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To

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI,

WHOSE EARLY FRIENDSHIP

BRIGHTENED MANY DAYS OF MY LIFE,

AND WHOM I NEVER CAN FORGET.

W. A.

811330



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FLOWERS AND MONTHS.

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FLOWER PIECES.

'Beauty too is infinite.'

FLOWER PIECES AND OTHER POEMS
by William Allingham, with two de-
signs by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Note.—‘The Maids of Elfinmere’ woodcut has for some years been very rare and much sought after. The copies now published are all that remain from the original printing, those on large paper being selected impressions. ‘The Queen’s Page’ has never before been made public: the circumstances in which it was designed are described in the volume.



FLOWER PIECES.



FLOWERS AND MONTHS.

I.

DAISY.

O DAISY—' Day's Eye '—on this New Year's Day
Opening thy circlet on our grassy mount
To greet the low-arch'd Sun far south-away,
As mystically perfect each small ray
As the vast billow of light and life whose fount,
Glorious beyond conception, yet doth count
Only as one flow'r in God's garden,—yea,
Face, little Bloom, our King-Orb, front to front.

Ye both are creatures of one substance wrought
In deeps beyond our subtlest exploration,
Thence into living form and due relation
Lifted by power that works in beauty : nought
So made but with its home too in Man's thought,
Microcosm of the whole divine creation.

II.

SNOWDROP.

(In Time of War.)

FAIR Maid of February—drop of snow
 Enchanted to a flow'r, and therewithin
 A dream of April's green—who without sin
Conceived wast, but how no man may know :
 I would thou mightest, being of heavenly kin,
Pray for us all (thy lips are pure, altho'
 The soil be soak'd with tears and blood), to win
Some ruth for human folly, guilt and woe.

A flitting phantasy and fond conceit !
 Yet mark this little white-green bell, three-cleft,
 Nor say of miracles the Earth's bereft.
Lo, for our comfort, here is one complete :
 And after this the whole new spring-time left,
And all the roses that make summer sweet.

III.

DAFFODIL.

GOLD tassel upon March's bugle-horn,
Whose blithe reveille blows from hill to hill
And every valley rings—O Daffodil!
What promise for the season newly born?
Shall wave on wave of flow'rs, full tide of corn,
O'erflow the world, then fruited Autumn fill
Hedgerow and garth? Shall tempest, blight, or chill
Turn all felicity to scathe and scorn?

Tantarrara! the joyous Book of Spring
Lies open, writ in blossoms; not a bird
Of evil augury is seen or heard:
Come now, like Pan's old crew we'll dance and sing,
Or Oberon's; for hill and valley ring
To March's bugle-horn,—Earth's blood is stir'd.

IV.

PRIMROSE.

THE rancour of the East Wind quell'd, a thrush
 Joyfully talking on through glittering rain,
 O see the yellow tufts along the lane,
Crowding the copse round every budded bush,
Dotting the dingle by its brooklet's gush,
 And elm-path's mossy border,—who not fain
To drink their tender sweetness, cool and fresh,
 The very breath of Spring, return'd again ?

The Child's Flow'r, in the childhood of the year :
Our slopes and woods but yesterday were drear ;
 Now all the country breaks into a smile
Of Primroses, and Youth is full of cheer ;
 This fragrant vernal breeze in some, the while,
Waking old thoughts, mnutterably dear.

V.

HAWTHORN.

A GREEN world, pranked with flow'rs, and fill'd with
songs ;

And if our woodlands have their own May-Queen,
Surely to thee, fair May, this crown belongs,

With cluster'd pearls upon thy robe of green,
And broideries of white bloom ; or all one sheen
Thou and thy maidens, worshipp'd by the throngs
In various verdure—tho' sad Yew is seen
Still with the black cloak round his ancient wrongs.

Soft winds o'er sunlit grass bear news of thee.

Blue, darkening, feels the moonrise. Then, elate
Thy coaxing Nightingales whose love is great
For thee, sweet Thorn, not sharp as feign'd to be,
Call hearts and lips—how loth to separate !—
Into the shadow of the trysting-tree.

VI.

WILD ROSE.

SOME innocent girlish Kisses by a charm
 Changed to a flight of small pink Butterflies,
 To waver under June's delicious skies
Across gold-sprinkled meads—the merry swarm
A smiling powerful word did next transform
 To little Roses mesh'd in green, allies
 Of earth and air, and everything we prize
For mirthful, gentle, delicate, and warm.

See, Rosie! sure thy sister-flow'r it is
 (*Rosa Sylvestris* one hath named thee well);
Methinks I could imagine gloomy Dis
 Whirling you, with a wildrose wreath, to—dwell
In Hades. Only one thing sweet as this,
 One thing—come closer—nay, I'll never tell!

VII.

HONEYSUCKLE.

FIRST a cloud of fragrance. Then one sees
Coronets of ivory, coral, and gold,
Full of luscious treasure for the bees,
In their hedgerow-wreathage manifold
Clustering, or outswinging at their ease,
Watching in the hayfield those who hold
Scythe and rake, or overpeering bold
Dusty wayfarers 'twixt roadside trees.

Honeysuckle-scented Summer Night !
Leaves above and dewy woods around,
Save the purring nightjar not a sound,
Save the tender glowing stars no light,—
Thou hast hid thy lovers out of sight,
Bower'd, or wandering through enchanted ground.

VIII.

MEADOWSWEET.

THROUGH grass, through amber'd cornfields, our slow
Stream—

 Fringed with its flags and reeds and rushes tall,
 And Meadowsweet, the chosen from them all
By wandering children, yellow as the cream
Of those great cows—winds on as in a dream
 By mill and footbridge, hanlet old and small
(Red roofs, gray tower), and sees the sunset gleam
 On mullion'd windows of an ivied Hall.

There, once upon a time, the heavy King
 Trode out its perfume from the Meadowsweet,
 Strown like a woman's love beneath his feet,
In stately dance or jovial banqueting,
When all was new ; and in its wayfaring
 Our Streamlet curved, as now, through grass and
 wheat.

IX.

HEATHER.

VAST barren hills and moors, cliffs over lakes,
Great headlands by the sea—a lonely land !
With Fishers' huts beside a yellow strand
Where wave on wave in foam and thunder breaks,
Or else a tranquil blue horizon takes
Sunlight and shadow. Few can understand
The poor folk's ancient tongue, sweet, simple, grand,
Wherein a dreamy old-world half awakes.

And on these hills a thousand years ago
Their fathers wander'd, sun and stars for clock,
With minds to wing above and creep below ;
Heard what we hear, the ocean's solemn shock,—
Saw what we see, this Heather-flow'r aglow,
Empurpling league-long slope and crested rock.

X.

IVY.

GREEN leaves, green flow'rs, green berries, gothic fret
 Of woven green, from year to century,—
 On ground, wall, wayside, mountain-crag, old tree,
 In town or wilderness, the living net
 Of Ivy richly clothes bare poverty,
 Adds to the stateliest house a beauty yet,
 Pathos to ruin'd arch and parapet,
 With cottage, church-tower, tomb, can well agree.

No luck misfits thee, Ivy, great or mean,
 Mirthful or solemn ; right for Pluto's bower,
 Bacchus's jolly garland. Now, serene,
 You welcome winter, choose for time to flower
 The misty month when most things crouch and
 cower.
 Green is Youth's colour. Hail, Prince Evergreen !

XI.

CHRYSANTHEMUM.

THE rustic family of Oxeyes claim
A royal Cousin, clad in purple and gold,
Pearl, ruby, fleecy colours such as fold
The couching sun, and with a lofty name,
Chrysanthemum—appearing bright and bold
To startle poor November with a flame
Of sumptuous flowerage, making summer tame,
And flush with Eastern pomp the dark and cold.

Voyager from Japan and broad Cathay,
The slant-eyed Yellow People love thee much
(All Humans love a flow'r), and know the way
To fix their garden favourite with fine touch
In shapes of art: how joyful we to clutch
Their gifts—but shall we clasp their hands one day

XII.

GORSE.

BLOOM of the Common, common bloom, gold honey,
Sweet like a healthy life in every season,
Nature still grows thee, Gorse, regales her bees on
Stretches of English land, wide, windy, sunny,
Free from the fetters of that monster, Money,
Big with delusive promise full of treason ;
Harbours the wren, the furzeling, and the coney,
Feeds goose and ass there,—Soul too, lord of
reason.

Wild wealth of merry May, of dim December !
Swedish Linnaeus fell upon his knees
To thank with joy the Everliving Power
(No scraps of lore forbade him to remember)
Giving such wondrous beauty to a Flower,
To Man the beauty-loving eye that sees.

FLOWERS AND POETS.

*Long years ago these Flowers were cull'd,
Entwining gentle Names:
By younger hands be others pull'd
To garland other fumes.*

PRELUDE.

LIKENESS, offer found than sought
Or by wit's exertion wrought,
Here 'tween two delights exprest,
In the various tinge is drest
Playing on it from affection's
Sympathizing recollections.
When you find the fancy just,
Wreath the Blossom round the Bust.
Nor of Fancy's birth may be
Every correspondency.
Say that matter's but expansion
Of that force whose central mansion
Is the soul that each man shares,
And so each like Atlas bears
Earth on's shoulders—in his head,
Here involved, what's there outspread ;
Thus each modal element
A faculty doth represent,
And the beauty dreamed in Flowers
Mind's distinct poetic powers—
Poured in both from one completeness
Into various moulds of sweetness ;
Say that we, in scanning over
Do not fancy, but discover
Where the Inner's like the Outer :
Then, who'er will be a doubter,
Let him prove it is not so.
I meantime my guesses show ;
And my fellow-children bid
Search where mother's hand hath hid.

WALLFLOWER.

THIS dark-red Wallflower seemeth well to me
DAN CHAUCER'S emblem meetest for to be :
So rich it is, yet sturdy in its hue ;
So sweet in scent, yet very wholesome too ;
So freshly thriving in a homely place,
Yet in the rarest knots a welcome grace.

HONEYSUCKLE.

ONE summer noon, all carelessly dispreed
Where lush green trails a thickest bower did form,
I gazed on trumpet-blossoms overhead
Dropping with honey sweetness, amber-warm,
Till sleep came softly. Oh, what maiden charm
Flush'd dainty-bright that bower, in vision seen !
What noble knighthood there did swiftly arm
For high emprises of the Faëry Queen !
Murmuring a word, I woke—'twas SPENSER'S name I
ween.

ROSES.

ALL Roses be the crown for SHAKESPEARE'S head,
The half-green buddings and the bossy blooms,
Virginal white and tender maiden-blush,
Nor that rejected where a canker's hid
To move us more than beauty, rival flow'rs
Embracing here of York and Lancaster,
Shy wildings from the forest, proud ones woo'd
By nightingales in gardens of the South,
Or worn by Cleopatra,—rose on rose,
Roses from every region of the world !

Vicegerent to Queen Flora, free thou giv'st
Thy royalty the air, thy favours fling
To cottage threshold or a palace-hall,
Or delicately wreath the wayside hedge ;
All zones are native to thee ; never sun
Can scorch the whiteness of thy pearly brow,
Or wan the flushing of thy chereb cheek ;
Unsickly is thy spirit, and breathes out
Exhilaration, buoyancy and triumph,
Wedded to richness without paragon ;
That even thy cast-off leaves are precious things,
And thy nice essence of a dearer rate
Than the oft-furnaced gold,—O rarest thou
And commonest, most cheap, most prizable,
Of all the Flowers in garden or in field,
Of all that earth from east to west can yield !

AGAVE.

AMID a stately space of garden ground,
 Proud of its old ancestral seat in ken
 Of Andes or of Appalachian hills,
 The AGAVE towers, and step by step is built
 Above its weighty leaves the mass of bloom,
 Slow-nurtured pyramid, with which compared,
 Flowers at its base appear like shepherds' huts
 Round those Nilotic structures that beheld
 Isis and Orus and the Memphian Gods,
 Long ruin'd, they still firm.

For whom but thee
 (Although of foreign stock its pilèd wealth),
 O great Blind Man of England, to whose sight,
 Cancell'd from earth, unroll'd the Wars of Heaven
 And sweetness of the primal Paradise,—
 For whom but thee, this mighty Agave blows ?

HYACINTH.

FOR KEATS, O Hyacinthus, thus dost show
 Thy sumptuous curling bells of crispèd snow,
 Ingrainèd pure as snow's first feathering,
 Or dyèd like the richness of Night's wing,
 Or sapphire morn, or roseate even-bloom,
 And loaden down with luscious perfume.
 Were but thine old inscription legible
 'Twould suit our modern loss too sadly well.

EGYPTIAN LOTOS.

A MIGHTY stream from undiscover'd fountain
Pours through an ancient and deserted lands,
With cities of the dead along its mountains,
Tombs of forgotten kings amid its sand,
And shatter'd temples, where the priestly band
With all their gods have moulder'd ;—on its tide
This necromantic Lily doth expand,
Unveiling like a pale and queenly bride,
And float—as loved to float ALASTOR dreamy-eyed.

SWEETBRIAR.

LEIGH HUNT, the bloom I name for thine
Is pretty, pointed Eglantine ;
Flusht with the gentlest garden hue,
Yet with a wilding freshness too ;
With fragrant breath in fine flower-lips,
And fragrance to green finger-tips ;
And all its sweetness sweeter yet,
With dews or showery droppings wet.
For not in blossom books alone
Thy Poetry and Love are shown ;
And tearful trials of this earth
But draw their richest essence forth.

BLUEBELL OF SCOTLAND.

OF all that bloom in field or fell,
 O SCOTT of Scots, how passing well
 The Scottish flow'r, the wild Bluebell,
 May be assign'd to you.
 On breezy heath it nods to greet
 The happy rover's bounding feet,
 Whose eye with welcome laughs to meet
 The glance of kindly blue ;
 Or on some mouldering donjon tow'r
 Waves in the wind its slender flow'r
 Where 'scutcheon'd banners flew—
 A bright existence, springing gay
 From time's despoil and power's decay.

JASMIN.

THE colour'd sunset's waning glow,
 The coy sparks trembling forth on high,
 The summer moon, alighting slow
 Amid the purple summer sky,
 Melt through these dim and fragil bars
 Our dream-enfolding Jasmin weaves ;
 While scarce its own white scented stars
 Divide their shadowy heav'n of leaves.
What dreams are in the dusk afloat ?—
 A ruin'd 'Dragon on the Heath,'
 Mount Ida, Locksley, Camelot ;
 A Poet with a Jasmin wreath.

TIGER-LILY.

THIS is an Indian sun, well-nigh,
 And the hour in a deep green shade to lie.
 But strolling off from your palanquin
 As though in your English barouche you'd been,
 If there should ray through the forest gloom edge,
 Under the jungle-grass's white plumage,
 Two sudden stars of fierce red fire
 Just in front, and nigher and nigher
 Crawling, you saw—and those eyes unwinking
 Tied you from running, upheld you from sinking,
 Till the claw'd yellow Strength all swarthy barr'd,
 With that serpentine tail stretched stiff and hard
 Should crash——

Our gentle garden-border,
 Can it feed us with fancies of murder?
 Lily that set us off on such freaks
 Rich with dark splendid spots and streaks,
 A crown on a sceptre—blame you? or else us?
 Surely not *him*!—but see 'Paracelsus.'

GARLANDS.

IN idle shade to mark them one by one
 We may not loiter, for the waning hours
 Through garden, field, and woodland haste us on,
 To match no meaner flowers.

This Passion-Flow'r, the delicate and strange
 And dim, as though half-faded into air
 By enchantment, or awaiting some high change,
 Let none but COLERIDGE wear.

Midst quaintly crumpled leaves the Violet
 Hides close and warm its tufts of sweetness blue,
 For HOOD ;—and if his flower be softly wet,
 Say, is it more than due ?

Aspiring, shrinking, Lily of the Vale,
 The word ' ELIZABETH ' is faintly toll'd
 From all thine arching chime of silver pale
 In dark green turret-fold.

Run, children ! run away to MARY HOWITT
 With early Primrose-bunches and a song.
 To BARNES (true poet, if not many know it)
 Let Apple-bloom belong.

' The milk-white Thorn ' where ploughmen at mid-
 day
 And lovers in the friendly gloaming sit,
 And every wild-bird brings its sweetest lay,
 For whom but BURNS is fit ?

Geranium, thou, methinks, for EMERSON ;
 The choice and home-familiar, featly blent,
 Mystical naivety, fresh antiqueness, run
 Through shape, fine hues, and scent,

And THOMAS CARLYLE—think you he being named
 Among the Muse's children, 'twould offend her ?
 Or Queen of Flow'rs refuse the Cactus claim'd
 For ruggedness and splendour ?

The shadows fall : so, quickly as we may,
 We touch for HERRICK, never sad or cold,
 This Meadowsweet that borders fields of hay ;
 For CHAPMAN, Marygold :

The flaming Peony with MARLOWE mate ;
 The Rhododendron give to DRYDEN'S charge ;
 To BEN the Dahlia, burly-elaborate,
 Iris to holy GEORGE.

Lavender, QUARLES ; Sweet-William's honest face,
 MARVEL ; JOHN FLETCHER must Convolvulus get ;
 POPE the Camellia, nursed for lamplight grace ;
 GOLDSMITH the Mignonette.

The dark sward's spirits of early Crocus flame,
 Purple, and Or, and Argent, do thou take,
 Boy CHATTERTON ; and 'crown'd with a golden
 dream,'
 This angel Lily, BLAKE.

ELLIOTT'S, a Foxglove from the Yorkshire fells ;
 This double Cowslip must be COWPER'S right ;
 HEMANS'S Gillyflower ; and L. E. L.'s,
 Anemone, the white.

Rich Pansy, gravely 'freakt.' to WORDSWORTH goes ;
 To BYRON, Sunflower ; MOORE, the gay Sweet-Pea,
 Flower-butterfly ; where SOUTHEY'S blazon grows
 In Garden Poppy see.

Give HOGG the Wild Thyme from a fairy knowe ;
 And RAMSAY, Broom ; and ALLAN CUNNINGHAM
 Scotch Whin ; and CLARE the Buttercup. Allow ;
 For Daisy, BLOOMFIELD'S claim.

May LANDOR not disdain thee, Asphodel !
 Ah, EDGAR POE, the Dwale, the Dwale's thine own.
 Methinks the wholesome Heather suits thee well,
 Brave Irish FERGUSON.

CAMPBELL, the choice Auricula is thine,
 Cultured, compact ; the Hollyhock's firm pride
 MACAULAY'S ; Double Rocket, hearty and fine,
 For CLOUGH we lay aside.

Light melts from heav'n. Our curfew be the same
 As folds the latest of these happy clans.
 New bridals may another day proclaim,
 And none forbid the banns !

POSTSCRIPT.

ONCE (oh, not immodest deem
 Your friend, if he relate his dream)
 Fast asleep as I was laid
 In translucent summer shade,
 FLORA came, and stooping down,
 Bless'd me also with a crown,
 For adding, over all her dowers,
 One new sweetness to the Flowers.
 Woven of what bloom or leaf
 Never knew I : to my grief,
 When I lifted hand to head
 Swift th' unreal honour fled.



TO EÄRINÉ.

‘Eäriné,
 ‘Who had her very being, and her name,
 With the first knots or buddings of the Spring.’
 BEN JONSON.

SAINT VALENTINE kindles the crocus,
 Saint Valentine wakens the birds ;
 I would that his power could evoke us
 In tender and musical words !

I mean, us unconfident lovers,
 Whose doubtful or stammering tongue
 No help save in rhyming discovers ;
 Since what can't be said may be sung.

So, Fairest and Sweetest, your pardon
 (If no better welcome) I pray !
 There's spring-time in grove and in garden ;
 Perchance it may breathe in my lay.

I think and I dream (did you know it ?)
 Of somebody's eyes, her soft hair,
 The neck bending whitely below it,
 The dress that she chances to wear.

Each tone of her voice I remember,
 Each turn of her head, of her arm ;
 Methinks, had she faults out of number,
 Being hers, they were certain to charm.

From her every distance I measure ;
 Each mile of a journey, I say—
 ‘I'm so much the nearer my treasure,’
 Or ‘so much the farther away.’

And love writes my almanac also ;
The good days and bad days occur,
The fasts and the festivals fall so,
By seeing or not seeing her.

Who know her, they're happy, they only ;
Whatever she looks on turns bright ;
Wherever she is not, is lonely ;
Wherever she is, is delight.

So friendly her face that I tremble,
On friendship so sweet having ruth :
But why should I longer dissemble ?
Or will you not guess at the truth ?

And that is—dear Maiden, I love you !
You sweetest and brightest and best !—
Good luck to the roof-tree above you,
The floor where your footstep is press'd !

May some new deliciousness meet you
On every new day of the Spring ;
Each flow'r in its turn bloom to greet you,
Lark, mavis, and nightingale sing !

May kind vernal powers in your bosom
Their tenderest influence shed !
May I when the Rose is in blossom
Enweave you a crown, white and red !

WAYSIDE FLOWERS.

PLUCK not the wayside-flower,
It is the traveller's dower ;
A thousand passers-by
Its beauties may espy,
May win a touch of blessing
From Nature's mild caressing.
The sad of heart perceives
A violet under leaves
Like some fresh-budding hope ;
The primrose on the slope
A spot of sunshine dwells,
And cheerful message tells
Of kind renewing power ;
The nodding bluebell's dye
Is drawn from happy sky.
Then spare the wayside-flower !
It is the traveller's dower.

THE CHOICE.

Now let me choose a native blossom,
Ere I quit the sunny fields,
Fittest for my Lucy's bosom,
Hill, or brake, or meadow yields.

Flag or Poppy I'll not gather,
Briony or Pimpernel ;
Scented Thyme or sprouting Heather,
Though they please me both so well.

Purpling Vetches, crimson Clover,
Pea-bloom winglets, pied and faint,
Bluebell, Windflow'r, pass them over ;
Sober Mallow, Orchis quaint.

Striped Convolvulus in hedges,
Columbine, and Mountain-Pink ;
Lilies, floating seen through sedges,
Violets nestling by the brink ;

Creamy Elder, blue Germander,
Betony that seeks the shade ;
Nor where Honeysuckles wander
May that luscious balm persuade.

Sad Forget-me-not's a token
Full of partings and mishaps ;
Leave the Foxglove spire unbroken,
Lest the Fairies want for caps.

Crimson Loose-strife, Crowfoot, Pansy,
Golden Gorse, or golden Broom,
Eyebright cannot fix my fancy,
Nor the Meadowsweet's perfume.

Azure, scarlet, pink or pearly,
Rustic friends in field or grove,
Each of you I prize full dearly,
None of you is for my Love.

Wild-Rose ! delicately flushing
All the border of the dale—
Art thou like a pale cheek blushing,
Or a red cheek turning pale ?

Is it sorrow ? is it gladness ?
Lover's hopes, or lover's fears ?
Or a most delicious sadness,
Mingled up of smiles and tears ?

Come !—no silky leaflet shaken—
To a breast as pure and fair ;
Come ! and thoughts more tender waken
Than thy fragrant spirit there.

IN A GARDEN.

BETWIXT our apple-boughs, how clear
 The violet western hills appear,
 As calmly ends another day
 Of Earth's long history,—from the ray
 She with slow majestic motion
 Wheeling continent and ocean
 Into her own dim shade, wherethrough
 The Outer Heavens come into view,
 Deep beyond deep.

In thought conceive
 This rolling Globe whereon we live
 (For in the mind, and there alone
 A picture of the world is shown),
 How huge it is, how full of things,
 As round the royal SUN it swings,
 In one of many subject rings—
 Carrying our Cottage with the rest,
 Its rose-lawn and its martin's nest.

But, number every grain of sand
 Wherever salt wave touches land ;
 Number in single drops the sea ;
 Number the leaves on every tree ;
 Number Earth's living creatures, all
 That run, that fly, that swim, that crawl ;
 Of sands, drops, leaves, and lives, the count
 Add up into one vast amount ;
 And then, for every separate one
 Of all those, let a flaming SUN
 Whirl in the boundless skies, with each
 Its massy planets, to outreach
 All sight, all thought : for all we see,
 Encircled with Infinity,
 Is but an island.

Look aloft,
 The stars are gathering. Cool and soft
 The twilight in our garden-croft
 Purples the crimson-folded rose,
 (O tell me how so sweet it grows)
 Makes gleam like stars the cluster'd white;
 And Beauty too is infinite.

AT A WINDOW.

To ———

SEARCH the round Earth, and Heavens afar,
 Man is the highest thing you find :
 Yet all the powers of all mankind
 Drawn to a point, could never make
 One scented little Jasmin-Star
 Of these that by our window shake
 As stirs the fitful evening wind,
 Showing, in purple depth between
 The frondage, Sirius glancing keen.

Look back into the twilight room,
 And see amid the tender gloom
 Our favourite Picture glimmering rich,
 Our dear Greek Goddess in her niche,
 Our fifty priceless Books a-row,
 And Music where she mildly waits
 To open with a touch Heaven's gates.
 Say hath not Art, man's proper power,
 Its world of miracles to show ?
 The boundless world of star and flower,
 All that exists, above, below,

Is chaos, blind and deaf and dumb,
Until within the Soul it come
(That essence of its gross), perceive
Itself at last, and instant weave
A Universe of Beauty, wrought
Of interflow, within, without,—
Soul's joy : which in its own fine ways
Art expresses and conveys.

How Nature hides her music-tones !
More deeply than her precious stones.
How we have found and set them ! Nay,
To-night, Love, do not sing or play,
But improvise—*A Starry Night,*
And Beauty too is infinite :
Its source the Loving Soul, a Face
Like yours its choicest dwelling-place.





DAY AND NIGHT SONGS.

THESE little Songs,
Found here and there.
Floating in air
By forest and lea,
Or hill-side heather,
In houses and throngs,
Or down by the sea—
Have come together,
How, I can't tell :
But I know full well
No witty goose-wing
On an inkstand begot 'em ;
Remember each place
And moment of grace,
In summer or spring,
Winter or autumn,
By sun, moon, stars,
Or a coal in the bars,
In market or church,
Graveyard or dance,
When they came without search,
Were found as by chance.
A word, a line,
You may say are mine ;
But the best in the songs,
Whatever it be,
To you, and to me,
And to no one belongs.

SPRING.

THE LOVER AND BIRDS.

WITHIN a budding grove,
 In April's ear sang every bird his best,
 But not a song to pleasure my unrest,
 Or touch the tears unwept of bitter love.
 Some spake, methought, with pity, some as if in jest.
 To every word
 Of every bird
 I listen'd, and replied as it behove.

Scream'd Chaffinch, 'Sweet, sweet, sweet!
 Pretty lovey, come and meet me here!
 'Chaffinch,' quoth I, 'be dumb awhile, in fear
 Thy darling prove no better than a cheat,
 And never come, or fly when wintry days appear.'
 Yet from a twig
 With voice so big,
 The little fowl his utterance did repeat.

Then I, 'The man forlorn
 Hears Earth send up a foolish noise aloft.'
 'And what'll *he* do? what'll *he* do?' scoff'd
 The Blackbird, standing in an ancient thorn,
 Then spread his sooty wings and flitted to the croft
 With cackling laugh:
 Whom I, being half
 Enraged, call'd after, giving back his scorn.

Worse mock'd the Thrush, 'Die! die!
 Oh, could he do it? could he do it? Nay!
 Be quick! be quick! Here, here, here!' (went his
 lay)
 'Take heed! take heed!' then, 'Why? why?
 why? why? why?'
 See—ee now! see—ee now!' (he drawl'd). 'Back!
 back! back! R-r-r-run away!
 O Thrush, be still!
 Or, at thy will,
 Seek some less sad interpreter than I.

'Air, air! blue air and white!
 Whither I flee, whither, O whither, O whither I
 flee!
 (Thus the Lark hurried, mounting from the lea)
 'Hills, countries, many waters glittering bright,
 Whither I see, whither I see! deeper, deeper, deeper,
 whither I see, see, see!
 'Gay Lark,' I said,
 'The song that's bred
 In happy nest may well to heaven make flight.'

'There's something, something sad,
 I half remember'—pip'd a broken strain.
 Well sung, sweet Robin! Robin sung again,
 'Spring's opening cheerily, cheerily! be we glad!
 Which moved, I wist not why, me melancholy mad,
 Till now, grown meek,
 With wetted cheek,
 Most comforting and gentle thoughts I had.

A HOLIDAY.

Out of the city, far away
 With Spring to-day !
Where copses tufted with primrose
 Give me repose,
Wood-sorrel and wild violet
 Soothe my soul's fret,
The pure delicious vernal air
 Blows away care,
The birds' reiterated songs
 Heal fancied wrongs.

Down the rejoicing brook my grief
 Drifts like a leaf,
And on its gently murmuring flow
 Doth glide and go ;
The bud-besprinkled boughs and hedges,
 The sprouting sedges
Waving beside the water's brink,
 Come like cool drink
To fever'd lips, like fresh soft mead
 To kine that feed.

Much happier than the kine, I bed
 My dreaming head
In grass ; I see far mountains blue,
 Like heaven in view,
Green world and sunny sky above
 Alive with love ;
All, all, however came they there,
 Divinely fair.

Is this the better oracle,
 Or what streets tell?
 O base confusion, falsehood, strife,
 Man puts in life!
 Sink, thou Life-Measurer!—I can say
 ‘I’ve lived a day;’
 And Memory holds it now in keeping,
 Awake or sleeping.

IN A SPRING GROVE.

HERE the white-ray’d anemone is born,
 Wood-sorrel, and the varnish’d buttercup;
 And primrose in its purpled green swathed up,
 Pallid and sweet round every budding thorn,
 Gray ash, and beech with rusty leaves outworn.
 Here, too, the darting linnet has her nest
 In the blue-lustred holly, never shorn,
 Whose partner cheers her little brooding breast,
 Piping from some near bough. O simple song!
 O cistern deep of that harmonious rillet,
 And these fair juicy stems that climb and throng
 The vernal world, and unexhausted seas
 Of flowing life, and soul that asks to fill it,
 Each and all these,—and more, and more than
 these!

THE LITTLE DELL.

DOLEFUL was the land,
Dull on every side,
Neither soft nor grand,
Barren, bleak, and wide ;
Nothing look'd with love ;
All was dingy brown ;
The very skies above
Seem'd to sulk and frown.

Plodding sick and sad,
Weary day on day ;
Searching, never glad,
Many a miry way ;
Poor existence lagg'd
In this barren place ;
While the seasons dragg'd
Slowly o'er its face.

Spring, to sky and ground,
Came before I guess'd :
Then one day I found
A valley, like a nest !
Guarded with a spell
Sure it must have been,
This little fairy dell
Which I had never seen.

Open to the blue,
Green banks hemm'd it round ;
A rillet wander'd through
With a tinkling sound ;
Briars among the rocks
Tangled arbours made ;
Primroses in flocks
Grew beneath their shade.

Merry birds a few,
Creatures wildly tame,
Perch'd and sung and flew ;
Timid field-mice came ;
Beetles in the moss
Journey'd here and there ;
Butterflies across
Danced through sunlit air.

There I often redd,
Sung alone, or dream'd ;
Blossoms overhead,
Where the west wind stream'd ;
Small horizon-line,
Smoothly lifted up,
Held this world of mine
In a grassy cup.

The barren land to-day
Hears my last adieu :
Not an hour I stay ;
Earth is wide and new.
Yet, farewell, farewell !
May the sun and show'rs
Bless that Little Dell
Of safe and tranquil hours !

A SEED.

SEE how a Seed, which Autumn flung down,
And through the Winter neglected lay,
Uncoils two little green leaves and two brown,
With tiny root taking hold on the clay,
As, lifting and strengthening day by day,
It pushes red branchlets, sprouts new leaves,
And cell after cell the Power in it weaves
Out of the storehouse of soil and clime,
To fashion a Tree in due course of time ;
Tree with rough bark and boughs' expansion,
Where the Crow can build his mansion,
Or a Man, in some new May,
Lie under whispering leaves and say,
'Are the ills of one's life so very bad
When a Green Tree makes me deliciously glad ?
As I do now. But where shall I be
When this little Seed is a tall green Tree ?

A VERNAL VOLUNTARY.

COME again, delightful Spring,
Hasten, if you love us ;
Let your woodbine-garland swing,
Vault the blue above us !
Nay, already she is here :
Stealthy laughters quiver
Through the ground, the atmosphere,
Wood, and bubbling river.

Sweet the herald west wind blows,
Green peeps out from melting snows ;
Snowdrop-flow'r, and crocus, dawn
With daffodil around the lawn ;
Their bushy rods the shallows gild ;
The clamorous rooks begin to build,
Watch the farmer dig and sow
In his miry fields below,
Gravely follow in the furrows
Picking where his plough unburrows.
Pearl-white lambkins frisk and bleat
Or kneeling tug the kindly teat ;
The roguish rat is creeping nigh
His darksome cavern ; low and high,
Through sun-gleam or soft rainy gloom,
Like children coursing every room
Of a new house, the swallows glance,
Wafted over Spain and France
From the sultry solemn Nile's
Mysterious lakes of crocodiles,
And the desert-lion's roar,
To a greener gentler shore.
Native lark from stair to stair
Of brilliant cloud and azure air

Mounts to the morning's top, and sings
 His merry hymns on trembling wings,
 Tireless, till the cressets high
 Twinkle down from cooler sky.
 What beholds he on this earth ?
 A rising tide of love and mirth.
 —And was it I who lately said,
 'Mirth is fled, and Love is dead,'
 For chill and darkness on the day,
 As on my weak and weary spirit lay ?

Welcome, every breeze and show'r ;
 Sun that courts the blossom ;
 Every new delicious flow'r
 Heap'd for Maia's bosom !

Every bird !—no bird alone,
 Always two together ;
 Spring inspiring every tone,
 Flushing every feather.

Verdure's tufted on the briar
 Like crockets of a minster-spire ;
 Free sprouts the youngling corn ; a light
 Is on the hills ; dim nooks grow bright
 In blossom ; now with scent and sight
 And song, the childhood of the year
 Renews our own ; we see and hear,
 We drink the fragrance, as of yore,—
 A gleam, a thrill, a breath, no more.
 Away, dull musing ! who are these
 Under the fresh-leaved linden trees ?
 Three favourite Children of the Spring,
 Who lightly run, as half on wing,
 Dorothy, Alicia, Mary ;
 Over moorlands wide and airy,

Deep in dells of early flow'rs,
They have been abroad for hours,
Flow'rs themselves, and fairer yet
Than primrose, windflow'r, violet,
Or even June's wild-rose to come.
Frost never touch their opening bloom
The tender fearless life to check !
—Alicia's hat is on her neck,
With flying curls and glowing face
And ringing laugh, she wins the race ;
Her eyes were made for sorrow's cure,
And doubts of Heav'n to reassure.
Veils of fresh and fragrant rain
Sinking over the green plain,
Founts of sunny beams that lie
Scatter'd through the vernal sky,
The million-fold expanding woods,
Are less delightful than these children's moods.

'Tis not life, to pine and cloy ;
Sickness utters treason ;
Best they live, who best enjoy
Every good in season.

Glad, with moisten'd eyes, I learn
April's own caressing :
Children, every month in turn
Bring you three a blessing !

BY THE MORNING SEA.

THE wind shakes up the sleepy clouds
To kiss the ruddied Morn,
And from their awful misty shrouds
The Mountains are new-born :
The Sea lies fresh with open eyes ;
Night-fears and moaning dreams
Brooding like clouds on nether skies,
Have sunk below, and beams
Dance on the floor like golden flies,
Or strike with joyful gleams
Some white-wing'd ship, a wandering star
Of Ocean, piloting afar.

In brakes, in woods, in cottage eaves,
The early birds are rife,
Quick voices thrill the sprinkled leaves
In ecstasy of life ;
With silent gratitude of flow'rs
The morning's breath is sweet,
And cool with dew, that freshly show'rs
Round wild things' hasty feet ;
But heavenly guests of tranquil hours
To inner skies retreat,
From human thoughts of lower birth
That stir upon the waking earth.

Across a thousand leagues of land
The mighty Sun looks free,
And in their fringe of rock and sand
A thousand leagues of sea.
Lo ! I, in this majestic room,
Real as the mighty Sun,
Inherit this day and its doom
Eternally begun.
A world of men the rays illumine,
God's men, and I am one.
But life that is not pure and bold
Doth tarnish every morning's gold.

FOUR ducks on a pond,
A grass-bank beyond,
A blue sky of spring,
White clouds on the wing ;
What a little thing
To remember for years—
To remember with tears !

WINDLASS SONG.

HEAVE at the windlass!—Heave O, cheerly, men !

Heave all at once, with a will !

The tide quickly making,

Our cordage a-creaking,

The water has put on a frill,

Heave O !

Fare you well, sweethearts!—Heave O, cheerly, men !

Fare you well, frolic and sport !

The good ship all ready,

Each dog-vane is steady,

The wind blowing dead out of port,

Heave O !

Once in blue water—Heave O, cheerly, men !

Blow it from north or from south ;

She'll stand to it tightly,

And curtsey politely,

And carry a bone in her mouth,

Heave O !

Short cruise or long cruise—Heave O, cheerly, men !

Jolly Jack Tar thinks it one.

No latitude dreads he

Of White, Black, or Red Sea,

Great icebergs, or tropical sun,

Heave O !

One other turn, and Heave O, cheerly, men !

Heave, and good-bye to the shore !

Our money, how went it ?

We shared it and spent it ;

Next year we'll come back with some more,

Heave O !

THE FIELDS IN MAY.

WHAT can better please,
When your mind is well at ease,
Than a walk among the green fields in May?
To see the verdure new,
And to hear the loud cuckoo,
While sunshine makes the whole world gay :

When the butterfly so brightly
On his journey dances lightly,
And the bee goes by with business-like hum ;
When the fragrant breeze and soft
Stirs the shining clouds aloft,
And the children's hair, as laughingly they come :

When the grass is full of flowers,
And the hedge is full of bowers,
And the finch and the linnet piping clear,
Where the branches throw their shadows
On a footway through the meadows,
With a brook among the cresses winding near.

Any pair of lovers walking
On this footway in sweet talking,
Sweeter silence, often linger and delay,
For the path, not very wide,
Brings them closer, side by side,
Moving gently through the happy fields of May :

Till they rest themselves awhile
At the elm-o'ershaded stile,
When stars begin to tremble in the blue,
Just to hear a nightingale,
Near our village in the vale,
To his sweetheart singing carols fond and true :

Evening wind, and brooklet's flow,
Softly whisper as they go,
Every star throbs with tenderness above ;
Tender lips are sure to meet,
Heart to heart must warmly beat,
When the earth is full and heaven is full of love.

Oh, I would the song I sing
Might to me a sweetheart bring,
For companion through the green fields of May !
She should nestle in my heart,
And we never more should part,
While the summers and the winters roll'd away.

SPRING IS COME.

YE coax the timid verdure,
Along the hills of Spring,
Blue skies and gentle breezes,
And soft clouds wandering !
The quire of birds on budding spray,
Loud larks in ether sing ;
A fresher pulse, a wider day,
Give joy to everything.

The gay translucent morning
Lies glittering on the sea,
The noonday sprinkles shadows
Athwart the daisied lea ;
The round sun's falling scarlet rim
In vapour hideth he ;
The darkling hours are cool and dim,
As vernal night should be.

Our Earth has not grown aged,
With all her countless years ;
She works, and never wearies,
Is glad, and nothing fears :
The glow of air, broad land and wave,
In season re-appears ;
And shall, when vanish in the grave
These human smiles and tears.

Oh, rich in songs and colours,
Thou joy-reviving Spring !
Some hopes are chill'd with winter
Whose term thou canst not bring,
Some voices answer not thy call
When sky and woodland ring,
Some faces come not back at all
With primrose-blossoming.

The distant-flying swallow,
The upward-yearning seed,
Find Nature's promise faithful,
Attain their humble need.
Great Parent ! Thou hast also form'd
These hearts which throb and bleed ;
With love, truth, hope, their life hast warm'd,
And what is best, decreed.

A RAINBOW.

CLOUD rolls up from the west,
Blotting the sun in the sky ;
Rain pours down from its breast,
Stone nor leaf is dry.

Cloud rolls off to the east,
Sun shines out afresh ;
All things, greatest and least,
Laugh in a diamond mesh.

Vast arch springs from the plain,
Lovely, of seven-fold hue,
Built by the sun and rain :
Melting swiftly from view.

Sol, that painter of pow'r,
Shows on his palette there
The colours of every flow'r,
Of earth, of sea, and of air.

It is not seen of the birds
That hop and flutter and trill,
Or the placidly grazing herds,
Or the flock of sheep on the hill.

Storm, shadow, and ray
Triumph and disappear ;
Hour melts into day,
Day melts into year.

Force changes and flows ;
Nothing is lost or spilt.
SOUL, who art watching these shows,
Rate thyself as thou wilt,

Curve and colours are thine,
Thine are the eyes to see :
Natural, human, divine,
This is of Heaven and of Thee.

ACROSS THE SEA.

I WALK'D in the lonesome evening,
And who so sad as I,
When I saw the young men and maidens
Merrily passing by.
To thee, my Love, to thee—
So fain would I come to thee !
While the ripples fold upon sands of gold,
And I look across the sea.

I stretch out my hands ; who will clasp them ?
I call,—thou repliest no word :
Oh, why should heart-longing be weaker
Than the waving wings of a bird !
To thee, my Love, to thee—
So fain would I come to thee !
For the tide's at rest from east to west,
And I look across the sea.

There's joy in the hopeful morning,
There's peace in the parting day,
There's sorrow with every lover
Whose true-love is far away.
To thee, my Love, to thee—
So fain would I come to thee !
And the water's bright in a still moonlight,
As I look across the sea.



SUMMER.

THE MOWERS.

WHERE mountains round a lonely dale
Our cottage-roof enclose,
Come night or morn, the hissing pail
With fragrant cream o'erflows ;
And roused at break of day from sleep,
And cheerly trudging hither,—
A scythe-sweep, and a scythe-sweep,
We mow the grass together.

The fog drawn up the mountain-side
And scatter'd flake by flake,
The chasm of blue above grows wide,
And richer blue the lake ;
Gay sunlights o'er the hillocks creep,
And join for golden weather,—
A scythe-sweep, and a scythe-sweep,
We mow the dale together.

The goodwife stirs at five, we know,
The master soon comes round,
And many swaths must lie a-row
Ere breakfast-horn shall sound ;
Sweet vernal-grass, and foptail deep,
The spike or silvery feather,—
A scythe-sweep and a scythe-sweep,
We mow them down together.

The noon-tide brings its welcome rest
Our toil-wet brows to dry ;
Anew with merry stave and jest
The shrieking hone we ply.
White falls the brook from steep to steep
Among the rocks and heather,—
A scythe-sweep and a scythe-sweep,
We mow the dale together.

For dial, see, our shadows turn ;
Low lies the stately mead :
A scythe, an hour-glass, and an urn—
All flesh is grass, we read.
To-morrow's sky may laugh or weep,
To Heav'n we leave it whether :
A scythe-sweep, and a scythe-sweep,
We've done our task together.

ON THE SUNNY SHORE.

CHECQUER'D with woven shadows as I lay
Among the grass, blinking the watery gleam,—
I saw an Echo-Spirit in his bay,
Most idly floating in the noontide beam.
Slow heaved his filmy skiff, and fell, with sway
Of ocean's giant pulsing, and the Dream,
Buoy'd like the young moon on a level stream
Of greenish vapour at decline of day,
Swam airily,—watching the distant flocks
Of sea-gulls, whilst a foot in careless sweep
Touch'd the clear-trembling cool with tiny shocks,
Faint-circling ; till at last he dropt asleep,
Lull'd by the hush-song of the glittering deep
Lap-lapping drowsily the heated rocks.

THE WAYSIDE WELL.

GREET thee kindly, Wayside Well,
In thy hedge of roses !
Whither drawn by soothing spell,
Weary foot reposes.

With a welcome fresh and green
Wave thy border grasses,
By the dusty traveller seen,
Sighing as he passes.

Cup of no Circean bliss,
Charity of summer,
Making happy with a kiss
Every meanest comer !

Morning, too, and eventide,
Without stint or measure,
Cottage households near and wide
Share thy liquid treasure.

Fair the greeting face ascends,
Like a naiad's daughter,
To the peasant lass that bends
To thy trembling water.

When a lad has brought her pail
Down the twilight meadow,
Tender falls the whisper'd tale,
Soft the double shadow.

Clear as childhood's is thy look,
Nature seems to pet thee,
Fierce July that drains the brook
Hath no power to fret thee.

Shelter'd cool and free from smirch
In thy cavelet shady,
O'er thee in a silver birch
Stoops a forest lady.

Mirror to the Star of Eve,
Maiden shy and slender,
Matron Moon thy depths receive,
Globed in mellow splendour.

Bounteous Spring ! for ever own
Undisturb'd thy station ;
Not to thirsty lips alone
Serving mild donation.

Never come the newt or frog,
Pebble thrown in malice,
Mud or wither'd leaves, to clog
Or defile thy chalice.

Heaven be still within thy ken,
Through the veil thou wearest,—
Glimpsing clearest, as with men,
When the boughs are barest.

HALF-DREAMING.

IN morning mist and dream I lay,
 And saw, methought, two Babes at play,
 In a green garden, girl and boy ;
 With Lucy painting in her chair,
 The sunshine catching golden hair
 At moments when she lifts her head
 To look at these, and share their joy.
 Kind happy Dream !—Ah, sting of woe !
 This *used to be*, long time ago.
 The Mother and the Babes are dead,
 And I am old and lonely : fled
 Life's pleasure now, itself a dream.

How long a dream lasts, who can say,
 Or how it drifts and intershifts ?
 I woke, I saw the sunny beam,
 I heard the shrieking of the swifts,
 Then flung my curtain back. Below,
 Two merry faces all aglow
 Look up, 'Good morning, dear Papa !
 Mamma is coming home to-day.'

Grant us to taste,
 Ye Mystic Powers,
 Our happy hours,—
 O how they haste !

EVEY.

BUD and leaflet, opening slowly,
Woo'd with tears by winds of Spring
Now, of June persuaded wholly,
Perfumes, flow'rs, and shadows bring.

Evey, in the linden alley,
All alone I met to-day,
Tripping to the sunny valley
Spread across with new-mown hay.

Brown her soft curls, sunbeam-sainted,
Golden in the wavering flush ;
Darker brown her eyes are, painted
Eye and fringe with one soft brush.

Through the leaves a careless comer,
Never nymph of fount or tree
Could have press'd the floor of summer
With a lighter foot than she.

Can this broad hat, fasten'd under
With a bright blue ribbon's flow,
Change my pet so much, I wonder,
Of a month or two ago ?

Half too changed to speak I thought her,
Till the pictured silence broke,
Sweet and clear as dropping water,
Into words she sung or spoke.

Few her words ; yet, like a sister,
Trustfully she look'd and smiled ;
'Twas but in my soul I kiss'd her,
As I used to kiss the child.

Shadows, which are not of sadness,
Touch her eyes, and brow above.
As pale wild roses dream of redness,
Dreams her innocent heart of love.

AN EVENING.

A SUNSET'S mounded cloud ;
A diamond evening-star ;
Sad blue hills afar ;
Love in his shroud.

Scarcely a tear to shed ;
Hardly a word to say ;
The end of a summer day ;
Sweet Love dead.

THE QUEEN OF THE FOREST.

BEAUTIFUL, beautiful Queen of the Forest,
 How art thou hidden so wondrous deep ?
 Bird never sung there, fay never morriced,
 All the trees are asleep.
 Nigh the drizzling waterfall
 Plumèd ferns wave and wither ;
 Voices from the woodlands call,
 ‘ Hither, O hither !’
 Calling all the summer day,
 Through the woodlands, far away.

Who by the rivulet loiters and lingers,
 Tranced by a mirror, a murmur, a freak :
 Thrown where the grass’s cool fine fingers
 Play with his dreamful cheek ?
 Cautious creatures gliding by,
 Mystic sounds fill his pleasure,
 Tangled roof inlaid with sky,
 Flowers, heaps of treasure :
 Wandering slowly all the day,
 Through the woodlands, far away.

Late last night, betwixt moonlight and morning,
Came She, unthought-of, and stood by his bed :
A kiss for love, and a kiss for warning,
A kiss for trouble and dread.
Now her flitting fading gleam
Haunts the woodlands wide and lonely ;
Now, a half-remember'd dream
For his comrade only,
He shall stray the livelong day
Through the forest, far away.

Dare not the hiding Enchantress to follow !
Hearken the yew, he hath secrets of hers.
The gray owl stirs in an oaktree's hollow,
The wind in the gloomy firs.
Down among those dells of green,
Glimpses, whispers, run to wile thee ;
Waking eyes have nowhere seen
Her that would beguile thee—
Draw thee on, till death of day,
Through the dusk woods, far away.

IN A BROKEN TOWER.

THE tangling wealth by June amass'd
Left rock and ruin vaguely seen ;
Thick ivy-cables held them fast,
Light boughs descended, floating green.

Slow turn'd the stair, a breathless height,
And far above it set me free,
When all the golden fan of light
Was closing down into the sea.

A window half-way up the wall
It led to ; and so high was that,
The tallest trees were not so tall
That they could reach to where I sat.

Aloft within the moulder'd Tower
Dark ivy fringed its round of sky,
Where slowly, in the deepening hour,
The first faint stars unveil'd on high.

The rustling of the foliage dim,
The murmur of the cool gray tide,
With tears that trembled on the brim,
An echo sad to these I sigh'd.

O Sea, thy ripple's mournful tune !—
The cloud along the sunset sleeps,
The phantom of the golden moon
Is kindled in thy quivering deeps,

Oh, mournfully !—and I to fill,
Fix'd in a ruin-window strange,
Some countless period, watching still
A moon, a sea, that never change !

The guided orb is mounting slow ;
The duteous wave is ebbing fast ;
And now, as from the niche I go,
A shadow joins the shadowy past.

Farewell, dim Ruins, tower and life,
Sadly enrich the distant view !
And welcome, scenes of toil and strife ;
To-morrow's sun arises new.

AFTER SUNSET.

THE vast and solemn company of clouds
Around the Sun's death, lit, incarnadined,
Cool into ashy wan ; as Night enshrouds
The level pasture, creeping up behind
Through voiceless vales, o'er lawn and purpled hill
And hazèd mead, her mystery to fulfil.
Cows low from far-off farms ; the loitering wind
Sighs in the hedge, you hear it if you will,—
Tho' all the wood, alive atop with wings
Lifting and sinking through the leafy nooks,
Seethes with the clamour of a thousand rooks.
Now every sound at length is hush'd away.
These few are sacred moments. One more Day
Drops in the shadowy gulf of bygone things.

IN THE DUSK.

WELCOME, friendly stars, one by one, two by two !
Voices of the waterfall toning in the air ;
And the wavy landscape-outlines blur'd with falling
 dew,
As my rapture is with sadness, because I may not
 share,
And double it by sharing it with *thee*.
— Cloudy fire dies away on the sea.

Calm shadowy Earth ! she lies musing like a saint ;
 Wearing for a halo the pure circlet of the moon ;
From the mountain breathes the night-wind, steadily,
 tho' faint ;
As I am breathing softly, 'Ah ! might some
 heav'nly boon
Bestow thee, my Belov'd One, to my side !'
—Like a full, happy heart flows the tide.

ÆOLIAN HARP.

O PALE green sea,
With long pale purple clouds above—
What lies in me like weight of love ?
What dies in me
With utter grief, because there comes no sign
Through the sun-raying West, or on the dim sea-line ?

O salted air,
Blown round the rocky headlands chill—
What calls me there from cove and hill ?
What falls me fair
From Thee, the first-born of the youthful night ?
Or in the waves is coming through the dusk twilight ?

O yellow Star,
Quivering upon the rippling tide—
Sendest so far to one that sigh'd ?
Bendest thou, Star,
Above where shadows of the dead have rest
And constant silence, with a message from the blest ?

ON THE TWILIGHT POND.

A SHADOWY fringe the fir-trees make,
Where sunset light hath been ;
The liquid thrills to one gold flake,
And Hesperus is seen ;
Our boat and we, not half awake,
Go drifting down the pond,
While slowly calls the rail, 'Crake-crake,'
From meadow-flats beyond.

This happy, circling, bounded view
Embraces us with home ;
To far worlds, kindling in the blue,
Our upward thoughts may roam ;
Whence, with the veil of scented dew
That makes the earth so sweet,
A touch of astral brightness too,
A peace—which is complete.

UNKNOWN BELOV'D ONE.

O UNKNOWN Belov'd One! to the perfect season
 Branches in the lawn make drooping bow'rs;
 Vase and plot burn scarlet, gold, and azure;
 Honeysuckles wind the tall gray turret,
 And pale passion-flow'rs.
 Come thou, come thou to my lonely thought,
 O Unknown Belov'd One.

Now, at evening twilight, dusky dew down-wavers,
 Soft stars crown the grove-encircled hill;
 Breathe the new-mown meadows, broad and misty;
 Through the heavy grass the rail is talking;
 All beside is still.
 Trace with me the wandering avenue,
 Thou Unknown Belov'd One.

In the mystic realm, and in the time of visions,
 I thy lover have no need to woo;
 There I hold thy hand in mine, thou dearest,
 And thy soul in mine, and feel its throbbing,
 Tender, deep, and true;
 Then my tears are love, and thine are love,
 Thou Unknown Belov'd One?

Is thy voice a wavelet on the listening darkness?
 Are thine eyes unfolding from their veil?
 Wilt thou come before the signs of winter—
 Days that shred the bough with trembling fingers,
 Nights that weep and wail?
 Art thou Love indeed, or art thou Death,
 O Unknown Belov'd One?

SERENADE.

Oh, hearing sleep, and sleeping hear,
The while we dare to call thee dear,
So may thy dreams be good, altho'
The loving power thou dost not know.
As music parts the silence,—lo!
Through heaven the stars begin to peep,
 To comfort us that darkling pine
 Because those fairer lights of thine
Have set into the Sea of Sleep.
Yet closèd still thine eyelids keep;
And may our voices through the sphere
 Of Dreamland all as softly rise
As through these shadowy rural dells,
Where bashful Echo somewhere dwells,
And touch thy spirit to as soft replies.
May peace from gentle guardian skies,
Till watches of the dark are worn,
Surround thy bed, and joyous morn
 Makes all the chamber rosy bright!
Good-night!—From far-off fields is borne
The drowsy Echo's faint 'Good-night,'—
 Good-night! Good night!

AUTUMN.

AUTUMNAL SONNET.

NOW Autumn's fire burns slowly along the woods,
And day by day the dead leaves fall and melt,
And night by night the monitory blast
Wails in the key-hole, telling how it pass'd
O'er empty fields, or upland solitudes,
Or grim wide wave; and now the power is felt
Of melancholy, tenderer in its moods
Than any joy indulgent Summer dealt.

Dear friends, together in the glimmering eve,
Pensive and glad, with tones that recognise
The soft invisible dew in each one's eyes,
It may be, somewhat thus we shall have leave
To walk with memory, when distant lies
Poor Earth, where we were wont to live and grieve.

ÆOLIAN HARP.

HEAR you now a throbbing wind that calls
Over ridge of cloud and purple flake ?
Sad the sunset's ruin'd palace-walls,
Dim the line of mist along the lake,—
Even as the mist of Memory.
O the summer-nights that used to be !

An evening rises from the dead
Of long-ago (ah me, how long !)
Like a story, like a song,
Told, and sung, and pass'd away.
Love was there, that since hath fled,
Hope, whose locks are turn'd to gray,
Friendship, with a tongue of truth
And a beating heart of youth,
Wing'd Joy, too, just alighted,
Ever-welcome, uninvited ;
Love and Friendship, Hope and Joy,
With arms about each other twined,
Merrily watching a crescent moon,
Slung to its gold nail of a star,
Over the fading crimson bar,
Like a hunter's horn : the happy wind

Breathed to itself some twilight tune,
And bliss had no alloy.

Against the colours of the west
Trees were standing tall and black,
The voices of the day at rest,
Night rose around, a solemn flood,
With fleets of worlds: and our delightful mood
Rippled in music to the rock and wood ;
Music with echoes, never to come back.
The touch upon my hand is this alone—
A heavy tear-drop of my own.

Listen to the breeze : ' O loitering Time !—
Unresting Time !—O viewless rush of Time !'
Thus it calls and swells and falls,
From Sunset's wasted palace-walls,
And ghostly mists that climb.

ÆOLIAN HARP.

WHAT is it that is gone, we fancied ours ?
O what is lost that never may be told ?—
We stray all afternoon, and we may grieve
Until the perfect closing of the night.
Listen to us, thou gray Autumnal Eve,
Whose part is silence. At thy verge the clouds
Are broken into melancholy gold ;
The waifs of Autumn and the feeble flow'rs
Glimmer along our woodlands in wet light ;
Within thy shadow thou dost weave the shrouds
Of joy and great adventure, waxing cold,
Which once, or so it seem'd, were full of might.
Some power it was, that lives not with us now,
A thought we had, but could not, could not hold.
O sweetly, swiftly pass'd !—air sings and murmurs ;
Green leaves are gathering on the dewy bough :
O sadly, swiftly pass'd !—air sighs and mutters ;
Red leaves are dropping on the rainy mould.
Then comes the snow, unfeathered, vast, and white.
O what is gone from us, we fancied ours ?

AWAKING.

A GOLDEN pen I mean to take,
A book of ivory white,
And in the mornings when I wake
The fair dream-thoughts to write,
Which out of heav'n to love are giv'n,
Like dews that fall at night.
For soon the delicate gifts decay
As stirs the miry, smoky day.

'Sleep is like death,' and after sleep
The world seems new begun,
Its quiet purpose clear and deep,
Its long-sought meaning won ;
White thoughts stand luminous and firm
Like statues in the sun ;
Refresh'd from supersensuous founts
The soul to blotless vision mounts.

'Sleep is like death' Is death like sleep ?
A waftage through still time ?
And when its dreams of dawn shall peep
What strange or alter'd clime
Will they foreshow ? No man may know ;
Though some few souls may climb
So far as faintly to surmise
The master-secret of the skies.

AN AUTUMN EVENING.

Now is Queen Autumn's progress through the land
Her busy, sunbrow subjects all astir,
Preparing loyally on every hand
A golden triumph. Earth is glad of her.

The regal curtainings of clouds on high,
And shifting splendours of the vaulted air,
Express a jubilation in the sky,
That nobly in the festival doth share.

With arching garlands of unfinger'd green,
And knots of fruit, a bower each highway shows ;
Loud busy Joy is herald on the scene
To Gratitude, Contentment, and Repose.

Lately, when this good time was at its best,
One evening found me, with half-wearied pace,
Mounting a hill against the lighted West,
A cool air softly flowing on my face.

The vast and gorgeous pomp of silent sky
Embathed a harvest realm in double gold ;
Sheaf-tented fields of bloodless victory ;
Stackyards, and cottages in leafy fold,

Whence climb'd the blue smoke-pillars. Grassy hill
And furrow'd land their graver colourings lent ;
And some few rows of corn, ungarner'd still,
Like aged men to earth, their cradle, bent.

While reapers, gleaners, and full carts of grain,
With undisturbing motion and faint sound
Fed the rich calm o'er all the sumptuous plain :
Mountains, imbued with violet, were its bound.

Among the sheaves and hedges of the slope,
And harvest-people, I descended slowly,
Field after field, and reach'd a pleasant group
On their own land, that were not strangers wholly

Here stood the Farmer, sturdy man though gray,
In sober parley with a stalwart son,
Who had been reaping in the rank all day,
And now put on his coat, for work was done.

Two girls, like half-blown roses twin, that breathed
The joy of youth untroubled with a care,
Laugh'd to their five-year nephew, as he wreathed
Red poppies through his younger sister's hair.

Their homestead bounds received me with the rest ;
The cheerful mother waiting at the door
Had smiles for all, and welcome for the guest,
And bustling sought the choicest of her store.

O gentle rustic roof, and dainty board !
Kind eyes, frank voices, mirth and sense were
there ;
Love that went deep, and piety that soar'd ;
The children's kisses and the evening pray'r.

Earth's common pleasures, near the ground like grass,
Are best of all ; nor die although they fade :
Dear, simple household joys, that straightway pass
The precinct of devotion, undismay'd.

Returning homeward, soften'd, raised, and still'd ;
Celestial peace, that rare, transcendent boon,
Fill'd all my soul, as heav'n and earth were fill'd
With bright perfection of the Harvest Moon.

ROBIN REDBREAST.

(*A Child's Song.*)

GOOD-BYE, good-bye to Summer !
For Summer's nearly done ;
The garden smiling faintly,
Cool breezes in the sun ;
Our Thrushes now are silent,
Our Swallows flown away,—
But Robin's here, in coat of brown,
With ruddy breast-knot gay.
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear !
Robin singing sweetly
In the falling of the year.

Bright yellow, red, and orange,
The leaves come down in hosts ;
The trees are Indian Princes,
But soon they'll turn to Ghosts ;
The scanty pears and apples
Hang russet on the bough,
It's Autumn, Autumn, Autumn late,
'Twill soon be Winter now.
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear !
And welaway ! my Robin,
For pinching times are near.

The fireside for the Cricket,
The wheatstack for the Mouse,
When trembling night-winds whistle
And moan all round the house ;
The frosty ways like iron,
The branches plumed with snow,—
Alas! in Winter, dead and dark,
Where can poor Robin go ?
Robin, Robin Redbreast,
O Robin dear !
And a crumb of bread for Robin,
His little heart to cheer.

THE SHOOTING STAR.

AUTUMNAL night's deep azure dome
Darken'd the lawn and terrace high,
Where groups had left their music-room
For stary hush and open sky,
To watch the meteors, how they went
Across the stately firmament.

As Walter paced with Josephine,
The loveliest maid of all he knew,
Touch'd by the vast and shadowy scene,
Their friendly spirits closer drew,
Beneath the dim-lit hollow night,
And those strange signals moving bright.

'A wish,' said Walter,—'have you heard—
Wish'd in the shooting of a star,
Fulfils itself?' 'Prepare your word,'
Said Josephine; 'there's nought to mar
The shining chance.' 'And may I tell?'
'O no! for that would break the spell.'

But now a splendid meteor flew,
And ere it died the wish was made,
And won: for in a flash they knew
The happy truth, so long delay'd,
Which months and years had never brought,—
From this bright fleeting moment caught.

THE VALLEY STREAM.

STREAM flowing swiftly, what music is thine !
 The breezy rock-pass, and the storm-wooing pine,
 Have taught thee their murmurs,
 Their wild mountain-murmurs,
 Subdued in thy liquid response to a sound
 Which aids the repose of this pastoral ground,
 Where mingles our valley an awe with the love
 It smiles to the sheltering bastions above :
 Thy cloud-haunted birthplace,
 O Stream, flowing swiftly !

Encircle our meadows with bounty and grace,
 Then move on thy journey with tranquil pace,
 To find the great waters,
 The great ocean-waters,
 Blue, wonderful, boundless to vision or thought ;—
 Thence, thence, might thy musical tidings be brought
 One waft of the tones of the infinite Sea !
 Our gain is but songs of the mountain from thee,
 O Child of the Mountain !
 O Stream of our Valley !

And have we divined what is thunder'd and hiss'd
 Where the lofty ledge glimmers through screens of
 gray mist,
 And raves forth its secrets,
 The heart of its secrets ?
 Or learnt what is hid in thy whispering note
 Mysteriously gather'd from fountains remote
 To the peak and the fell ? O what music is thine,
 Thou swift-flowing River, if soul's ear be fine,
 Far-wafted, prophetic,
 Thou Stream of our Valley !

SOLUS.

AUTUMN and sunset now have double-dyed
The foliage and the fern of this deep wood,
The sky above it melting placidly
All crimsonings to gray. No sound is heard.
The Spirit of the Place, like mine, seems lull'd
In pensive retrospection. One more Spring,
And one more Summer past, and one more Year
Anon the distant bell begins to chime,
And calls me homeward, calls me to a home
As lonely as the Forest, peopled but
With memories, and fantasies, and shadows.
These wait for me this evening. What beyond ?
The silent sunset of a lonely life ?

Norley Wood.

ÆOLIAN HARP.

WHAT saith the river to the rushes gray,
Rushes sadly bending,
River slowly wending?
Who can tell the whisper'd things they say?
Youth, and prime, and life, and time,
For ever, ever fled away!

Drop your wither'd garlands in the stream,
Low autumnal branches,
Round the skiff that launches
Wavering downward through the lands of dream.
Ever, ever fled away!
This the burden, this the theme.

What saith the river to the rushes gray,
Rushes sadly bending,
River slowly wending?
It is near the closing of the day.
Near the night. Life and light
For ever, ever fled away!

Draw him tideward down; but not in haste.
Mouldering daylight lingers;
Night with her cold fingers
Sprinkles moonbeams on the dim sea-waste.
Ever, ever fled away!
Vainly cherish'd! vainly chased!

What saith the river to the rushes gray,
Rushes sadly bending,
River slowly wending?
Where in darkest glooms his bed we lay,
Up the cave moans the wave,
For ever, ever, ever fled away!

LATE AUTUMN.

OCTOBER—and the skies are cool and gray
O'er stubbles emptied of their latest sheaf,
Bare meadow, and the slowly falling leaf.
The dignity of woods in rich decay
Accords full well with this majestic grief
That clothes our solemn purple hills to-day,
Whose afternoon is hush'd, and wintry brief.
Only a robin sings from any spray.

And night sends up her pale cold moon, and spills
White mist around the hollows of the hills,
Phantoms of firth or lake; the peasant sees
His cot and stackyard, with the homestead trees,
Islanded; but no foolish terror thrills
His perfect harvesting; he sleeps at ease.

TWO MOODS.

I.

SLOW drags this dreary season ;
The earth a lump of lead ;
The vacant skies, blue skies or brown,
Bereft of joy and hope.
I cannot find a reason
To wish I were not dead,—
Unfasten'd and let glide, gone down
A dumb and dusky slope.
I recognise the look of care
In every face ; for now I share
What makes a forehead wrinkles wear,
And sets a mouth to mope.
A sombre, languid yearning
For silence and the dark :
Shall wish, or fear, or wisest word,
Arouse me any more ?
What profits bookleaf-turning ?
Or prudent care and cark ?
Or Folly's drama, seen and heard
And acted as before ?
No comfort for the dismal Day ;
It cannot work, or think, or pray ;
A shivering pauper, sad and gray,
With no good thing in store.

II.

What lifts me and lightens ?
 Enriches and brightens
 The day, the mere day, the most marvellous day ?
 O pleasure divine !
 An invisible wine
 Pours quick through my being ; broad Heaven is
 benign,
 And the Earth full of wonders, and both of them
 mine,—
 What first shall I do, shall I say ?
 See the bareheaded frolicsome babes as they run
 Go skipping from right foot to left foot in fun,—
 'Tis the pleasure of living ;
 Too long I've o'erlook'd it,
 In sulk and misgiving,
 And lunatic fret ;
 But it wakes in me yet,
 Though the world has rebuked it :
 O city and country ! O landscape and sun !
 Air cloudy or breezy,
 And stars, every one !
 Gay voices of children !
 All duties grown easy,
 All truths unbewild'ring,
 Since Life, Life immortal, is clearly begun !

TWILIGHT VOICES.

Now, at the hour when ignorant mortals
 Drowse in the shade of their whirling sphere,
 Heaven and Hell from invisible portals
 Breathing comfort and ghastly fear,
 Voices I hear ;
 I hear strange voices, flitting, calling,
 Wavering by on the dusky blast,—
 ‘ Come, let us go, for the night is falling,
 Come, let us go, for the day is past !’

 Troops of joys are they, now departed ?
 Wingèd hopes that no longer stay ?
 Guardian spirits grown weary-hearted ?
 Powers that have linger’d their latest day ?
 What do they say ?
 What do they sing ? I hear them calling,
 Whispering, gathering, flying fast,—
 ‘ Come, come, for the night is falling ;
 Come, come, for the day is past !’

 Sing they to me ?—‘ Thy taper’s wasted ;
 Mortal, thy sands of life run low ;
 Thine hours like a flock of birds have hasted ;
 Time is ending ;—we go ! we go !
 Sing they so ?
 Mystical voices, floating, calling ;
 Dim farewells—the last, the last ?—
 ‘ Come, come away, the night is falling ;
 Come, come away, the day is past !’

See, I am ready, Twilight Voices ;
Child of the spirit-world am I ;
How should I fear you ? my soul rejoices.
O speak plainer ! O draw nigh !
Fain would I fly !
Tell me your message, Ye who are calling
Out of the dimness vague and vast ?—
Lift me, take me,—the night is falling ;
Quick, let us go,—the day is past !

A GRAVESTONE.

FAR from the churchyard dig his grave,
On some green mound beside the wave ;
To westward, sea and sky alone,
And sunsets. Put a massy stone,
With mortal name and date, a harp
And bunch of wild flowers, carven sharp ;
Then leave it free to winds that blow,
And patient mosses creeping slow,
And wandering wings, and footstep rare
Of human creature pausing there.

HYMN.

O how dimly walks the wisest
On his journey to the grave,
Till Thou, Lamp of Souls, arisest,
Beaming over land and wave !

Blind and weak behold him wander,
Full of doubt and full of dread ;
Till the dark is rent asunder,
And the gulf of light is spread.

Shadows were the gyves that bound him ,
Now his soul is light in light ;
Heav'n within him, Heav'n around him,
Pure, eternal, infinite.



WINTER.

BARE twigs in April enhance our pleasure ;
We know the good time is yet to come ;
With leaves and flow'rs to fill Summer's measure,
And countless songs ere the birds be dumb.

Bare twigs in Autumn are signs for sadness ;
We feel the good time is well-nigh past ;
The glow subdued, and the voice of gladness,
And frosty whispers in every blast.

For perfect garlands just now we waited ;
Already, garlands are turning sere ;
And Time, old traveller, like one belated,
Hurries on to fulfil the year.

Ah, Spring's defects, and October's losses !
Fair hope, sad memory !—but grieve not thou
In leafless dells, look, what emerald mosses ;
Nay, secret buds on the wintry bough.

FOOTSTEPS.

I.

SOUND of feet
 In the lonely street,
 Coming to-night,—coming to me ?
 Perhaps (why not ? it well may be)
 My dear old friend
 From the world's end,
 At last.
 How we shall meet,
 And shout and greet,
 (O hearty voice that memory knows !)
 Till the first gush and rush be past,
 And smoother now the current flows ;
 Plenty on either side to tell,
 Sharing joy, and soothing pain
 As friendship's tongue can do so well
 Hush ! hark !
 I hear, in the dark—
 Only the footsteps of the rain.

II.

Stay ! stay !
 Coming this way
 Through the dull night—perhaps to me—
 Coming, coming, coming fast,
 (And why may not such things be ?)
 A messenger's feet
 In the lonely street,
 With some good wonderful news to say
 At last.

A word has been spoken,
 A bad spell broken,
 Men see aright,
 All faces are bright,
 For the world to-morrow begins anew ;
 There's much to plan, and plenty to do ;
 Away ! search, sift the country through,
 And say at once to a certain few :
 'Come, for our gain,
 We know you, and now we have work for you.
 Hush ! hark !
 I hear, in the dark—
 Only the footsteps of the rain.

III.

Close, close,
 Outside the house,
 Steps approaching !—are these for me ?
 Coming gently, coming fast,
 (And O, if this can be !)—
 Out of the strife
 Of selfish life
 My Love has fled of a sudden,—'tis She,
 At last !
 Here she stands,
 Eyes and mouth and tender form
 True and warm ;
 My dream of many a lonely year ;
 Stretches her hands—
 No doubt or fear—
 'See, my Love, 'tis all in vain
 To keep true lovers parted,
 If they be faithful-hearted !'
 Hush ! hark !
 I hear, in the dark—
 Only the footsteps of the rain.

ÆOLIAN HARP.

Is it all in vain ?
Strangely throbbing pain,
Trembling joy of memory !
Bygone things, how shadowy
Within their graves they lie !

Shall I sit then by their graves,
Listening to the melancholy waves ?
 I would fain.
But even these in vapours die :
 For nothing may remain.

One survivor in a boat
On the wide dim deep afloat,
When the sunken ship is gone,
Lit by late stars before the dawn.

The sea rolls vaguely, and the stars are dumb.
The ship is sunk full many a year.
 Dream no more of loss or gain.
A ship was never here.
A dawn will never, never come.
 --Is it all in vain ?

THE LIGHTHOUSE.

THE plunging storm flies fierce against the pane,
And thrills our cottage with redoubled shocks ;
The chimney mutters and the rafters strain ;
Without, the breakers roar along the rocks.

See, from our fire and taper-lighted room,
How savage, pitiless, and uncontroll'd
The grim horizon shows its tossing gloom
Of waves from unknown angry gulfs uproll'd ;

Where, underneath that black portentous lid,
A long pale space between the night and sea
Gleams awful ; while in deepest darkness hid
All other things in our despair agree.

But lo ! what star amid the thickest dark
A soft and unexpected dawn has made ?
O welcome Lighthouse, thy unruffled spark,
Piercing the turmoil and the deathly shade !

By such a glimpse o'er the distracted wave
Full many a soul to-night is re-possesst
Of courage and of order, strong to save ;
And like effect it works within my breast.

Three faithful men have set themselves to stand
Against all storms that from the sky can blow,
Where peril must expect no aiding hand,
And tedium no relief may hope to know.

Nor shout they, passing brothers to inform
What weariness they feel, or what affright ;
But tranquilly in solitude and storm
Abide from month to month, and show their light.

NIGHTWIND.

MOANING blast,
The summer is past,
And time and life are speeding fast.

Wintry wind,
Oh, where to find
The hopes we have left so far behind !

Mystery cold,
To thee have they told
Secrets the years may yet unfold ?

Sorrow of night,
Is love so light
As to come and go like a breeze's flight ?

Opiate balm,
Is death so calm
As to faint in one's ear like a distant psalm

ANGELA.

AFTER the long bitter days, and nights weigh'd down
with my sadness,
I lay without stir or sound in my lonely room in a
twilight.
Stilly She glided in, and tenderly came she beside me,
Putting her arm round my head, heavy and weary
with aching ;
Whispering low, in a voice that trembled with love
and with pity,
' Knowest thou not that I love thee ?—am I not one
in thy sorrow ?
Maze not thy soul in dark windings, joy that our
Father excels us,
Since with His power extends the High One's care
and compassion.
Fear not the losing of love ; love is the surest of all
things,
Heaven the birth-place and home of everything holy
and lovely.
Go thou cautiously, fearlessly, on in the way thou
hast chosen ;
Pits and crags that seem, thou wilt find are mostly
but shadows.
Take thou care of the present, thy future will build
itself for thee.

Life in the body is full of entanglements, harsh contradictions ;

Keep but the soul-realities, all will unwind itself duly.
Think of me, pray for me, love me—I cease not to
love thee, my dearest.'

So it withdrew and died. The heart, too joyful, too
tender,

Felt a new fear of its pain, and its want, and the
desolate evening,

Sunken, and dull, and cold. But quickly a kind
overflowing

Soothed my feverish eyelids: my spirit grew calmer
and calmer :

Noting, at length, how the gloom acknowledged a
subtle suffusion,

Veiling with earnest peace the stars looking in through
the window,

Where, at the time appointed from numberless
millions of ages,

Slowly, up eastern night, like a pale smoke mounted
the moon-dawn.

On the Longest Day,
Heav'n was gay,
Roses and sunshine along the way.
I loiter'd and stood,
In listless mood,
With many a sigh,
I knew not why :
Nothing pleasant ; nothing good.

On the Shortest Day,
Heav'n was gray,
Coldness and mire along the way.
How or where
Had I cast off care ?
For light and strong,
With a snatch of song,
I stept through the mud and biting air.

Moods, that drift,
Or creep and shift,
Or change, not a windy cloud more swift,
No fetter found
To hold you bound,—
Can I dare to go
To the depth below
Whence ye rise, overspreading air and ground ?

There in the gulf
 Of my deep deep self,
 Stranger than land of dragon and elf,
 Acts and schemes,
 Hopes and dreams,
 Loves and praises,
 Follies, disgraces,
 Swarm, and each moment therewith teems.

They rise like breath
 Of coming death,—
 Of flow'rs that the soul remembereth,—
 The Present, whose place
 Is a foot-sole space,
 Being then as nought.
 But the Present hath wrought
 All this ; and our Will is King, by God's grace.

THE WINTER PEAR.

Is always Age severe ?
 Is never youth austere ?
 Spring-fruits are sour to eat ;
 Autumn's the mellow time.
 Nay, very late in th' year,
 Short day and frosty rime,
 Thought, like a winter pear,
 Stone-cold in summer's prime,
 May turn from harsh to sweet.

HALF-WAKING.

I THOUGHT it was the little bed
I slept in long ago ;
A straight white curtain at the head,
And two smooth knobs below.

I thought I saw the nursery fire,
And in a chair well-known
My mother sat, and did not tire
With reading all alone.

If I should make the slightest sound
To show that I'm awake,
She'd rise, and lap the blankets round,
My pillow softly shake ;

Kiss me, and turn my face to see
The shadows on the wall,
And then sing *Rousseau's Dream* to me,
Till fast asleep I fall.

But this is not my little bed ;
That time is far away ;
With strangers now I live instead,
From dreary day to day.

WINTER CLOUD.

O NAMELESS Fear, which I would fain contemn !
The swarthy wood-marge, skeleton'd with snow
Driv'n by a sharp north-east on bough and stem ;
The broad white moor, and sable stream below
Blurr'd with great smoke-wreaths wandering to and
fro ;
That monstrous cloud pressing the night on them,
Cloud without shape or colour, drooping slow
Down all the sky, and chill sleet for its hem ;—
Such face of earth and time have I not watch'd
In other years : why now my spirit sinks,
Like captive who should hear. in helpless links,
Some gate of horror stealthily unlatch'd,
Who shows me ? but Calamity methinks
Is creeping nigh, her cruel plot being hatch'd.

FROST IN THE HOLIDAYS.

THE time of Frost is the time for me !
When the gay blood spins through the heart with glee,
When the voice leaps out with a chiming sound,
And the footstep rings on the musical ground ;
When earth is white, and air is bright,
And every breath a new delight !

While Yesterday sank, full soon, to rest,
What a glorious sky !—through the level west
Pink clouds in a delicate greenish haze,
Which deepen'd up into purple grays,
With stars aloft as the light decreas'd,
Till the great Moon rose in the rich blue east.

And Morning !—each pane a garden of frost,
Of delicate flow'ring, as quickly lost ;
For the stalks are fed by the moon's cold beams,
And the leaves are woven like woof of dreams
By Night's keen breath, and a glance of the Sun
Like dreams will scatter them every one.

Hurra ! the lake is a league of glass !
Buckle and strap on the stiff white grass.
Off we shoot, and poise and wheel,
And swiftly turn upon scoring heel ;
And our flying sandals chirp and sing
Like a flock of swallows fresh on the wing.

Away from the crowd with the wind we drift,
No vessel's motion so smoothly swift ;
Fainter and fainter the tumult grows,
And the gradual stillness and wide repose
Touch with a hue more soft and grave
The lapse of joy's declining wave.

Pure is the ice ; our glance may sound
Deep through an awful, dim profound,
To the water dungeons where snake-weeds hide,
Over which, as self-upborne, we glide,
Like wizards on dark adventure bent,
The masters of every element.

Homeward—and how the shimmering snow
Kisses our hot cheeks as we go !
Wavering down the feeble wind,
Like myriad thoughts in a Poet's mind,
Till the earth, and trees, and icy lakes,
Are slowly clothed with the countless flakes.

But our Village street—the stir and noise !
The long black slides running mad with boys !
The pie is kept hot, in sequence due,
Aristocrat now the hobnail shoe ;
And the quaint white bullets fly here and there
With laugh and shout in the wintry air.

In the clasp of Home, by the ruddy fire,
Ranged in a ring to our heart's desire,
Now, who will tell some wondrous tale,
Almost to turn the warm cheeks pale,
Set chin on hands, make grave eyes stare,
Draw slowly nearer each stool and chair ?

The one low voice goes wandering on
In a mystic world, whither all are gone ;
The shadows dance ; little Caroline
Has stolen her fingers up into mine.
But the night outside is very chill,
And the Frost hums loud at the window-sill.

THE Boy from his bedroom-window
Look'd over the little town,
And away to the bleak black upland
Under a clouded moon.

The moon came forth from her cavern
He saw the sudden gleam
Of a tarn in the swarthy moorland ;
Or perhaps the whole was a dream.

For I never could find that water
In all my walks and rides :
Far-off, in the Land of Memory,
That midnight pool abides.

Many fine things had I glimpse of,
And said, ' I shall find them one day.'
Whether within or without me
They were, I cannot say.

OH ! WERE MY LOVE.

Oh ! were my Love a country lass,
That I might see her every day,
And sit with her on hedgerow grass
 Beneath a bough of may ;
And find her cattle when astray,
Or help to drive them to the field,
And linger on our homeward way,
 And woo her lips to yield
A twilight kiss before we parted,
Full of love, yet easy-hearted.

Oh ! were my Love a cottage maid,
To spin through many a winter night,
Where ingle-corner lends its shade
 From fir-wood blazing bright.
Beside her wheel what dear delight
 To watch the blushes go and come
With tender words, that took no fright
 Beneath the friendly hum ;
Or rising smile, or tear-drop swelling,
At a fire-side legend's telling.

Oh ! were my Love a peasant girl,
That never saw the wicked town ;
Was never dight with silk or pearl,
 But graced a homely gown.
How little force in fashion's frown
 To vex our unambitious lot,
How rich were love and peace to crown
 Our green secluded cot,
Where Age would come serene and shining,
Like an autumn day's declining !

SONG.

O SPIRIT of the Summertime !
Bring back the roses to the dells ;
The swallow from her distant clime,
The honey-bee from drowsy cells.

Bring back the friendship of the sun ;
The gilded evenings, calm and late,
When merry children homeward run,
And peeping stars bid lovers wait.

Bring back the singing ; and the scent
Of meadowlands at dewy prime ;—
Oh, bring again my heart's content,
Thou Spirit of the Summertime !

RISING OF JUPITER.

SPLENDIDLY Jupiter's planet rises over the river,
 Jupiter, fabulous god of vanish'd mortals and years,
 Silence and dusk diffused far and wide on the land-
 scape,
 Solemn, shadowy world, past and present in one.
 Many a glimmering light is aloft, but grandest to
 vision
 Now, as noblest in rank of our Sun's astonishing
 brood,
 Over dim waters and wolds and hills, in the clear dark
 night-sky,
 Jupiter hangs like a royal diamond, throbbing with
 flame.

Still in our starry heav'n the Pagan Gods have their
 station ;
 Only, in sooth, as words : what were they ever but
 words ?
 Lo, mankind hath fashion'd its thoughts, its hopes,
 and its dreamings,
 Fashion'd and named them thus and thus, by the
 bardic voice,
 Fashion'd them better or worse, from a shallower
 insight or deeper,
 Names to abide for a term, in many mouths or a
 few ;

Each and all in turn to give place, be it sooner or later.

What is ten thousand years on the mighty Dial of Heav'n ?

Nothing is fix'd. All moves. O Star ! thou hast look'd upon changes

Here on this Planet of Man. Changes unguess'd are to come.

The New Time forgetteth the Old,—remembereth somewhat, a little,

A scheme, a fancy, a form, a word of the poet, a name.

Still, when a deeper thought, a loftier, wider and truer,

Springs in the soul and flows into life, it cannot be lost.

That which is gain'd for man is gain'd, as we trust for ever.

That which is gain'd is gain'd. We ascend, however it be.

Blaze, pure Jewel ! Shine, O Witness, pulsing to mortals

Over the gulf of space a message in echoes of light. Dead generations beheld thee, men unborn shall behold thee,

Multitudes, foolish or wise, call thee by other words.

What was thy title of old, a beacon to wandering shepherds,

Lifted in black-blue vault o'er the wide Chaldæan plain ?

What is it now, Bright Star, at the wigwams out on the prairie ?

What between two pagodas at eve in the Flowery Land ?

Roll up the sky, vast Globe! whereunto this other,
 our dwelling,
 Is but the cat to the lion, the stalk of grass to the
 palm.
 Certain to eye and thought,—but a very dream
 cannot reach thee,
 Glimpsing what larger lives may dwell in thy
 spacious year.
 Heed they at all, for their part, our little one-moon'd
 planet?
 Of China, India, or Hellas, or England, what do
 they know?
 How have they named it, the spark our Earth, that
 we think so much of,
 One faint spark among many, with moon too small
 to be seen?
 O great Space—great Spheres!—great Thoughts in
 the Mind!—what are ye?
 O little lives of men upon earth!—O Planets and
 Moons!
 Wheel'd and whirl'd in the sweep of your measured
 and marvellous motion,
 Smoothly, resistlessly, swung round the strength of
 the central Orb,
 Terrible furnace of fire—one lamp of the ancient
 abysses,
 An Infinite Universe lighted with millions of
 burning suns,
 Fondlessly fill'd with electrical palpitant world
 forming ether,
 Endlessly everywhere moving, concéntrating, well-
 ing-forth pow'r,
 Life into countless shapes drawn upward, mystical
 spirit
 Born, that man—even we—may commune with
 God Most High.

WINTER VERDURE.

I SAT at home, and thought there lived no green,
Because the time is winter ; but, to-day,
Entering a park a mile or two away,
Smooth laurels tower'd as if no cold had been ;
The tangled ivy, holly sharp and sheen,
Hung over nested ferns, and craglets gray
Broider'd with moss ; high firs, a drooping screen,
Guarded their turfy lawn in close array.

Soon shall the hopeful woodbine-garland swing,
And countless buds the misty branch impearl ;
My little Portress, fair come Spring to you—
Life's and the year's—flower-cheek'd and sparkling
girl !
Or are you, child, the Spirit of the Spring,
Safe in these warmer groves the winter through ?

EVENING PRAYER.

GOOD LORD, to thee I bow my head ;
Protect me helpless in my bed ;
May no ill dream disturb the night,
Nor sinful thought my soul affright !
And sacred sleep enfold me round,
As with a guardian-angel's wings,
From every earthly sight and sound ;
While tranquil influence, like the dew
Upon thine outer world of things,
Prepares a morning fresh and new.



BALLADS,
Etc.



LADY ALICE.

I.

NOW what doth Lady Alice so late on the turret
stair,
Without a lamp to light her, but the diamond in her
hair,
When every arching passage overflows with shallow
gloom,
And dreams float through the castle, into every silent
room ?

She trembles at her footsteps, altho' they fall so
light ;
Through the turret loopholes she sees the wild mid-
night ;
Broken vapours streaming across the stormy sky ;
Down the empty corridors the blast doth moan and
cry.

She steals along a gallery ; she pauses by a door ;
And fast her tears are dropping down upon the oaken
floor ;
And thrice she seems returning—but thrice she turns
again :—
How heavy lies the cloud of sleep on that old father's
brain !

Oh, well it were that *never* shouldst thou waken from
 thy sleep !
 For wherefore should they waken, who waken but to
 weep ?
 No more, no more beside thy bed doth Peace a vigil
 keep,
 But Woe,—a lion that awaits thy rousing for its leap.

II.

An afternoon of April, no sun appears on high,
 But a moist and yellow lustre fills the deepness of
 the sky :
 And through the castle-gateway, left empty and
 forlorn,
 Along the leafless avenue an honour'd bier is borne.

They stop. The long line closes up like some gigantic
 worm ;
 A Shape is standing in the path, a wan and ghost-like
 form,
 Which gazes fixedly ; nor moves, nor utters any
 sound ;
 Then, like a statue built of snow, sinks noiseless to
 the ground.

And tho' her clothes are ragged, and tho' her feet
 are bare,
 And tho' all wild and tangled falls her heavy silk-
 brown hair ;
 Tho' from her eyes the brightness, from her cheeks
 the bloom is fled
 They know their Lady Alice, the darling of the dead.

With silence in her own old room the fainting form
they lay,
Where all things stand unalter'd since the night she
fled away :
But who—but who—shall bring to life her father
from the clay ?
But who shall give her back again her heart of a
former day ?

KING HENRY'S HUNT.

KING HENRY stood in Waltham Wood,
 One morn in merry May-time ;
 Years fifteen hundred thirty-six,
 From Christ, had roll'd away time.

King Henry stood in Waltham Wood,
 All young green, sunny-shady.
 He would not mount his pawing horse,
 Tho' men and dogs were ready.

' What ails his Highness ? Up and down
 In moody sort he paceth ;
 He is not wont to be so slack,
 Whatever game he chaseth.'

He paced and stopp'd ; he paced and turn'd :
 At times he inly mutter'd ;
 He pull'd his girdle, twitch'd his beard ;
 But not one word he utter'd.

The hounds in couples nosed about,
 Or on the sward lay idle ;
 The huntsmen stole a fearful glance,
 While fingering girth or bridle.

Among themselves, but not too loud,
 The young lords laugh'd and chatter'd
 Or broke a branch of hawthorn-bloom,
 As tho' it nothing matter'd.

King Henry sat on a fell'd oak,
 With gloomier eyes and stranger ;
 His brows were knit, his lip he bit ;
 To look that way was danger.

Mused he on Pope and Emperor ?
 Denied them and defied them ?
 Or traitors in his very realm
 Complotting ?—woe betide them !

Suddenly on the southern breeze,
 Distinct though distant, sounded
 A cannon shot,—and to his feet
 The King of England bounded.

‘ My horse ! ’ he shouts,—‘ Uncouple now !
 And all were quickly mounted.
 A hind was found ; man, horse, and hound
 Like furious demons hunted.

Fast fled the deer by grove and glade,
 The chase did faster follow ;
 And every wild-wood alley rang
 With hunter's horn and hollo.

Away together stream'd the hounds ;
 Forward press'd every rider.
 You're free to slay a hind in May,
 If there's no fawn beside her.

King Harry rode a mighty horse,
 His Grace being broad and heavy,
 And like a stormy wind he crash'd
 Through copse and thicket leavy.

He rode so hard, and roar'd so loud,
 All men his course avoided ;
 The fiery steed, long held on fret,
 With many a snort enjoy'd it.

The hind was kill'd, and down they sat
To tankard and to pasty.

'Ha, by Saint George, a noble Prince!
Tho' hot, by times, and hasty.'

Lord Norfolk knew, and other few,
Wherefore that chase began on
The signal of a gun far off,
One growl of distant cannon,—

And why so jovial grew his Grace,
That erst was sad and sullen.
With that boom from the Tower, had fall'n
The head of fair Anne Bullen.

Her neck, which Henry used to kiss,
The bloody axe did sever;
Their little child, Elizabeth,
She'll see no more for ever.

Gaily the King rides west away ;
Each moment makes his glee more :
To-morrow brings his wedding-day
With beautiful Jane Seymour.

The sunshine falls, the wild-bird calls,
Across the slopes of Epping ;
From grove to glade, through light and shade,
The troops of deer are stepping.

THE TOUCHSTONE.

A MAN there came, whence none could tell,
 Bearing a Touchstone in his hand ;
 And tested all things in the land
By its unerring spell.

Quick birth of transmutation smote
 The fair to foul, the foul to fair ;
 Purple nor ermine did he spare,
Nor scorn the dusty coat.

Of heirloom jewels, prized so much,
 Were many changed to chips and clods,
 And even statues of the Gods
Crumbled beneath its touch.

Then angrily the people cried,
 ‘The loss outweighs the profit far ;
 Our goods suffice us as they are ;
We will not have them tried.’

And since they could not so prevail
 To check his unrelenting quest,
 They seized him, saying—‘ Let him test
How real it is, our jail !’

But, tho’ they slew him with the sword,
 And in a fire his Touchstone burn’d,
 Its doings could not be o’erturn’d,
Its undoings restored.

And when, to stop all future harm,
They strew'd its ashes on the breeze ;
They little guess'd each grain of these
Convey'd the perfect charm.

North, south, in rings and amulets,
Throughout the crowded world 'tis borne ;
Which, as a fashion long outworn,
Its ancient mind forgets.

THREE FLOWERS.

I.

A PILGRIM light for travel bound
 Trips through a gay parterre,
 The cool fresh dewdrops on the ground
 The lark's song in the air.
 One Bud, where free of cloud or mist
 Heav'n's colour doth unfold,
 He claims with joy, hath fondly kiss'd,
 And next his heart will hold,—
 How happy! might the tender thing,
 The blue delightful blossom,
 But keep the sweetness of its Spring,
 Nor wither in his bosom.

II.

He strides along through cultured fields
 By manly contest won,
 Enjoys the sylvan bow'r that shields
 From rage of noontide sun;
 But see the rich red Bloom!—for this,
 Come good or evil hap,
 He climbs the slippery precipice,
 To set it in his cap;
 Then forward, forward, proudly flies,
 Too swift and proud for heeding
 How leaf by leaf his vaunted prize
 Is scatter'd in the speeding.

III.

On moorland now he wends his way,
The heather far and near
Steep'd in the solemn sinking day
And the sad waning year.
His bent regard descries a Flow'r,
White as a hill of snow,
Whose subtle fragraney hath pow'r
To bring him kneeling low.
He takes the Flow'r. He drops asleep,
The dropping sun to face him.
Roll on above, thou starry deep!
Night-shadow doth embrace him.

THE WONDROUS WELL.

FROM north and south and east and west,
Four Pilgrims gain'd a mountain crest,
Each vow'd to search the wide world round,
Until the Wondrous Well be found ;
For in this place, as old songs tell,
Shine sun and moon on that pure Well ;
And now, the lonely crag their seat,
The water rises at their feet.

Said One, ' This Well is small and mean,
Too petty for a village-green.'
Another said, ' So smooth and dumb —
From earth's deep centre can it come ?'
The Third, ' This water's nothing rare,
Hueless and savourless as air.'
The Fourth, ' A Fane I look'd to see :
Where the true Well is, *that* must be.'

They rose and left the lofty crest,
Went north, and south, and east, and west ;
Through many seas and deserts wide
They wander'd, thirsting, till they died ;
Because no other water can
Assuage the deepest thirst of man.
—Shepherds who by the mountain dwell,
Dip their pitchers in that Well.

BLACK NIGHT.

A WAYFARER on the wold,
 Black the air and the ground ;
 On he goes through the dark,
 Over marsh and mound.
 Like death-bell, his heart has toll'd
 One groan, no other sound :
 He has fall'n from a verge,—he lies . . . stark !
 And a creeping wind on the wold
 Whistles through pitch-black air
 For Will o' the Wisp to hold
 His flickering lantern there,
 Where the moveless Face lies bare,
 With sightless eyes a-stare.
 But the wind is not so bold
 As to touch the blood-wet hair.

Merely a fireside fancy ?—No,
 A thing that happen'd, years ago,
 On this very moor,
 Nigh this very door.
 Draw the window curtains close,
 Blackest night is round the house ;
 The cat purrs loud, the crickets sing ;
 Shadowy sweet our tranquil ring.
 The wind's in the chimney, and below
 The whispering fire sheds dusky glow.
 Hush !—a knock. Open and see.
 Who's there ? 'A Wayfarer.' Welcome is he !

THE POOR LITTLE MAIDEN.

I.

A GENTLE face and clear blue eyes
The little maiden hath, who plies
Her needle at her cottage door,
Or, with a comrade girl or more,
At times upon the hedgerow-grass.
I love to find her as I pass,—
Humbly contented, simply gay,
And singing sweetly ; many a day
I've carried far along my way
From that fair infant's look and voice
A strength that made my soul rejoice.

II.

O sad ! her father died last week ;
Her mother knows not where to seek
Five children's food ; the little maid
Is far too young for others' aid.
Willingly would she do her best
To slave at strangers' rude behest ;
But she is young and weak. Her thread,
From dawn till blinding rushlight sped
Could never win her single bread.

III.

And must the Workhouse save alive
This Mother and her helpless five,
Where Guardians, no Angelic band,
With callous eye and pinching hand,
Receive the wretched of their kin,
Cursing the law that lets them in ?
I see her growing pale and thin,
Poor Child : (the little needle-song
Is ended)—and perhaps ere long
Her coffin jolting in their cart
To where the paupers lie apart.

IV.

Just from that cottage-step one sees
A Mansion with its lawn and trees,
Where man and wife are wearing old
In a wilderness of gold,
Amidst all luxuries and graces,
But the light of children's faces.
Ah, had the little Maid forlorn
In that fine house been only born,
How she were tended, night and morn !
A long-tail'd pony then were hers,
And winter mantles edged with furs,
And servants at her least command,
And wealthy suitors for her hand.

SAINT MARGARET'S EVE.

I BUILT my castle upon the sea-side,
The waves roll so gaily O,
Half on the land and half in the tide,
Love me true !

Within was silk, without was stone,
The waves roll so gaily O,
It lacks a queen, and that alone,
Love me true !

The gray old harper sung to me,
The waves roll so gaily O,
Beware of the Damsel of the Sea !
Love me true !

Saint Margaret's Eve it did befall,
The waves roll so gaily O,
The tide came creeping up the wall,
Love me true !

I open'd my gate ; who there should stand—
The waves roll so gaily O.
But a fair lady, with a cup in her hand,
Love me true !

The cup was gold, and full of wine,
The waves roll so gaily O,
'Drink,' said the lady, 'and I will be thine,'
Love me true !

‘Enter my castle, lady fair,’
The waves roll so gaily O,
‘You shall be queen of all that’s there,
Love me true !

‘A gray old harper sung to me,
The waves roll so gaily O,
‘Beware of the Damsel of the Sea !’
Love me true !

‘In hall he harpeth many a year,
The waves roll so gaily O,
‘And we will sit his song to hear,
Love me true !

‘I love thee deep, I love thee true,’
The waves roll so gaily O,
‘But ah ! I know not how to woo,’
Love me true !

Down dash’d the cup, with a sudden shock,
The waves roll so gaily O,
The wine like blood ran over the rock,
Love me true !

She said no word, but shriek’d aloud,
The waves roll so gaily O,
And vanish’d away from where she stood,
Love me true !

I lock’d and barr’d my castle door,
The waves roll so gaily O,
Three summer days I grieved sore,
Love me true !

For myself a day and night,
The waves roll so gaily O,
And two to moan that lady bright,
Love me true !

THISTLEDOWN.

(An English Rural Custom.)

LONG ago,—a little girl,
 Smooth of cheek and dark of curl,
 Like my daughter's nearly,—
 I gather'd for my bridal bed
 Many a hoary thistle-head
 Before the flying tufts were shed,
 And saved them up so dearly.

O the happy days and dreams !
 Endless Present,—lit with gleams
 Of a wondrous Future !
 Day, and week, and month, and year,
 Glide,—and what know you, my dear ?
 And what know I ? O little sphere
 Of every mortal creature !

Life has pleasure, life has pain,
 Passing, not to come again,
 Blackest hours and brightest.
 Time takes all things, all must go ;
 Byegones vanish—is it so ?
 Gone and lost for ever ?—No !
 Not the least and lightest.

In Age, we laugh at dreams of Youth.
Are Age's dreams more like the truth?
And what is life but feeling?
The world is something, none can doubt,
But no one finds its secret out;
To childhood, and to souls devout,
Comes the best revealing.

Gay at heart are you, my child,
Gathering downy thistles wild;
Cares nor fears oppress thee;
Gathering up, for joy, for moan,
When all these autumns, too, are flown,
The bed that you must lie upon.
—God protect and bless thee!

THE BUBBLE.

SEE, the pretty Planet !
Floating sphere !
Faintest breeze will fan it
Far or near ;
World as light as feather ;
Moonshine rays,
Rainbow tints together,
As it plays ;
Drooping, sinking, failing,
Nigh to earth,
Mounting, whirling, sailing,
Full of mirth ;
Life there, welling, flowing,
Waving round ;
Pictures coming, going,
Without sound.
Quick now, be this airy
Globe repell'd !
Never can the fairy
Star be held.
Touch'd—it in a twinkle
Disappears !
Leaving but a sprinkle,
As of tears.

THE DIRTY OLD MAN.

A LAY OF LEADENHALL.

IN a dirty old house lived a Dirty Old Man ;
Soap, towels, or brushes were not in his plan.
For forty long years, as the neighbours declared,
His house never once had been clean'd or repair'd.

'Twas a scandal and shame to the business-like street,
One terrible blot in a ledger so neat :
The shop full of hardware, but black as a hearse,
And the rest of the mansion a thousand times worse.

Outside, the old plaster, all spatter and stain,
Looked spotty in sunshine and streaky in rain ;
The window-sills sprouted with mildewy grass,
And the panes from being broken were known to be
glass.

On a rickety signboard no learning could spell
The merchant who sold, or the goods he'd to sell ;
But for house and for man a new title took growth,
Like a fungus,—the Dirt gave a name to them both.

Within, there were carpets and cushions of dust,
The wood was half rot, and the metal half rust,
Old curtains, half cobwebs, hung grimly aloof ;
'Twas a Spiders' Elysium from cellar to roof.

There, king of the spiders, the Dirty Old Man
Lives busy and dirty as ever he can ;
With dirt on his fingers and dirt on his face,
For the Dirty Old Man thinks the dirt no disgrace.

From his wig to his shoes, from his coat to his shirt,
His clothes are a proverb, a marvel of dirt ;
The dirt is pervading, unfading, exceeding—
Yet the Dirty Old Man has both learning and breeding.

Fine dames from their carriages, noble and fair,
Have enter'd his shop—less to buy than to stare ;
And have afterwards said, though the dirt was so
frightful,
The Dirty Man's manners were truly delightful.

Upstairs they don't venture, in dirt and in gloom,—
Mayn't peep at the door of the wonderful room
Such stories are told of, not half of them true ;
Its keyhole no mortal has ever seen through.

That room—forty years since, folk settled and deck'd
it.

The luncheon's prepared, and the guests are expected.
The handsome young Host he is gallant and gay,
For his Love and her friends will be with him to-day.

With solid and dainty the table is drest,
The wine beams its brightest, the flowers bloom their
best ;
Yet the host need not smile, and no guests will appear,
For his Sweetheart is dead, as he shortly shall hear.

Full forty years since, turn'd the key in that door.
'Tis a room deaf and dumb 'mid the city's uproar.
The guests, for whose joyance that table was spread,
May now enter as ghosts, for they're every one dead.

Through a chink in the shutter dim lights come and go ;
The seats are in order, the dishes a-row ;
But the banquet was wealth to the rat and the mouse
Whose descendants have long left the Dirty Old House.

Cup and platter are mask'd in thick layers of dust ;
The flow'rs fallen to powder, the wine swathed in crust ;
A nosegay was laid before one special chair,
And the faded blue ribbon that bound it lies there.

The old man has played out his parts in the scene.
Wherever he now is, I hope he's more clean.
Yet give we a thought free of scoffing or ban
To that Dirty Old House and that Dirty Old Man.

VENUS OF THE NEEDLE.

O MARYANNE, you pretty girl,
Intent on silky labour,
Of semstresses the pink and pearl,
Excuse a peeping neighbour !

Those eyes, for ever drooping, give
The long brown lashes rarely ;
But violets in the shadows live,—
For once unveil them fairly.

Hast thou not lent that flounce enough
Of looks so long and earnest ?
Lo, here's more 'penetrable stuff,'
To which thou never turnest.

Ye graceful fingers, deftly sped !
How slender, and how nimble !
O might I wind their skeins of thread,
Or but pick up their thimble !

How blest the youth whom love shall bring,
And happy stars embolden,
To change the dome into a ring,
The silver into golden !

Who'll steal some morning to her side
To take her finger's measure,
While Maryanne pretends to chide,
And blushes deep with pleasure.

Who'll watch her sew her wedding-gown,
Well conscious that it *is* hers ;
Who'll glean a tress, without a frown,
With those so ready scissors ?

Who'll taste those ripenings of the south,
The fragrant and delicious—
Don't put the pins into your mouth,
O Maryanne, my precious !

I almost wish it were my trust
To teach how shocking that is ;
I wish I had not, as I must,
To quit this tempting lattice.

Sure aim takes Cupid, fluttering foe,
Across a street so narrow ;
A silken thread to string his bow,
A needle for his arrow !

THE WITCH-BRIDE.

A FAIR witch crept to a young man's side,
And he kiss'd her and took her for his bride.

But a Shape came in at the dead of night,
And fill'd the room with snowy light.

And he saw how in his arms there lay
A thing more frightful than mouth may say.

And he rose in haste, and follow'd the Shape
Till morning crown'd an eastern cape.

And he girded himself, and follow'd still
When sunset sainted the western hill.

But, mocking and thwarting, clung to his side,
Weary day !—the foul Witch-Bride.



THE LULLABY.

I SEE two children hush'd to death,
In lap of One with silver wings,
Holding a lute, whose latest breath
Low lingers on the trembling strings.

Her face is very pale and fair,
Her hooded eyelids darkly shed
Celestial love, and all her hair
Is like a crown around her head.

Each ripple sinking in its place,
Along the lute's faint-ebbing strain,
Seems echo'd slower from her face,
And echo'd back from theirs again.

Yes, now is silence. Do not weep.
Her eyes are fix'd : observe them long ;
And spell, if thou canst pierce so deep,
The purpose of a nobler song.

FORGET ME NOT.

It is a Lover and his Bride,
Slowly walking side by side,
Through the golden eventide,
By a swift river.

Deep as love the water flows,
Fresh as joy the bramble grows,
Sweet as hope the west-wind blows,
By the swift river.

Now a blossom's eye of blue,
Laughing in the Lady's view,
Praiseth she its tender hue,
By the swift river.

Down the Young Man springeth gay,—
Fatal blossom! heavy day!
All at once the bank gives way,
By the swift river.

Throwing her the prize he sought
With these words—'Forget me not!
He falls and out of reach is caught
By the swift river.

Evermore the Flow'r for name
Bears three mournful words, the same
With his last fond look that came,
By that swift river.

Many doleful partings be ;
Joy is fled, and what have we ?
A little flow'r for memory
By Time's swift river.

THE OLD SEXTON.

(INSCRIBED TO ALFRED RETHEL.)

'Twas nigh the hour of evening pray'r ;
The Sexton climb'd his turret-stair,
Wearily, being very old.
The wind of Spring blew fresh and cold,
Wakening there Æolian thrills,
And carrying fragrance from the hills.

Through a carven cleft he lean'd,
Eyeing the landscape newly green'd ;
The large sun, slowly moving down,
Flush'd the chimneys of the town,—
The same where he was first alive
Eighty years ago and five.

Babe he sees himself, and boy ;
Youth, astir with hope and joy ;
Wife and wedded love he sees ;
Children's children round his knees ;
Friends departing one by one ;
The graveyard in the setting sun.

He seats him in a stony niche ;
The bell-rope sways within his reach ;
High in the rafters of the roof
The metal warder hangs aloof ;
All the townfolk wait to hear
That voice they know this many a year.

It is past the ringing hour ;
There is silence in the tower ;
Save that on a pinnacle
A robin sits, and sings full well.
Hush—at length for prayer they toll :
God receive the parted soul !

SQUIRE CURTIS.

SQUIRE Curtis had a cruel mouth,
Tho' honey was on his tongue ;
Squire Curtis woo'd and wedded a wife,
And she was fair and young.

But he said, ' She cannot love me ;
She watches me early and late ;
She's meek and good and cold of mood.'—
His liking turn'd to hate.

One autumn eve they rode through the woods,
Far and far away ;
' The dusk is drawing round,' she said,
' I fear we have gone astray.'

He spake no word, but lighted down,
And tied his horse to a tree ;
Out of the pillion he lifted her ;
' 'Tis a lonely place,' said she.

Down a forest-alley he walk'd,
And she walk'd by his side ;
' Would Heav'n we were at home !' she said,
' These woods are dark and wide !'

He spake no word, but still walk'd on ;
The branches shut out the sky ;
In the darkest place he turn'd him round—
' 'Tis here that you must die.'

Once she shriek'd and never again ;
 He stabb'd her with his knife ;
 Once, twice, thrice, and every blow
 Enough to take a life.

A grave was ready ; he laid her in ;
 He fill'd it up with care ;
 Under the brambles and fallen leaves
 Small sign of a grave was there.

He rode for an hour at a steady pace,
 Till back to his house came he ;
 On face or clothing, on foot or hand,
 No stain that eye could see.

He boldly call'd to his serving-man,
 As he lighted at the door :
 ' Your Mistress is gone on a sudden journey,—
 May stay for a month or more.

' In two days I shall follow her ;
 Let her waiting-woman know.'
 ' Sir,' said the serving-man, ' My Lady
 Came in an hour ago.'

Squire Curtis sat him down in a chair,
 And moved neither hand nor head.
 In there came the waiting-woman,
 ' Alas the day !' she said.

' Alas ! good Sir,' says the waiting-woman,
 ' What aileth my Mistress dear,
 That she sits alone without sign or word ?
 There is something wrong, I fear !

' Her face was white as any corpse
 As up the stair she pass'd ;
 She never turn'd, she never spoke ;
 And the chamber-door is fast.

‘She’s waiting for you.’ ‘A lie!’ he shouts,
And up to his feet doth start ;
‘My wife is buried in Brimley Holt,
With three wounds in her heart.’

They search’d the forest by lantern light,
They search’d by dawn of day ;
At noon they found the bramble-brake
And the pit where her body lay.

They carried the murder’d woman home,
Slow walking side by side.
Squire Curtis he swung upon gallows-tree,
But confess’d before he died.

A venerable trusty Man
With hair like drifted snow,
Told me this tale, as from his wife
He learn’d it long ago.

‘Her father, Sir, in early days,
Lived close by Curtis Hall ;
Many’s the time he heard folk tell
Of what did there befall.

‘The story’s true from first to last ;
His name was Henry Dabb ;
Died Christmas Eve at eighty-four,—
You’ll read it on the slab.’

EMILY.

‘Good evening. Why, of course it’s you !
 You “half imagined,”—O I knew !
 There, there, don’t make a fuss, my dear,
 Come in and let’s have supper here.

‘You’re married now, Frank ; yes, I heard ;
 And looking bright, upon my word.
 And I ?—a little thin or so ?—
 You can’t make cottage-roses grow
 In London, can you ?—O dear me !
 But never mind ; it’s life, you see.

‘Her name—don’t tell me ; I don’t care.
 Of course you make a loving pair.
 Your jolly healths ! Why, there you sit,
 And never eat or drink a bit.
 “How well I’m drest”—you think so, eh ?
 You like my hair done up this way ?

‘Oh don’t go yet, Frank ! stay, do stay
 Five minutes longer ! please don’t go !
 I’m not fit company, I know—
 But just this one time—just this last !

‘D’ye ever think of days gone past,
 When you and I a-courting went,
 So loving, and so innocent ?
 Our walks, our little messages,
 Our notes, our quarrels ; after these,

Our makings-up—O were we not
Rare fools? Then, of a sudden, came
The desperate quarrel, and for what?
For nothing! I was most to blame.

‘What use in crying? Ain’t it funny?
Nay, my good sir, I don’t want money.
I don’t, Frank; no, I don’t indeed.
Why, I can lend you if you need.
Stop, I’ll take this; I’ll tell you why;
A little locket I shall buy,
(Now mayn’t I?) big enough to hold
A lock of hair, that you forgot,
And so I kept it back.

‘How cold
The night-air strikes when one’s so hot!
Ah, you won’t kiss me now. All right,
Ta, ta, Frank; off you go; good-night!’

THE BULL.

It's true, a beast is but a beast :
 Man ! be thou no less, at least.

Plaudits shake the Circus round,
 No sluggard hath this Bull been found,
 Three horses furiously he gores,
 Pushes hard the Picadors,
 In one mad sweep the Chulos drives
 Over the barrier for their lives,
 And, tail outstretch'd, black head low-bow'd,
 Nucleus of a dusty cloud,
 Flies round the orbit free of check,
 Stung by the javelins in his neck.

What strikes the throng with such amaze ?
 Why start they from their seats to gaze ?
 One long low whistle hath the force
 To curb the monster in his course ;
 From the seats a rustic Stranger
 Vaults into the ring of danger,
 Mildly calls the Bull by name,
 'Soberbio !—and never came
 A lamb more meekly to a child
 Than comes to him the Strong and Wild.

Join'd in a gentle group they stand ;
 The hot Bull licks the Herdsman's hand,

Whose other strokes his shivering ear
And soothes away the rage and fear ;
Till—see !—with a contented moan
He lays his tortured body down,
And of his mountain pasture dreams,
Amid the cool Sierra streams.

The Crowd a general pity share.
That simple Herdsman could not bear
His favourite's pangs, and thus hath sought
His old friend's side, distrusting nought,
Trusting the faithful Beast aright,
Whose rankling pain, tumultuous fright,
Mock'd despair, revengeful rage,
One voice can with a word assuage.

Is it not so ?—Nay, fool, not so !
This is a portion of our show ;
Contrived a novel zest to bring
To the arena's bloody ring,
For even bull-fights pall at length ;
And with his courage and his strength
The Brute's affection, duly paid for,
Helps our pastime,—what else made for ?

Plaudits roar the Circus round.
The black Bull, startled by the sound,
Remembering all the wrong and pain,
Plunges to his feet again
And whirls the Herdsman over his head,—
'Madre Santa ! he is dead !'
A purse out of the wretch's breast
Drops before him to the dust,
And there with twisted neck he lies
Motionless upon his prize.

Din springs up and mad commotion,
As on glossy tropic ocean
Fierce tornado's flail may strike ;
Brilliant Chulos, leopardlike,
Bound in to the Herdsman's aid.
Too late. He now is both ways paid.
May all that true affection sell
Find it profit them as well !

THE MAIDS OF ELFIN-MERE.

WHEN the spinning-room was here,
Came Three Damsels, clothed in white,
With their spindles every night ;
One and two and three fair Maidens,
Spinning to a pulsing cadence,
Singing songs of Elfin-Mere ;
Till the eleventh hour was toll'd,
Then departed through the wold.

*Years ago, and years ago ;
And the tall reeds sigh as the wind doth blow.*

Three white Lilies, calm and clear,
And they were loved by every one ;
Most of all, the Pastor's Son,
Listening to their gentle singing,
Felt his heart go from him, clinging
To these Maids of Elfin-Mere ;
Sued each night to make them stay,
Sadden'd when they went away.

*Years ago, and years ago ;
And the tall reeds sigh as the wind doth blow.*

Hands that shook with love and fear
Dared put back the village clock,—
Flew the spindle, turn'd the rock,
Flow'd the song with subtle rounding,
Till the false ' eleven ' was sounding ;

Then these Maids of Elfin-Mere
Swiftly, softly left the room,
Like three doves on snowy plume.

*Years ago, and years ago ;
And the tall reeds sigh as the wind doth blow.*

One that night who wander'd near
Heard lamentings by the shore,
Saw at dawn three stains of gore
In the waters fade and dwindle.
Never more with song and spindle
Saw we Maids of Elfin-Mere.
The Pastor's Son did pine and die ;
Because true love should never lie.

*Years ago, and years ago ;
And the tall reeds sigh as the wind doth blow.*

MARY.

MARY'S but a lowly maid,
 Very wise and gentle ;
 Proud Lucinda's rich brocade
 Proves her father's rental.
 Where the lamps and jewels glow,
 Doth Lucinda bask it ;
 Cottage roof where roses blow,
 You're my Mary's casket !

See, in whim, Lucinda bright
 Flings her glances my way,
 As a travelling duchess might
 Wander down a bye-way,
 Love the brook, the village inn,—
 ' Here to live and die now !
 Ah, new horses—off we spin :
 Little place, goodbye now !

Nay, my lady, by your leave,
 Wasted fall those glances ;
 You yourself alone deceive,
 Dangling toyish fancies.
 There, in all your charms array'd,
 Calm I look you over ;
 Mary's but a simple maid,
 I am Mary's lover.

Sweeter far my Mary's smile,
Tender, truthful, gracious,
Than the lady's honey'd wile,
Delicately mendacious.
Give me Mary's finger-tips,
Robb'd of half their whiteness,
Rather than Lucinda's lips,
Wreath'd in languid brightness !

A thousand beauties, fair and brown,
I've seen, of every station :
Like my Mary, never one ;
She's new as Eve's creation.
And hid was this delightful girl
Where no man could discover,
Till I, most happy, found the pearl,—
I am Mary's lover.

Fresher far than flowery wood
When the spring awakes it,
Brighter far than morning cloud
When the sunshine takes it,
Mary's love—and pure as Heav'n :
O thou best and dearest !
All thy love to me is given,
All my soul thou cheerest.

TOWER AND FIELD.

A HERMIT sat in a lonely tower,
Heaping knowledge hour by hour ;
Searching through all lives, all forces,
All beginnings, and all courses ;
Tracing on, from old to new,
How rounded worlds from chaos grew ;
Sifting all matter's form and plan,
Within the utmost reach of man ;
All dependence, all relation,
Through the system of Creation.
Of man's mind too, and its modes,
Disentangling all the nodes,
To that limit where extremes
Interpenetrate like dreams,
Where the eager wings in pain
Struggle madly to sustain
The soul in void,—where rises ever
A wall of blank to man's endeavour.

One day came a Shepherd Lad
To where the Hermit plied his task :
The Hermit raised his head to ask
What knowledge was the best he had.
' A crowded, various earth is spread
Around my footsteps,' said the Youth ;
' A great Heaven is above my head.
To love and hope in simple truth,
To reverence God, whate'er befall,—
This is best, this is all.'

Then did this Hermit take the Boy,
And teach him all that he could teach ;
And, after many years, he said,
' All knowledge in the human reach
Is thine, to use and to enjoy.
What count'st thou best ?' He answer made,
' Increase of knowledge is good and sweet,
That the soul may shun deceit ;
And the best is this in sooth—
To love and hope in simple truth,
To reverence God, whate'er befall.
This is best, this is all.'

THE FAITHLESS KNIGHT.

I.

It is a careless pretty may, down by yon river-side ;
Her face, the whole world's pleasure, she gladly hath
 espied ;
And tossing back her golden hair, her singing echoes
 wide ;
When gaily to the grassy shore a youthful knight doth
 ride.

II.

And vaulting from his courser, that stoops the head
 to drink,
And greeting well this Maiden fair, by running water's
 brink,
He throws about her slender neck a chain of costly
 link :
Too courteous he for glamourie, as any may might
 think.

III.

All through the flowery meadows, in the summer
 evening warm,
The rippling river murmurs low, the dancing midges
 swarm ;
But far away the pretty may, nor makes the least
 alarm,
Sits firm on lofty saddle-bow, within the young
 knight's arm.

IV.

Now months are come, and months are gone, with
sunshine, breeze, and rain ;
The song on grassy river-shore you shall not hear
again ;
The proud knight spurs at tournament, in Germany or
Spain,
Or sues in silken bow'r to melt some lady's high dis-
dain.

V.

And thus in idle hour he dreams—'I've wander'd
east and west ;
I've whispered love in many an ear, in earnest or in
jest ;
That summer day—that pretty may—perhaps she
loved me best ?
I recollect her face, methinks, more often than the
rest.'

SIR HUGH DE LA POLE.

I.

SIR HUGH DE LA POLE was a sturdy old knight,
Who in war and in peace had done every man right ;
Had lived with his neighbours in loving accord,
Save the Abbot and Monks, whom he fiercely ab-
 horr'd,
And to their feet alone refused oak-floor and sward.

II.

With guests round his table, good servants at call,
His laughter made echo the wide castle-hall ;
He whoop'd to the falcon, he hunted the deer ;
If down by the Abbey, his comrades could hear—
' A plague on these mummers, who mime all the
 year !'

III.

And now see him stretch'd on his leave-taking bed.
Five minutes ago with a calm smile he said,
' I can trust my poor soul to the Lord God of
 Heaven,
' Tho' living unpriested and dying unshriven.
' Say all of you, friends, " May his sins be forgiven !"'

IV.

But some who are near to him sorely repine
 He thus should decease like an ox or a swine ;
 So a message in haste to the Abbey they send,
 When the voice cannot ring, and the arm cannot
 bend ;
 For this reign, as all reigns do, approaches an end.

V.

Says my lady, ' Too long I have yielded my mind.'
 Son Richard ' to go with the world ' is inclined.
 ' Sweet Mother of Mercy !' sobs Jane, his young
 spouse,
 ' O Saviour, forget not my tears and my vows !'
 In pray'r for the dying her spirit she bows.

VI.

At once the good Abbot forgets every wrong,
 And speeds to the gate which repell'd him so long ;
 The stair (' Pax vobiscum !') is strange to his tread ;
 He puts everyone forth. Not a sound from that bed ;
 And the spark from beneath the white eyebrow is
 fled.

VII.

Again the door opens, all enter the place,
 Where pallid and stern lies the well-beloved face.
 ' The Church, through God's help and Saint Simon's,
 hath won
 To her bosom of pity a penitent son.'
 See the cross on his breast ; hark, the knell is begun.

VIII.

Who feasts with young Richard? who shrives the
fair Jane?
Whose mule to the Castle jogs right, without rein?
Our Abbey has moorland and meadowland wide,
Where Hugh for his hunting and hawking would
ride,
Full of priest-hating whimsies and paganish pride.

IX.

In the chancel the tomb is of Hugh de la Pole.
Ten thousand fine masses were said for his soul,
With praying, and tinkling, and incense, and flame;
In the centre whereof, without start or exclaim,
His bones fell to dust. You may still read the name,
'Twixt an abbot's and bishop's who once were of
fame.

DOWN ON THE SHORE.

I.

Down on the shore, on the sunny shore !
Where the salt smell cheers the land ;
Where the tide moves bright under boundless light,
And the surge on the glittering strand ;
Where the children wade in the shallow pools,
Or run from the froth in play ;
Where the swift little boats with milk-white wings
Are crossing the sapphire bay,
And the ship in full sail, with a fortunate gale,
Holds proudly on her way ;
Where the nets are spread on the grass to dry,
And asleep, hard by, the fishermen lie,
Under the tent of the warm blue sky,
With the hushing wave on its golden floor
To sing their lullaby.

II.

Down on the shore, on the stormy shore !
Beset by a growling sea,
Whose mad waves leap on the rocky steep
Like wolves up a traveller's tree ;
Where the foam flies wide, and an angry blast
Blows the curlew off, with a screech ;
Where the brown sea-wrack, torn up by the roots,
Is flung out of fishes' reach ;
And the tall ship rolls on the hidden shoals,
And scatters her planks on the beach ;
Where slate and straw through the village spin,
And a cottage fronts the fiercest din
With a sailor's wife sitting sad within,
Hearkening the wind and the water's roar,
Till at last her tears begin.

OUTWARD BOUND.

I.

CLINK-CLINK-CLINK goes our windlass.
‘ Ahoy !—‘ Haul in !—‘ Let go !
Yards braced and sails set,—
Flags uncurl and flow.
Some eyes that watch from shore are wet,
(How bright their welcome shone !)
While, bending softly to the breeze,
And rushing through the parted seas,
Our gallant ship glides on.

II.

Tho’ one has left a sweetheart,
And one has left a wife,
What use, my lads, to mope and fret ?
We live a sailor’s life.
See, far away they signal yet—
They dwindle—fade—they’re gone !
For dashing outwards, bold and brave,
And springing light from wave to wave,
Our merry ship flies on.

III.

Gay spreads the sparkling ocean ;
But many a gloomy night
And stormy morrow must be met
Ere next we heave in sight.
The parting look we’ll ne’er forget,
The kiss, the benison,
As round the rolling world we go.
God bless you all !—blow, breezes, blow !
Sail on, good ship, sail on !

HOMEWARD BOUND.

I.

HEAD the ship for England !
Shake out every sail !
Blithe leap the billows,
Merry sings the gale.
Captain, work the reck'ning ;
How many knots a day ?—
Round the world and home again,
That's the sailor's way !

II.

We've traded with the Yankees,
Brazilians, and Chinese ;
We've laugh'd with dusky beauties
In shade of tall palm-trees ;
Across the Line and Gulf-Stream—
Round by Table Bay—
Everywhere and home again,
That's the sailor's way !

III.

Nightly stands the North Star
Higher on our bow ;
Straight we run for England ;
Our thoughts are in it now.
Jolly time with friends ashore,
When we've drawn our pay !—
All about and home again,
That's the sailor's way !

IV.

Tom will to his parents,
Jack will to his dear,
Joe to wife and children,
Bob to pipes and beer ;
Dicky to the dancing-room,
To hear the fiddles play ;—
Round the world and home again,
That's the sailor's way !
*Round the world and home again,
That's the sailor's way !*

THE SLAVE-SHIP.

THE slave-ship was burning, the sea was aflame,
And the sunset bedimm'd with the blaze of the same.
'These slaves,'—said the crew, 'Let us pick two or
three ;
For the rest, they may burn, they may drown—what
care we ?

Then the cry of ten-score in that black vessel cramm'd
Arose like the cry of ten-score of the damn'd ;
Chain'd fast whilst the growling fire fought with the
sea,
Like tiger with lion, whose prey they should be.

Some rended their bonds with the strength of despair,
And swam to the boats ; but a fiercer was there
Than the sea or the fire, and more cruel than they ;
For Man took Death's side in that terrible fray !

A young negro girl in the long-boat had place.
Through the water close by rose a dark, well-known
face.

When she saw it she cried out with joy like a child,
And held down her hand to her lover, and smiled.

A shot rang beside her : he sank like a stone :
The waters were bloody, and she was alone.
She has sprung from the boat : she is lost in the deep :
And their sorrows and wrongs are laid softly to sleep.

NANNY'S SAILOR LAD.

Now fare-you-well ! my bonny ship,
For I am for the shore.
The wave may flow, the breeze may blow,
They'll carry me no more.

And all as I came walking
And singing up the sand,
I met a pretty maiden,
I took her by the hand.

But still she would not raise her head,
A word she would not speak,
And tears were on her eyelids,
Dripping down her cheek.

Now grieve you for your father ?
Or husband might it be ?
Or is it for a sweetheart
That's roving on the sea ?

It is not for my father,
I have no husband dear,
But oh ! I had a sailor lad,
And he is lost, I fear.

Three long years
I am grieving for his sake,
And when the stormy wind blows loud,
I lie all night awake.

I caught her in my arms,
And she lifted up her eyes,
I kiss'd her ten times over
In the midst of her surprise.

Cheer up, cheer up, my Nanny !
And speak again to me ;
O, dry your tears, my darling,
For I'll go no more to sea.

I have a love, a true true love,
And I have a golden store ;
The wave may flow, the breeze may blow,
They'll carry me no more !

CAPE USHANT.

(THE LAST LOOK.)

OUR ship, the stout Bellerophon,
Off Rochefort Harbour lay :
We took a passenger on board,
And slowly sail'd away.
Seven days and nights, with baffling winds,
We strove to fetch Tor Bay.

The eighth day, with the rising sun,
A morning in July,
French land upon our starboard bow
We plainly could desery ;

When I, a little midday
(Ah ! sixty years ago),
Came up, to take my watch on deck,
Into the early glow.

Magnificently rose the sun
Above the hills of France,
And spread his splendour on the sea,
And through the sky's expanse.

Meanwhile, upon the poop, alone,
Our Passenger stood there,
And view'd the gently gliding land
In clearest morning air,—
The cliffs of Ushant, and the slopes
Of shadowy Finisterre.

‘Ushant?’ he asked; and I replied,
‘Yes, sire.’ Whereon he raised
His little pocket-telescope,
And gazed, and ever gazed.

For hours and hours he hardly moved;
And if his eyes grew dim,
We never saw it; there he stood,
And none went near to him.

Till with a faint and fickle wind
We drew from off the coast,
And in a noontide haze of heat
France faded, and was lost.

Napoleon’s thoughts in that last look
It were in vain to seek;
He had enough to think upon
If he had gazed a week.

And sometimes from his rock, perhaps,
He saw, amid the shine
Of lonely waves, Cape Ushant’s ghost
Far on the dim sea-line.

THE PILOT BOAT.

I.

A SCHOONER'S in the bay,
 With a signal at her fore ;
 And I heard the Pilot say—
 'Tho' a squall may come to-night,
 We shall get on board all right,
 And the tide begins to flow at break of day.'
 'Shove her off, my lad,' cries he,
 'We've a craft that's fit for sea !'
 And the ripples on the shore
 Murmur softly as they run
 Through the crimson evening light,
 While the father and the son
 Sail away.

II.

When cliff and wave grow dark,
 Shines a cottage by the strand
 With its feeble taper-spark,
 Where the pilot's wife is sewing,
 Whilst her little children sleep ;
 All the gloomy heav'n above no glimmer showing.
 Ha !—lightning !—and a crash
 Like the downfall of the skies ;
 Rushing rain, booming deep,
 Sudden gale with fury blowing.
 Out of nothing, at each flash
 Leap the dreadful sea and land.
 Was that wind she heard ? or—hark !
 Shouts and cries ?

III.

A morn remorseful, pale,
For the frenzy overpast,—
A sullen sinking gale,—
Flying clouds, torn and shatter'd,
And a dismal gleam of day through them cast
On the wilderness in motion
Of the ghastly rugged ocean
With its dull unceasing roar,
And the birds that scream and flee,
And the misty wreck-strewn shore,
And a black unmoving Boat
Flung keel upwards, bruised and batter'd,
Past the help of sail or oar.
But the Pilot, stout and steady,
And his boy, brave and ready,—
On what voyage, on what sea,
Do they float ?

TRANSLATED OR ADAPTED.



THE SAILOR.

A ROMAIC BALLAD.

THOU that hast a daughter
For one to woo and wed,
Give her to a husband
With snow upon his head ;
Oh, give her to an old man,
Though little joy it be,
Before the best young sailor
That sails upon the sea !

How luckless is the sailor
When sick and like to die !
He sees no tender mother,
No sweetheart standing by.
Only the captain speaks to him,—
Stand up, stand up, young man,
And steer the ship to haven,
As none beside thee can.

Thou sayst to me, ‘ Stand up, stand up ;’
I say to thee, take hold,
Lift me a little from the deck,
My hands and feet are cold.
And let my head, I pray thee,
With handkerchiefs be bound ;
There, take my love’s own handkerchief,
And tie it tightly round.

Now bring the chart, the doleful chart ;
See, where these mountains meet—
The clouds are thick around their head,
The mists around their feet :
Cast anchor here ; 'tis deep and safe
Within the rocky cleft ;
The little anchor on the right,
The great one on the left.

And now to thee, O captain,
Most earnestly I pray,
That they may never bury me
In church or cloister gray ;—
But on the windy sea-beach,
At the ending of the land,
All on the surfy sea-beach,
Deep down into the sand.

For there will come the sailors,
Their voices I shall hear,
And at casting of the anchor
The yo-ho loud and clear ;
And at hauling of the anchor
The yo-ho and the cheer,—
Farewell, my love, for to thy bay
I nevermore may steer !

KOSTAS.

A ROMAIC BALLAD.

SHE had nine noble brothers,
This beautiful young Maid,
And of old gloomy Charon
Not much was she afraid.

Young Kostas her betrothèd
Of four estates was heir,
And for old gloomy Charon
Right little did she care.

But Charon like a bird flew past,
And shot his deathly dart,
Flew like a coal-black swallow,
And pierced her to the heart.

Then deep, deep did her father sigh,
And loud her mother moan,
'O my one only daughter,
My fair, my only one !'

And down the valley Kostas came,
With thrice three hundred men,
And sixty-two musicians,
Along the mountain glen.

‘ Oh ! stop the marriage jubilee,
Musicians, play no more ;
Oh, stop awhile, for I can see
A cross upon the door.

‘ It may be one of her brethren
Lies wounded on his bed ;
Perchance her old grandfather
Is dying now, or dead.’

He spurreth to the churchyard
His steed so black and brave,
And there he finds the sacristan
Digging in a grave.

‘ O Sacristan, I greet thee !
For whom that grave ? he cries.
‘Tis for a fair young Maiden,
Her with the beautiful eyes ;

‘ Who had nine noble brethren
Within her father’s gates,
And Kostas for her bridegroom,
The heir of four estates.’

‘ O Sacristan, I pray thee,
Now dig the grave more wide,
Now dig it wide enough for two
To rest there side by side.’

He drew his golden-hilted sword,
He plunged it in his breast ;
And there the young betrothed lie
Side by side at rest.

THE FISHERMAN.

FROM GOETHE.

THE water gushed, the water swell'd ;
A Fisherman sat by,
Gazing upon the line he held,
With peaceful heart and eye ;
And while he watched in listless mood,
A billow heaved and surged ;
And, rustling from the parted flood,
A woman's form emerged.

She sung to him, she spake to him :
' Why lure my brood away,
By human skill, and human fraud,
Up to the burning day ?
Oh, happy live the little fish !
So happy—might'st thou know
This moment 'twere thine only wish
To come to us below.

' Finds not the Sun a resting-place ;
The moon, within the mere ?
Uplifts not each a radiant face
Grown doubly bright and clear ?
Persuade thee not these heav'ns so deep ?
This moist, embracing blue ?
Thy features, lo ! that swim and sleep
In soft eternal dew ?

The water gush'd, the water swell'd,
It kiss'd his naked feet ;
Deep longing all his heart impell'd,
As when our love we meet.
She spake to him, she sang to him ;
No help could come between ;
Half drew she him, half sunk he in,
And never more was seen.



THE QUEEN'S PAGE.

FROM HEINE.

THERE was a King, an old King,
Chill his heart, and gray his head ;
And that poor King, that old King,
A sweet young wife must wed.

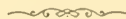
There was a Page, a young Page,
Light of heart, and bright of hair ;
And that fair Page, that young Page,
The young Queen's train must bear.

But dost thou know the old song,
Old story, sad to tell ?—
Death they found, they needs must die,
Who loved each other well.

TO THE TETTIX.

FROM MELEAGER.

O TETTIX ! drunk with drops of dew,
What magician equals you
In the rural solitude ?
On a perch amidst the wood
Scraping to your heart's desire
Dusky sides with notchy feet,
Shrilling, thrilling, fast and sweet,
Like the music of a lyre.
O my Tettix ! I entreat,
Sing the Dryads something new ;
So from thick-embower'd seat
PAN himself may answer you,
Till every inmost glade rejoices
With your loud alternate voices ;
And I listen, and forget
All the thorns, the doubts and fears,
Love in lover's heart may set,—
Listen, and forget them all.
And so, with music in mine ears,
Where the plane-tree shadows steep
The ground with freshness, gently fall
Into a noontide sleep.





NOTES.

Page 4. An old name for the Snowdrop was 'Fair Maid of February,' in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary; the Feast of the Purification, otherwise called Candlemas Day, falling on the second of this month.

Page 19. 'AGAVE.'—*Erratum*: for 'Cancell'd from earth,' put 'Earth being shut out.'

Page 35. 'DAY AND NIGHT SONGS.'—This group of short poems is here printed in the literary form in which I desire it may remain.

Page 124. 'KING HENRY'S HUNT.'—Waltham was, in the time of Henry VIII., a woody district, which included the present Epping Forest. The tradition of this particular hunt is traceable up to the time of Elizabeth. It has been sometimes claimed for Richmond Park, but, so far as I know, against both evidence and probability.

Page 127. 'THE TOUCHSTONE.'—Mr. Emerson conferred a dignity on this poem by reciting it in his oration on John Brown's execution. It was printed as his in a great number of American newspapers.

Page 137. 'THISTLEDOWN.'—I was told of this as a still-existing custom in some parts of England. A friend objected that thistledown could not be thus used; but Mr. Richard Jefferies in his 'Wild Life in a Southern County,' p. 206, says, 'Thistledown is sometimes gathered to fill pillow-cases, and a pillow so filled is exquisitely soft.'

Page 140. 'THE DIRTY OLD MAN.'—A singular man, named Nathaniel Bentley, for many years kept a large hardware shop in Leadenhall Street, London. He was best known as 'Dirty Dick' (Dick for alliteration's sake, probably), and his place of business as 'The Dirty Warehouse.' He died about the year 1809. The verses accord with the accounts given of himself and his house. Some twenty-five years ago I saw a placard in the window of a coffee-house in Leadenhall Street,

'Formerly the residence of the celebrated Dirty Dick ;' but the original house had then been made into two. I possess a good copperplate engraving of it, in Dick's time—'A Remarkable OLD HOUSE in Leadenhall Street,' 'Drawn and engrav'd by S. Rawle.' The large shop-front, which retains an aspect of stateliness, has many broken panes. At the door stands a stoutish figure, 'Dick' himself no doubt, in knee-breeches and half-ragged coat, with something of a Charles James Fox countenance. A gentleman passing by with a lady on his arm directs her attention to the house.

'The Dirty Old Man' was first published in Mr. Dickens's *Household Words*, having received a warm welcome from the editor. Perhaps it had the honour, some time later, of suggesting Miss Havisham's wedding-feast in 'Great Expectations.'

Page 149, 'THE OLD SEXTON.'—Rethel's powerful woodcut, *Der Todt als Freund*, is now widely known.

Page 151, 'SQUIRE CURTIS.'—I dreamed the supernatural incident.

Page 159, 'THE MAIDS OF ELFIN-MERE.'—The story, like that of 'Forget me not,' is doubtless of German origin; I cannot recall where I found it. My verses first appeared in 1855, with a design by Rossetti, far out-valuing the poem which, in more senses than one, it illustrated. To his extreme fastidiousness it seemed inadequately engraved (it was drawn direct on the wood, after the custom of those days), but in the opinion of good judges, some of whom saw the original drawing, it remains a very characteristic and beautiful work. I possess a copy touched by the artist's own hand, which has some lines darkened and others softened, but is not materially altered in effect. The woodcut has long been unattainable by the general public. The limited number of copies now published are in no respect inferior to those which appeared in the first edition.

Page 174, 'THE SLAVE-SHIP.'—From an incident in 'Tom Cringle's Log.'

Page 177, 'CAPE USHANT.'—A real incident. The day was Sunday, July the 23rd, 1815. See Captain Maitland's 'Narrative of the Surrender of Bonaparte,' p. 109 (London: Colburn, 1826); and 'Memoirs of an Aristocrat and Anecdotes of Napoleon' (London: Whittaker, 1837).

Page 185, 'KOSTAS, A ROMAIC BALLAD.'—Charon is the *Death* of the modern Greeks.

Page 189, 'THE QUEEN'S PAGE.'—In the summer of 1854 I had rooms in quiet, shady little Queen's Square, Bloomsbury (corner house on the left as you come from Southampton Row), and there one afternoon appeared, as it often did, the welcome face of Gabriel Rossetti. 'Would I come out with him?' 'With the greatest pleasure, if he could wait a little while.' He took a book and sat silent. A quarter of an hour or so later (it was a scribbling-book of mine that was in his hands) he had made a pen and ink drawing in it opposite to a translation of a poem of Heine's, twelve lines long, which he had never seen before. I think he was not dissatisfied with this rapid design, which he signed and dated, and that many will be gratified by its reproduction. The size of the original is six inches by four and a quarter.

Page 190, 'TETRIX.'—A kind of grasshopper, much honoured by the Greeks.



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