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SONGS OF THE SEASONS

AND OTHER POEMS.

Handwritten signature: T. Stoddart

SONGS OF THE SEASONS

And other Poems.

BY

THOMAS TOD STODDART.

AUTHOR OF "THE ANGLER'S COMPANION," "ANGLER'S RAMBLES," &c.

"Ego, apud Matine
More modoque,
Grata carpentis thyma per laborem
Plurimum, circa nemus uvidique
Tiviotæ ripas operosa parvus
Carmina fingo."

—HORACE, Car. Lib. iv. 2.

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TO MY OLD AND VALUED FRIEND,

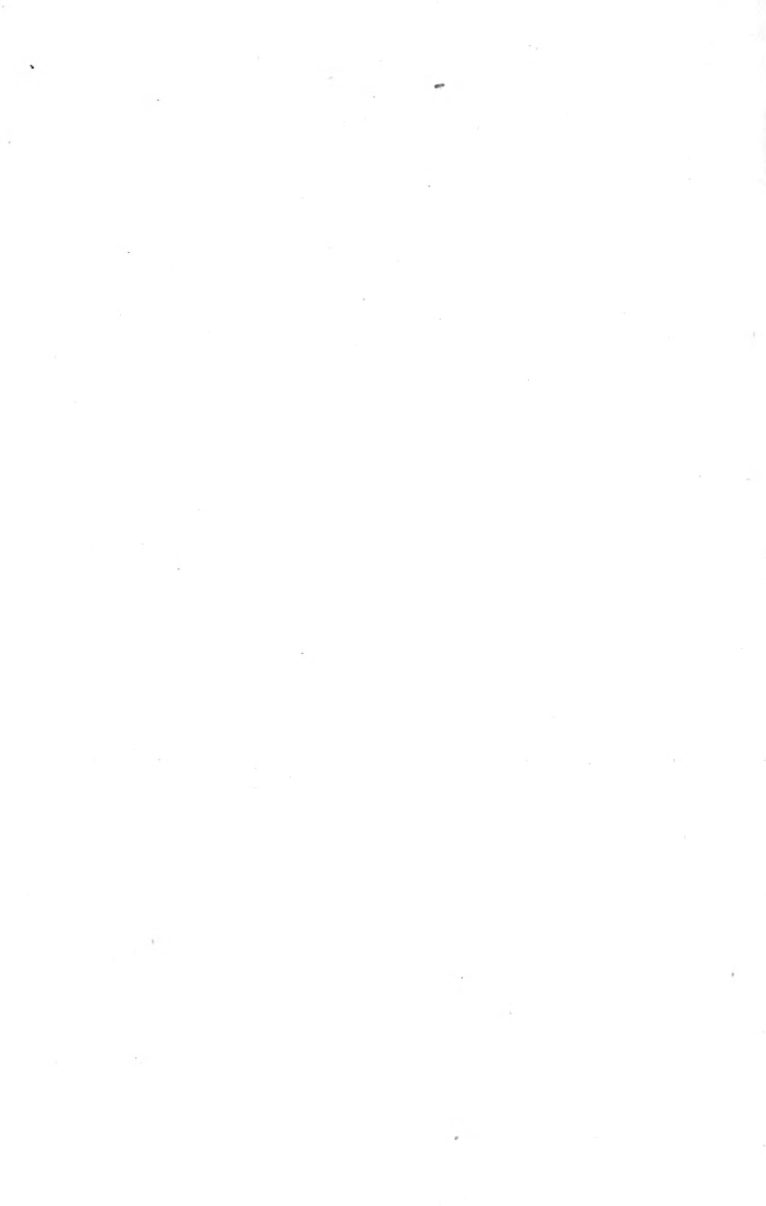
Henry Glassford Bell, Esq.,

SHERIFF OF LANARKSHIRE,

I HAVE PLEASURE IN DEDICATING

THESE EFFUSIONS.

T. T. S.



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Songs of the Seasons.



SPRING.

I AM coming, I am coming !
Look ye out with more than eyes,
Listen ! but with more than ears !
I am coming, I am coming ;
Seldom come I by surprise,
Oftener than with smiles, with tears—
Look ye out for my pioneers !
Look ye out for the snowdrop simple,
Look ye out for the crocus and daisy,
For the song of the thrush from the budding bush ;
For the flutter of life, and its smile and dimple,
And the breaking of light through the shadows hazy.
Listen and look for the caw of the rook,
And the busy repair of clustered nests
That swing to the breeze, on the tops of the trees,
Older in date than their owners' crests !

Look ye out for the bell of the trout,
On a river freshened with showers—
Whiten'd with creams, and soothed with the beams
That herald the sun's redeeming powers.
Icy Winter is hard of life,
And jealous of my going forth ;
With every wind he is at strife,
Save what bloweth east and north.
With *him* to contend I am oft at fault,
Yet his snows protect what his frosts destroy,
And when my journey is called to a halt,
The wreath that buries begets a new joy.

—oo—

S U M M E R.

I AM coming, I am coming,
When my sister Spring retires,
Under escort of wing'd lyres,
And with bees around her humming :
Musical wings salute *me too*,
Blending welcome with adieu,—
Flowers, both of field and garden—
Flowers, too, of lake and fountain,
Of the forest and the mountain,
Hail me as their chosen warden.

Sister Spring around her focus,
Gather'd snowdrop, true ! and crocus,
Primroses, and daffodillies,
Violets, hyacinths, and lilies,
In a timid, tearful cluster ;
These, and the forget-me-nots,
In the Virgin court made muster,
Sharing her divided thoughts.
With her passing they have died,
Some of them, but not them all.
'Twas her wish to leave the bride
Of the round year, at Whitsuntide,
Some delicate memorial ;
And so, *I*, Summer, am the heiress
Of the Spring, and half her beauty,
And her handmaids, nymphs, and fairies,
Tender me their loving duty.

All this dower I accept,
With the true, becoming grace
Of a monarch in her place,
The donor leaving not unwept !
On the May-day of my birth,
At sunrise, you will find the sward
That belts the hills with emerald girth,
Bathed in dew-drops of regard :
But I have treasures of my own,
To which my sister's fond bequest

SONGS OF THE SEASONS.

(The love excepted, treasure best !)
Endureth no comparison.
A richer glow is on my cheek,
A higher lustre in my eyne ;
The generous largess of a queen
Flows from me of its own accord :
They need not but to take, who seek
My bounties, and to praise the Lord !
Poets and artists hold me fast,
With loving clasp at every turn ;
In leafy bower, by limpid burn,
In all the nooks of their sojourn,
They study me as I glide past.
Upon the purpling moor, they sing
And sketch their rapture at my knees,
And on the hill-tops stay my wing
With homage ; and their mysteries
To keeping of my ear confide,
In barter for the Summer tide.
And wooers also, of a sort,
Less ardent, greet my coming forth,
And travel to the glowing north
From the dull town to pay me court.
To murmuring inlets of the sea—
To breezy outposts upon which
I take my airings and bewitch
The eye with landscape broad and rich,
The ear with flowing melody.

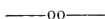
Out with me, in the morning's mist,
Saunters the mineralogist,
Wallet on back, and hammer in hand,
Riving the rock and raking the sand.
Out with me roams, nor cares a whistle
For granite, mica, shale, or schist,
The labour-loving botanist,
Who, in the veriest tare and thistle,
And in the humbler weeds accurst
By toiler with the plough and harrow,
An interest finds, and slakes the thirst
Inherent in his inner marrow.

For such men I create my wonders,
For such I reign and levees hold,
And for their pleasure forge the gold
Whose currency is told in thunders.
For me all hunger, yet ingrates
That in the winters, chill and dreary,
Longed for the spreading of my gates,
Now, these are spread, pronounce me weary.
“Weary, oh ! weary is the summer !
Weary, oh ! weary is summer time !
Welcome Autumn—the after-comer !”
Is the burden of their rhyme.
The hey-day of my youth is gone,
I, Summer, of the seasons Queen,
Am warned of old age creeping on.

The opal in my mystic crown
Shows waning life ; the florid green
Is passing into russet brown.
A chill comes o'er me in the eyes,
And creeps along, with snaky stealth :
The hinges of the rustling leaves
Are loosened, and my flowery wealth
Filch'd from its pedestals and stems.
The amber cups and roseate stars—
The carcanets of burning gems—
The hoods, the helmets, and the plumes,
From which the armourer of Mars
Shaped harness, and the maids of Venus
Sore pilfer'd, nor the offence deem'd heinous ;
All this, my store of floral wealth
(Who choose may take, and welcome most
The freest taker !)—shows unhealth.

Well ! Summer, like her sister, Spring,
Must wane and die, if that be death
Which is the folding of the wing,
And the withdrawing of the breath
A measur'd space ! I come again
In my own season, all renewed,
To inspire new hymns of gratitude,
And cause the palms of pious men
To meet in praiseful attitude.
Farewell ! I hear the reaper's song,

The vintage gatherer draws nigh,
The hornets round the nectarine throng,
The corn-ears rustle and around
My closing curtains flits a sigh !
I die ! I die !



AUTUMN IN THE HIGHLANDS.

SISTER Summer, she is dead !
And a wail goes up the valley ;
Misty forms and shadows rally
Round about the mountain head ;
And the wail becomes the muttering
As of thunders in restraint,
Holding requiem for a saint !
Shall I set my breezes fluttering
To dispel this heavy grief,
I, who am the mourner chief ;
I, her heiress, the new comer,
Heiress to the Throne of Summer ?

Dead is Summer ! but she died
In the ardent clasp of Love,
In an ecstasy she died !

Songsters caroll'd in the grove,
And with rapt'rous notes the dove
To her monody replied.
Flowers their sweetest breath exhaled,
Fairest hues her eye regaled ;
At her will and to her wishes,
Tided in the pride of fishes !
Through the gates of Neptune's palace,
Tided in the scaly forces ;
Up by shining water-courses,
Radiant salmon climbed the valleys.

In her Empire, all was beauty,
Glowing, ravishing, possessing !
Love lay fondled and caressing
In the lusty arms of Duty.
All was beauty, which her sceptre
Touched, or shadowing overwaved—
Beauty that enkindled rapture,
Conquered, fettered, and enslaved.
Rosy curtains in the dawning,
In the eve a rosier awning !
In the noon-tide, a contention
Of bright azures overhead ;
Fleecy clouds in rapt suspension—
To the visionary mind
Kindred to the angel kind,—
Such as in the great Ascension

Waited with their wings outspread
To escort the Risen Dead.
All was beauty and perfection
In my queenly Sister's time.
Poets from her drew direction—
Drew the thoughts that make sublime—
The sweet fancies that give lustre
To the harmony of rhyme !
Now, around the bed of state,
By her confined presence pressed,
Bards of every nation cluster,
And all great Designers wait.

Marvel not that I look pensive
Musing on her joyous reign,
Gazing out on hill and plain,
On the treasures comprehensive
Which flowed in at her demise.
Ah ! the freshness and the splendour
That regaled and dazzled so,
By the spell of Evil eyes,
By some ominous witch of Endor,
Have been rifled of their glow.

Idle these regrets ! The morrow
May bring healing on its wings.
From corruption, Beauty springs ;
Happiness is born of sorrow.

Chastened sorrow is the finest
Of delights, because divinest.
Of the Seasons, as a Season
To be gladdest, I have reason.
Have I not to suit my pleasure,
Store of riches without measure—
Every quality of treasure?

Caravans, with wealth untold
Laden, cross my daily path.
Hill and valley, steep and strath,
Are aglow with sheaves of gold.
To the far horizon's line,
You, the ardent mountain-sitter,
May pursue the waving glitter
Casting life into the brine.

There, too, in the moaning seas,
I have treasures and keep state,
Sitting on a rock elate,
Throned among my argosies!
I have harvests in the port,
In the tideway, crops prolific;
The Atlantic and Pacific
Waft their offerings to my court.

Dazzling shapes come, southward pressing,
On the bearing of the wave;

Welcomest, as boon and blessing,
The unfailing "herring drave !"

Come and view my garden riches,
Terraced walks and sunny slopes—
Grottoes, arbours, statued niches,
In whose odorous recesses
With her fair, refulgent tresses,
Summer toyed, or, couched on hopes,
Sleeping, shunned the sun's caresses.

Of these hopes, the sweet fruition,
Part was hers—the lesser part—
Grateful to her generous heart,
Even a tithe ; 'twas recognition,
Of the service she had rendered,
And the wealth of blessings tendered.

In the glory-time of cherries,
When they hang, like orbs of coral,
Gazing out o'er treasures floral ;
At the feast of ruddy berries,
When the circulating bowl
Plenished is with creams of clover,
Ere the banquet was nigh over,
From the lips of the Great Soul
Of universe, a voice descended,
"Summer, thy brief reign is ended."

So, I've come into possession
Of the flower-wealth, in part,
Only to feel sad at heart
And lament my own accession.

All the incense, nearly all,
Which endowed my sister's breath
Is burnt out. The Holy Death
Sought a balmy funeral.
I have fragrance, ne'er the less,
Left me, and great flush of colour,
Both, I fear, foretelling dolour—
Neither, winsome of caress.

Meet me in my orchard yard,
Roam among my vineries,
Shake the loaded apple trees!
Welcome Artist! Welcome Bard!
Shake the filbert and the hazel,
Shake the walnut, and the chesnut,
Go on shaking, Pen and Easel!
None of mine the motto—"Waste not."
I would rather, than the breeze,
Or the versed in pious frauds,
That the gifted of the gods
Revell'd in mine arbories!

Plant my standard, rich with blazon,
Tissued by no niggard churl,

Where the tempest may unfurl
Signals for the eye to gaze on !
Plant it on a Norland Peak,
Over which the symbol resteth
In whose clefts the eagle nesteth,
Cruel eye o'er crueller beak !
On a hundred such, let float
My web of glory. Serfs impassive
Wait me on the mountains massive,
Eager to take turn about
In the pageant and the shout.
Trumpets blown by able lungs
Animate my sober paces ;
Echo, heedless of the graces,
Heeding more the stately muses,
The enchantment of her tongues
In the extasy unlooses.

I am casting off my spells,
Setting loose my eerie wells,
Rifling the witch-land of Fancy—
Peopling, too, with shapes unchancy
The recesses of the dells.
Round the cauldron, at the linn,
I set haggard forms a-spin.
On the cairn that crowns the height
Blue fires shew at dead of night.

Breaking the cold grave-yard's calm,
In the yew-shade, at the gloaming,
I with charm of holy psalm,
Exorcise the spirits roaming.
Leering demons at my will
Peep out in the traveller's path :
Loiterers who provoke my wrath,
Shiver in the deadly chill,
Faces comic and grotesque
I delight to carve and fashion ;
With the ugly, the burlesque
To commingle, is my passion.
Goblin hunch-backs, full of frolic,
Hairy satyrs, grinning apes,
Urchins twisted with the cholic,
And a world of grisly shapes.
Out at night, I set adrift
These, the marvels of my craft,
When at speed with levelled shaft
Riding on the stormy lift,
Tilts the Moon Queen—vizor down
As the rebel clouds come surging
Sullenly with surly frown
Their unknighly chargers urging.

Lo ! the fowler waits for me—
Wearies, like an ardent lover,
For the hour of my appearing !

Happy with his dogs and gearing
And the dream of glossy wealth
Hidden in the purple cover.
At the dawning of the Twelfth,
While, as yet, the dews are falling,
I regard him on the hill
To his wayward setters calling ;
On the hill, among the heather
Dropping with an aim of skill
Tuft on tuft of lustrous feather.

Ho ! the stalker of the Stag,
I espy him striding forth,
The great Nimrod of the North !
Through the oscillating hag,
Trusting to the leal rushes,
With a ready foot he pushes—
Through the pinewood, up the crag,
Gliding, clambering, striding on,
In his eye the silent corry,
With its vert and venison.

INTER-PART.

In the days of ancient foray,
Round about the hunter's path,
A great, gloomy forest spread,
Sable shade o'er Ben and Strath—
Shook its plumes on wintry nights

O'er the raving torrent bed—
Cover gave to surly sprites—
Secrets held from vulgar ken,
Of dark deeds and foul intents,—
The death-throes of murdered men,—
Treacheries and ravishments !

Here, too, lurked the savage boar,
Brandishing his whetted tusks,
Chafing o'er his meal of husks,
Champing, snorting, sniffing gore.
With his bristles all astir,
When, on breath of dewy morn,
Music from the hunting horn
Animated oak and fir.

And the ruffian wolf found hiding
In this Sanctuary's heart,
Through the mazy covert gliding,
Noiseless, without star or chart ;
Like a shadow in the shade,
With two flaming eyes endowed,
God defend the boldest-browed
By this murderer way-laid !

Here, too, streaming from the swamp,
Harbour found the shaggy Bull ;
With his slow and measured tramp
Filling up the weary lull.

In the old days of the chase,
Ere the cunning arts expanded,
When the dagger, spear, and bow,
Of the rifle held the place,
Who would care a craftier foe
To encounter single-handed ?

With the strength of Elm and Oak,
With the felling of the Pine,
In the Sanctuary's shrine ;
With the Woodman's wanton stroke,
Levelled at some old-world column,
Guardian of the dread and solemn !
With the death-shriek of the Druid
Driven from his kin and kith—
Fettered to a monolith
In the grim heart of Glen Fruid,
From the violated covers,
Vanished the old forest rovers.

Through the gloomy mountain gorges,
Lightnings held their snaky play—
Gleamed and hissed the fiery fluid,
When the Pagan and his orgies,
Howling, shrieking, passed away !
Passed with Pagan superstition,
Crafty Bison, foaming Boar,
And the great Elk of tradition

That held harbour in Strathmore,
Yet, the Stag in all his glory,
Stately, royally apparell'd,
Stalketh where the were-wolf snarl'd—
Coucheth 'mong the remnants gnarl'd
Of a Forest famed in story !

In my musings held a part,
The great Tainchels of the kings,
When, by herald and by horn,
Messuages and summonings
Crossed and stirred the nation's heart.
With the breaking of the morn,
From the wellings to the mouth
Of a foaming river, roll'd
Tidings of the royal behest !
Out of castles in the South,
Nobles and retainers bold
To the place of trysting press'd.
Out of strongholds in the North
Haughty chieftains strutted forth ;
Sturdy hench-men, pipers stilted,
Marshalling the vassals kilted.
From the East and from the West,
At the Monarch's high behest,
Experts with the bow and shaft,
Men of subtlety and mark,
Rangers in the Royal Park

Versed in olden Forest-craft
And the arts of Venerie,
Hurried, to show fealty.

With the Slogan of the Chase,
A great panic swept across
Thicket, underwood, and moss,
Wildering the antler'd race,
Roe and "rascal" laying spell on,
Scaring from his haunts the felon.
To the fissures of the rocks,
To the curtains of the fens,
To the holds of wolf and fox,
Fled the Forest denizens.

I am musing, I am dreaming,
Of the old, autumnal days !
Mused on through the dreamy haze,
They have gained a holier seeming ;
Like the works of some great master,
In whose ekeing out took part
With the hand, the head and heart—
A brave labour of renown
Which, protected from disaster
By the worshippers of art,
Time hath chasten'd and ton'd down.

From my brows the film hath slid

Moist with eye-charms, that had power
Of inner pageant, while they hid
The gross transits of the hour.
Pass'd the visionary mood
Which resuscitated forms
Kindred to the steeps and storms—
Kindred to the mighty Wood
That, from Loyal's tow'ring crest,
Crowded into Strath and Glen,
Belted many a giant Ben.
With its umbrage onward press'd,
Drawing life from Loch and River,
From the stores of the Life-Giver,
Till it reach'd the Border marches,
Bridging with its shadowy arches
Silver Tweed and songful Teviot—
Reached the fosses of green Cheviot!

With freed eyes, once more I search
For symbols on the Grampian tops,
Wandering from copse to copse—
Through the hazels and the birch,
Up, beyond the purpled fringes,
Up into the place of boulders,
Round the mountains' lusty shoulders,
Where the storm-gates on their hinges,
In the elemental battle,
Wheel and clatter, clash and rattle!

Casting onward, I descry,
In a drowsy hollow feeding,
The great Hart, and to his leading
Follow hundreds of the kind,
Calf and Broacher, Stag and Hind ;
But above them, royally,
Monarch in the Herd's esteem,
Crowned with antlers vast of beam,
Palmed and pointed, towers He,
Like an Oak of olden date
Among Saplings holding state !

Why this pricking of the ear ?
Why this rousing of the head ?
Why this sniffing of the wind
And regarding of the Hind ?
What of trouble dreams the Deer ?

In the drowsy hollow lies
A Tarn which the water-shed
Feeds with generous supplies ;
Cherished thus and lustre-fed,
Brightest of the mountain eyes,
Up it gazes to the skies !
Here, Nymph lilies swing their cables
And with festal chalices
Carved in time of ancient fables
Out of glistening ivories,

Cumber the enamell'd tables
Wrought in buoyant malachite
By the cunning Water-Sprite.

Under screen of reedy spears,
Here the wary mallard steers
Followed by his dusky mate,
Painted, like a barge of state,
With its pageant prow elate !
From the quiet tarn, in stealth
And ambuscade, a riv'let issues
At each turn uncoiling tissues
Laden to its brim with wealth,—
Crystal life, and trusts of health.
From the covert of the sedges,
From the hidings of the banks,
To and fro, flit jewell'd wedges,
Pearly fins and rubied flanks.

Out at bowshot from the source,
I lose token of its course,
As it passeth from the levels,
Through a fissure in the glen,
To pursue its merry revels
Downward to the homes of men.
In the cleft, below the hollow,
As I watch it disappear,
Straining out mine eyes to follow,

A faint clicking meets the ear.
Up! the mighty Antlered Head!
Up! the fronts of many a Deer!
Panic through the Herd hath spread
Forecast of the Stalker dread!—
Comes a blaze, and comes a smoke,—
Comes the rifle's fell discharge;
Echoes bound are set at large,
Loosed are lips that only spoke
In conference with the Thunder-stroke.

Oaks! your arms of tempest swing!
Wave your sable plumes, ye pines!
Fallen is the Forest King,
With his crown of many tines!

Through the corrie, up the shoulders
Of the mountain, stream the masses,
Tearing past the place of Boulders—
Plunging down through savage passes—
Crossing torrent—climbing crag.
On the flurried wings of fear—
Onward press the startled deer,
Calf and Brochard, Hind and Stag!

From their heathy ambush start
The grim slayer of the Hart
And his stalwart, kilted gillie,

In the leash a deer-hound leading,
But a thought's-time since, were feeding
In that hollow, now so stilly,
Hundreds of the cervine race.
Not a hoof is left, nor horn,
Not a mottled Hind to mourn
The dead monarch of the Chase!

It is sunset—and the setting
Is Creation's self of glory—
A Creation, like a story
Fabulous, yet past forgetting.
In a language richly fraught
Of the gems that image Thought,
Of the liquid syllables
Found, like pearls, in Saxon wells—
Of the coinage, rare and quaint,
Dug up in the Doric fells;
Fraught of cyphers and of scrolls,
Mystical and half attain't,
Spelt out on Cathedral walls—
Of curt words that live in mottoes
Or in charters of entail,
Of the warblings heard in grottoes—
Voices from the nightingale!—
Fraught of sounds, which once did duty
In the Academic grove,
Full of power and life and beauty,

Apt for Hymns of War and Love ;
Sounds which Homer turn'd to meaning—
Sounds which Sappho trained to measure ;
Many a century intervening,
Flowing still to Britain's Treasure,
To her endless lingual Treasure !—
Steel'd with sinews of a tongue
Spoken by the dauntless Latin,
Now at vespers and at matin
Mumbled, parodied, unstrung ;
Ruling once in camps and senates,
Medium, now, of monkish tenets !
Medium, by whose twisted handle
Law and leech-craft sweat and swindle,
And at bidding of the Vandal
Science moves on rusty spindle.

In a language to whose keeping
Poets gave the inner man—
Felt its presence in their sleeping,
Turned and woke to lead the Van
With new Pæans,—nobler measures !
In its variegated treasures,
In the lavish flow and glow,
In its pithy emphasis,
In its sweet alliterations,
In its swayings to and fro,
And its graceful undulations,

In its chaste simplicities,
In its rare plasticities
And its fine felicities.
In its bundle of conceits,
And its store of counterfeits,
In its conjuncts and declensions,
In its classic apprehensions,—
In these marvels, all combined,
Ingot over ingot turning,
I am at a loss to find
Utterance to the hidden yearning—
Fluency of song and power
To depict that glowing hour!

High upon a peak defiant,
On the Cromlech of a Giant,
I sit watching, for the night
Comes, and with it One I dread.
The grand splendours overhead
And the dazzlings round about
Now are vanished from my sight.
Towards Ocean looking out,
I descry upon the wing,
In the far West glimmering,
Galleons freighted with the spoils
Of my palace grounds and arbours—
With the fruitage of my toils
Pressing on to distant harbours.

As I watch them disappear,
Shining mast and crimson'd sail,
A great rustling fills the ear,
As of leaves before a gale.
Night's wan shadows, fast and faster,
Travel past me, bringing fear
And the boding of disaster.
East-ward, on a wall of vapour,
Like some grimy, battered shield
Found on ancient battle-field,
Hangs the moon, full orb'd and dim,
While above her pallid rim
Holds a star its ghostly taper.

Again the film is on mine eyes !
Presences before me press
Sister Summer to caress,
Summer radiant with reflections,
Sister Spring to sympathise !
Spring intent on resurrections.
Other shapes and evil-brow'd
Mingle in the phantom crowd—
Some to warn and some to scare,
Some to mock and some to stare
Into stone with snaky eyes,
Overlapp'd with snaky hair !

From the depth of every hollow,

Comes a moaning, and the sounds,
Piteous more, of wailing follow,
With the howl of famish'd hounds !
Through the air, a fire-bolt hurtled,
Casts its glare o'er cairn and peak,
From their distant eyries, startled
By its hissing, eagles shriek !
Welded in the Arctic forges
Ice-bolts follow thick and fast,
Rattling through the flinty gorges,
Out on foray with the blast.
From the far and frosty regions
With his desolating legions
The Usurper comes at last.

Nine gray, weather-beaten stones
Crown the peak on which I rest,
Laid out like a Runic chest.
Old Tradition and her crones
Gibber of gigantic bones,
Without cross or cerement,
In this dreary dwelling pent.
Surely, or mine ear deceives,
I hear stirrings under-ground—
A great wrestling and the sound
Of yokings to fetch home the sheaves !
On my knees I fall and pray,
Sister Summer ! Stay ! oh stay,

Sister Spring! thy rosaries bring!
Alas! both have fled away!
Under me the Cromlech heaves,
And the huge gray stones dispart,
The last anguish rends the heart,
Bear me to the stream I love,
Bear me to the weeping grove!
Bury me among the leaves!

—oo—

W I N T E R.

HIGH time *I* should wield the sceptre,
High time *I* should play a part
In the Drama of the Year!
Timid Spring (although I kept her
Prison'd long) by power of heart
Burst her fetters, and with rapture
Freedom shouted, far and near!
Of the Queenly sisterhood,
Her alone I held in thrall,
And in my rude fashion woo'd—
Woo'd, as the old Sea Kings woo'd—
Of my riches prodigal—
Prodigal of oath and bluster,

And of jewels that in lustre
Rivall'd those of real cost,
Worked up by the hand of Frost.
For her shapely limbs infantile
I devised an ermine mantle ;
In its glossy foldings wrapp'd her,
To the throat with fleeces happ'd her ;
And my choicest artisans
Brought the triumphs of their skill—
Streaming wimples, waving fans,
Wrought behind a Lapland hill,
In some dragon-watch'd recess
By the busy sorceress,
Known through Scandinavian valleys
As Aurora Borealis.
I, her guardian, for a while
Fondled her in such rude fashion,
Sought my fair ward to beguile,
Proffer'd her my senile passion,
Only to interpret scorn
Out of her responsive smile,
And to shake my head forlorn !
Ay ! when March had nigh run down,
I read rebel in her eyes ;
But the terror of my frown
Had vanished with my spells ;
Rattling down came icicles,
Slid the snow-drifts off the heights,

Captive Spring assum'd her rights,
And I, powerless, dropp'd my crown !

Face to face we never met,
I and rival Summer, yet
My cold cheek is made to burn,
Oftimes, with her jealous breath,
And I smite her in return.
Winter's Life is Summer's Death !
Truly, there is no love lost
Betwixt us : still we work as *one* ;
Mutual purposes are cross'd
Only to insure the doing
Of the work that must be done.
All away from servile wooing
Is my action with the Summer,
'Tis a battle without ending—
A great, measureless contending—
Each in turn the Overcomer !

Autumn, too, makes cause of quarrel,
That with *her* I hold no parle,
Deeming me a crusty carle !
When the stain is on the laurel
And the mildew on the bay,
Rests it, even with lips of coral,
The ill signs to kiss away ?
Less, with languid breath, like *hers*,

Or the warmth of minnivers
Heaped upon a dying Queen,
To restore their wonted green.

Of all things effeminate,
True! I make earth desolate!
The companions of the Rose
Tremble when I come. In vain
The battle with my chills and snows—
The striving with the hurricane!
Yet in mercy, more than wrath,
I trample them below my feet.
The deadliest poisons are the sweet,
And the adder's choice retreat
Lurketh in the flowery path.

With the wrecks of garden-beauty,
In the earnestness of duty
I deal ruthlessly. They ask
No quarter, and have lost desire:
Yet less ruthless than the Fire
Are the hands I set to task;
And she slanders me, who says,
Drawing from a fancy fertile,
That I persecute the myrtle,—
Slay the laurel,—scourge the bays.
It is *I* who nurse them, rather,
Freshen up their sickly hues—

Dissipate the rusts that gather,
Counteract the evil dews.
Without Me, how the Year would fare !
How wearily would life creep on,
In one unvaried monotone,
How slumberous the very air !
How stagnate river, lake, and sea ;
No wind, no wave, no energy
Of sound or action ; no true psalm
Of Nature breaking through the calm,
But the pent gasping which pertains
To dungeons and their festering chains,
To the lazar-house and tomb,
To recondite catacomb,
To the pestilential fen
And the throat of dragon's den !

In the Black land, watchers grimy
Greet my coming to defy me ;
In the kingdom under ground,
Where, with jetty diamonds crown'd,
And attired in glossy sables,
Sits the Fire King, Ancient Coal !
On a daïs of control,
Heading the convivial tables
Where his thousands of tried miners,
Frugal in their fare, as diners,
Wax uproarious round the bowl.

Hand of friendship I would stretch,
Ay! and *do*, oft and again,
To this comrade of my reign :
But my fingers all relax
In his grasp, like melting wax,
And I feel it were unwise
Dignity to compromise ;
So, I leave your shivering wretch
To *his* mercies, and proclaim
Dissolved the League of Frost and Flame.

'Tis *His* duty to unfreeze,
Mine to vex the bed of ease ;
His to foster and to cherish,
Mine to wither and enchain !
From the graves of those who perish
In my desolating reign,
Three-fold life will spring again.
Ruler stern of the unruly !
Swarthy comrade ! answer truly,
Out of thy seductive heart
Canst thou multiply the strong ?
Will thy kindlings at the feet
Of the oak insure from wrong ?
Art thou slower to devour,
On thy day of breaking forth,
Judg'd of when the wind is north,
In an eligible hour,

When thou play'st the nursing mother
Indoors to both babe and flower,
And the check is on thy power
To inflame, consume, and smother?
I am terrible, 'tis true,
Thou, who liv'st the whole year through
In hypocrisy of heart,
More terrible and cruel art!

Yet, in one week of the Year,
In the merry Christmas time,
When from belfries far and near,
From Cathedral towers sublime,
From the spires of village churches,
Flows the soul of Inter-chime—
In the week memorialized
Of His Advent, who by purchase,
And the Body sacrificed,
Reinstated in God's grace
The fallen of the human race;—
When the Mistletoe suspended
Deftly from the festive ceiling—
Mystic leaf with berry blended—
Gives invite to chaste saluting;
And the treasured stores of feeling
Make up in their breaking out
For long terms of double dealing—

Charities their hands forth-putting,
With a self-applauding shout !

In the reign of Pantomime,
When the strutter on the stage,
Charged throat-high with florid rhyme,
Personates a mythic age—
Brings to play the Jack and Giant,
Ogre, faery, gnome, and dragon—
Matchless drainers of the flagon—
Ravishers, and knights defiant—
Ladye loves of all degrees,
From the Princess to the Peasant,
Making of the Past a Present ;
By the help of magic keys
Throwing wide the wondrous gates
Of invisible estates
In the world of Fantasies :—
In that festival of truce
I find blustering of no use.
Should I summon my war hosts
Into play to rave and threat,
With his wondrous amulet
Among rosy sapphires set,
He, the unscar'd, scares my ghosts,
All the dismaler their howl,
All the merrier the laugh
Indoors, and the streaming bowl

Rimm'd with Motto "Fill and Quaff,"
Faster circles with the pace
Of my whirling Spectre-race.

'Tis in vain the siege I press—
Cast in vain for port of sally
And my scatter'd forces rally,
The old Fire King, ne'ertheless,
Holds his own, by rug and hearth—
Meets my menaces with laughter—
Drowns my agonies in mirth,
And I pelt both roof and rafter—
Storm the casement and the gable—
Yell the chimney throats adown—
Simulate the roar of Babel
Round the curtains of the Town;—
All in vain! Yet times there are
When Grace betwixt us twain is cast
Aside, and Mercy veils her Star,
And all God's Angels stand aghast;
For the fierce Soul of devilry
Is out at large, and Storm and Fire
Are knit for ruthless revelry,
Hung'ring to do the Fiend's desire.
Pity the ship and all its crew,
Be it a British Admiral,
And they who man it the true blue,
Which, on that night of Festival,

Crosses our pathway ! Rather meet
The Vanguard of a rival Fleet
With triple force of turret power
Equipped and eager to destroy,
Than the fierce Rovers of the hour
Sworn to exhaust their cruel joy
In *one* great onset which shall yield
No traces of the Battle-field !

My bugler with his glittering horn
Is on the hills at break of morn—
At break of morn, while yet the West
Shews paling stars. The Lake is paved
With floor of glass—the rills enslaved—
Their silvery fountains in arrest.
Enamell'd are the meads deflower'd
With sapphires, and the slopes above
With clustering diamonds are dowered.
My jeweller Frost such gifts of love
Bestows ; and who with loom or shuttle,
Or facet-saw and cunning tool,
Can imitate an art so subtle—
So subtle and so wonderful ?

Upon the Lake, the roaring game
All yesterday, to dip of sun,
Was played, and boisterous the fun—
The bandied jest, the loud acclaim—

The cheering and the helping on,
With spur of voice and twirl of broom,
Towards its goal the laggard stone.

O curler! in your honest heart,
For much of nobler strife lies room—
For much that shews the better part—
For much of patriotic zeal—
For much of that true charity
Which casteth for the general weal!
I joy in your hilarity,
And gild the rigors of my reign
With free concessions—sympathies
Aloof from those to grief and pain
The due. In freezing, I unfreeze;
In chaining, silently unchain.

Enough! I am to Duty pressed;
My bugler slowly climbs the hill;
A dark cloud hovers in the West,
But darker passions stir my breast,
And goading then an Iron Will.
With flourish from his glittering horn
He ravisheth the ear of morn,
The prelude to a louder strain!
Not always I assert my reign
By hurricane or noisy rage—
Not always the wild winds uncease

At once, in sudden petulance ;
But dally often, as the scene
From calm to storm I shift, and pause,
That man may learn how Nature's laws
Work for his good, and things terrene
Teach wisdom on the true incline,
Which, step by step, and line on line,
Leads upward to the Primal Cause.

Another blast my bugler blows,
But not with stinted breath,
Fearful to break the graves' repose,
Or stir the feud with Death.
Out ring the measures of his horn—
Clear as the eagle's cry at morn—
Loud as the summons to the charge
Which sets the long-enslaved at large.
Its wings, the dark cloud in the West
Extends, obedient to the call,
And manifests on every crest
The spreading of the sable pall.

Another, and a fiercer blast !
And from the uplands overcast,
And from the valleys and the glens,
And from the bowels of the fens,
And from the hidings of the cave,
And from the toilers on the wave,

And from the forest-heart retired,
A chorus, as of throats inspired,
Rolls forth in emulous reply,
And on its tide of sound retreat,
As if with tramp of equine feet,
The legions of the under-sky.
Squadron on squadron disappears,
And in its stead the luminous spears
Of a new legion meet the eye.
On every eminence and front
Of vantage, the supplanting host
Shews of a sudden ; on the flanks
Of the great hills, and by the streams
That lave them, lo ! stand serried ranks !

One Salvo more ! its echoes fall
Smothered upon the listening ear,
Or only rise at interval
In token how the far and near
Are welded by the spell of sound,
And how a secret agency
Is aye at work, above, around,
And in God's forges under ground.

Out of the North, a Battle cry !
A yearning from the flow'ry South !
Which the true voice of Liberty ?—
The shout from the defier's mouth,

Or the strong sobbing to be free
 That by its restless energy
 Looseneth the bonds of Tyranny?

I wave the Sceptre, and my hosts
 Surge and resurge, deploy and wheel—
 Show front of animated steel
 A moment in the sun's brief glance,
 And in the next a cloud of ghosts,
 Bereft alike of helm and lance,
 With howlings leads the grand advance.

When, and on what devoted head,
 Shall I wreak vengeance? for my blood,
 Long frozen and allied with the dead,
 Boils and is eager as the flood
 Which clouds and melting winds have moved
 To overtake the bounds approved.

* * * * *

The Shepherd and his fleecy charge,
 The simple watcher of the kine
 Pasturing by the river's marge,
 The Forest Ranger and the Deer
 Under his ward and discipline,
 Have well considered me, and steer
 Their courses by my voice and sign.
 The Eagle throned upon the crag,

The raven wheeling in the sky,
Acknowledge my uplifted flag,
And to my challenger reply.
Sounds come from places in whose heart
Silence had stored its mouldering urns ;
And voices out of hollows start
To torture and affright the ear,
Or calm and ravish it, by turns.
Oh Spring ! my long-imprisoned ward !
To whom redemption draweth near,
Consider how thy wooer woos—
How of his treasures (thou to choose)
The rarest are set forth, and how,
To win thine over-chaste regard,
He hath put all his energy
To task—the hand, the heart, the brow—
To keep dominion over thee !

Last effort this ! I have made pact
With my Snow Queen, who, when she shews,
Attracts as Presences attract
Through whom the sacred ichor flows—
By virtue of her chastity,
By virtue of the calm repose
Befitting conscious sovereignty
That sits at ease upon her brows.

O consort mine ! whom marriage vows

Bound to obedience, love, and honour,
Beseeching be in my behalf,
Or else commanding ; for the staff
Fails me that propp'd—the sceptre, too,
Is heavy in my grasp ; some few
Short hours are left us, and upon her,
When these are gone, the crown descends.
Give her thy token of amends ;
Prepare the coronation Feast
And summon the anointing priest,
Bring all of thy regard to bear
On *her*, the adopted of my choosing,
As chaste, as royal, and as fair
As any shape in poet's musing ;
Invest her with a robe of grace
Thou only can'st design and fashion,
Befitting faultless form, and face
Whose only fault is want of passion.

She lists, and listening obeys,
If 'tis obedience to command,
For, at the waving of her hand,
Are cast upon the waiting land
The tokens of her means and ways :
As moltings of angelic wings,
The down of cherubs, dropt in course
Of their celestial wanderings,
So, emblematic of their source

In the abodes of hallowed pleasure,
Descend the snow-flakes, all at leisure.

Alas ! my throne is tottering !
Awry the crown ! My Snow Queen's power
Dissolves with the dissolving hour ;
And, yielding to the breath of Spring,
The Vestals in her train have doffed
Allegiance with the outer garb.
Hard natures are becoming soft,
And out of chastity superb
And cold, there emanates
The flow that bursts our crystal gates.

In vain, in vain, wind, sleet, and hail !
In vain the elemental war !
Nor drift nor cloud is of avail
To trouble her ascendant star !
The armies of my Snow Queen—where ?
The mighty forces on the hill,
Assembled—sworn to do and dare—
That up to Heaven's own window sill
Clomb, and in shining phalanxes
Guarded the passes and the slopes—
Where are they ? Scattered with my hopes—
Defeated—driven to the seas !

O Spring ! Enchantress ! spells thou hast

Surpassing the Magician's art—
Spells woven in a prisoned heart
That work out Liberty at last.
The law divine which sanction gave
To bind, prevails to ransom Thee ;
So all great aimings to enslave
Provoke, alike from cell and grave,
The trumpet-shout of Liberty.

I take my turn : go free, fair Ward !
Go free, and scatter Earth with flowers,
Moisten and mellow it with showers !
Summer will come and parch the sward.
And wither up thy promised joys ;
Summer will come, and stay the trill
Of the aspiring lark, unvoice
The merle, and disenchant both hill
And grove of all their winsome charms.
Summer will come, and by her arms
Encircled,—on her breast of fire,
Inhaling meretricious breath,
Consenting to an early death,
Thou, my true sweet-heart, wilt expire !

But *I*, when from the temperate zone
Driv'n by thy petulance and scorn,
Go back to an unchalleng'd throne
With my Snow Queen ; nor eve nor morn

Prevail within the Arctic Ring :
Only the Phantom of a Spring
Flutters about our Palaces—
Mayhap, thine unappeased ghost
Let loose to wander with the lost !
No imprint marks the Frozen seas
Crossed by this pallid visitor,
The pressure of her foot shows not
In flowers or verdure any more ;
Nor with its presence are there brought
Regalements to the ear and eye,
Nor perfumes of delicious kind
That savour of Virginity.
Yet in my inmost heart enshrined
A truer image I bear forth
To my bleak Empire in the North
Of thee, my long-imprisoned Ward ;
And sitting on its desolate Throne,
My melting moods—and such there be,
When I float icebergs out to sea,
When I let brave explorers free,
And at God's bidding sacrifice
My will, and bow to the All-Wise—
Lead me, fair Spring ! to muse on Thee.

In this wide Empire of mine own
My rule is absolute, and none,
Even the Fire King, dare intrude,

Much less my sovereignty dispute,
Summer in vain hath urged her suit,
And Autumn, tendering ruddy fruit,
Towards that realm of solitude
Presses in vain! On wall of brass,
In characters of adamant,
(Such cypher only angels plant),
Th' inscription runs—"Thou shalt not pass."

On my high feast days, to caress
The footstool of our Monarchy,
Thousands of living creatures press—
A medley of strange courtiers,
Blending with suave docility
And tenderness the rude reverse ;
In visage and demeanor strange,
Unlike the life of temperate range !

My wondrous realm, to be devoid
Of monsters would be incomplete,
And without homage at my feet
Tendered, a kingdom unenjoyed.

In these high court days, I let drift
The dancing waves, and winds untie
Made captive in my warrings south :
Not like old Boreas, rude and swift,
These breathings of a balmy mouth,

Nor like the billows of his wrath
 Made animate with show of power
 That fain would intercept my path,
 Unwitting of their destiny
 And the inevitable hour.

Go free, ye winds ! ye waves, go free !
 Mine is no court effeminate,
 I care not to uphold my state
 By craft of show or luxury,
 I care not that sooth things, like you,
 Should in my stately prisons pine,
 And with soft flatteries incline
 My servitors to play th' untrue ;
 Rather than *that*, take Liberty !
 More welcome your release to me
 Than the great peril and the cost
 Which wait upon old customs cross'd,
 And manners of simplicity
 Perverted, fallen through, and lost.

With ransom I my festival
 Combine, for ransom is delight,
 The highest joy of conquering might—
 The noblest pride of chivalry
 Is the unloosing of the thrall !

* * * * *

Then gambol the great Whales, and lave
The footstool of my dazzling throne,
And Behemoth, with eyes of stone,
Watches them, crouching in his cave.
A thousand fountains are at play
On this hybernal holiday ;
Ten thousand creatures urge their way
Towards the curtain of my shrine.
I welcome them, but make no sign !
The Walrus, with his wizard stare
And pendant tusks, the timorous Seal,
The subtle Fox, the Arctic Bear,
Surly and gruff, with teeth of steel—
All to my footstool come and kneel.

Waist-deep the Syren of the Sea
Reveals herself in woman's form,
Impersonating modesty :
Ubiquitous in calm or storm,
In sunny and in frigid clime,
Her pearly comb she ever plyeth
'Mong tresses of the softest silk,
Which o'er a bosom that defieth
In candour, ivory or milk—
Playing, choice morsels of delight
Reveal, and to warm thoughts incite.
And with this ravisher consort
As shapely forms, but chaste and cold, •

Befitting more our Arctic court—
The Nereid, with her loves untold,
And vestal groups, whose faces scanned
Are impotent of all desire,
Repressive of the unlawful fire,
Yet win adorers at command.

Show there, the Triton and his conch,
With sturdy Mermen, ready aye,
When of my icebergs I make launch
To tender active fealty.
The Mermen these from whose blue eyne
The Sea Kings borrowed azurine—
Borrowed the cruel glare and sheen
Which in their fronts lay manifest ;
As on the lowering thunder-cloud
Lie couch'd the tokens of unrest,
Ready with utterances loud,
And fiery tongues, at signal given,
To storm the embrasures of heaven.

O'er century hath roll'd century,
And generations of mankind
Have pass'd, I cannot call to mind
Their number, yet no change in me,
Or in my Polar Sovereignty !

There came among things animate,

In quest of plunder to my realm,
Once on a day, with brows elate
And eyes that gleam'd below scarr'd helm,
These Sea Kings. Forests had been fell'd
To build their ships, and demons yell'd
Round cauldrons and vast furnaces
In which the red ore fum'd and sung,
Which was to aid their ravages,
In shape of halbert and of mace,
And falchion and the barbed tongue
That points the shaft in war or chase.
For then the Scandinavian ore
Aspired not to take higher place
In the fierce strife of brotherhood,
Nor was to service put of yore,
As now, in engines terrible.

It was as yesterday review'd,
When their huge galleys hugg'd my shore,
Throng'd, poop and stern, with reivers fell.
A towering vessel led the van,
And at its helm a towering man,
Broad in the chest and limb'd therefrom
With arms, like spreadings of the oak,
Which centuries, under heaven's black dome,
Have sinew'd, and the thunder stroke
Only inured and fitter made
To wrestle with the fire and storm ;

So jointed on his lofty form
These movers of the hands of might—
The red, right hand that grasped the brand—
The wary left that swayed the helm,
And toward the white ports of my realm
Steer'd, without asking or invite.

That Sea King's tale again was told
In modern time, and yet again !
New histories but repeat the old
Linked to the epochs of my reign.
One instance let suffice ;—no need
To name the hero rashly bold.
Resolute both in creed and deed,
Who, in the cause of Science, braved
My power, and thought to break the spell
By which I held Earth's ends enslaved.
The secret of *his* fate to tell
Were to imperil my Arctic throne.
In darkness I shall keep my own—
Reign among silences profound.
Who over-vaults the appointed bound
Must rue th' offence. *I*, while *I* reign,
Shall reign supreme, and they who dare
Affront me, at their cost, I swear,
May do so *once*, but not again.

Prepare for me, ye temperate zones !

Autumn and Spring ! I warning give—
One dying and the one to live !—
I shall sit 'twixt you on your thrones.
My Snow Queen and her brother Frost
Will *with* me, when I head the host
And Southward charge—shall go before
My Uhlans arméd to the teeth—
Sworn on the sword, without a sheath,
To halt not till their task is o'er.

Foremost, fierce Tempest, with command
To strip the gorgeous forests bare—
To bend their lofty masts, and tear
Their plumes to shivers ; so the land
Shall mourn, that vaunted of their power :
His errand, too, as I draw near,
To shake the temple and the tower,
And in high places cause to cower
The Mammon worshippers in fear !

Then Famine, a precursor oft
Of my approach, as often left
To work his will on the bereft,
Driven at my hands from cot and croft.
Not crueller than the bloated priest,
This willing messenger of mine ;
He breaks no vow, he robs no shrine,
No glutton he, nor swills the wine
Blest on the altar at God's Feast.

Companion of this Uhlan gaunt,
More ghastly, but a speaking match,
Pacing together on the watch,
Together chanting the same chant,
Is Pestilence, by Summer nursed,
And fostered, on her royal demise,
In Autumn's arms, where burning skies,
Stretched o'er a land by War accurst,
Drink in the steams from fetid swamps
To sate Day's thirst and dim Night's lamps.

Thou renegade among my hosts !
I neither trust thee nor suspect ;
I act the Wrecker, but the Wreck'd
Lie at thy mercy on Earth's coasts.
The Fire King has a pact with me,
When both of us have duty done,
To rear an altar to the Sun,
And on its red horns immolate thee !

To mount my Uhlans, I have cast
The compass round. Blest Araby,
The dreary steppes of Tartary,
The New World and its Prairies vast,
All fail me. Not the Emerald Jewel,
Nor England, for these riders cruel
Can to the saddle bring and rein
A fitting barb. I cast in vain

Over palatial parks ; I make
Study in vain of pedigrees—
Take note of sweepstakes won with ease—
Consult in vain the wide-awake—
Descend to stable talk, and chaff
With trainers and the jockey crew.
Before such were, or were but few,
I lived, and on my side the laugh
Remained, when our select discourse
Turned on the merits of the Horse :—
For I had stridden Bucephalus
And Job's war charger in their day,
Had taken a turn on Pegasus—
Raced with the Centaurs—held my way
With Timour in his Tempest raide—
To Troy's disasters lent my aid,
And Hercules to his labour urged,
When he the Augean stables purged.
Many a time have I pursued
Across the Ukraine, for my sport,
Clouds of strong horses, when the feul
At highest was with Autumn lewd,
And the fierce spirit of retort.

Within the circle of my sway,
In places unapproachable
By man, where Night is ring'd with Day,
And all things lie below the spell

Of Frost, in crevasses and caves
Are stored the products of the chase.
There, life-like, in dissembled graves,
Draped by my Snow Queen, finds repose
The equine with the antlered race ;
Not to recount my victories
O'er huger spoils, and lift the snows
That hide my glistening ivories.

Let these alone ! I am in quest
Of chargers for my Uhlans three,
And I have east from East to West,
From North to South, o'er Land and Sea
(One valley only left unsought),
Yet failed to find a fitting mount
For these wild servitors of mine.
The cost I care not for nor count ;
Let rattle dice and gurgle wine—
Good ! I begrudge them not.

In a valley never gladdened
By the passing of the sun,
In a valley overrun
With shadow, and by shadow saddened ;
Chilly, silent, lonesome, eerie,
Travelled by a river weary,
That at every turns shews halt,
As if in its course at fault,

Pausing among passes dreary :
In that valley, all remote,
Shunn'd even by the fearless goat,
Where browse nor kine, nor deer, nor sheep,
Nor elephant nor antelope ;
For with the sun-rays those of Hope
Penetrate not within its scope ;
And all around is utter Sleep.
In that valley stands a tower,
One only—a grim structure, such
As in the days of feudal power
Braved Law, and in its robber clutch
Held, with immunity from toil,
Life, freedom, and ill-gotten spoil—
A grim old structure, loop-holed o'er,
Save in the basement, which betrays
Through narrow slits a dungeon floor,
Deep sunk, and under it a lower.

In that tower is a banqueting hall,
And the tables are spread, but every one
Of the guests around them, twelve in all,
Is a grinning, ghastly skeleton.
The tables were spread, I wot not when,
Where is the host to make thirteen ?
And who the intruder that now and then
Peeps in, and with his fingers lean
Grasps the great goblet at the head,

And nods and quaffs, and forth is sped,
Like one in haste that cannot stay
The Feast out, but must mount and away?

Near to that tower is a courtyard : there
Are the stables I seek, and the training-ground
Of the steeds that will suit to a very hair
My Uhlans. The lord of the Manor round,
The lord of the Valley, the lord of the Feast,
'Tis true, is travelling in the East
With a strong retinue. What matter !
The leaner he grows his train shews fatter.
So generous is he, so foreseeing
Of my requirements, at his Tower,
Was left the message—" Brother Power !—
Part, but a sure Part in my Being—
Enter my stables—take your will
Of what you find ! I warrant all—
Colts, three and four year olds. The rest
And refuse will have bidders still ;
And were there none, the trumpet's call
And the war-saddle would make test
Of pedigree ; but choose and take
The fittest—I no bargain make,
Save that you give them work to do,
And spur and whip and high halloo.
It boots not of their *dums* to inquire,
Enough to know who is their *Sire*,

And who *I* am, and *whence* I sally !
 Their Sire is the Pale Horse—I, Death,
 His Rider, Monarch of the Valley !
 Speak of Us in an under-breath :
We have the gift—My Horse and I—
 No Pope can claim—Ubiquity,
 And with his breed in part remains
 This virtue latent in their veins.
 Choose for thine Uhlans what thou wilt,
 And welcome ! Thou of the icy breath !
 The Valley of the Shadow of Death
 Is open as the day to thee.
 Only the hardened sons of guilt
 Tremble before Sin's Eldest-born.
 My valley is of Terrors shorn
 To those who trust in Calvary.
 Come, Brother Winter ! sound thy horn,
 'Twill fright the Beldame at the gate
 That guards the avenue of Fate,
 So thou may'st enter in thy state,
 And with my ready stud make free."

A blear-eyed crone, a fangless hound
 Keep ward behind the rusty gate,
 Through which the dolorous Estate
 Of Death is entered. Round and round
 Whirl spectres. An approach to sound,
 And, as it were, sound's shadow, fills

The ear—a whispering indistinct,
 To which the muttering of the crone
 And creaking of the hinge are linked,
 And wail and shriek, and moan and groan,
 And the old bandog's snarl. Even rills
 Seem to be tinkling, and the ring
 Of distant bells is on the wing,
 With every sound below the sun,
 As 'twere, resolving into *one*
Dread Silence, overpow'ring, strange,
 Such as is meekest to express
 Th' expiry of *all* sounds—their change—
 And hurrying towards forgetfulness.

Up the avenue I sweep
 Without challenge at the gate ;
 The old Beldame is asleep,
 Snoring, mumbling, muttering,
 Under spell of opiate ;
 And the bandog feigns a spring
 From his antiquated barrel—
 Tristful shakes his mangy jowls—
 Vents a wind-up to his snarl
 In three melancholy howls !

As I hurried up the Vale
 Many the strange sights I saw—
 Passed by many a shadow pale

Under sentence of the Law—
Many a shivering ghost—King, Peer,
And Peasant, Millionaire and Pauper—
Poet and Sage and Cavalier ;
The Harlot and the Madame proper—
The Reverend—Very Reverend
Who prophesied the round world's end,
But of his own knew nothing—read,
Even as a dead man to the dead,
God's Gospel, and discoursed of Grace
And Glory with a brazen face,
As if he held, direct from Heaven,
Authority to bless or curse,
And privilege to fill his purse
By dispensations—ay ! and worse,
To make belief of sins forgiven
By power of priestly intercession—
The cost, a plenary confession,
With recognition of the Host,
And altar-gifts beyond all cost.

Among the trooping ghosts, I pass'd
None so disconsolate as those
Who gold and lordships had amass'd,
At sacrifice of life's repose
Had toiled and sweated to the end—
Cast kindred overboard and friend—
Love's torch extinguished—not an aim

Had, beyond adding to and keeping—
Sneer'd at the Scholar, sneer'd at Fame—
Reproach'd themselves as over-sleeping
Their opportunity for gain
When Nature needed sleep. In vain
The knowledge—"Naked to the Earth
Whence naked came ye at your birth,
Mortals ! ye shall return." Alas !
The strange delusion ! that shall pass
With them into the World to come
Their many hoardings—crust and crumb !
No marvel, on my way I read
The panic in their faces—spelt,
Letter by letter, the expression dread
Of a great, sudden anguish felt
To the heart's core—a stroke that told
On Reason, making dross of gold.
The thunder-bolt upon their god
Had fallen, and with the idol crushed
Its worshippers—the pæan hushed—
And all the voices of applaud
That made divine the yellow clod.

Of these there was no end of ghosts !
The flakes my Snow Queen letteth drive
In her impatient moods, were nought,
When number'd up, to the great hosts
That issued from the Money Hive,

And in death's dolorous Valley sought
Their smitten credit to revive.

I pass'd, moreover, in that ride
Of Mystery, the shades sedate
Of Mortals who had hugg'd with pride
The notion they could master Fate.
Among these there were Kings discrown'd
And sceptreless—their counsellors—
Their pimps and executioners—
The captains of their host renowned,
Stript of their stars and medals, *all*,
Under an impulse past control,
Mixed with the common herd—on way
To where the sifting shall take place,
And the allotting of dismay—
The second Death which Judgment Day
Apportions with its gifts of Grace.

I, Winter—an appalling Power,
Who in my rage am merciless,
And care not whether Man or Flower,
Army or Orchard, meet distress—
Appalled was in this trying hour!

Onward to the Stables I press'd,
But halted oft in wonderment,
Oft in compulsion; for the bent

Of the dark Vale was a puzzle at best !
Like a huge Python's trail it lay,
Its river running neither way,
Making no sound, but a smother'd moan—
Shewing no life or colour-tone :
Only at intervals there shot
Across it an uncertain glare,
Bituminous and deadly hot,
That stirred the curtains of the air,
But scarcely stirred. Its lurid glare
Reveal'd the surface of the stream
Studded with bubbles heavily ;
Not the bright foam-bells, such as I
Transmute; when in my humours fond.
To emerald and diamond,
But baleful ebullitions, bred
In slimy depths where rot the dead.

On as I press'd, the fetid fumes,
As of discharg'd torpedoes, vex'd
My nostrils ; gloomier grew the glooms,
Wilder the road, and more perplex'd !
I awful caverns passed and chasms,
From which peep'd dragons belching fire,
And faces writhing under spasms,
And eyes of terror where desire
Had dwelt, and still its spirit dwells,
Like the waves' voice in empty shells.
Goblins and visages of dread

Encounter'd me at every turn ;
These wanting, obelisk or urn
Or gloomy cypress shewed instead.
Crept from their ambush to my feet
Gaunt crocodiles and lizards vast,
The slimy creatures of the Past,
Fabulous pronounced or obsolete :
The Kraken, Kelpie, Water Witch,
Sea Serpent, and the Worm of Dole,
That gnaw'd the vitals of the Soul,
And left the body in the ditch.

All hideous things and loathsome cross'd
My path—the deadly rattlesnake,
Cobra, puff-adder, and in wake
Of these, their victim's writhing ghost !

On as I press'd the horrors grew.
Huge vampires flitted by me, ghouls—
Terrible birds, with eyes like owls',
But crueler ; and as I drew
Nigh to Death's Castle, there rushed out
To greet me its grim sentinel,
The Were-Wolf, with a savage yell.
A troop of tigers hung about,
And fain would spring, their famished eyes
Fix'd on me, but I wav'd them back,
And they slunk, shivering, jungle-wise,
And left me to pursue my track.

Strange lights are gliding to and fro
In the Castle of Death as I draw near.
From the loop-holes and the dungeon slits
Banners are hung inscribed with Woe,
Judgment, Eternity, and Fear ;
The fiery flashing comes in fits
And reads them—the Escutcheon reads,
And its devices—shews aloof
The great blaek Flag that o'er the roof
Of highest battlement outspreads
Its drapery. A hundred creeds,
Each torn into a hundred shreds,
The sable folds o'erhang. The tents
And violated tenements
Of Trillions of Immortal Souls,
Loves, Hatreds, and Desires, are all,
Under the Shadow of that Pall,
Committed to the moles.

As I drew nearer, under daze
Of the strange sights that met my eye,
While yet in silence and amaze
I ponder'd on the mystery,
A sound stole on the ear of neighing—
The neighing of high-mettled steed
In distant stable, and the baying
Of hounds in kennel at their feed ;
My errand, nigh forgotten, came

All suddenly to mind. I threw
 The daze off, and the terror too,
 Link'd with the Valley's ominous name,
 And on I strode the Castle past
 Towards the courtyard where were housed
 The fav'rites of the stud. At last
 I reach'd the entrance, and aroused
 The ancient Master of the Horse.

A surly-visaged bully he,
 No limner could have etched a worse
 Ideal of Iniquity.
 Brows scowling over eyes oblique
 And sinister—a livid cheek
 Gashed to the bone—nose hammer'd in—
 Contorted lips, on which the sneer
 Held turn with a malicious grin ;
 More loathing caus'd the shape than fear ;
 Wen and wry-neck'd, hunch-back'd, splay-footed,
 And bandy-legged. No doubt, he suited
 His office well, and did the work
 Of his employer without shirk.

A mock obeisance, cap in hand,
 He made, and whistled on his staff.
 Responding with an eldritch laugh
 There started up the goblin band,
 One, two, three, four, five, six, aye ! seven,
 Rare specimens of imp and ape !

Contained the like nor earth nor heaven,
In cast of feature and in shape.
Moon-faced, globe-headed, goggle-eyed,
Lean, spindle-shank'd, and what beside?—
The special grooms that in the Stable
Of Death had groom'd the Pallid Horse
On the dire morn that Cain slew Abel,
And, like a shadow, crept Remorse
Behind the slayer Earth's whole length—
Growing in terror and in strength
The further from the stricken corse.

I heard a snorting and a tramping—
A neighing, vigorous and shrill—
The noise as of a squadron camping
At eve of battle when the chill
Sets in; for the War furor stretches
Beyond the Camp where council grave
Is held, and its infection catches
Oft times the Horse, and in the watches
Of Night, with other instincts, blends
The sense that he fulfils his ends
In dying, like his rider—*brave!*

With his lean finger he beck'd me on,
The surly Master of the Horse,
Nor spake, but took direct his course
Towards an archway, dark as throat
Of dragon, where a skeleton

Paeed to and fro ; and from a moat
In front, by narrow drawbridge cross'd,
The shimmering came of snakes afloat,
Twisted into a cable. At its post,
On either side the drawbridge, stood a ghost !
A beck from the master !—a leer and grin
From the Goblin grooms ; and away they skip
Helter skelter, with brandished whip,
Across the drawbridge—scamper and spin—
Sidle and hop, and twirl and twist,
And shake their moon-faced noddles gravely.
Marry ! I wist
They are doing the honours bravely
To the strange guest of the Terror King !

My surly guide, I following,
Confronts at his appointed post
The warder on this side the Moat—
An affable and simple ghost,
As was his fellow opposite.
I tendered him a shining groat,
But he declined, with bow polite,
To accept it, and to pass made way
Along the drawbridge for my guide
And me. The moat below us lay
A vast way down, but I desieried,
Revolving in the deep profound,
What seemed a fiery cable. Round

And round it spun, with wildering speed,
And threw out light enough to read
Its nature by. From basilisks' eyne
Flashed fitfully the electric sheen.
The seeming cable shewed instead
A mass of serpents interlaced
One with the other—tail and head—
Warp, strand, and tissue, every thread
Alive and writhing—chasing, chased—
Devouring, and in turn devour'd !
Before me was the mystery
Of Life in Death, most strange to see !
I halted on the Bridge, and fell
A pondering on the Terrible
In time and in Eternity,
When suddenly the whisper " Coward !"
Rous'd me. Who utter'd it I sought
In my guide's face to know ; but there,
So far as I could see, lay nought
Which gave a pretext to infer
Whence sprang the insult ; yet the word
Moved me—moved ready hand to sword !—
An icebolt gathered to my eye,
Which, in the levelling, shewed force
Against the Master of Death's Horse.
To hurl it were expenditure
Of Power upon a curry-comb—
A churl who hugg'd his sinecure

And vision of obliquity ;
Otherwise, to have sent it home
Not Death himself could have hinder'd me !

Again the snorting and the neighing
Of horses, and of hounds the baying,
Told of the Stables and Kennels at hand.
The Ghosts that kept ward o'er the fiery Moat
Escorted us on and did the bland,
Until we drew near to the gloomy throat
Of the archway—where, their errand done,
They vanished, and the skeleton
Stalked forward to salute us.

The goblin grooms preceding us set up
The view halloo among a rush of bats,
Whose leathern wings made tempest of its kind,
As through the dismal archway we advanced,
Until the courtyard, circled by Death's stables,
Brought to a sudden halt. Meanwhile, the neighing,
Snorting, and plunging, and all equine sounds
Imaginable, kept the ear distraught.
Fiercer and more insufferable grew
The wild distraction, when there came to play
Part in the discord many strident voices—
A Bell that had done duty in its day,
Chiming out joys at merry festival,
Tolling out griefs at woful funeral—
Crack'd now, yet armed with a conceited tongue

That would its bygone virtues still extol !
A Trumpet that had rallied to the fight,
And startled slumbering Nations with its voice,
Which Fame had lifted to her burning lips
And pour'd her soul through—batter'd, out of shape !
A Hunting Horn, which, erst by Nimrod winded,
Had urged to the hot chase and stirred to life
The echoes of the uplands—gnarled with rust !
A Lute with broken strings—an Organ sacked
Of its grand thunder-store—a muffled Drum,
A Bag-pipe repossessed by seven devils
Worse than the first that wail'd and shriek'd and
 skirled,
And puff'd and snorted, drawl'd and dron'd in turn—
An old used-up Cremona, with its ribs
Staved in, and the rich soul of music,
Emprison'd in it as by sorcery,
Run out. By report it was the same
That Paganini won his laurels by ;
And now a very mouse might parody it,
And the vile screech-owl, as a rival, start,
More versed in Melody. Such were the sounds
And such the Instruments that welcomed me
To Death's dread Stables ! Such the Orchestra—
Instructed to do honour to Death's Guest !

Emerging from the Archway to the Courtyard,
All suddenly, as by a flash of magic,

I lost sight of the Master of the Horse
And Goblin escort ; and instead was faced
By Tempest, Famine, and foul Pestilence,
My clamorous Uhlans ! How they had passed up
The Valley, in advance of me, half puzzled ;
But three huge chargers rolling on their backs
In agony, their nostrils spurting blood,
With foam commingled, and their hoofs flung up,
A story told of speed and sacrifice.

In light of a good Augury my Uhlans
Regarded the disaster—plumed themselves
On its acceptance as an offering
Made to the Shadowy King, and with each other
Laid odds on the requital. I devoured
The marrow of their talk as one that reads
Resistlessly the pages of Romance,
And with its spirit becomes identified.
Auxiliary to my intents were theirs,
And I, by nod and gesture, gave approval.

At a right angle from its first direction,
All suddenly, the dialogue diverged
And settled on the merits of Death's Horse.
It was a rare discussion, out of which
Eliminated strange conclusions
Regarding origin and pedigree
And the descendants of the pallid Charger.

All knew the Sire, for he had crossed them oft
In hunting and in battle field alike,
In earthquake, conflagration, hurricane,
In city, desert, and the rolling sea ;
But his descendants none had seen or known.
Heretofore—so I learnt from their discourse—
They had been reckoned fabulous, and classed
With Centaurs and Chimeras. Was it so ?

The dialogue went on. To the turn it came
Of Pestilence to speak—the hated Uhlan
Condemn'd, by pact, to grace the Altar's horns !
Astride the carcase of his horse he sate,
And with sepulchral voice and loathly breath
Declaimed, in terms of fulsome eulogy,
Touching the grisly Monarch of the Valley.
Discarded parasites speak highly oft
Of their discarders, on a shift of tenure,
So spake this skulk in eulogy of Death.
And this the wind-up of his narrative—
Its purpose I divined—to disaffect
His brother Uhlans, and make mutiny.
But Tempest backed me up, and Famine took
A neutral part. The incident described
Is one of many such that have taken place,
And will take place until the end of Time.

“ He smote and smote, in front, to right and left,
And when, in very centre of the Smiter,

A shell exploded, meant to annihilate,
Unscorched, intact, and imperturbable,
In front, to right and left, the Rider smote !
A hedge of corpses lay on either side,
Forming a lane, on furthest end of which
Upheaved, upheaving, showed a mound of dead
So high and so impracticably broad,
In every sense deterrent to the nerve,
None could have pushed beyond it, but *the One* ;
And He—the Double-He—the Horse and Rider,
At easy vault th' obstruction over-topped,
And away passed, to enact the massacre
Upon another stage. I, Pestilence,
As was my duty, with my Ghouls and Vultures,
Pitched Tent and hoisted up the Yellow Flag."

Scarce had the loathly Uhlan finished speech,
When re-appeared the Master of the Horse
Beckoning to the stables. I in front
Dispersed, by virtue of my icy breath,
The thousand maladies in spectral form
Way-laying our approach. A sudden turn
Brought into view a Churchyard vast—*so* vast
That all the prairies of the Western World,
The Afric deserts, and the howling wastes
That hug my frontiers, blended into one,
Were nothing to this camp of burial.
So vast ! my ken distinguished no horizon,

No boundary, yet here and there a speck
 In the far distance—a Necropolis,
 Obelisk, mausoleum, monument—
 So I divined ; and here and there a patch
 Of sable timber—Upas, Yew, and Cypress—
 Under whose ghastly cover toad-stools shew'd,
 And noxious creatures sputtered out their venom
 To feed the hemlocks and rank parasites.
 All this by apprehension I divined.

What most attracted in this Churchyard vast
 Were the great elouds of horses ; some at feed,
 Grazing in quiet ; some in full career,
 Scouring the flats or bounding up the heights ;
 Legion their number ! all the cavalries
 Of the contending kingdoms of the Earth
 Could challenge no comparison. The waves
 Beating upon a thousand eapes and headlands
 Came nearer to the mark. Astonishment
 Stood out upon the faces of my Uhlans,
 And questioning looks were levelled at the guide.
 No answer but a curt, derisive laugh
 He deigned, and beckon'd onwards to the Stables.

(Interpart omitted.)

* * * * *

The eribs in Death's dread Stables are but seven,
 And of these seven but six were occupied.

The empty one, more roomy than the others,
No token in its furnishings revealed
By which to guess when it was last in use.
Seven eyeless masks on seven rusty pegs—
The staves and parted girdings of a pail—
A mop, a pitchfork, and a curry-comb,
And in the rack a mouldy wisp of hay
My glance took in, with other equine gear
And musty provender ; no date of when
The going forth ! no preparation made
To welcome back the Rider and his Steed.
A leaden chill pervaded the compartment
That more benumbed than does my coldest breath ;
Such as inhales the Walrus in his cave,
And Kraken, when he tugs my Icebergs out.
It grasped the heart, as with a hand of steel,
And all its ducts and arteries choked up ;
The brain it petrified, and, as it were,
Let fall a curtain o'er the throne of Thought.

Upon my Uhlans' faces I descried
The working of a great spasmodic shock—
Strange corrugations—twistings of the features—
A death approached of all Intelligence !

Out of this stall we hurried with all speed,
The groom in charge not bidding us to stay,
Rather, by gesture, hasting our retreat.

No guessing needed it, no setting forth
By an interpreter, into whose crib,
Armed with authority, we had set foot !

I watched the Master,
He watching me with an assiduous eye,
Knave in the grain—a murderous, scheming knave !
He knew his vantage-time, but I beforehand
Took him at vantage, and waved back my Uhlans,
Else it had cost them dear, and, as it was,
Staggering, they reached the threshold of the den.

With freer breath towards the neighbouring stall
We stepped. The daggers, strange to say !
Which on our Guide's face hitherto had gleam'd,
All of a sudden became snugly sheathed,
And the impassive clods of his reticence
Gave way unto a garrulous exordium,
Touching the charger under our review.

The moon-faced goblin at his elbow chuckled,
And drank in every word the Master spake,
As if it were a vinous compliment
Paid to himself and his discharge of trust.

“ This *is* a Horse ! look to it, Ancient !
And *you* nigh smother'd in the crib hard by !
The telling picture of a thorough-bred !

Examine him. His teeth are all entire ;
You can't pronounce him aged on *this* score ;
Nor is it an objection that they shew
A cannibal propensity. His grand-dam
The favourite mare was in the dainty stalls
Of Diomede, the quondam King of Thraee,
Whom doughty Hercules was charged to brain—
Him and his stud ! Horses were epicures
In those brave days, and fed on fattened babes.
Such fare gave wind and muscle, speed and mettle.
Look to it, Ancient ! how this Horse is fashioned !
His pasterns upright and his fetlocks curt,
Lash-legg'd and round, but bony in the knees,
Neck long, and like a galley's prow upreared ;
Ample the eye and black, the ear high-prick'd
But small, proportion taken into account,
The forehead large and lean, the withers sharp
And pointed, deep the flanks and bulging out ;
Of ample belly, warded well with rib—
Short in the back and even—double-chined—
Thighs long and large, but muscular withal—
The truncheon aptly couched, and well set on—
Mane narrow-ridg'd, not scant, nor yet redundant—
This is the Horse before you, my most Ancient !
The colour you object to ? liver-coloured ;
'Tis an objection of some force, I admit.
The feeding of his grand-dam may account for't ;
But blood makes blood, and the high colour showing

On the outside betokens pedigree—
The dam and not the sire predominates.
Our wholesome custom is to sink the *Sire*.
More than enough of *Him* is prevalent
Hereabouts, and we send to grass *out yonder*
(Pointing in the direction of the churchyard)
The colts that take to him too partially.
This is no school for horses of that sort,
Which cast no shadow, and no hoof-tracks shed ;
But come, my hearties—by your looks, I guess,
This limb of the renowned Androphagi
Is not in favour—on the round we'll go,
And what we have in ward and keeping show."

In the next crib there stood a Horse superb,
And black as coal from tip of ear to hoof,
That knew instinctively of our approach,
Nor neighed nor pranced, nor demonstration made
Of joy or terror, but with stately front
Regarded us in equine dignity.
He needed no laudation from the Guide,
So patent were his merits at all points.
A grander Stallion, save his Pallid Brother,
And He not grander, only more empower'd—
More favour'd, more in keeping with the Rider—
Ne'er shewed since headstrong Phæton took in hand
To guide the flaming chariot of the sun,
Deeming himself an expert with the reins.

Upon that day of retribution dire,
When from his rack of fire-bolts, Jove, incensed,
The deadliest snatched, by Mulciber devised
For special paroxysms, and with aim
Vindictive hurled it at the hapless youth.
Of the unwonted violence of the stroke
Partook the frantic coursers, Phlegon most,
Once purple-hued, but by the charring fumes
Made black as Erebus. From Phlegon sprang,
As the great-grandsire of his sable dam
(For sable ruled immaculate, from tip
Of ear to hoof, throughout the whole descent)
The Horse before us. During the Eclipse
Which shrouded Heav'n and Earth—that sin'ster hour,
When with a clang the gates of Paradise
Closed on the outcast pair—first of the race
Of Mortals—on that hour, Tradition saith,
Were foaled, outside the forfeited domain,
Twin Steeds—the one the pallid Steed of Death!
The other stands before us in his dread,
The grander of the Twain, but not the chosen,
Nor deemed the fittest for the Smiter's work!

Tradition saith, 'twas in a cavern
Close by the gate through which the outcasts fled,
This double birth took place. Were gather'd there
A concourse of foreshadowed demigods,
In the expectancy of something dread,

Which would imperil their verity of being—
Concuss and jumble epochs, dates delete,
And to perdition hurl Mythology.
The Lapithæ, Theseus, and Hercules,
Bellerophon and winged Pegasus—
The Centaur Chiron, and grim Steropes,
The Cyclop who at Lemnos ruled the forge,
And shod the saffron horses of the Morn—
The Gemini and other monstrous shapes
That came from tampering of the Heaven with Earth,
Divinities with gross humanities,
And intercourse of more unnatural sort ;
Such forms were there made heroes by the brain
Of those who deeply drank of Hippocrene,
Or the strong waters freighted from the North.
To which the seasoned juices of the grape,
Be it Falernian or of Cretan growth,
Put in comparison, are whey of milk—
A dullard's drink provocative of drivel.

Seemed presence-struck himself, the while he gave,
Touching this horse's pedigree and birth,
A rambling narrative, our surly Guide !
Nor did its subject deign to notice him,
Until he ventured on disparagement
Of his twin brother, and a contrast drew
In fulsome terms in favour of the listener ;
Then with his hoof right angrily the charger

Pawed, and the flinty pavement underneath
A spray of scintillating fire threw up ;
And when renewed was the comparison,
Again he pawed, and with distended nostril,
Out from the crib to courtyard and to camp
Of burial, far, sent forth a neigh of fury,
Which made the grazers start, the scourers halt,
And reached, so told me a responsive neigh,
The ear of the Pale Horse. Death's ear impassive,
Ay ! and impervious to all flattery,
Was taken for the moment by assault,
Else had been no return of compliment,
So I divined. The Battle news which ranged
Along the wires that night was terrible,
And spoke to the extinction of a Nation.

Such admiration did the sable Horse
Excite, the Uhlan Tempest stood astonished,
Famine expressed his wonder open-mouthed,
And Pestilence made muttering to himself
Of Vivisection and the Rinderpest.

I noted how the Master of Death's Stud
Watched them, and read the expression of their
thoughts,
And how in turn he scanned my immobile face,
As if some scrap of scripture might o'erpass it
That he could take advantage of. At length,

Baulk'd of the sought-for opportunity,
But trusting to the die, he signall'd for
The moon-faced groom to lead the sable steed
Out to the Courtyard, so Death's favoured guest
Might scrutinise his points and give a judgment.

The Urchin knew his charge, his charge knew him,
And needed neither coaxing nor the halter,
But readily, his ire being pacified,
Stepp'd out with head erect, proud as a Czar!
Approached him first, the Uhlan Pestilence,
In hound-like posture, sniffing like a hound
Intent on carrion ; his cadaverous brow
Lit up with a malign expectancy.
At venture out he jerked his hideous arms,
Swivell'd on which were hands of cruel cast,
Set off with digits, wiry, crooked, lean,
Adapted to the practice of the Thug,
Or skilled garotter from the murder-dens
Of some great city on the rove let loose.

Of his officiousness I made rebuke,
But he excused it, as a proof of zeal,
And gave me to imagine he was versed
In all the parts and bearings of the horse ;
His judgment did me service, he implied,
Nor further cared I to dispute his humour ;
For in the Charger's ample eye, I read

A dangerous something that sufficed to show
The lack of grace in which my Uhlan stood,
And in what peril, should he presumptuously
Lay hand upon the bridle (for the Horse,
As if by magic, in the courtyard showed
In harness deft, caparisoned and shod,
Ready for action at some rider's beck,
But who the rider was, a riddle still !)
Nor did the varlet fail himself to note
The dangerous glitter of the equine eye,
And, deeming it were best to be discreet,
Avoided it, but not escaped the scorn
That flashed upon him, and the loathing shewn,
Which smote his inner consciousness the more,
That not by endowed speech it was exprest,
But by the instincts of a quadruped.

The Uhlan Famine made his venture next,
And press'd, but with subdued effrontery,
His gaunt and ghastly presence into view.
With quiet scorn the Horse regarded him
As one he could annihilate with scorn,
But cared not to lose virtue on account of.
Without more effort, his disdain availed
To cow my ill-appointed servitor,
And back he slunk. No mount this Horse for *him* !

Tempest the while stood grandly in the background .

Communing with the Master ; in a whisper
The one the other sounding, as those do
With Stable-craft familiar—not a doubt !
Nevertheless, some shew of merriment,
At the repulse of Pestilence and Famine,
Took place betwixt them ; and the sable steed,
On the dismissal of his noisome suitors,
Encouraged it, neighing disdainfully—
Tossing his tail about and glossy mane—
Pawing, yet not with fury as before,
But in a coaxing manner, his full eye
Fixed on the Uhlan Tempest, as the eye
Would of an ardent soldier on the Chief,
In whose advance was victory assured
That led to highest meed of proud renown.

On revelation of this equine fancy,
The Uhlan Tempest, with an oath abrupt,
And at a stride or two, betokening scorn
Of his adviser, to the steed drew near,
Which, in its own way, gave encouragement
And opportunity to grip the bridle ;
Nor did he hesitate a pulse's beat
To take advantage of the proffer'd honour ;
But, ere the pulse's beat had well expired,
Was firm in saddle, as an oak on the earth,
Or Pharos stablished by the hand of might
And compassing around of thought with thought

In centre frantic of conflicting seas.
A great delight it was, and overjoyed me,
Casting aside the terrors and the horrors
Of my strange journeying through the silent valley,
To note the overjoy of Steed and Rider,
And how at once they took to being *one*—
One in the purpose, *one* in the desire,
Both as *one* shape, to execute my will.

Neighed forth the Horse a neigh of exultation,
Expressive of redemption from Death's Crib
And jubilant welcome to its swarthy Rider.
A neigh responsive quickly caught the ear,
And ere it died away the Sable Horse,
Bearing my faithful Uhlán, disappeared ;
And a fierce wind arose that fluttering set
The awful Flag upon Death's fortalice,
And from the hall of banquetting evoked
The rattling of dry bones. Let Pestilence
Shift for himself, and Famine for *himself* !
There yet remain four cribs unvisited
From which to choose their mounts. I'm in no hurry
To have their service. Meantime, they may go,
Play pitch and toss with the dare-devil Master,
Or take a turn at skittles with his grooms.
Only let Famine be on the alert,
For I shall summon him by Trumpet blast
At hands of Tempest when the Siege is pressed,

And there are breaches in the city walls.
Pestilence, the skunk, may go, make terms with Summer
All through the dog-days. . . . Meanwhile,
Upon my fav'rite Uhlan's track I press.

Farewell! O Death, my Brother!
Farewell! O Sin, thy Mother!
Farewell, O Valley dread—
And thy abhorrent river!
Farewell! ye Shades that tread
Toward that Valley's head!
Farewell, farewell, for ever!



Poems and Songs.



BIRD MUSIC.

I.

Oh! the delight of listening,
When song-life is astir!
The blackbird on the hawthorn,
And cushat on the fir:
The lintie on the lime-tree,
And laverock in the lift,
The finch among the hazels
Making its merry love-shrift.

II.

The peeswit o'er the meadows
That skirt the sedgy rill,
And the grey whaup with its eerie cry
Disporting on the hill:
The owl that from the ivies
Gives challenge to the moon.
And the corn-crake at his vigils
In the balmy eves of June.

III.

The sparrow on the house-top,
Chattering late and early,
The swallow cruizing with voiced wing
Athwart the "riggs o' barley."

The sultan of the grey-fowl
Convoking his haraam,
And the moorcock on the heath-beds
Joining chorus with the lamb.

IV.

The weary and the cheery,
The solemn and the sweet,
The grating and the musical
In our mountain voices meet.
The screaming of the osprey,
The clanging of the crane,
The plaining of the sea-mew
O'er the altars of the main :

V.

The rocky island altars,
Where sacrifice is due,
Of many a costly cargo,
And many a gallant crew ;
Of many a shapely vessel
Trimmed for the eyes' delight,
Of many a venturesome seaman
That has fought for Britain's right.

VI.

Peep ! playmate of the fairy !
From below your curtains coy ;
The pulses of the greenwood
Are quivering with joy.

From his frolics on the larch-top
Ceases the pranksome squirrel,
With perk'd ear giving audience
To the warbling of the merle !

VII.

The dormouse at its banquet,
Upon the beechen mast,
Turns dainty as it catches
The carols chiming past :
The carols of the song-birds—
The music of the grove—
The concord and the discord
In the hymns of feather'd love.

VIII.

All that is best within us
Confesses to the charm,
For the joy of song is kindled
In the forest and the farm.

IX.

Warble ! warble ! warble !
Warble at your will !
Hearts and veins of marble
Throb with every thrill.
Carol ! carol ! carol !
Happy lark and linnet !
When your lay is ended
Then again begin it.

X.

Warble! warble! warble!
Ousel and willow wren!
Who with joy have listened
Will list with joy again—
With joy and sweet regarding
To the concert of the grove,
To the blending streams of melody
That flow from feather'd love.

—oo—

THE JILT; OR, FORTY YEARS AGO.

I.

I LOOKED into a loving face,
A winning face with loving eyes;
Before me tripped a form of grace,
So moulded that in very wise
I thought of life in Paradise.
But this was forty years ago!

II.

And I remember, too, how she
Excelled in every excellence,
Was truth and gentle courtesy;
Abounding, yet without pretence,
In gifts of high intelligence.
But this was forty years ago!

III.

And I remember how I hung
 Upon her soft persuasive voice,
And the rich notes that when she sang
 The ballads of her own sweet choice
With sadness filled or bade rejoice.
 But this was forty years ago !

IV.

Ay ! more beside ! I recollect
 Of longings that of love were born,
Of hopes that in the retrospect
 Kept high the heart at eve and morn,
Free from all fear of woman's scorn.
 But this was forty years ago !

V.

A dreamer then, a dreamer now,
 I whilom dreamt of plighted truth,
And from serenity of brow—
 From auspices of seeming ruth—
Drew presage of my favoured youth.
 But this was forty years ago !

VI.

A dreamer then, a dreamer still,
 I dreamt that woman must be fond,

When, in her exercise of will,
 She gives no reason to despond,
 And, dreaming thus, I looked beyond—
 But this was forty years ago !—

VII.

Beyond unto that sea of bliss
 Into which kindred rivers glide
 And blend their fortunes—so I wis,
 In the fair ebbing of its tide,
 My ardent fancy clasp'd a bride.
 But this was forty years ago !

VIII.

A dreamer now, a dreamer then,
 I dream of how I was befool'd,
 And again wonder, and again,
 Under what Circe she was school'd,
 Who so my reason over-ruled.
 But this was forty years ago !

IX.

“ Oh ! woman's arts are woman's own ;
 To study them and comprehend
 Is not our province—let alone,
 And patience may attain its end !”
 Who said so was a doubtful friend—
 A friend of forty years ago !

X.

And yet who said so, in a way
Spake truth, but erred so far in this,
That he forgot that herein lay
The golden secret of man's bliss—
The key to every rapt'rous kiss—
Half friend of forty years ago !

XI.

'Tis true, to study her, and gain
The knowledge that we would acquire,
Is oft a labour spent in vain ;
But it is love's, and who can tire
In the fair garden of desire
Frequented forty years ago !

XII.

The wayward fancies of the sex,
Heart and frivolity combined ;
The contradictions which perplex,
Yet staple form of womankind,
Are surely studies for the mind !
Ay ! were so forty years ago !

XIII.

Yet who among our earnest men—
The deepest thinkers of the age—

The ablest wielders of the pen,
Will venture singly to engage
With woman on her own free stage?
Who durst so forty years ago?

XIV.

Or to explain with satisfaction,
And in philosophy's behalf,
The secrets of the sex's action,
The meaning of Delilah's laugh—
The worship of the golden calf?
None durst so forty years ago!

XV.

Of those great men, both grave and great,
In their pretences and position—
The floats and anchors of the State—
Who of them all, without contrition,
Can link to visions of ambition
The loves of forty years ago?

XVI.

Although to study her is truly,
If not a duty, still a pleasure,
They favour woman all unduly
Who sacrifice their choicest leisure
In wooing of a fancied treasure!
Ah me! the forty years ago!

XVII.

To this conclusion I am carried
By old experiences. Moreover,
Seeing that years have held me married,
'Tis only from a happy cover
I watch the wooings of the lover,
And think of forty years ago!

XVIII.

I watch the making up of matches—
The setting of the man-traps cruel—
The under-plot and tricky fetches
By which is stirr'd the slumbering fuel.
And raised the value of the jewel!
And muse on forty years ago!

XIX.

Yes! woman is a puzzle still;
Whatever be her aim and boast,
It ends in *this*, and always will,
Herself it is she puzzles most—
Come, join me in a passing toast
To the jilt of forty years ago!

XX.

For still *she* lives, but where the grace,
And airy elegance of form—

The loving eyes and witching face—
The voice that ravished, as by storm—
The whole illusion, and the charm,
That bound me forty years ago ?

—oo—

LINES TO MY WIFE.

I.

In the heart of the year, ere June expires,
When the sun holds court in the Highlands high,
And is lavish most of its marvel fires,
We'll off to Oban, you and I.

II.

In the noon of the year, when the rage hath died
Out of the great Atlantic roll,
And the spell is binding on wave and tide,
That draws to Oban heart and soul ;

III.

When Morven reveals its purpling heights,
And the banners of mist are all up-rolled ;
When the legion hath fled of sullen sprites,
And the angel unravels his tissues of gold ;

IV.

When over the rugged thrones of Mull,
Where antler and eagle tower supreme,
The glory rests with the sea-born lull,
Transcending Art or Poet's dream !

V.

When over the maze of motley isles,
That ward our harbours from foe and storm,
The cloudland dissolves into wreaths of smiles,
And the rainbow stretches its tremulous form ;

VI.

In the season of flowers, when the Meadow Queen
Invites to her court the wandering bee,
And the fragrance exhaled on the heights terrene
Circles on zephyr wings down to the sea ;

VII.

When the blended breaths of the heath and thyme,
And balmy orchis are all astir ;
When in fairy ears the blue-bells chime,
And the cone is greening on the fir ;

VIII.

When the leaf of the water-lily paves
The shallows of the dreaming mere,
And its white cup tossed on the mimic waves
Bringeth the lazy distance near ;

IX.

After the early life of the brae,
The primrose joy and glory are past ;
After the honey-moon of the May,
When its bridal attire the sloe hath cast ;

X.

After the merle hath ceased to sing,
Or sings by starts in the gates of the eve ;
After "the wandering voices of Spring,"
Cuckoo and curlew, have taken leave ;

XI.

When the scowl is lifted from off the brows
Of old Duntroon and grim Dunolly ;
And there is the whisper of lovers' vows
Below the hazels and the holly ;

XII.

When the spectres that howl round Gylen stern
In the winter nights are laid and at rest,
And the otter, gliding through cave and cairn,
In Kerrera fair, is its grimmest guest ;

XIII.

In the heart of the year, when the salmon seek
Their way to the rivers, and merry sea-trout
Give life by their frolics to bay and creek—
When the lusty porpoise is rolling about ;

XIV.

When the lythe is at play round the Eilan Dhu,
And the dolorous gurnard shews on the calms,
And the hoe and stenlock dare and do
The havoc of wolves among the lambs ;

XV.

When the crops of the sea are ripe and rife—
Dainty and luring to palate and eye—
And its garnerers teem with the marvels of life,
We'll off to Oban, you and I.

XVI.

In the noon of the year, when out of Clyde
The fleet of the West, in full array,
Braving alike the gale and tide,
Bounds with proclaim of holiday ;

XVII.

When the summer range of its going forth
Is meted out with a generous hand,
And, rolling up to the capes of the North,
Echoes of welcome fill the land !

XVIII.

In the heart of the year, when the *Chevalier*
Lifts, like a falchion, his prow of scorn,
And, cleaving his way from bay to bay,
Sets free the storm-bound havens of Lorn ;

XIX.

When the gusty bluffs, where, till summer came,
With hoof of fury the sea-horse pranced,
And reefs that bear an ominous name
Shew in the distance all entranced !

XX.

In the noon of the year, when the great mirage
Knits sea and sky in a bond divine,
And whispers of coming pilgrimage
Have reached Iona's distant shrine ;

XXI.

When over the province of billows enslaved
Treads like a monarch the *Mountaineer*,
And the heads that all spring-time frothed and raved,
Are the surest beacons by which to steer ;

XXII.

In that rapt season, when, as by a charm,
Are dropt the weapons of clerical strife,
And Churchman and Sectary, arm-in-arm,
Draw to the cradle of Christian life ;

XXIII.

Where, in the centre of storms and dearth,
Were planted the Cross and fostered the creed,
Which, to the uttermost isles of the earth,
Salvation brought in an hour of need ;

XXIV.

When raised is the siege of warring waves
Round Staffa, and the Siren's lute,
In the remote of its pillared caves,
With conch of Triton holds sweet dispute;

XXV.

When the chisellings of that wondrous pile,
Tested by storm all winter through,
Shew freshest, and the wizard isle
Out of the waters hath risen anew;

XXVI.

When the mason's eye, that is swift to detect
Blemish or blur in the mystical craft,
Confesses a faultless architect
In this blending of altar, cornice, and shaft;

XXVII.

In the summer's heart, when the steamer's pant,
Like the pant of a whale when the chase is warm,
Climbing the Kyles, falls jubilant
On the ear of castle, cot, and farm!

XXVIII.

Before the boisterous rush of the mass,
When only the skirmishers in advance
Face the hazards of mountain pass,
And under its curtains couch the lance;

XXIX.

Before the hurrying to and fro
To pier and station, from square and street,
Before the city's life ebbing low
Seaward tides with the Western Fleet ;

XXX.

Before our senators are at large,
And silence rules in the great Divan ;
Before the rifle's cruel discharge
Rings through the corries of Cruachan ;

XXXI.

In the witching season when my ladye,
Who is winning and joyous beyond compare,
With loving speech entreateth me
Again to summer in Oban fair ;

XXXII.

And so to Oban, you and I,
Bird of my heart ! shall wing our way,
When the sun, holding court in the Highlands high,
Of its glory is lavish in Oban Bay.

THE HEIR OF ARDGOUR.

I.

“When fair the wind blows,
And the tide is true to its promise,
I will steer to the island dear—
To the lov'd harbour where thy home is.

II.

“When calm the sea shows,
And its waves carry freights of pleasure,
I will steer to the harbour dear—
To the lov'd island that holds my treasure.

III.

“When fair the wind blows,
And the moan is hushed on the skerry,
As day drops o'er the mountain tops,
I will betake me across the ferry.”

IV.

—“Let fair the wind blow,
And the tide run leal to its promise,
Craven lover they but carry over
To shame the island where my home is.”

V.

—“Let wild the tides run,
And the billows toss at their pleasure—
Dark and swift let the cloud hosts drift—
I will brave all to clasp my treasure !

VI.

“Let fierce the storm blow,
On its every gust a new fiend riding,
On each wave, the crest of the grave,
No moon shining, and no star guiding !

VII.

“Wild though the night be,
Weird its phantoms and sable its cover,
I will steer to the island dear
Where thou, the loved, art—I, the lover !”

VIII.

Dreary the night is ;
Surge meets surge on the ominous skerry ;
Roar on roar travels the shore ;
And battle is fought on the waist of the ferry !

IX.

Fitful the wind blows,
Howling by turns and muttering low ;
Woven its moods with the tale of the feuds
Wag'd on the isles in the long ago !

X.

Frightful the tempest !
Spectre ships before it are driven ;
The waves writhe—for the lightning scythe
Of death is mowing for hell or heaven !

XI.

Wail on the mainland !—
Wail in the shieling ! and wail in the tower !
Great the grief of vassal and chief :
A desolate father is old Ardgour !

XII.

Wrapt in the sea-weed—
Motherly shroud of the ocean's weaving !—
Lay a youth in the morning ruth,
High on the tide-mark's fresh up-heaving !

XIII.

Wail on the mainland !—
Wail in the chapel ! and wail at the shrine !
Broken the sward in the still churchyard
For the hope and heir of an ancient line !

XIV.

Wail on the mainland !—
Wail and weeping on every isle !
Brave Ardgour is cut off in his flower !
Raise the coronach through Argyle !

XV.

Empty the home is !

Empty its chambers—empty and silent—
 Drear the harbour, stilly the arbour—
 Lone the ferry, and loner the island !

XVI.

Rash were the words said—

Foolish the challenge by maiden spoken !
 Cruel the test of a faithful breast—
 Sore the remorse, and bitter its token !
 The sward break anew for a heart newly broken !

—oo—

*MOVEMENTS—THE LEADER AND HIS
 FOLLOWERS.*

I.

EVERY day and every night,
 Under us, and overhead,
 Round about, the book is spread
 That cannot be too often read.
 In this scripture of delight—
 In this great, untiring page—
 Lie revealed to scholar and sage
 The secrets of each passing age.

II.

Every student of the scroll,
Earnest in his high pursuit,
Labouring with a mind acute,
And with spirit resolute,
Holds, by virtue of his call,
By service of both head and heart,
By skill in the decyphering art,
A privileged and honoured part

III.

In the great progressive work,
In the conquest of the light
Over ignorance and night—
In the triumph of God's right.
Where it will, let evil lurk
'Mongst the dark dens of the earth:
From its hidings men of worth
Vow to drag the demon forth.

IV.

In our own exalting time
Liberty of soul increases,
Bigotry's dominion ceases,
Thrones despotic fall to pieces.
So *they* tell us who would climb
To the summits they asperse—
Fill themselves the thrones they curse—
Evil rule convert to worse ;

V.

From the altar snatch the offering,
Quench the fire by angels fed,
Desecrate the Wine and Bread,
Trample upon Christ the Head ;
Fill a happy land with suffering—
In its furrows scored by toil
Sow the seeds of rank turmoil—
Mar the virtue of the soil.

VI.

Blind old Britain ! is the letter
Of history—the history
Of Liberty and Tyranny—
Become a sealéd book to thee ?
Dost thou glory in the fetter,
As an ornament in vogue,
Forged by regicide and rogue,
By radical and demagogue ?

VII.

From thy memory have slipped
Every glorious recollection,
And the faith in God's protection,
Once thy rudder of direction ?
Hast thou all remembrance dipped
In Lethe of thy sore besettings—
Of thy shifts and toils and sweatings—
Of thy losings and thy gettings ?

VIII.

Of thy place among the nations—
Not the perquisite of ease,
But on crimson'd fields and seas
Won and held by slow degrees—
Fought to, both with toil and patience,
In the uphill, weary fight,
Where to win needs hand of might,
Head and heart, and cause of right?

IX.

Base-born serf and rabid spouter!
What do *they* for Britain's honour?
Of what boon is *he* the donor,
That, to slight her, looks upon her?
Of his honesty a doubter,
I regard him, and with cause,
As disturber of tried laws,
Living but for self-applause;

X.

Even to his pet, Reform
(Which he prates of, nothing knowing,
And exalts in phrases glowing),
Traacherous on his own showing.
“Sow the elements of storm
Broadcast over hill and dale,
Hoist the drum, and raise the gale,
So the Ship of State may sail!”

XI.

True ! this is the Wrecker's scoffing,
 Yet a willing pilot stands
 Ready to the Wrecker's hands,
 Trustless as the treacherous sands.
 Loyalty would seek the offing,
 Speak its gratitude in psalm,
 Lion o'er the Oriflamme,
 Court the harbour and the calm.

XII.

But the toiler at the helm—
 Is *he* loyal? Pause ! while asking—
 Statesmen, in the sunshine basking,
 Study well the art of masking.
Him to trust to, save the realm !
He of all men careth least
 Whence the wind blows, West or East,
 So he shares the Wrecker's feast.

XIII.

Stronger than the patriot's zeal,
 Stronger than a knightly tower,
 Strong to hold and to devour
 Is the rabid lust of power.
 Who regards the common weal,
 Right maintains, or from aggression
 Shields by strength or intercession
 When this demon takes possession ?

XIV.

Tell me not we have a leader
Leavened with the single spirit—
One beyond the common merit,
Born great honour to inherit.
I see nothing but the feeder
Of convulsions in the man—
Eker out of his own plan—
Trimmer to the Vatican.

XV.

Not the true, desired example
Of a statesman large of soul,
With whose power of self-control
Grows the power that rules the whole—
One whose energies are ample,
But his heart is ampler still,
Who, by an instinctive skill,
Can work out a nation's will.

XVI.

Is *he* such, to whom committed
Are the sacred trusts, whereon
Rests the Triple Union—
Rest the Church, the State, and Throne ?
For a loftier purpose fitted
Than to make ignoble paction
With the movers of reaction
And the demon soul of faction ?

XVII.

Oh ! I fear the brave, old spirit
That engender'd men of part,
Adepts in the ruling art,
Has died out of Britain's heart !
Who are *they* that claim the merit
In this great reforming strife ?
Judge them in the actual life ;—
Spare nor branch nor pruning knife !

XVIII.

Go to Birmingham or Sheffield,
Bradford, Manchester, or Leeds—
Hot-beds for malignant seeds—
Nurseries of envenomed weeds !
Not to be out-done or baffled
In their purposes of wrong
Are the minds that sway the throng,
Hell-ward urging it along.

XIX.

'Tis the baleful power of money,
Working to an evil end,
In the name, may God forefend !
Of the self-styled People's Friend.
“ Ours are both the wax and honey ;
We are owners of the hives ;
What to us the workers' lives,
Hungered households, jaded wives ?

XX.

" Mills are ours that grind to order—
 Mar the human face divine—
 Tamper with the inner shrine—
 Keep us on the right incline,
 Help to overstep the border
 'Twixt Nobility and Trade.
 Titled lordlings are outweighed,
 Acred squires thrown into shade.

XXI.

" Ay ! look out ! We have abettors
 Everywhere. The franchise lower'd,
 Now, and for all times untoward,
 Is our sceptre and our sword !
 Lawyers, and those men of letters
 Who let out their wits for hire,
 Facile are at our desire,
 Borough to command or Shire.

XXII.

" A constituency binding
 To our service and estate,
 For our ends to legislate,
 We have purposed to create.
 Let our mills be set a-grinding !
 We of the Progressive school,
 When great Senates play the fool,
 Bear the fittest heads to rule.

XXIII.

“ Have we not ourselves made wealthy
By employing every shift—
Laws of discipline and thrift—
By the shuttle, sure and swift?
Who, in face of things unhealthy,
When the puppets of the great
Take bold guidance of the State,
Better trained to legislate ?

XXIV.

“ Better versed in economics—
Better up to men and things,
And not held by courts and kings
In perpetual leading-strings?
Who can act as fitter tonics
For a constitution worn ;
Dazzling into nought the scorn
Of the beggar, nobly born?

XXV.

“ Are we not the merchant princes,
Under tread of whom the mould
Of usages, as was foretold,
And vile dust shall turn to gold?
Heraldry before us winces,
So do every sham and boast ;
Give us only Power and Post,
Won't we of them make the most ?”

XXVI.

Such are those the Premier chooses,
Wisely chooses for his friends,
And the hand that *he* extends
Helps to many private ends.
Little deems he what he loses,
Trusting to the purse-proud crew ;
Of the many thinking true,
Doubting jealously the few.

XXVII.

Yet the few he rashly scorneth
Wait their day, and know its token,
When the judgment shall be spoken,
And the spell of evil broken ;
When to *him* that nigh-hand doubteth
Of the Reason of the Nation,
Weeping o'er its degradation,
Shall be given consolation.

XXVIII.

Names enrolled on banners flaunting,
By the fickle mob paraded,
To some sin'ster scheme persuaded,
Under promises evaded,
Now at summit of their vaunting,
Shouted at the People's meetings,
And at Loyalty's defeatings
Trumpeted in clamorous greetings—

XXIX.

Comes the time, and is not distant,
 When as bye-words these shall be
 Cast as a reproach to thee,
 Britain! in thine idiocy.
 Seek and pray for an assistant
 In the interim of strife,
 To roll back the smoke and stife,
 And restore thy wonted life.

XXX.

Seek and pray for some great spirit—
 Part the Eagle, part the Dove—
 Ruling in the cause of Love!
 Fearing only God above—
 A distinguisher of merit—
 A despiser of all sect,
 Leaning among thrones erect
 On the staff of Intellect!

XXXI.

Such the man the occasion needeth,
 Not the truckler to the mob,
 Not the winker at a job,
 Deeming it Reform to rob.
 Better stuff in him that leadeth,
 May we hope for—ay! shall get;
 Britain's sun shall never set,
 The "*Good Time* is coming yet."

CLIMBING SONNETS.

I.

THIS demon of the Alps—this climbing rage,
That yearly on our vent'rous islemen throws
Its cruel spells, and blanches many a rose,
And blights the hope of many a heritage,
Who can appease it? Who the purpose move
Of those that to its fatal beck respond,
And leave adoring hearths and circles fond,
In the strange faith that weakness flows of love?
Foolish ambition! all to be a span
Nigher the interminable heavens than are
Their fellows. Take example from that star,
Which, measuring not its strength by thine, O man!
Shews purest in celestial life and beauty
Upon the low horizon of its duty.

II.

If thou *wilt* climb and hold as enterprise
This tampering with inglorious danger—go!
There are some men to whom God's Paradise
Were Hell, if reached without excess of woe;
But such have the Eternal Heav'ns in view,
And crowns of Amaranth, and the rest to be
That holds with Christ and all eternity;—
Thou but the greeting lost in the adieu—

The momentary triumph which, attained,
Is like the climax of the rocket's flight—
A turning point in exultation gained,
Whereat dissolve the extasies of light.
Such, too, the fortune of thy daring feat!
To reach is but to hoist the signal of retreat.

III.

If thou *wilt* climb, are there not still undared,
Within the compass of thy native land,
Thrones of strong venture—muniments which scared
The Roman eye, so terrible and grand—
Ramparts of rock, by bard and echo manned,
Enough to sate thee? *Not*, in all this wealth
Of mountain range made richer by home ties,
By pride of nation and on score of health,
Enough to satisfy thine enterprise?
Thou emmet, without soul! A chimney sweep
Will stand in rough comparison with thee,
Should climbing be thy sole felicity.
Emmet! yea, emmet! Climbing is to creep,
When all its purpose is below the skies;
Thine own green hills, with their familiar scalps,
As soul-exalters, soar beyond the Alps.

MUSINGS ON THE BANKS OF TEVIOT.

I.

With thy windings, gentle Teviot !
Through life's summer I have travelled—
Shared in all thy merry gambols,
All thy mazy course unravell'd.

II.

Every pool I know and shallow,
Every circumstance of channel,
Every incident historic
Blent with old or modern annal,

III.

Which, within thy famous valley,
Dealt a mercy or a sorrow—
Every song and every legend
Which has passed into its morrow.

IV.

Who has loved thee, artless river,
Best of all thy single wooers ?
Of thy wayward, witching waters,
Who most ardent of pursuers ?

V.

On thy banks, a constant dreamer,
Sitting king among his fancies,
Casting all his wealth of musing
Into thy tried course of chances.

VI.

Name another in thy prattle
Who has done his service better—
Tendering or accepting tribute,
Creditor as well as debtor?

VII.

Out of thy redundant plenty,
On the lap of living mercies,
I have woven a votive offering—
Shaped a wreath of simple verses.

VIII.

Every generous wish attend thee !
And, among thy generous wishers,
Takes its place with bard and scholar
The more lowly band of fishers.

IX.

To that lowly band belonging,
In its pleasures the partaker,
More I feel of true contentment
Than the lord of many an acre.

X.

Still, with glowing virtues, Teviot !
Graces, joys, and forms of beauty,
Fill the valley of thy holding—
Roll in dignity of duty !

XI.

Forward roll and link thy fortunes
With fair Tweed—thine elder sister !
Lyne and Leithen, Ettrick, Leader,
In their earlier turns have kissed her.

XII.

Welcome, more than all the others,
Thou ! whose fulness of perfection
Finds a grateful recognition
In this symbol of affection !

XIII.

So entwined, Tweed glides exultant,
As a joyful burden bearing
All thy passionate confidings—
The rich lore of love and daring

XIV.

Which to ballad and romances,
Oft uncouthly, bard committed,
Guided by thy chime or plaining,
To the rhythm which best befitted.

XV.

In the arms of Tweed enfolded,
Followed still by my devotion,
Thou art separate to the vision,
Wending on thy way to ocean.

XVI.

Even there, I see the spirit
Of whose life partook the willow,
And whose love laved slope and meadow,
Moving o'er the restless billow.

XVII.

In the salmon which ascends thee—
All arrayed in gorgeous scaling—
A proud legate I distinguish
From the court of Neptune hailing ;

XVIII.

From the kingdom of the Trident,
Bearing to his native river
Noble gifts of self-devotion,
Tribute to the Tribute Giver !

THE INCENTIVE.

Who so fondly, who so truly,
Loves the country of his birth?—
Who will guard it so securely,
Knowing best its inner worth?—
As the searcher of its story—
As the student of its song—
He who cons its page of glory
When the right o'ercame the wrong—
He who in its tuneful treasures
Finds an impulse and a charm,
With the nerve of Bardic measures
Sinewing both soul and arm?
When the fiery war-storm gathers,
Who, like *him*, will do and dare,
Whom the faith which moved our fathers
Fires to grapple with despair—
Fires, by virtue of example—
Fires, by reason of the need,
To protect the house and temple,
Both by daring and by deed?

Best of patriots ! noblest martyr !
Fittest conqueror in the strife !
Who interprets Freedom's charter
By the labour of his life—

By the scripture of all nations—
By the anthems of all time—
By the ceaseless revelations
Of a destiny sublime—

By the faith so fondly cherished,
Which regards as in God's trust
Claims that otherwise had perished,
Judged of by the Judge unjust !

Not because to fight makes glorious,
And the battle brings renown ;
Not because to be victorious
Draws down honours from the Crown ;

Not for *this* their country's lovers
Ready in the harness stand,
Watchful of the cloud that hovers,
And the wave-break on the sand.

Higher motives arm the freemen,
Nobler impulses provoke,
When the war-blast of the demon
Threatens England's honour'd oak ;

Through the leafy cover driving,
Shaking down the untimely mast,
With the grand old timbers striving,
Scathing not, but howling past ;

In the rage of disappointment,
In the fury of despair,
With the smoke of baffled vengeance
Filling the affrighted air ;

Then, when darkness clouds the dial,
And the prophet stands perplexed,
Balancing the fiery trial
'Gainst the burden of his text—

Praying, lest his faith should falter
'Fore the seeming of the hour,
Lest the vision of the altar
Yield to some disturbing power ;

Then breaks out the light of freedom,
Then begins the life of light,
And the mind asserts its birthright
O'er the spectres of the night ;

Then the deep-read sons of Albion
Bring to bear their cherished lore,
And the God's strength slumbering in them
Manifests itself once more.

Grandest epoch in our story !
Festival of truth sublime !
Of the hero and the martyr,
The long looked for crowning-time !

Herald ! stride into the circle—
Herald of the Lion's choice,
Rich in blazonry of office,
Giant-limbed and strong in voice !

Lift the trumpet tongued with silver,
Charge it with thy loudest note,
So the sound may lave the welkin,
Dying in the far remote—

Dying on the shore of silence,
In the calm of things unborn,
Under the eternal torches
At the gateway of the morn !

Lift the trumpet hung with echoes,
Give it voice where voice may reach ;
Mountain-ward—a voice returning
Shore-ward—dying on the beach !

Thus proclaim the mind's dominion,
Thus assert the scholar's right,
And inaugurate the union
Of LOVE, LIBERTY, and LIGHT.

FLOWER-LIFE.

PART FIRST.

I.

ANGELS are sowers everywhere !
They scatter as they fly
The gifts of Heaven. In Flower-life
Is traced their passing by.

II.

Upon the beaten thoroughfare,
Under the hedge-rows sere,
On the heavings of the churchyard,
In places dread and drear ;

III.

Upon the far-famed battle-field,
Where Freedom at a blow
Abased the Giant Tyranny,
Their mission is to sow.

IV.

Also 'mid pleasant homesteads,
And meadows of delight,
And up among the harbourings
Of God's tempestuous might ;

V.

Upon the mountain forehead,
Which the ploughshare never scarr'd,
They cast, while soaring heaven-ward,
Their farewells of regard—

VI.

The nigh-exhausted affluence
Committed to their charge,
On the more favour'd valley land,
Sown broad-cast and at large!

VII.

In yon desert, parch'd and howling,
On yon rock, so bare and stern,
If you have eyes and soul of grace
You may their tracks discern.

VIII.

No spot without its token—
Its letter of commend
Left by celestial Visitor—
Sent by the Unseen Friend!

IX.

In Flower-life is Scripture,
Which to study is to gain
Glimpses of the eternal world,
Where saints with their Saviour reign.

X.

By power of its teachings
We higher climb and nigher
To the heaven of the heavens seven,
Where sit the tongues of fire ;

XI.

And of God's Heart and purposes—
His Glory and His Power—
New revelations ope on us
By virtue of the Flower !

XII.

Better than pulpit rhapsodies,
Safer than priestly strife,
In its guidings to the throne of Love
Is the study of Flower-life.

PART SECOND.

I.

Angels are Sowers everywhere,
They scatter as they fly
The gifts of Heaven, and everywhere
Reveals their passing by.

II.

Behold it in that shining tuft
No jeweller could devise
Out of the seed of orient pearl,
Or diamond's flashing eyes !

III.

From imprint of the messenger
On mercy's errand sent,
Sprung up, obedient to the charm,
The sparkling ornament.

IV.

An Angel dropt the acorn
Four centuries gone by,
From which you gnarled oak cast root,
And sprung its antlers high.

V.

And oft among the curtains of
The storm-defying tree
Are heard the rustling as of wings,
And a sound like a nearing sea.

VI.

The lovers trysting under it
Affirm that earnest eyes
Are oftentimes gazing down on them
Like stars from autumnal skies.

VII.

And the pauses in their whisperings
Are filled up to the ear
With conference among the boughs
Of voices low and clear—

VIII.

With renderings of legends
That stir the spirit fond,
And snatches of quaint melody,
Cull'd from the world beyond.

IX.

The gathering of angels
'Mid the hidings of the oak
Is a page in the pleasant fiction
Of the merrie fairy folk.

X.

For Angel-life and fairy-life,
In the Poet's soul and song,
Their part hold in the mystery
That mateth Right with Wrong.

XI.

And everywhere and everywhere,
The Angels and the Elves,
To win God's creatures, zealously
Contend among themselves.

XII.

Yet of this grand contention
'Twixt the Evil and the Good—
'Twixt Elf and Angel, Wrong and Right—
The End is understood!

XIII.

Ye Messengers of God! go on
Sowing the seed of Grace,
And grant that in the Reaping-time,
When Face is turned to Face,

XIV.

And Man beholds the Maker
In whose Image he was fraught—
When the light of apprehending
Things that were vainly sought

XV.

Comes flashing on an Intellect
Obscured by the Under-powers,
Be ye among the Presences,
Ye Sowers of the Flowers!

XVI.

That vindicate God's Glory
By the shewing of His Love,
And lend a leal helping hand
To the Paradise above!

TO THE SWALLOW.

I.

TRAVEL, travel, restless swallow !
Travel over land and sea,
Tell thy story, wayward pilgrim !
Tell thy secret quest to me !

II.

Why so restless and untiring—
Ever on the glancing wing—
Darting, circling, shaping courses
Summer-ward beyond the Spring ?

III.

Hast thou some imprisoned yearning
Urging to a distant goal—
Some strong instinct leading onward—
A desire beyond control ;

IV.

Only by the grosser medium,
In a region of suspense,
Held back from its destined future
Round the throned Intelligence ?

V.

Hast thou such, and art a spirit
Taking cognizance of things,
Doing errands under angels—
Pilot to their voyagings ?

VI.

From the Cabinet of Monarchs
Egress hast thou, free, unfettered,
In the compass of a nutshell
Bearing with thee trusts unlettered—

VII.

Cyphers telling on dominions
And the balancings of Power—
On the tasking of the Peoples,
On the shiftings of the hour ?

VIII.

Surely, not in idle questing,
Swallow ! are thy goings forth—
Surely, for some higher purpose
Are thy rangings South and North ?

IX.

Of thy travel o'er the ocean
Tell ! It wilders me that thou,
No heed taking of provision,
Nor equipped, like merchant prow,

X.

Can'st a thousand leagues accomplish,
Helm thy way 'cross labouring seas,
Perforate the cloudy breast-works,
Measure distance with the breeze !

XI.

Bold as are the Eagle's soarings,
Swift as is the Eagle's pinion,
Keen as are his regal glances,
Taking in a broad dominion ;

XII.

Bolder, braver are thy ventures,
Swifter, surer are thy wings,
And thy subtle vision reacheth
Past the thrones of many kings.

XIII.

Once—it seems like yesterday—
In a summer thunder-storm,
'Mid the rattling of the fire-bolts
I descried a cowering form

XIV.

On the heights beyond Dalwhinnie,
Pastured by the roving deer,
Where the haughty Monoleäds
Snows imprison all the year,

XV.

I descried our boasted Eagle,
Tyrant of the feathered race,
At confession, scared and trembling,
Seeking mercy in my face,

XVI.

As if *I* were its dispenser,
Could the frowning clouds dispart,
Re-assort his ruffled plumage
By an effort of the heart?

XVII.

On a boulder drenched and shivering,
In an agony of fear,
Within range of stalker's rifle,
Casting round his eye severe,

XVIII.

Stood the Thunderer's attendant
Seeking mercy in my face ;
Thought I, Jove, the inflexible,
Holds his favourite in disgrace !

XIX.

Then I thought of *thee*, dear swallow !
When thou travellest abroad ;
Of the perils which thou facest,
And the hazards in thy road !

XX.

Of thy fragile form—so tiny,
So unlike a daring thing—
Which had room for heart of purpose—
Willing and untiring wing.

XXI.

In the scales of courage measured,
Heedless of his high pretence,
To the fierce anointed Eagle
I give *thee* the preference !

XXII.

To our windows, lo ! thou comest—
Buildest without ask or chiding,
Knowing thou art ever welcome
To a corner and a hiding.

XXIII.

Thus, mayhap, at Heaven's own windows
Thou dost spend thine other summer,
Having two homes where to hie to,
And to both the wished-for comer !

S U P P L I C A T I O N.

I.

OUT from the Ocean hidings
The billows bring their tidings,
And my ear is on the stretch
As I pace the yellow strand,
For the message they may fetch
From a far and sunny land.

Oh! voices of the Sea,
Draw near and comfort me!

II.

The days around me darken,
But I listen, vainly hearken
For the whispering from afar—
A whispering from the South—
A love-charge from my Star,
In the errant Sea-wave's mouth!

Oh! billow bearing thee,
Draw near and comfort me!

III.

Kiss the cold strand I tread on
And the hopes that I have fed on
The weary summer through,
Make real, and bring nearer—

Bring the lost one into view,
That I may hold him dearer,
Assured that *he* is true !

Oh ! billow, shore-ward bearing,
Cast up in a distant sea !
I am weary, weeping, wearing
My heart out—all despairing,
Draw near and comfort me !

—oo—

THE CUP OF MERCIES.

I.

OLD and feeble ! feeble and old !

But I remember the days of our youth,
When the life in prospect wore hues of gold,
And the pledge we took was Love and Truth.

II.

Love and Truth was the pledge we took—

To love and be true hearts—each to each ;
The vow was couch'd in kiss and in look,
Not in the falser form of speech.

III.

We have lov'd and been true for many a year,
And our children's children are at our knees,
Laughing and playing, with prattle so dear,
That the frosted veins of our life unfreeze.

IV.

We are children again at a grandchild's will,
More docile than in our teens we were ;
The pride beaten out, though the old self still
And all its under-currents are there.

V.

All that was mist and cloud and rain,
All that was chilly on Life's ascent,
The ghastly shadows of Terror and Pain
That flitted around our early tent,

VI.

By the working of God, through Jesu's grace,
Are into sunbeams broken up ;
The glory, whose source no finger can trace,
Illumes and gladdens all Nature's face,
While of His mercies we drink the cup !

*DEATH'S HERDSMAN; OR, THE LAY OF THE
RINDERPEST.*

AN EPISODE FROM A LOST BOOK OF HERODOTUS.

“WHOSE herdsman, gaunt and evil-eyed,
Art thou, that strid'st without consent
Across our homesteads—every stride
Loud'ning the uproar of lament?
Rude stranger! what hath brought thee here
Into our parks and dales and downs,
Close to the purlieus of our towns,
Unasked? Recount thy dread career!
Whence hast thou come, and whither bent?
By whom and on what errand sent?”

“Who questions me? a child of clay?
My story has its counter-part:
Listen, and, taking both to heart,
In fear and trembling, go thy way!
Yet know me first—from whence I roam,
And at whose nod I travel west:
I am Death's Herdsman, and I come
From the valley of the Rinderpest.

“Time was, when in a ghastly cave,
Surrounded by Chimeras dire,
I came to shape and terms of hire
With the fell filler of the grave.
On many an errand at his beck
Have I gone forth, and many an one
Haply remaineth to be done
Before the universal Wreck.

“The icy hollow where I dwell
Is heaped with trophies terrible
Of my dread power. The Mammoth there
Stands prisoned with the sullen Sloth,
And the Ark’s ballast, Behemoth.
Huge creatures, leaning to the Bear,
The Urus, and the Elephant,
Hold place in this museum vast.
The bestial glories of the past
Are treasured up by covenant,
Not confined in the common form,
But kept in life’s last attitude,
Blanch’d by the frosts of winters rude,
Yet still defiant of the worm.
A grim assemblage ! Tusks and bones,
Legions of glittering skeletons,
The which the Arctic moon delights
To marshal in her hurried flights.

“ My first commission has its date
Before the sacrificial times,
And bears the signature of Fate,
Penn'd in an atmosphere of crimes.
Cain was a witness to the deed,
And set his mark upon the scroll.
The Tempter in the primal fall
In tones of mockery agreed
To the conditions of my hire.
' Let pestilence precede the fire—
What matter? I resign the lead.'
Aye! Ask the question—who I am—
Whence came this uninvited guest?
I am Death's Herdsman, and I came
From the valley of the Rinderpest.”

A day there was of solemn feast
Held on the margins of the Nile;
The Ibis, Snake, and Crocodile
Partook, with their attendant priest,
Of the rude homage of the throng;
But the chief spectacle afoot
Was a huge Bull—a bloated brute—
Osiris term'd—the Sire of gods—
Which, ribbon-decked, in onward route,
Waddled along amid the applauses
Of thousands. Through the city gate
The monster passed in regal state;

Gilded its hoofs, and jewel-tipped
Its horns. Before it, vestals nine,
Scattering the lotus blossoms, tripped,
And sung the praises of the kine ;
And nine, with cymbals in their hands,
Followed, and nine times nine, in bands,
Guarded its flanks, and in the rear,
Hindmost of all, glanced helm and spear.
Memphis and Thebes in long array
Had mustered fast that holiday !

Onward the grand procession pass'd
Through street, and square, and under arch
Triumphal, with the trumpet's blast,
And clash of cymbal, keeping march ;
Pressed onward, too, the gazing throng,
And in the music's happening pause
Rent the hot air with loud hurrahs.
Shout, cymbal-clash, and vestal song,
And trumpets' blare, and tramp of feet,
And now and then in concert full
The angry questioning of the bull,
Held their blent sway in square and street.

“ Osiris ! bless the sire of Beeves,
The sturdy husband of the Cow,
The god whose offspring drag the plough,
And tread to grain the yellow sheaves :

Hail to Osiris ! hail to thee,
Munificent divinity !”

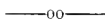
Such were the greetings at the gate
Of the great temple, where in state
Stood the stoled priests, and round and round
Their idol, in a circle vast,
The pomp and pride of Egypt wound ;
When suddenly among the host
A shape appeared, nor man, nor ghost,
Nor mummied form, nor skeleton,
Yet blending with the flesh and bone
Of Life the character of Death.

A cubit's height above the crowd
He towered, and on his shoulders proud
Lay what was neither scarf nor shroud—
A mantle woven by Winter's breath,
Which shed its icy influence round
The wearer. As he stalked along,
All shook and ceased from shout and song
Who came within the enchanted bound—
Ay, through the undulating throng
To each extreme the nervous chill
Pierced and arrested power and will.
But who was this intruder strange ?
All sought to know, and made exchange
Of wondering glances, each with each,

Yet dared not ask in common speech.
Onward the stranger stalked to where
Stood the sleek bull, for now it stood
Panting below the noon-day glare.
Swayed on each side the multitude,
None challenging, yet all amazed ;
And while with eager eyes they gazed,
A skinny finger came to play,
Stretched forth from under mantle grey,
And touched the frontal star which lay
Betwixt the gilded horns divine ;
At once, and with a sullen roar,
That crossed old Nile from shore to shore,
The father of a thousand kine
Staggered and fell. Below the stroke
Of the dire axe, with heavier crash,
Fell not the patriarchal oak,
The pine, and elm, and veteran ash,
Hewn to build Albion's wooden walls.

But who the intruder, gaunt and grim,
That stayed the Osirian festivals,
And fiercely hushed the vestal hymn ?
Who but the herdsmen that is now
Setting the grisly master's brand
Upon the cattle of your land ?
Sooner an arméd host, I trow,
And roar of cannon on its strand,

And the invaders' noisy tramp,
And all the carnage of the camp,
Than the strange pestilence that stalks
By noon-day in your sunniest walks !

*A LEAF OF MY CREED.*

NOTHING endued with vitality,
And destined for Immortality,
Becomes old in reality.

In the days of our altering
The step may have semblance of faltering,
The locks grow thin and hoary,
The voice turn into the treble,
The eyes into orbs of pebble,
But is there no Inner Glory ?

What though the brow be wrinkled,
And the fingers periwinkled,
The jaws bereft and toothless,
Time in itself is ruthless,
But never in verity youthless !

We excavate great cities,
And over them waste our pities,
And form laments and ditties—
Thebes, Luxor, for example,
Even Nineveh more ample,
Babylon and Jerusalem,
The cave in which Methusalem
Lies chested—ruins various,
And places multifarious.

We dig into futurity,
And link with dim obscurity
The Past and its peoples olden—
The ages held as golden,
Arcadian and Augustan,
To which in bardic fustian
We are so much beholden—
The ages of bronze and iron,
Cyclopean and Titanic,
When with a base mechanic
Toyed Venus and the Syren.
What find we but the key
To the future?—to fashion and faction—
To the present abiding reality,
And the restless wave of reaction?
Marry! the Past and its glories,
Marry! the Past with its stories
Of Valour, and Love, and Ambition,

Of Tyranny, Crime, and Sedition,
Of Hope and Despair, of Joy and of Sorrow,
Foreshadows in its history
The happenings of the morrow.
Can we make more of the mystery?
One generation goeth,
And lo! another succeedeth,
As o'er the billow that leadeth
Another billow floweth.

The Past in the Future mergeth,
And out of the Future resurgeth!
The Present is but a tittle,
Brave in its own esteem,
But less than the veriest little—
Of existence, haply the dream!
True! in our chrysalis state,
We regard it as all in all;
But in the scripture of Fate,
Conning the stars as we read,
The Present is thrown to the wall—
Such is a leaf of our creed!

A DREAM OF THE PAST.

I.

DEAREST ! my dream was of thee !
My dream at the morning's breaking,
When thy sweet eyes inquired of me,
Why, why this sudden waking ?

II.

Fondest ! my dream was of thee !
Ask not why this sudden waking,
Or why this start, and clasp to my heart
At the morning's ruddy breaking ?

III.

I dream't of a circle scatter'd,
Of thy home 'mid the hills of heather—
Of faces fair that shone out there
When we cast our lot together.

IV.

I dream't of a comely matron,
Into whose lingering beauty
The chisel of Time had graven sublime
The struggle of Love with Duty—

V.

Of the mother of the household,
A woman true and tender,
Whose step was grace, Love's throne her face,
And round her beam'd the splendour

VI.

With which Artists and their pencils
Strive vainly to invest
The Virgin mild and the wondrous Child
On her nectar-flowing breast.

VII.

I dream't of a white-haired patriarch,
Versed in the Celtic tongue,
Who took his laugh at the Sassenach
That courted his daughter young—

VIII.

An ancient 'mong the patriarchs,
Who can speak to his hundred years,
And though reft of sight is still in the fight—
Still in this valley of tears !

IX.

I dream't of a band of brothers,
Four strong and heartsome boys,
Who work'd out the charm of the Highland farm,
And its barren hills made rejoice.

X.

Where now these sons of promise?
Ask of the New World, ask of the Old ;
Enquire of the seas and the wand'ring breeze,
Enquire of the fields of gold !

XI.

Question our Western colonies,
Question the blustering States ;
Some potent key they can give, it may be,
To their fortunes or their fates.

XII.

I dream't of a group of sisters,
Numbering the mystic seven ;
Among the bereft five still are left,
Two have their home in heaven !

XIII.

A bevy rare of damosels
Might angel's heart beguile,
For seven such graces, and seven such faces,
Shone not on our sea-girt isle.

XIV.

The two the angels have taken
Are but pledges for those that remain ;
In the household of heaven, as one be the seven,
Linked in Love's golden chain !

XV.

Beloved ! in this rendering
Back to the eyes of the mind
Of our days of mirth and the happy Hearth
Lit up with faces kind,

XVI.

I had framed to me a picture
Of joys to be restored—
Of youth as it was, and a glorious Cause
That needed nor Cross nor Sword ;

XVII.

For, on its dazzling Banner,
Two Hearts were the Device,
And the motto above was "Love, ay, Love !
For to Love is to Sacrifice."

XVIII.

When lo ! a silent shadow crept
Over the Dial's face,
And I knew its power to disturb the hour,
And darken the gateways of grace—

XIX.

To hinder the passage upward,
And perplex the faith of the core ;
The thoughts that lie under, of doubt and of wonder,
To ravel them more and more.

XX.

Dearest ! the Light has its Shadows,
Evening steals over the Day ;
With the promise of Dawn rise spectres wan,
But Love will chase them away.

XXI.

And though the Curtain be falling
On the Drama acted here,
Let us look beyond to a life as fond
In a purer and happier sphere,

XXII.

Where a sense of the true prevaieth,
And neither by Book nor Priest
Are we taken to task for the mercies we ask,
Nor fenced from the Holy Feast.

XXIII.

Be our Hope and our Faith and their Longings
Toward the Home of Love,
And the wings that transport to the upper Court
Will be given us from above !

LOVE AND WORSHIP.

I.

GIVE me to clasp thy dainty waist,
And lay thy ruddy lips to mine !
I look on thee as one divine,
And all divinity is chaste.

II.

Even Venus, not the Cyprian, gave
Proof of her virtue in the form
That rose in the Egean storm
Out of the white crest of the wave.

III.

But purer thou than Dian even
Returning from the eager chase,
Her panthers gazing in her face,
And sleuth hounds baying towards heaven !

IV.

Had'st thou divinity like hers,
And scorn of lip and brow and eye,
I might not love, but I would die,
Kneeling among thy worshippers !

TWEED AND ITS PROSPECTS.

I.

RIVER of all rivers, dearest
To the Scottish heart—to ours !
River without shade of rival,
Rolling crystals, nursing flowers,

II.

Stirring up the soul of music,
Chaunting, warbling, luting, chiming,
To the poet's ardent fancy,
Adept in the art of rhyming ;

III.

Marching onward through thy valley
With the bearing of a king,
From the hundred hills surrounding
All thy vassals summoning !

IV.

Of our Rivers still the Glory !
God defend it ! there is need,
For the Demon of Pollution
Campeth on the banks of Tweed.

V.

See the tents of the Invader !
How they spread on every hand,
Pitched by devilish intuition
O'er the marrow of the land !

VI.

In the fairest of its meadows,
In its gardens of desire—
On its Bo-peeps and Blink-bonnies—
On its terraces of Fire,

VII.

Where were fought the Fights of Freedom,
And the stirring Songs were sung,
Which the heart and arm of Scotland
Moved as with a trumpet tongue.

VIII.

Count the forces of the Upstart,
Smoke-begrimmed and dimly seen
On and under the horizon,
Blackening the blue and green.

IX.

Idle task ! they multiply
Faster than the pen can score,
Legion crowding upon legion,
Like the waves that scourge the shore.

X.

Read the motto on their Banner :
Self and Pelf ! so apt the scroll ;
Not an apter on the Headstone,
Nor on knightly bannerol.

XI.

Pelf and Self ! the double Demon !
From its clutch, good God, deliver !
Save from taint of the defiler,
Saviour ! save our dearest River !

XII.

For the Life-blood of our Valleys
We entreat on bended knee !
For the Queen of Nursing Mothers,
God ! defend her chastity !

—oo—

THOUGHTS SUGGESTED BY PASSING EVENTS.

WRITTEN DURING THE SIEGE OF PARIS IN 1870.

I.

It is the old and self-repeating story ;
The generations that are yet to be
Will have their taste of it. Humanity
Is most itself in the desire of glory.

II.

Peace is an idle word, and only meaneth
A brief cessation from the activities
Of life—a pause that interveneth
During the combat—a pretence of ease.

III.

Oh, War! thou hast thy thousand lame excuses!
The jealousies that rouse thee are untold:
Treaties with thee are forecasts of abuses—
Below their shelter Liberty is sold!

IV.

Upon thy lying standard Peace is written—
“The message of the cannon ball is Peace;”
Thou would’st persuade the world! Forsake, O Briton!
The weary hope that wars shall ever cease!

V.

They never will, so long as Man is Man,
And passions are unchanged, and Kings are Kings,
And Kings have Ministers that plot and plan,
And such have Creatures and vile underlings.

VI.

Great wars are ever preludes to still greater;
And this great war that desolates the earth,
And the *eidolon* mars of our Creator,
Will mother be of many a monstrous birth.

VII.

For what breed wars, and what the strife of nations,
But stern revenges that look centuries back
On burning wrongs and cruel desolations,
And long to acquit them on a bloodier track ?

VIII.

Let all alone the fantasy of glory—
Ambition and the lust of sov'reign sway !
A darker passion tells on future story,
Bred from their loins, and watchful of its day.

IX.

What with the humbling of an Empire's pride
Compared are those incentives to the fight
Which spring of fame-love ? With an under-tide
Of stern revenge conquest is borrowed might.

X.

Dictate what terms he may, if they but touch
The nation's honour, *He*, the conqueror,
Hath sought to humble, and hath humbled much,
Priding himself that he can humble more,

XI.

Graves will give forth their dead. The chivalries
Of ancient France will start to life again—
A murmur, like the chafing of the seas,
And lo ! they rise to combat—the long-slain !

XII.

O Patriot Spirit ! art thou dead or sleeping ?
O sons of Gaul ! degenerate in seeming !
See ye no dawning in this night of weeping—
Through its dark curtain no deliverance streaming ?

XIII.

Be but yourselves ! Resolve to be resolved !
With union, and the purpose to excel,
Your strength will come. The year hath not revolved—
Paris may starve—but starve invincible.

XIV.

Out with exultant chimes from Notre-Dame !
The heart of France is stirring as of yore,
Their brows illumined with heroic calm—
Her sons are sons of Paladins once more !

XV.

Die resolute !—not unavenged ye die :
With Dragons' teeth is sown the battle-field
On which they fall, who fall for Liberty—
Woe to the Slayer and his tainted shield !

PILGRIMAGES TO THE TOMBS OF THE POETS.

P R E L U D E.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY.—POET'S CORNER.

A F R A G M E N T.

THE Poet's Corner!

It was a spot familiar to my mind
In boyhood, made so by the simple name
And apprehension of the wealth it held :
Save as the resting place of rival bards,
Allotted by the nation they gave fame to,
I knew it not ; yet, in my ignorance,
Let rein to fancy. I lived then remote
In Scotland ; but a burning wish was mine
To visit London, and of all its sights
And marvels, foremost in the catalogue
Loomed the grand Abbey and its Poet's Corner.

The Poet's Corner was to *me* a theme
Of frequent meditation and delight ;
For out of it the resurrections came
Daily and nightly of immortal thoughts,
And I held converse in its fancied courts

With souls illustrious. Many were the forms
Imagination to the spot assigned ;
Extending it into a garden oft,
Refulgent with bright flowers—exhaling odours
That wrapt the senses in sweet reverie :
It took shape also as a charmed rood
In God's own acre—an enchanted bower,
In which the cypress over-topped the bay,
And weeping willows intervening spake
Both Grief and Love, shedding their leaves betimes.

The Poet's Corner ! How expressive seem'd
The simple words to my untutored mind,
Creative of devout and soaring thoughts !
Knelt in its niches, so my fancy pictured,
The worshippers of Genius ! Bards flocked thither
Of a new race, by jealousies unswayed,
To cast their offerings. The Angel Death
Carv'd Immortality upon the tombs.
“ I smote the body to let free the soul,
And give it presence and the magnitude
That is its portion in the Universe.”
But when I came, a-glow with ardent thoughts
And preconceptions of the venerable,
To Poet's Corner—ah ! how rude the shock
That laid my idols prostrate—pillaged me
Of cherished Faith—the altar upset
On which I thought to lay presumptuous gifts—

The curtain rent, behind whose waving *ægis*
I long had pictured gorgeous effigies,
And the accordings of a generous nation
To those great souls who, with the voice of Song,
Did more than all the tricksters of the State
To knit together human sympathies,
And elevate into a Passion-form
The love of country and the love of Throne !

Woe to the Nation that neglects its Bards !
Woe to the City which its Prophets spurns !
Woe to the Hamlet that is deaf to Song !
Woe to the Palace and the Cottage both
From which the Poet's presence is debarred,
And in whose vestibules and round whose hearths
Fools' tongues talk lightly of the gift divine !

Who of the charming lyrists of our day
Would care to lie interred in Poet's Corner—
His bones cooped up in parsimonious space
As lumber—an incumbrance thrown aside
Into the rubbish hole of the Cathedral,
So men may jeer at Poets and their doom—
Ay ! laud, as the economy of sense,
The dealing out to them so scant a grace—
So out of all accordance with their song—
A cage so narrow, dingy, sinister !

Who of the Poets, nurtured under wing
Of the four angels of the elements,
Instructed in the cardinal mysteries,
Zealous for Truth and prodigal of Love—
Generous dispensers of the earnings won
By their endowments—lion-hearted men,
And eagle-eyed—to whom redeeming work
Was given to do, and emphasis of speech,
Akin to inspiration, showered upon,
So they might use it to the nation's welfare
In praying, warning, threatening, and denouncing,
Hoping and trusting and encouraging,
Commending, lauding, as the Master lauds
The faithful in his service ; keeping Him
The while in view, to whom, as its true source,
All glory with its manifold accessions
Tides back—a reflux of exceeding glory !
In whose swift tiding, luminous and swift,
Prophets and Poets take the leading part,
Freighting with songs of Immortality
The onward current—who of these the Elect
And privileged, in trustful consciousness
That with the casket is imprison'd the jewel,
And both shall resurge when the trumpet blows,
Would care to be interred in Poet's Corner !

Yet in this nook, so chary as to space,
So inappropriate and unclassical,

So gloomy and forbidding to the eye—
Under these slabs and tablets fanciful—
The illustrious fathers of our Saxon song
Lie chested. Here repose the stalwart bones
Of Chaucer. Here our Spenser sleeps the sleep
Held to be dreamless. Here the mortal coil
Of Shakspeare's cognate in the tragic art,
Beaumont, long shuffled off, hath found a shelf.
Here in this dismal corner, huddled up
With poets of small worth, lies glorious John.

Here, too, that dictatorial Elephant,
Whose parasite exalted from the pot-house,
And made a shew of and a make-belief—
Sam Johnson, lies—the lexicographer,
So called, who built in folio his renown
As an interpreter of languages,
Not knowing any save a smattering
Of dog-latinity besides his own—
And *that*, not as a scholar in its roots,
But as a pedagogue upon the surface.

Oft have I marvell'd how the ponderous brute
Acquir'd ascendancy in literature ;
His *Rasselas* being the prosiest of prose,
His *Rambler* a collection of dull essays,
Wordy, didactic, and idealess,
Unseasoned with a pepper-corn of humour ;

His satire pointless, and his rash attempt
To master Pegasus a crowning failure !

True ! from materials given by one who knew
How to make gold out of a labouring brain,
He faithfully performed a noble trust,
And by his Poet's Lives had nigh redeemed
The claim on Poet's Corner he enjoys.

But all the merit I would fain have ceded
To this Sir Oracle is disallowed,
When I regard his rank malignity
Towards the Scotch, and the offensive way
In which the big beer-swiller dealt with Anglers.
A verier humbug never swayed an Age !
Hack, snob, pretender, bully, *all in one*,
An egotist, a glutton, but *no fool* !

Keep silent in thy grim sarcophagus,
O Samuel ! thou art not among the prophets !
And, rising with them in the appointed day,
Thou of their glory never shalt partake !

THE OAKLING.

I.

THERE is *life* in this Acorn. Lay it
 A finger's depth under the soil—
 In a soil where nothing can fray it,
 Nothing its forthcoming foil—
 In a place, a hill-side or hollow,
 Not remote from the dwellings of toil,
 Where the cornercrake copes with the swallow
 In casting abroad for its spoil,

II.

It will *spring*. The sun's early blessing
 Will cherish it. Be not afraid !
 The zephyrs will give it caressing—
 The dew-fall quicken its blade.
 In thy watch of the delicate treeling,
 My affection for *thee*, merry maid !
 I feel, and how rapturous the feeling !—
 My devotion to thee is repaid !

III.

It will grow, dearest lamb ! with your growing,
 And bud with your budding, Sweetheart !
 And in your coming and going
 Will play its own typical part.

In your visitings during the summer,
 It will out with its leafy array ;
 But when rude carle Winter is comer,
 It will cast its green mantle away.

* * * * *

IV.

Say you?—but nine ! and nine only ?
 You were five when we planted our tree
 In a spot, I thought it too lonely—
 Too like where a churchyard should be.
 But *you chose* it, my darling ! and *chosen*
 By *you*, I do more than agree,
 'Tis no garden to rear up a rose in,
 But the Eden for *you* and for *me*.

V.

And, my *Pet* ! I have pride in our treeling ;
 The fourth of its May-days is nigh ;
 And if thine is the ninth—no concealing !—
 Happy nine ! happy four ! happy I !
 A sapling, a sylph, and a rhymer ;
 The marvel that dotard like me
 Should entice my sweet pet from her primer,
 To watch o'er the growth of a tree !

VI.

No matter ! the Acorn's springing
 Is a tie 'twixt the old and the young,

'Twixt an ending and kind of beginning,
 'Twixt the Sung and the promised Unsung !
 Come forth, and look at our Sapling,
 Ye grey-beards that cumber the glen !
 Come forth at the morning's grey dapping,
 When the mists are ascending the glen ;
 When with song-birds the skies are a-peopling,
 And the fogs are forsaking the fen.

VII.

Ye are nigh to the Valley of Vision
 On whose verge is the trembling of knees ;
 But a sage, with the lip of decision,
 Four-score old, may pronounce upon trees.
 Speak out, Forest Ranger, that wert !
 And tell of the Oaks of thy ken—
 Of a giant that stood in the heart
 Of the grenewood under the Ben.

VIII.

“ I am here, though my shoulders are weighted
 With the burden of many long years—
 Here, ready with all my griefs freighted,
 To sail from a harbour of tears.
 But you ask for the Oak, the old giant,
 O'er-topping the rest of its kind,
 With its joints and its spreadings defiant,
 Whose joy is to battle the wind ?

IX.

Behold it! No older it seemeth
To *me* than it seemed in my youth ;
I speak as a dreamer that dreameth,
And its seeming so may be untruth :
But then, in the days of my daffing,
It was reckoned the veteran tree,
And its health was a toast in the quaffing
Of healths at the sign of the Bee.

X.

Its age is a leaf of Tradition ;
They say 'twas the Tree of old Tryst,
Where the Priests of a gone Superstition
Conferred with the Herald of Christ—
Where a haughty Arch-Druid and cruel
Was baptised at the hands of a Saint,
And is now an immaculate jewel
In the Crown, without rust or attainit.

XI.

A monarch, 'tis added, in reason,
Under its boughs was at rest,
When a shaft from the red hand of treason
Found its murderous way to his breast ;
And the turf, by his life-wellings wetted,
Assumeth a crimson colour,
When the date comes round in its circle
That is wed to this deed of dolour.

XII.

To idols had I been given—
 Not knowing the God Supreme,
 Mine own Fancy, the Maker of Heaven—
 The Future shaped out of a dream—
 The homage I owe to the Only
 I'd have paid at the shrine of this Tree,
 At the shrine, in the grene-wood so lonely,
 Where I bent, as a lover, my knee."

* * * * *

XIII.

Years have passed. The old Forest Ranger
 Sleeps his sleep in the Acre of God ;
 His office is held by the stranger—
 A churl—an irreverent clod,
 Who has neither humour nor fancy,
 Nor courtesy in his grain,
 Who values an oak by the footrule
 And the guage of his timber brain.

XIV.

He came to look at our Treeling
 By invite from my pet and from me ;
 At a glance, 'twas a matter of dealing
 I saw, put the pith in his knee.
 A curse on his lips, but half smothered,
 Told plainly the rage in his heart,
 When he found, o'er its vaunted coëvals,
 Our fav'rite was holding the start.

XV.

For he prided himself in his wood-craft,
 And at the old Ranger's demise
 Took, as *his own* due, the credit
 Of instructing the Forest supplies ;
 And the coppice he vaunted of chiefly
 Was an oak-wood, companion in years
 To the tree which you and I, darling !
 Have nurtured with smiles and with tears.

* * * * *

XVI.

Twenty ! say you ? are you twenty ?
 Out of your teens ? Is it so ?
 And *I*—I look back on my plenty
 Of years, and the long, long ago ;
 I look back, but only a shadow
 Is left of the things that have been ;
 Yet my staff and my pet are beside me,
 Before us an oak of fifteen !

XVII.

And where is its proud predecessor—
 The Tree of the Ranger's regard—
 The King from whose loins started Forests,
 And gave birth to the Hymns of the Bard ?—
 The veteran nursed by the Pagan—
 Redeemed by a knight of the Cross—
 The Oak, whose each leaf was a legend—
 A waif tale for the Tempest to toss ?

XVIII.

From whose acorns sprung, with their Tree-life,
The Navies, whose Flag is unfurled,
In the twin names of Commerce and Freedom,
Everywhere over the World?
The enterprise, courage, and sinew,
The might of our sea-faring folk—
Their lion-like faces, and rugged,
Which are carved from the limbs of the oak,
Cast and carved from the bole of the oak.

XIX.

A thousand summers and winters,
Each in its turn had passed
Over the brow of the idol,
The kiss of the zephyr and blast—
The sun's red heat in the dog-days,
The torrents from skies overcast,
Dew-falls, Ice-bolts, and Fire-bolts,
And the Angel that scatters the Mast.

XX.

But it stood in high dudgeon and haughty,
With its forehead erect in disdain,
And the look of a growing Immortal
Beginning his infinite reign.
Where is it?—the Lord of the Forest?
The tree of the Ranger's regard,
Whose each birth-morn heaped promise on promise,
And opened the lips of the Bard?

XXI.

A churl—a rude hewer of timber—
A worker with axe and with saw—
A trader in divots and lumber,
Counsel took with a limb of the law ;
And the sentence pronounced by the hireling,
Without upper court of review,
Save the Angels that shall be Avengers,
Was, “To-morrow, Old Timber ! for *you* !”

XXII.

On the morrow the hewers assembled—
Seven woodmen, noisy with brag,
Who looked on a tree, as the Stalker
Looks on a sure-at-hand Stag.
The Tree had its vengeance in falling,
The lawyer (small subject for grace
Taken any way) cheated the hangman ;
But the brass of his tongue and his face

XXIII.

Was no metal to vie with the Monarch
He thought to make gold of and gain ;
And the fellow, next door to the felon,
Was felled with worse schemes in his brain.
Ah ! well ! the kings of the Forest
Do justly, while dropping the crown,
In the farewell wave of their sceptres,
By casting the insolent down—

XXIV.

By shewing the strength of their sinews,
 And the valorous life in their core,
 And their ken of the Vexer and Doomster,
 Who lays the cold axe at their door.

* * * * *

XXV.

Five years have gone by, and my darling
 Has entered the days of her prime,
 And her figure, so gracefully moulded,
 Defies all description in rhyme ;
 When the woman has cast off her girlhood,
 Its pertness and shyness combined,
 And towers, like a castle of beauty,
 Over the rest of her kind.

XXVI.

Faultless in face and in figure—
 Artless, but having the art
 Of fending off empty admirers,
 Who bid high for her hand and her heart.
 “What ails you, my pet—my own darling?
 This is your birth-day. In tears?
 Surely, no shadow of sorrow
 Will darken your happiest years !

XXVII.

“ We shall go and visit our oakling ;
The time has come round, and the day,
When the Tree-Spirit, glad and expectant,
On tip-toe waiteth the May ;
And its arms will wave like a bridegroom’s
Arrayed in the true Lincoln green,
Bearing a promise of acorns
In the coming autumnal sheen.”

XXVIII.

“ Uncle, I have my misgivings ;
Dear uncle ! I cannot tell why ;
But the shadow you dread creepeth o’er me,
And its Caster must come by and by.
Take my arm ; we shall off to our treeing ;
The birds used to whistle the way ;
And you, my fond uncle, looked gayer
A thought or two. Was it so ? say.”

XXIX.

“ No wonder, my darling, and brisker ;
Not happier—no, I am wrong ;
My happiness takes its reflection
From the child of my heart and my song.
Ah ! well. There is cause for surmising—
Room for a grief to step in—
Place for a shadow to rest on ;
But to keep up the heart is to win !

XXX.

" My jewel ! be true to your nature,
 Take heart, keep it up to the end,
 And bring in the help-hand of duty
 To do its good part as a friend.
 But where is our oakling, my darling ?
 Have I mistaken the spot ?
 Here, surely ? It never was elsewhere ;
 But tell me, I may have forgot ?

XXXI.

" I'm so blind, and my memory fails me ;
 Yet my heart ! it has eyes of its own,
 And the memories given to its keeping
 Are memories none can dethrone.
 Ah ! you are troubled and silent ;
 Speak, is it so ? my own pet !
 Some evil has chanced to our favourite—
 A sorrow to us—a regret—

XXXII.

" A wound that will heal before sunset—
 A cross that at dawning will vanish ;
 One tear should avail to erase it—
 One sigh and a hand's waft to banish."

" Dear uncle ! my fondest of uncles,
 Our hearts were wrapt up in that tree ;
 Mine was and yours was, I know it,
 And its fate is the forecast to me

XXXIII.

“Of a something—I cannot define it—
Creeping on, stealing on, like a chill,
That withers the leaf and the blossom,
And curdles the sap at its will.
A shape that belongs to the grave-yard
Holds in my day-dreams its part,
And at night, by my couch leaning o’er me,
Trammels the flow from my heart.

XXXIV.

“A hand is dividing the curtain,
And beckons and beckons always ;
I cannot resist it, dear uncle !
But am bound by my fate to obey.”
“Prop of my life ! of its lingerings
Cheerer ! the Help on the way !
I have lived on your love, and had trusted
To live on it many a day !

XXXV.

“A blight had it been—the consumer
Travelling up by degrees
From the root to the crown of our oakling,
I might have divined your unease.
But man has been here, not the Angel
Appointed—the silent pursuer—
A man, and a demon within him,
Armed with the axe of the hewer.”

XXXVI.

“ Not less, dearest uncle, an omen !
 Our oakling has gone from its place ;
 We made it too much of an idol—
 Trusted too much to the grace
 Of the hireling. Ah ! now it is over !
 Seek him out, and spare not the cost !
 Six days hence—say a full fortnight—
 A fortnight, or three weeks at most.

XXXVII.

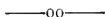
“ No matter ! the time is approaching,
 Seek him out, without grudge or delay ;
 He will drive a preposterous bargain,
 But let him for once have his way.
 Of our oakling we must have the timber
 Two coffins to make of—no more ;
Mine will be needed too early,
 Before the green summer is o'er.

XXXVIII.

“ *Yours*—ah ! I know not the whether
 To wish you to follow or stay ;
 I meant it a gift of remembrance—
 No ! *one* is enough for its day.
 Better not vex nor distress you—
 Better not darken the hour
 That is passing with gloomy forecastings—
 Preceding the Terrible Power.

XXXIX.

“Fare thee well! A dream of our oakling,
The dream of its Fate and of Thee
Across my soul’s vision is fleeting,
Dear Uncle! come quickly to me!”
And this was the last of my darling:
I live, but my life is a dream,
And the dream is the life-time remaining;
I wait to go on with the stream.

*THE LEGEND OF THE FOUNTAIN.*

I.

STAY with me upon the mountain,
Stay with me, and list my warning!
I am but a simple fountain,
Prattling on from eve to morning;

II.

But the gleaming eye is in me,
Which hath virtue to foresee,
And the tongue with which I babble
Can reveal strange things to thee.

III.

Mark ! a-leaning o'er my margin
 Skeletons of three great trees,
Cleft by thunder-bolts—mis-shapen,
 Gnarled, and fretted at the knees.

IV.

Oaks they are, but none would know it
 If the acorn were the test,
Even leaf they rarely show it—
 Forest monarchs sore distress !

V.

On the tale of their misfortunes
 Hangs a tale of human woe,
None, I trow, the less disastrous
 That its date was years ago.

VI.

Years ! a century is over,
 And the portion of another,
Since that day of dark remembrance,
 When a brother slew a brother—

VII.

Slew, but not as Cain slew Abel,
 In contending sacrifice,
When the offering on the Altar
 Drew no token from the skies—

VIII.

Smoked not, nor a sign of favour
Shewed, despite of fruit and corn
Heaped up in profusion lavish,
Decorating every horn—

IX.

All the three horns of the Tripod
Gloried in their setting out
In the choice sheaves of the harvest,
Juicy bulb and tender sprout.

X.

Let alone that ancient story,
Told by maiden at my side,
As she filled her homely pitcher
In the rosy eventide.

XI.

She had culled it from her mother,
Sitting on that mother's knee,
At the door-step of a cottage,
In the heart of the Holy Lee,

XII.

With the Bible spread before them
On a sunny Sabbath day—
The half-orphan and the widow
In her home-spun, hoddens grey.

XIII.

But my story :—I remember
When a youth came to my spring,
Quaffed it, named it Helicon—
Shouted, and essayed to sing—

XIV.

Shouted, and with frantic gestures,
Called upon the circling scaurs,
Till the echoes in confusion
Marred the ear, as discord mars.

XV.

Then he ceased, as by an effort—
Sobbed, as if his heart would burst,
And with lip to my cold fountain
Sought to slake his fiery thirst—

XVI.

Prostrate sought, and bathed his forehead,
Steeped his tresses, laved his cheek—
Rose again in upright posture—
Gestured as about to speak.

XVII.

But the voice failed, or the courage,
Or some sudden fit o'ertook ;
For at once an icy trembling
Seized him, and the scared look

XVIII.

Of a man upon whose shadow
Trode the avenger's feet—whose ear
Caught up menaces of evil—
Syllables of deadly fear—
Words of judgment drawing near.

XIX.

But the moody fit passed over ;
And again an eager draught
From my brimming stores he ravished,
Thanking Jesus as he quaffed—

XX.

Thanking all the Saints of Heaven,
And the Angel of the Spring,
Till his heart had lost its burden,
And his tongue essayed to sing.

XXI.

Low and plaintive was the measure,
Wild, but simple, were the words,
And the warblings to them mated
Teachings were of woodland birds.

XXII.

Of the letter of the descant
I can give but sorry snatch ;
And its spirit, too, is hidden
In the spirit of the catch.

XXIII.

Ah ! how short-lived the delirium !
As he sang, my watchful ear
Caught up sounds that boded evil—
Fateful footsteps drawing near.

XXIV.

'Cross the hills there toiled a figure,
Bearing burden o'er his heart,
And the burden, God of Mercy !
Was the comer's counterpart—

XXV.

Counterpart in form and feature ;
Only by a prescient sense,
And an instinct to me given,
I descried the difference.

XXVI.

In the arms of her strong lover
Clasped, a bleeding maiden lay,
Life's tide with its mystic floatings
Ebbing, ebbing fast away.

XXVII.

Weary, weary was the bearer
When he reached my fountain's edge,
And lay down his woful burden
Breathless on the flowery sedge—

XXVIII.

Breathless for the moment only,
Breath came back on hopeful wing ;
And affection, ever active,
Found its ally in my spring—

XXIX.

Dipped into the cooling waters
Hurriedly the fever'd palm—
Laved the forehead of the maiden
Over which the death-mist swam.

XXX.

With red rubies flashed my fountain—
Oozings from the deadly wound —
The life-jewels of a virgin
In my well of diamond drowned—

XXXI.

By the hand of strong affection
From the heart's-mine slowly freed,
Cast upon my fount of mercies
In an hour of crying need.

XXXII.

With my diamonds they consorted,
And the emerald growths that clave,
Laced with sapphires at my margin—
Lustres shooting through my wave.

XXXIII.

While the horror of the moment
Held me fast and all things near,
Hark ! a cry of bitter anguish,
Like sharp dagger, smote the ear !

XXXIV.

With its breaking forth great trembling
Seized the maiden, and a sigh
From the pallid lips escaping
With it took her soul on high.

XXXV.

Strode into the fatal circle,
Passionful, a youthful form,
By the help of my blurred mirrors
I divined the coming storm.

XXXVI.

Out it brake in sudden fury,
Brother upon brother rushed,
While the pale corse lay betwixt them,
And I gazed with ripple hushed.

XXXVII.

Sister, did I term the maiden ?
She was cousin to them both ;
But she stood in light of sister,
Shackled by a double oath.

XXXVIII.

In Thy merey, God of merey !
Shut my eyes ! The thousand years
O'erpassing me, until this moment,
Shewed nor blood nor human tears.

XXXIX.

God was gracious—heard my moanings—
O'er the mountains cast a haze,
Sealing up my power of vision
Seven long nights—seven longer days.

XL.

Ended these ; the dim perception
Of a tragedy in course,
Of my senses took possession,
Held it by magnetic force.

XLI.

And I travelled, in my fancy,
Over places strange to me,
Through a valley, and beyond it,
To a city by the sea.

XLII.

I had ceased to be a fountain—
Passed into a river wide,
On whose bosom barges floated,
Castles flourished at its side.

XLIII.

But the trust to me committed,
In this hour of wondrous trance,
Was a shallop richly gilded,
Masted with a pennon'd lance.

XLIV.

Caught its silken sails the zephyr,
And their shining tassels rung
Pleasantly, like bells of silver,
Armed with animated tongue.

XLV.

At the helm there stood a watcher,
Golden-haired and azure-eyed,
With his hand upon the tiller,
And his gaze upon the tide.

XLVI.

At the prow there sat a maiden
Motionless—the form of grace—
But a wonder and a rapture
Passed by turns into her face.

XLVII.

Flashed across my recollection
The fair martyr at my spring,
Purified from sin and sorrow—
Saintly made through suffering—

XLVIII.

Glided on the wondrous shallop
By the cherub pilot steered,
And the tassel'd sails made music
As the shining port it neared ;

XLIX.

To a palace in the city,
On it floated, like a swan,
Under pier, with angels crowded,
And an arch of mighty span—

L.

To a palace built of marble,
Fronted by a terrace broad ;
On its portal the inscription,
“ All the Glory be to God.”

LI.

I heard shouting of the angels,
And a song of welcome given ;
But my hour of trance had ended,
And the mission towards heav'n.

LII.

Waking, I am but a fountain,
Simple, garrulous, as of yore,
In the legends of the mountain
Versed, and in its fairy lore.

LIII.

Bare and gaunt, like shattered idols,
 Charred by the avenger's brand,
 With their arms wrenched off by tempest,
 Three grim oaks above me stand.

LIV.

Under them a mossy hillock
 Rivets the inquiring eye,
 With its headstone rudely cyphered,
 Marvel to the passer by!

—oo—

THE WAIL OF THE SAXON MOTHER.

IN THREE PHASES.

PHASE FIRST.

1.

My children! oh, my children!
 That we should ever part,
 The treasures of my household—
 The jewels of my heart!
 My sons, so bright and comely,
 Of courtesy the flower;
 Alas! to bear it humbly
 Is beyond a mother's power.

II.

My children ! oh, my children !
The future of my joys—
The solace of my widowhood—
My own beloved boys !
How many ardent fancies
Have shaped your fortunes trim,
And from the whirl of chances
Drawn prizes to the brim !

III.

The widow and the childrenless,
The more than twice bereft !
Out of Thy store of mercies,
God ! is one mercy left ?
Come back ! I care not whether
Ye bring honour or disgrace ;
All that I care for is to keep
My heart in its right place ;

IV.

Not to expend the yearnings
Of the mother on the dead—
Not to destroy the illusion
To which my soul is wed.
Why should I care for country ?
Why should I care for king ?
In concert both have robb'd me
Of every precious thing.

V.

To murmur is rebellion,
My staid confessor saith,
The droppings of his snaky tongue
Are poison to my faith.
What knoweth *he* of trials—
Of a mother's, least of all,
Reft in the prime of widowhood
Of hope beyond recal?

VI.

The altar and its hungerings
Bring famine to desire—
Darken the light of promises,
And quench the inner fire—
Would, if they could, extinguish
The noblest part of man—
The God-part—chos'n interpreter
Of the Eternal plan.

VII.

O Reason! hast thou left thy throne,
And Mercy hers, that priests
Should chide us in our agony,
Yet wallow at our Feasts?
Among them, who is backward
To keep the laughing Tryst?
But who of them is ready aye
To work the work of Christ?

VIII.

And ye! who wield the sceptre,
And go grandly in your time,
With a kingly gait and bearing
Enacting the sublime,
Why is it that your soarings
And plottings should redound
Only to wail and suffering,
And the lying under ground?

IX.

Will God not sound the trumpet,
And send His Angels forth
To hurtle red revenges
On the armies of the North—
The widow's cause to vindicate,
And justify His own ;
What was humbled on the Altar
To lift up to the Throne?

X.

The guise of the War Demon,
Alas! that it should be
Torn from the mantle of the Bard,
From robes of Liberty—
That singing of the Hearth and Home
Should stalk across the land,
A Phantom and a Phantasy,
With sabre in its hand!

XI.

What are the songs of Peoples,
 And Patriotic Airs,
 But incantations of the Fiend
 To stifle Christian prayers?
 What is the love of Country
 But a *lie* in God's own face,
 Who made the same sun shine on all,
 And tenders all His grace?

XII.

My sons are dead! My sons are dead!
 Buried, I know not where,
 In alien earth—the home to me
 Is a region of Despair!
 No other home, no other hearth,
 No other Country now,
 And I the Patriot mother once?
 Be broken, evil vow!

P H A S E S E C O N D .

I.

The Iron Cross was sent to me :
 Go, bauble, to the fire !
 Device of groaning Tyranny,
 Instructed by the liar !

Wert thou a bullet, I would fain
 Give life to the inert,
 So the grim Despot's gift of grace
 Should find way to his heart.

II.

My sons! my sons! where is the home
 Ye fought for? where the hearth?
 And all the glory vaunted of?—
 Six narrow feet of earth!
 Where is the Patriot spirit
 That led you out to fight?
 Has *it* a Resurrection, too,
 In the promised Day of Light?

III.

When the graves ope will ye strut forth
 With weapon in your hand,
 And in your mouth the eulogies
 Of a great Fatherland?
 The songs by which a Syren—
 The Syren of the Rhine—
 Lured to the cruel battle-field
 To die without a sign?

IV.

Oh! come, thou Day of Reckoning!
 Come, Judgment of the King!
 Come, thou discrowning Messenger!
 Bring healing on thy wing.

The strong yoke of the tyrant break,
Their glory turn to shame
Who sit on thrones of corpses,
And murder make their game !

v.

Unclasp the gyves of Serfdom—
The witching dream dispel
That War makes other Empire
Than befits the schemes of Hell—
That the cry evoked of Fatherland
Finds echo from the Throne,
Where Mercy is administered,
And Judgment finds its own !

vi.

Bereft I sit, and desolate,
I moan, but cannot pray
In the spirit of the Christian,
For my Faith has passed away :
And if the Love abideth,
Alas ! the springs are dry
That blended with its flowings
The life of Loyalty.

vii.

Ye Saxon Mothers ! who have staked
Your all in this emprise,
Hear me nor blame—your Fealty
Is more than Sacrifice—

More than stern Duty's offering,
Or your Country's cause demands,
The very Birthright of your sons
Is in the Enslaver's hands.

VIII.

The Dotard you call Father-King,
And hail with loud acclaim,
Is but the base Designer's Tool,
Working his country's shame.
Enough to have repelled the foe,
And humbled the Invader !
Laurels enough !—but not to sate
The arrogant Persuader.

IX.

The Spider lurking in the web
That hides the mouth of Hell,
The fierce Man-devil and his horde
Obey their master well.
Rhineland ! the shout, and Germany !
The King ! the Emperor !
The Farce behind the Tragedy !
Are the rehearsals o'er ?

X.

O Saxon dames ! my Sisters !
Who from this bitter strife
A nobler Future picture forth,
And a more Christian life—

Ye whom the Angel guarded
In passing through the Fire,
Whose sons came scathless from the Fight,
Hugging their heart's desire—

XI.

At what a cost of conscience
Do *they* their honours wear !
Murder and rapine on their hands,
And crimes beyond repair !
I wail mine own dark fortunes,
But more for *you* I wail—
For the red thread of Agony
Inwoven through Saxon tale.

P H A S E T H I R D .

I.

Who went out all untainted,
A radiant, hopeful band,
Clad in the honest virtues
Of a smiling Fatherland,
Come back, a troop of ruffians,
Given to lust and wine,
To vex the peace of households,
And shame their native Rhine.

II.

Black-throated, like the mitrailleuse,
 And cruel as the shell,
 Battered and gashed and grimy,
 Hot from the heart of Hell!
 Are these the noble Teutons
 In whose hands the balance lies,
 Through conquest and the Grace of God,
 Of Europe's destinies?

III.

Ye Saxon Mothers! hearken me!
 Than *mine*, *your* cross is worse:
Mine is a sore and suffering,
 But *yours* a very curse.
Mine has this consolation,
My sons have passed the fire;
 They fell in doing duty
 As did their noble sire:

IV.

Yours, ah! a cross how bitter!
 A fate how sad and stern!
 Go where you will, the Spectre
 Meets you at every turn;
 Dark'ning the Hearth and Doorway,
 At the Baptismal Font,
 Round the fencings of the Altar
 Glideth a Demon gaunt.

v:

O Liberty ! O Liberty !
 To this pitch has it come,
 That Serfdom has assumed thy name
 By right of Trump and Drum ?
 That a great Nation sells its soul
 To everlasting shame,
 Because a sceptred Lunatic
 Must have his day of Fame ?

vi.

Because to work the purposes
 Of his chaotic mind,
 Two of the Devil's delegates
 Press forward and behind—
 Two cunning men of Belial,
 Who know the nation well,
 And where to cast the glamour,
 And how to bind the spell—

vii.

To arouse the warlike ardour
 By Fable and by Song,
 By dragging from its resting place
 Some unexpiated Wrong ;
 Two subtle, hoary sorcerers,
 Vers'd in the craft of spells,
 Each in his groove of industry
 Working the parallels.

VIII.

O King ! assuming Empire,
 Thou speakest to thy God
 As if thou shar'st the Throne Supreme,
 And Heav'n bow'd at thy nod ;
 Thou art well back'd. Believe me !
 The tools that are thy trust
 Are hollowing thy Kingdom's grave,
 And will trample on its dust !

IX.

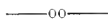
Once more, my Saxon Sisters !
 Hear me ! The hour is late—
 Idle are words of sympathy
 To stem the course of Fate ;
 But surely in their utterance
 Is this measure of relief,
 That, having felt its poignancy,
 I can divide the grief !

X.

When to your destined Future
 I strain the aching eye,
 The wail of my green sorrow
 Becomes a grateful cry.
 Mine own dark trouble vanisheth
 Before the woes in store
 For *you*, beloved Matrons !
 And I murmur now no more,

XI.

But cease the wringing of the hands,
 And raise them clasp'd on high,
 In thanks that God hath spared me this
 Red cup of Misery !
 Oh, blot the page from History !
 Tear out the crimsoned leaf !
 Leave all but this in Mystery,
 "Grief draweth unto Grief?"

*LINES TO A FAVOURITE DOG.*

OBIE : OBIT JANUARY 1873.

I.

My shadow ! my lov'd shadow !—not my only,
 Thank God for this ! I've parted with to-day,
 Obie ! poor Obie ! Oh ! my heart is wae,
 And all the landscape of my future lonely.

II.

How I shall miss thee in the summer-tide,
 While sauntering with my wand up Teviotdale—
 The merry wagging of thy glossy tail—
 Thy happy gambols at the river-side—

III.

The joyous ringing of thy wanton tongue,
That woke to life the echo of its joy,
And in me stirred the feelings of the boy,
A thousand thoughts, unlettered and unsung !

IV.

The Love and Worship beaming from an eye
That drowned in jet a living diamond,
And strove with gaze affectionate and fond
To read my inmost wishes and reply !

V.

Obie ! poor Obie ! of thy tragic fate
To whisper even, knowing as I know,
The dealing is of an o'erpowering blow
That leaves me tearful and disconsolate.

VI.

Was I thy deity, tried follower ?
Often I asked thee, and the mute reply
Was given by thy tail and earnest eye.
Oh ! had I been as true a worshipper

VII.

Of the great God as thou wert unto me,
I could have held my head up as a prophet,
And, by example, rescued souls from Tophet,
But such high privilege was not to be !

VIII.

Obie ! thine ashes in my garden laid
Are not less dear than dust of kith and kin,
If so to hold them, some regard a sin,
They're welcome ! Sinning so, is God obeyed !





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