



A. C. Lombard

POEMS AND BALLADS.

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

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Handwritten text, possibly a signature or name, written in cursive script below the drawing.

To
R. F. B.,

IN TOKEN OF GRATITUDE

FOR A FRIENDSHIP OF WHICH I AM PROUDER

THAN I COULD BE OF ANY

LITERARY FAME,

I Dedicate

THESE POEMS.



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THE LAST ORACLE.

(A.D. 361.)

εἶπατε τῷ βασιλῆϊ, χαμαὶ πέσε δαίδαλος αὐλά·
οὐκέτι Φοῖβος ἔχει καλύβαν, οὐ μάντιδα δάφνην,
οὐ παγὰν λαλέουσιν· ἀπέσβετο καὶ λάλον ὕδωρ.

YEARS have risen and fallen in darkness or in twilight,
Ages waxed and waned that knew not thee nor thine,
While the world sought light by night and sought not thy
light,
Since the sad last pilgrim left thy dark mid shrine.
Dark the shrine and dumb the fount of song thence welling,
Save for words more sad than tears of blood, that said:
*Tell the king, on earth has fallen the glorious dwelling,
And the watersprings that spake are quenched and dead.
Not a cell is left the God, no roof, no cover ;
In his hand the prophet laurel flowers no more.*

And the great king's high sad heart, thy true last lover,
Felt thine answer pierce and cleave it to the core.

And he bowed down his hopeless head

In the drift of the wild world's tide,

And dying, *Thou hast conquered*, he said,

Galilean ; he said it, and died.

And the world that was thine and was ours

When the Graces took hands with the Hours

Grew cold as a winter wave

In the wind from a wide-mouthed grave,

As a gulf wide open to swallow

The light that the world held dear.

O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,

Destroyer and healer, hear !

Age on age thy mouth was mute, thy face was hidden,

And the lips and eyes that loved thee blind and dumb ;

Song forsook their tongues that held thy name forbidden,

Light their eyes that saw the strange God's kingdom
come.

Fire for light and hell for heaven and psalms for pæans
Filled the clearest eyes and lips most sweet of song,
When for chant of Greeks the wail of Galileans
Made the whole world moan with hymns of wrath and
wrong.

Yea, not yet we see thee, father, as they saw thee,
They that worshipped when the world was theirs and
thine,
They whose words had power by thine own power to
draw thee
Down from heaven till earth seemed more than heaven
divine.

For the shades are about us that hover
When darkness is half withdrawn
And the skirts of the dead night cover
The face of the live new dawn.

For the past is not utterly past
Though the word on its lips be the last,
And the time be gone by with its creed
When men were as beasts that bleed,

As sheep or as swine that wallow,
In the shambles of faith and of fear.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear !

Yet it may be, lord and father, could we know it,
We that love thee for our darkness shall have light
More than ever prophet hailed of old or poet
Standing crowned and robed and sovereign in thy sight.
To the likeness of one God their dreams enthralled thee,
Who wast greater than all Gods that waned and grew ;
Son of God the shining son of time they called thee,
Who wast older, O our father, than they knew.
For no thought of man made Gods to love or honour
Ere the song within the silent soul began,
Nor might earth in dream or deed take heaven upon her
Till the word was clothed with speech by lips of man.
And the word and the life wast thou,
The spirit of man and the breath ;
And before thee the Gods that bow
Take life at thine hands and death.

For these are as ghosts that wane,
That are gone in an age or twain ;
Harsh, merciful, passionate, pure,
They perish, but thou shalt endure ;
Be their life as the swan's or the swallow,
They pass as the flight of a year.

O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear !

Thou the word, the light, the life, the breath, the glory,
Strong to help and heal, to lighten and to slay,
Thine is all the song of man, the world's whole story ;
Not of morning and of evening is thy day.
Old and younger Gods are buried or begotten
From uprising to downsetting of thy sun,
Risen from eastward, fallen to westward and forgotten,
And their springs are many, but their end is one.
Divers births of godheads find one death appointed,
As the soul whence each was born makes room for
each ;

God by God goes out, discrowned and disanointed,
But the soul stands fast that gave them shape and
speech.

Is the sun yet cast out of heaven ?

Is the song yet cast out of man ?

Life that had song for its leaven

To quicken the blood that ran

Through the veins of the songless years

More bitter and cold than tears,

Heaven that had thee for its one

Light, life, word, witness, O sun,

Are they soundless and sightless and hollow,

Without eye, without speech, without ear ?

O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,

Destroyer and healer, hear !

Time arose and smote thee silent at his warning,

Change and darkness fell on men that fell from thee ;

Dark thou satest, veiled with light, behind the morning,

Till the soul of man should lift up eyes and see.

Till the blind mute soul get speech again and eyesight,
Man may worship not the light of life within ;
In his sight the stars whose fires grow dark in thy sight
Shine as sunbeams on the night of death and sin.
Time again is risen with mightier word of warning,
Change hath blown again a blast of louder breath ;
Clothed with clouds and stars and dreams that melt in
morning,
Lo, the Gods that ruled by grace of sin and death !
They are conquered, they break, they are stricken,
Whose might made the whole world pale ;
They are dust that shall rise not or quicken
Though the world for their death's sake wail.
As a hound on a wild beast's trace,
So time has their godhead in chase ;
As wolves when the hunt makes head,
They are scattered, they fly, they are fled ;
They are fled beyond hail, beyond hollo,
And the cry of the chase, and the cheer.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apolló,
Destroyer and healer, hear !

Day by day thy shadow shines in heaven beholden,

Even the sun, the shining shadow of thy face :

King, the ways of heaven before thy feet grow golden ;

God, the soul of earth is kindled with thy grace.

In thy lips the speech of man whence Gods were
fashioned,

In thy soul the thought that makes them and unmakes ;

By thy light and heat incarnate and impassioned,

Soul to soul of man gives light for light and takes.

As they knew thy name of old time could we know it,

Healer called of sickness, slayer invoked of wrong,

Light of eyes that saw thy light, God, king, priest, poet,

Song should bring thee back to heal us with thy song.

For thy kingdom is past not away,

Nor thy power from the place thereof hurled ;

Out of heaven they shall cast not the day,

They shall cast not out song from the world.

By the song and the light they give

We know thy works that they live ;

With the gift thou hast given us of speech

We praise, we adore, we beseech,

We arise at thy bidding and follow,
We cry to thee, answer, appear,
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear !

IN THE BAY.

I.

BEYOND the hollow sunset, ere a star
Take heart in heaven from eastward, while the west,
Fulfilled of watery resonance and rest,
Is as a port with clouds for harbour bar
To fold the fleet in of the winds from far
That stir no plume now of the bland sea's breast ;

II.

Above the soft sweep of the breathless bay
Southwestward, far past flight of night and day,
Lower than the sunken sunset sinks, and higher
Than dawn can freak the front of heaven with fire,
My thought with eyes and wings made wide makes way
To find the place of souls that I desire.

III.

If any place for any soul there be,
Disrobed and disentranced ; if the might,
The fire and force that filled with ardent light
The souls whose shadow is half the light we see,
Survive and be suppressed not of the night ;
This hour should show what all day hid from me.

IV.

Night knows not, neither is it shown to-day,
By sunlight nor by starlight is it shown,
Nor to the full moon's eye nor footfall known,
Their world's untrodden and unkindled way.
Nor is the breath nor music of it blown
With sounds of winter or with winds of May.

V.

But here, where light and darkness reconciled
Hold earth between them as a weanling child

Between the balanced hands of death and birth,
Even as they held the new-born shape of earth
When first life trembled in her limbs and smiled,
Here hope might think to find what hope were worth.

VI.

Past Hades, past Elysium, past the long
Slow smooth strong lapse of Lethe—past the toil
Wherein all souls are taken as a spoil,
The Stygian web of waters—if your song
Be quenched not, O our brethren, but be strong
As ere ye too shook off our temporal coil ;

VII.

If yet these twain survive your worldly breath,
Joy trampling sorrow, life devouring death,
If perfect life possess your life all through
And like your words your souls be deathless too,
To-night, of all whom night encompasseth,
My soul would commune with one soul of you.

VIII.

Above the sunset might I see thine eyes
That were above the sundawn in our skies,
Son of the songs of morning,—thine that were
First lights to lighten that rekindling air
Wherethrough men saw the front of England rise
And heard thine loudest of the lyre-notes there—

IX.

If yet thy fire have not one spark the less,
O Titan, born of her a Titaness,
Across the sunrise and the sunset's mark
Send of thy lyre one sound, thy fire one spark,
To change this face of our unworthiness,
Across this hour dividing light from dark.

X.

To change this face of our chill time, that hears
No song like thine of all that crowd its ears,

Of all its lights that lighten all day long
Sees none like thy most fleet and fiery sphere's
Outlightening Sirius—in its twilight throng
No thunder and no sunrise like thy song.

XI.

Hath not the sea-wind swept the sea-line bare
To pave with stainless fire through stainless air
A passage for thine heavenlier feet to tread
Ungrieved of earthly floor-work ? hath it spread
No covering splendid as the sun-god's hair
To veil or to reveal thy lordlier head ?

XII.

Hath not the sunset shown across the sea
A way majestic enough for thee ?
What hour save this should be thine hour—and mine,
If thou have care of any less divine
Than thine own soul ; if thou take thought of me,
Marlowe, as all my soul takes thought of thine ?

XIII.

Before the moon's face as before the sun
The morning star and evening star are one
For all men's lands as England. O, if night
Hang hard upon us,—ere our day take flight,
Shed thou some comfort from thy day long done
On us pale children of the latter light !

XIV.

For surely, brother and master and lord and king,
Where'er thy footfall and thy face make spring
In all souls' eyes that meet thee wheresoe'er,
And have thy soul for sunshine and sweet air—
Some late love of thine old live land should cling,
Some living love of England, round thee there.

XV.

Here from her shore across her sunniest sea
My soul makes question of the sun for thee,

And waves and beams make answer. When thy feet
Made her ways flowerier and their flowers more sweet
With childlike passage of a god to be,
Like spray these waves cast off her foemen's fleet.

XVI.

Like foam they flung it from her, and like weed
Its wrecks were washed from scornful shoal to shoal,
From rock to rock reverberate ; and the whole
Sea laughed and lightened with a deathless deed
That sowed our enemies in her field for seed
And made her shores fit harbourage for thy soul.

XVII.

Then in her green south fields, a poor man's child,
Thou hadst thy short sweet fill of half-blown joy,
That ripens all of us for time to cloy
With full-blown pain and passion ; ere the wild
World caught thee by the fiery heart, and smiled
To make so swift end of the godlike boy.

XVIII.

For thou, if ever godlike foot there trod
 These fields of ours, wert surely like a god.
 Who knows what splendour of strange dreams was shed
 With sacred shadow and glimmer of gold and red
 From hallowed windows, over stone and sod,
 On thine unbowed bright insubmissive head ?

XIX.

The shadow stayed not, but the splendour stays,
 Our brother, till the last of English days.
 No day nor night on English earth shall be
 For ever, spring nor summer, Junes nor Mays,
 // But somewhat as a sound or gleam of thee
Shall come on us like morning from the sea. //

XX.

Like sunrise never wholly risen, nor yet
 Quenched ; or like sunset never wholly set,

A light to lighten as from living eyes
The cold unlit close lids of one that lies
Dead, or a ray returned from death's far skies
To fire us living lest our lives forget.

XXI.

For in that heaven what light of lights may be,
What splendour of what stars, what spheres of flame
Sounding, that none may number nor may name,
We know not, even thy brethren ; yea, not we
Whose eyes desire the light that lightened thee,
Whose ways and thine are one way and the same.

XXII.

But if the riddles that in sleep we read,
And trust them not, be flattering truth indeed,
As he that rose our mightiest called them,—he,
Much higher than thou as thou much higher than we—
There, might we say, all flower of all our seed,
All singing souls are as one sounding sea.

XXIII.

All those that here were of thy kind and kin,
Beside thee and below thee, full of love,
Full-souled for song,—and one alone above
Whose only light folds all your glories in—
With all birds' notes from nightingale to dove
Fill the world whither we too fain would win.

XXIV.

The world that sees in heaven the sovereign light
Of sunlike Shakespeare, and the fiery night
Whose stars were watched of Webster ; and beneath,
The twin-souled brethren of the single wreath,
Grown in king's gardens, plucked from pastoral heath,
Wrought with all flowers for all men's heart's delight.

XXV.

And that fixed fervour, iron-red like Mars,
In the mid moving tide of tenderer stars,

That burned on loves and deeds the darkest done,
Athwart the incestuous prisoner's bride-house bars ;
And thine, most highest of all their fires but one,
Our morning star, sole risen before the sun.

XXVI.

And one light risen since theirs to run such race
Thou hast seen, O Phosphor, from thy pride of place.
Thou hast seen Shelley, him that was to thee
As light to fire or dawn to lightning ; me,
Me likewise, O our brother, shalt thou see,
And I behold thee, face to glorious face ?

XXVII.

You twain the same swift year of manhood swept
Down the steep darkness, and our father wept.
And from the gleam of Apollonian tears
A holier aureole rounds your memories, kept
Most fervent-fresh of all the singing spheres,
And April-coloured through all months and years.

XXVIII.

You twain fate spared not half your fiery span ;
The longer date fulfils the lesser man.
Ye from beyond the dark dividing date
Stand smiling, crowned as gods with foot on fate.
For stronger was your blessing than his ban,
And earliest whom he struck, he struck too late.

XXIX.

Yet love and loathing, faith and unfaith yet
Bind less to greater souls in unison,
And one desire that makes three spirits as one
Takes great and small as in one spiritual net
Woven out of hope toward what shall yet be done
Ere hate or love remember or forget.

XXX.

Woven out of faith and hope and love too great
To bear the bonds of life and death and fate :

Woven out of love and hope and faith too dear
To take the print of doubt and change and fear :
And interwoven with lines of wrath and hate
Blood-red with soils of many a sanguine year.

XXXI.

Who cannot hate, can love not ; if he grieve,
His tears are barren as the unfruitful rain
That rears no harvest from the green sea's plain,
And as thorns crackling this man's laugh is vain.
Nor can belief touch, kindle, smite, relieve
His heart who has not heart to disbelieve.

XXXII.

But you, most perfect in your hate and love,
Our great twin-spirited brethren ; you that stand
Head by head glittering, hand made fast in hand,
And underfoot the fang-drawn worm that strove
To wound you living ; from so far above,
Look love, not scorn, on ours that was your land.

XXXIII.

For love we lack, and help and heat and light
To clothe us and to comfort us with might.
What help is ours to take or give? but ye—
O, more than sunrise to the blind cold sea,
That wailed aloud with all her waves all night,
Much more, being much more glorious, should you be.

XXXIV.

As fire to frost, as ease to toil, as dew
To flowerless fields, as sleep to slackening pain,
As hope to souls long weaned from hope again
Returning, or as blood revived anew
To dry-drawn limbs and every pulseless vein,
Even so toward us should no man be but you.

XXXV.

One rose before the sunrise was, and one
Before the sunset, lovelier than the sun.

And now the heaven is dark and bright and loud
With wind and starry drift and moon and cloud,
And night's cry rings in straining sheet and shroud,
What help is ours if hope like yours be none ?

XXXVI.

O well-beloved, our brethren, if ye be,
Then are we not forsaken. This kind earth
Made fragrant once for all time with your birth,
And bright for all men with your love, and worth
The clasp and kiss and wedlock of the sea,
Were not your mother if not your brethren we.

XXXVII.

Because the days were dark with gods and kings
And in time's hand the old hours of time as rods,
When force and fear set hope and faith at odds,
Ye failed not nor abased your plume-plucked wings;
And we that front not more disastrous things,
How should we fail in face of kings and gods ?

XXXVIII.

For now the deep dense plumes of night are thinned
Surely with winnowing of the glimmering wind
Whose feet are fledged with morning ; and the breath
Begins in heaven that sings the dark to death.
And all the night wherein men groaned and sinned
Sickens at heart to hear what sundawn saith.

XXXIX.

O first-born sons of hope and fairest, ye
Whose prows first clove the thought-unsounded sea
Whence all the dark dead centuries rose to bar
The spirit of man lest truth should make him free,
The sunrise and the sunset, seeing one star,
Take heart as we to know you that ye are.

XL.

Ye rise not and ye set not ; we that say
Ye rise and set like hopes that set and rise

Look yet but seaward from a land-locked bay ;
But where at last the sea's line is the sky's
And truth and hope one sunlight in your eyes,
No sunrise and no sunset marks their day.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN.

IN a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its
roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand ?

So long have the grey bare walks lain guestless,
Through branches and briers if a man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled
That crawls by a track none turn to climb
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken ;
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain.
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-shaken,
These remain.

Not a flower to be prest of the foot that falls not ;
As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are dry ;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls
not,
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.

Over the meadows that blossom and wither
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song ;
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The sun burns sere and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.
Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, 'Look thither,'
Did he whisper? 'Look forth from the flowers to the
sea ;
For the foam flowers endure when the rose-blossoms
wither,
And men that love lightly may die—but we ?'

And the same wind sang and the same waves whitened,
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?

And were one to the end—but what end who knows?
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,

As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
What love was ever as deep as a grave?

They are loveless now as the grass above them

Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,

Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers

In the air now soft with a summer to be.
Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,
When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again for ever ;

Here change may come not till all change end.

From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,

Who have left nought living to ravage and rend.

Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,

While the sun and the rain live, these shall be ;

Till a last wind's breath upon all these blowing

Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise and the sheer cliff crumble,

Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,

Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble

The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,

Here now in his triumph where all things falter,

Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,

As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,

Death lies dead.

RELICS.

THIS flower that smells of honey and the sea,
White laurustine, seems in my hand to be
 A white star made of memory long ago
Lit in the heaven of dear times dead to me.

A star out of the skies love used to know
Here held in hand, a stray left yet to show
 What flowers my heart was full of in the days
That are long since gone down dead memory's flow.

Dead memory that revives on doubtful ways,
Half hearkening what the buried season says
 Out of the world of the unapparent dead
Where the lost Aprils are, and the lost Mays.

Flower, once I knew thy star-white brethren bred
Nigh where the last of all the land made head
 Against the sea, a keen-faced promontory,
Flowers on salt wind and sprinkled sea-dews fed.

Their hearts were glad of the free place's glory ;
The wind that sang them all his stormy story
 Had talked all winter to the sleepless spray,
And as the sea's their hues were hard and hoary.

Like things born of the sea and the bright day,
They laughed out at the years that could not slay,
 Live sons and joyous of unquiet hours,
And stronger than all storms that range for prey.

And in the close indomitable flowers
A keen-edged odour of the sun and showers
 Was as the smell of the fresh honeycomb
Made sweet for mouths of none but paramours.

Out of the hard green wall of leaves that clomb
They showed like windfalls of the snow-soft foam,
Or feathers from the weary south-wind's wing,
Fair as the spray that it came shoreward from.

And thou, as white, what word hast thou to bring?
If my heart hearken, whereof wilt thou sing?

For some sign surely thou too hast to bear,
Some word far south was taught thee of the spring.

White like a white rose, not like these that were
Taught of the wind's mouth and the winter air,
Poor tender thing of soft Italian bloom,
Where once thou grewest, what else for me grew there?

Born in what spring and on what city's tomb,
By whose hand wast thou reached, and plucked for
whom?

There hangs about thee, could the soul's sense tell,
An odour as of love and of love's doom;

Of days more sweet than thou wast sweet to smell,
Of flower-soft thoughts that came to flower and fell,
Of loves that lived a lily's life and died,
Of dreams now dwelling where dead roses dwell.

O white birth of the golden mountain-side
That for the sun's love makes its bosom wide
At sunrise, and with all its woods and flowers
Takes in the morning to its heart of pride !

Thou hast a word of that one land of ours,
And of the fair town called of the fair towers,
A word for me of my San Gimignano,
A word of April's greenest-girdled hours.

Of the breached walls whereon the wallflowers ran
Called of Saint Fina, breachless now of man,
Though time with soft feet break them stone by stone,
Who breaks down hour by hour his own reign's span.

Of the cliff overcome and overgrown
That all that flowerage clothed as flesh clothes bone,
That garment of acacias made for May,
Whereof here lies one witness overblown.

The fair brave trees with all their flowers at play,
How king-like they stood up into the day !
How sweet the day was with them, and the night !
Such words of message have dead flowers to say.

This that the winter and the wind made bright,
And this that lived upon Italian light,
Before I throw them and these words away,
Who knows but I what memories too take flight ?

AT A MONTH'S END.

THE night last night was strange and shaken :
More strange the change of you and me.
Once more, for the old love's love forsaken,
We went out once more toward the sea.

For the old love's love-sake dead and buried,
One last time, one more and no more,
We watched the waves set in, the serried
Spears of the tide storming the shore.

Hardly we saw the high moon hanging,
Heard hardly through the windy night
Far waters ringing, low reefs clanging,
Under wan skies and waste white light.

With chafe and change of surges chiming,
The clashing channels rocked and rang
Large music, wave to wild wave timing,
And all the choral water sang.

Faint lights fell this way, that way floated,
Quick sparks of sea-fire keen like eyes
From the rolled surf that flashed and noted
Shores and faint cliffs and bays and skies.

The ghost of sea that shrank up sighing
At the sand's edge, a short sad breath
Trembling to touch the goal, and dying
With weak heart heaved up once in death—

The rustling sand and shingle shaken
With light sweet touches and small sound—
These could not move us, could not waken
Hearts to look forth, eyes to look round.

Silent we went an hour together,
Under grey skies by waters white.
Our hearts were full of windy weather,
Clouds and blown stars and broken light.

Full of cold clouds and moonbeams drifted
And streaming storms and straying fires,
Our souls in us were stirred and shifted
By doubts and dreams and foiled desires.

Across, aslant, a scudding sea-mew
Swam, dipped, and dropped, and grazed the sea ;
And one with me I could not dream you :
And one with you I could not be.

As the white wing the white wave's fringes
Touched and slid over and flashed past—
As a pale cloud a pale flame tinges
From the moon's lowest light and last—

As a star feels the sun and falters,
Touched to death by diviner eyes—
As on the old gods' untended altars
The old fire of withered worship dies—

(Once only, once the shine relighted
Sees the last fiery shadow shine,
Last shadow of flame and faith benighted,
Sees falter and flutter and fail the shrine.)

So once with fiery breath and flying
Your winged heart touched mine and went,
And the swift spirits kissed, and sighing,
Sundered and smiled and were content.

That only touch, that feeling only,
Enough we found, we found too much ;
For the unlit shrine is hardly lonely
As one the old fire forgets to touch.

Slight as the sea's sight of the sea-mew,
Slight as the sun's sight of the star :
Enough to show one must not deem you
For love's sake other than you are.

Who snares and tames with fear and danger
A bright beast of a fiery kin,
Only to mar, only to change her
Sleek supple soul and splendid skin ?

Easy with blows to mar and maim her,
Easy with bonds to bind and bruise ;
What profit, if she yield her tamer
The limbs to mar, the soul to lose ?

Best leave or take the perfect creature,
Take all she is or leave complete ;
Transmute you will not form or feature,
Change feet for wings or wings for feet.

Strange eyes, new limbs, can no man give her ;

 Sweet is the sweet thing as it is.

No soul she hath, we see, to outlive her ;

 Hath she for that no lips to kiss ?

So may one read his weird, and reason,

 And with vain drugs assuage no pain.

For each man in his loving season

 Fools and is fooled of these in vain.

Charms that allay not any longing,

 Spells that appease not any grief,

Time brings us all by handfuls, wronging

 All hurts with nothing of relief.

Ah, too soon shot, the fool's bolt misses !

 What help ? the world is full of loves ;

Night after night of running kisses,

 Chirp after chirp of changing doves.

Should Love disown or disesteem you
For loving one man more or less ?
You could not tame your light white sea-mew,
Nor I my sleek black pantheress.

For a new soul let whoso please pray,
We are what life made us, and shall be.
For you the jungle and me the sea-spray,
And south for you and north for me.

But this one broken foam-white feather
I throw you off the hither wing,
Splashed stiff with sea-scurf and salt weather,
This song for sleep to learn and sing—

Sing in your ear when, daytime over,
You, couched at long length on hot sand
With some sleek sun-discoloured lover,
Wince from his breath as from a brand :

Till the acrid hour aches out and ceases,
And the sheathed eyeball sleepier swims,
The deep flank smoothes its dimpling creases,
And passion loosens all the limbs :

Till dreams of sharp grey north-sea weather
Fall faint upon your fiery sleep,
As on strange sands a strayed bird's feather
The wind may choose to lose or keep.

But I, who leave my queen of panthers,
As a tired honey-heavy bee
Gilt with sweet dust from gold-grained anthers
Leaves the rose-chalice, what for me ?

From the ardours of the chaliced centre,
From the amorous anthers' golden grime,
That scorch and smutch all wings that enter,
I fly forth hot from honey-time.

But as to a bee's gilt thighs and winglets
The flower-dust with the flower-smell clings ;
As a snake's mobile rampant ringlets
Leave the sand marked with print of rings ;

So to my soul in surer fashion
Your savage stamp and savour hangs ;
The print and perfume of old passion,
The wild-beast mark of panther's fangs.

SESTINA.

I SAW my soul at rest upon a day
As a bird sleeping in the nest of night,
Among soft leaves that give the starlight way
To touch its wings but not its eyes with light ;
So that it knew as one in visions may,
And knew not as men waking, of delight.

This was the measure of my soul's delight ;
It had no power of joy to fly by day,
Nor part in the large lordship of the light ;
But in a secret moon-beholden way
Had all its will of dreams and pleasant night,
And all the love and life that sleepers may.





But such life's triumph as men waking may
It might not have to feed its faint delight
Between the stars by night and sun by day,
Shut up with green leaves and a little light ;
Because its way was as a lost star's way,
A world's not wholly known of day or night.

All loves and dreams and sounds and gleams of night
Made it all music that such minstrels may,
And all they had they gave it of delight ;
But in the full face of the fire of day
What place shall be for any starry light,
What part of heaven in all the wide sun's way?

Yet the soul woke not, sleeping by the way,
Watched as a nursling of the large-eyed night,
And sought no strength nor knowledge of the day,
Nor closer touch conclusive of delight,
Nor mightier joy nor truer than dreamers may,
Nor more of song than they, nor more of light.

For who sleeps once and sees the secret light
Whereby sleep shows the soul a fairer way
Between the rise and rest of day and night,
Shall care no more to fare as all men may,
But he his place of pain or of delight,
There shall he dwell, beholding night as day.

Song, have thy day and take thy fill of light
Before the night be fallen across thy way ;
Sing while he may, man hath no long delight.

THE YEAR OF THE ROSE.

FROM the depths of the green garden-closes

Where the summer in darkness dozes

Till autumn pluck from his hand

An hour-glass that holds not a sand ;

From the maze that a flower-belt encloses

To the stones and sea-grass on the strand,

How red was the reign of the roses

Over the rose-crowned land !

The year of the rose is brief ;

From the first blade blown to the sheaf,

From the thin green leaf to the gold,

It has time to be sweet and grow old,

To triumph and leave not a leaf

For witness in winter's sight
How lovers once in the light
Would mix their breath with its breath,
And its spirit was quenched not of night,
As love is subdued not of death.

In the red-rose land not a mile
Of the meadows from stile to stile,
Of the valleys from stream to stream,
But the air was a long sweet dream
And the earth was a swift wide smile
Red-mouthed of a goddess, returned
From the sea which had borne her and burned,
That with one swift smile of her mouth
Looked full on the north as it yearned,
And the north was more than the south.

For the north, when winter was long,
In his heart had made him a song,

And clothed it with wings of desire,
And shod it with shoon as of fire,
To carry the tale of his wrong
To the south-west wind by the sea,
That who might bear it but he
To the ears of the goddess unknown
Who waits till her time shall be
To take the world for a throne ?

In the earth beneath, and above
In the heaven where her name is love,
She warms with light from her eyes
The seasons of life as they rise,
And her eyes are as eyes of a dove,
But the wings that lift her and bear
As an eagle's, and all her hair
As fire by the wind's breath curled,
And her passage is song through the air,
And her presence is spring through the world.

So turned she northward and came,
And the white-thorn land was aflame
 With the fires that were shed from her feet,
 That the north, by her love made sweet,
Should be called by a rose-red name ;
 And a murmur was heard as of doves,
 And a music beginning of loves
In the light that the roses made,
 Such light as the music loves,
The music of man with maid.

But the days drop one upon one,
And a chill soft wind is begun
 In the heart of the rose-red maze
 That weeps for the roseleaf days
And the reign of the rose undone
 That ruled so long in the light,
 And by spirit, and not by sight,
Through the darkness thrilled with its breath,

Still ruled in the viewless night,
As love might rule over death.

The time of lovers is brief ;
From the fair first joy to the grief
That tells when love is grown old,
From the warm wild kiss to the cold,
From the red to the white-rose leaf,
They have but a season to seem
As roseleaves lost on a stream
That part not and pass not apart
As a spirit from dream to dream,
As a sorrow from heart to heart.

From the bloom and the gloom that encloses
The death-bed of love where he dozes
Till a relic be left not of sand
To the hour-glass that breaks in his hand

From the change in the grey garden-closes
To the last stray grass of the strand,
A rain and ruin of roses
Over the red-rose land.

A WASTED VIGIL.

I.

COULDST thou not watch with me one hour ? Behold,
Dawn skims the sea with flying feet of gold,
With sudden feet that graze the gradual sea ;
 Couldst thou not watch with me ?

II.

What, not one hour ? for star by star the night
Falls, and her thousands world by world take flight ;
They die, and day survives, and what of thee ?
 Couldst thou not watch with me ?

III.

Lo, far in heaven the web of night undone,
And on the sudden sea the gradual sun ;

Wave to wave answers, tree responds to tree ;
 Couldst thou not watch with me ?

IV.

Sunbeam by sunbeam creeps from line to line,
 Foam by foam quickens on the brightening brine ;
 Sail by sail passes, flower by flower gets free ;
 Couldst thou not watch with me ?

V.

¹⁸⁵⁶
 Last year, a brief while since, an age ago,
 A whole year past, with bud and bloom and snow,
 O moon that wast in heaven, what friends were we !
 Couldst thou not watch with me ?

VI.

Old moons, and last year's flowers, and last year's snows !
 Who now saith to thee, moon ? or who saith, rose ?
 O dust and ashes, once found fair to see !
 Couldst thou not watch with me ?

VII.

O dust and ashes, once thought sweet to smell !

With me it is not, is it with thee well ? 1902

O sea-drift blown from windward back to lee !

Couldst thou not watch with me ?

VIII.

The old year's dead hands are full of their dead flowers,

The old days are full of dead old loves of ours,

Born as a rose, and briefer born than she ;

Couldst thou not watch with me ?

IX.

Could two days live again of that dead year,

One would say, seeking us and passing here,

Where is she ? and one answering, Where is he ?

Couldst thou not watch with me ?

x.

Nay, those two lovers are not anywhere ;
If we were they, none knows us what we were,
Nor aught of all their barren grief and glee.

Couldst thou not watch with me ?

xi.

Half false, half fair, all feeble, be my verse
Upon thee not for blessing nor for curse ;
For some must stand, and some must fall or flee ;

Couldst thou not watch with me ?

xii.

As a new moon above spent stars thou wast ;
But stars endure after the moon is past.
Couldst thou not watch one hour, though I watch three ?

Couldst thou not watch with me ?

XIII.

What of the night? The night is full, the tide
Storms inland, the most ancient rocks divide ;
Yet some endure, and bow nor head nor knee ;
 Couldst thou not watch with me ?

XIV.

Since thou art not as these are, go thy ways ;
Thou hast no part in all my nights and days.
Lie still, sleep on, be glad—as such things be ;
 Thou couldst not watch with me.

THE COMPLAINT OF LISA.

(Double Sestina.)

DECAMERON, x. 7.

THERE is no woman living that draws breath
So sad as I, though all things sadden her.
There is not one upon life's weariest way
Who is weary as I am weary of all but death.
Toward whom I look as looks the sunflower
All day with all his whole soul toward the sun ;
While in the sun's sight I make moan all day,
And all night on my sleepless maiden bed
Weep and call out on death, O Love, and thee,
That thou or he would take me to the dead,
And know not what thing evil I have done
That life should lay such heavy hand on me.

Alas, Love, what is this thou wouldst with me?
What honour shalt thou have to quench my breath,
Or what shall my heart broken profit thee?
O Love, O great god Love, what have I done,
That thou shouldst hunger so after my death?
My heart is harmless as my life's first day:
Seek out some false fair woman, and plague her
Till her tears even as my tears fill her bed:
I am the least flower in thy flowery way,
But till my time be come that I be dead
Let me live out my flower-time in the sun
Though my leaves shut before the sunflower.

O Love, Love, Love, the kingly sunflower!
Shall he the sun hath looked on look on me,
That live down here in shade, out of the sun,
Here living in the sorrow and shadow of death?
Shall he that feeds his heart full of the day
Care to give mine eyes light, or my lips breath?
Because she loves him shall my lord love her

Who is as a worm in my lord's kingly way ?
I shall not see him or know him alive or dead ;
But thou, I know thee, O Love, and pray to thee
That in brief while my brief life-days be done,
And the worm quickly make my marriage-bed.

For underground there is no sleepless bed :
But here since I beheld my sunflower
These eyes have slept not, seeing all night and day
His sunlike eyes, and face fronting the sun.
Wherefore if anywhere be any death,
I would fain find and fold him fast to me,
That I may sleep with the world's eldest dead,
With her that died seven centuries since, and her
That went last night down the night-wandering way.
For this is sleep indeed, when labour is done,
Without love, without dreams, and without breath,
And without thought, O name unnamed ! of thee.

Ah, but, forgetting all things, shall I thee ?
Wilt thou not be as now about my bed

There underground as here before the sun?
Shall not thy vision vex me alive and dead,
Thy moving vision without form or breath?
I read long since the bitter tale of her
Who read the tale of Launcelot on a day,
And died, and had no quiet after death,
But was moved ever along a weary way,
Lost with her love in the underworld; ah me,
O my king, O my lordly sunflower,
Would God to me too such a thing were done!

But if such sweet and bitter things be done,
Then, flying from life, I shall not fly from thee.
For in that living world without a sun
Thy vision will lay hold upon me dead,
And meet and mock me, and mar my peace in death.
Yet if being wroth God had such pity on her,
Who was a sinner and foolish in her day,
That even in hell they twain should breathe one breath,
Why should he not in some wise pity me?
So if I sleep not in my soft strait bed

I may look up and see my sunflower
As he the sun, in some divine strange way.

O poor my heart, well knowest thou in what way
This sore sweet evil unto us was done.
For on a holy and a heavy day
I was arisen out of my still small bed
To see the knights tilt, and one said to me
'The king,' and seeing him, somewhat stopped my breath,
And if the girl spake more, I heard not her,
For only I saw what I shall see when dead,
A kingly flower of knights, a sunflower,
That shone against the sunlight like the sun,
And like a fire, O heart, consuming thee,
The fire of love that lights the pyre of death.

Howbeit I shall not die an evil death
Who have loved in such a sad and sinless way,
That this my love, lord, was no shame to thee.
So when mine eyes are shut against the sun,

O my soul's sun, O the world's sunflower,
Thou nor no man will quite despise me dead.
And dying I pray with all my low last breath
That thy whole life may be as was that day,
That feast-day that made troth-plight death and me,
Giving the world light of thy great deeds done ;
And that fair face brightening thy bridal bed,
That God be good as God hath been to her.

That all things goodly and glad remain with her,
All things that make glad life and goodly death ;
That as a bee sucks from a sunflower
Honey, when summer draws delighted breath,
Her soul may drink of thy soul in like way,
And love make life a fruitful marriage-bed
Where day may bring forth fruits of joy to day
And night to night till days and nights be dead.
And as she gives light of her love to thee,
Give thou to her the old glory of days long done ;

And either give some heat of light to me,
To warm me where I sleep without the sun.

O sunflower made drunken with the sun,
O knight whose lady's heart draws thine to her,
Great king, glad lover, I have a word to thee.
There is a weed lives out of the sun's way,
Hid from the heat deep in the meadow's bed,
That swoons and whitens at the wind's least breath,
A flower star-shaped, that all a summer day
Will gaze her soul out on the sunflower
For very love till twilight finds her dead.
But the great sunflower heeds not her poor death,
Knows not when all her loving life is done ;
And so much knows my lord the king of me.

Aye, all day long he has no eye for me ;
With golden eye following the golden sun
From rose-coloured to purple-pillowed bed,
From birth-place to the flame-lit place of death,

From eastern end to western of his way.
So mine eye follows thee, my sunflower,
So the white star-flower turns and yearns to thee,
The sick weak weed, not well alive or dead,
Trod underfoot if any pass by her,
Pale, without colour of summer or summer breath
In the shrunk shuddering petals, that have done
No work but love, and die before the day.

But thou, to-day, to-morrow, and every day,
Be glad and great, O love whose love slays me.
Thy fervent flower made fruitful from the sun
Shall drop its golden seed in the world's way,
That all men thereof nourished shall praise thee
For grain and flower and fruit of works well done ;
Till thy shed seed, O shining sunflower,
Bring forth such growth of the world's garden-bed
As like the sun shall outlive age and death.
And yet I would thine heart had heed of her

Who loves thee alive ; but not till she be dead.

Come, Love, then, quickly, and take her utmost breath.

Song, speak for me who am dumb as are the dead ;

From my sad bed of tears I send forth thee,

To fly all day from sun's birth to sun's death

Down the sun's way after the flying sun,

For love of her that gave thee wings and breath,

Ere day be done, to seek the sunflower.

FOR THE FEAST OF GIORDANO BRUNO.

PHILOSOPHER AND MARTYR.

I.

SON of the lightning and the light that glows
Beyond the lightning's or the morning's light,
Soul splendid with all-righteous love of right,
In whose keen fire all hopes and fears and woes
Were clean consumed, and from their ashes rose
Transfigured, and intolerable to sight
Save of purged eyes whose lids had cast off night,
In love's and wisdom's likeness when they close,
Embracing, and between them truth stands fast,
Embraced of either ; thou whose feet were set
On English earth while this was England yet,
Our friend that art, our Sidney's friend that wast,
Heart hardier found and higher than all men's past,
Shall we not praise thee though thine own forget ?

II.

Lift up thy light on us and on thine own,
O soul whose spirit on earth was as a rod
To scourge off priests, a sword to pierce their God,
A staff for man's free thought to walk alone,
A lamp to lead him far from shrine and throne
On ways untrodden where his fathers trod
Ere earth's heart withered at a high priest's nod
And all men's mouths that made not prayer made moan.
From bonds and torments and the ravening flame
Surely thy spirit of sense rose up to greet
Lucretius, where such only spirits meet,
And walk with him apart till Shelley came
To make the heaven of heavens more heavenly sweet
And mix with yours a third incorporate name.

AVE ATQUE VALE.

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

‘ Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs ;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l’entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.’

Les Fleurs du Mal.

SHALL I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee ?
Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve ?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet

To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trode by no tropic feet ?

II.

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies ;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs.
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

III.

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us :
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,

Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
 Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime ;
 The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech ;
 And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
 Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep ;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
 Seeing as men sow men reap.

IV.

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,
 That were athirst for sleep and no more life
 And no more love, for peace and no more strife !
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
 Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
 Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
 Behind the unopening closure of her lips ?
 Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
 As dew from flower-bell drips ?

v.

It is enough ; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labour and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
For in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

vi.

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,

The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savour and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep ?

VII.

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision ?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom ?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good ?
Are the fruits grey like dust or bright like blood ?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence ? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit ?

VIII.

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

IX.

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,

Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.

Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

x.

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

XI.

I among these, I also, in such station

As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,

And offering to the dead made, and their gods,

The old mourners had, standing to make libation,

I stand, and to the gods and to the dead

Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed

Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,

And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,

And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,

And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb

A curl of severed hair.

XII.

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,

Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,

The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,

Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken

There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns ;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfil all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

XIII.

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread ;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

XIV.

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunseting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

XV.

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill ;
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed that was the Cytherean,

With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine ;
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

XVI.

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things ; none to mend,
And none to mar ; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

XVII.

Sleep ; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,

If sweet, give thanks ; thou hast no more to live ;

And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.

Out of the mystic and the mournful garden

Where all day through thine hands in barren braid

Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,

Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants grey,

Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,

Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that
started,

Shall death not bring us all as thee one day

Among the days departed ?

XVIII.

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,

Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.

'Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,

And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,

With sadder than the Niobean womb,
And in the hollow of her breast a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done ;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

MEMORIAL VERSES.

ON THE DEATH OF THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

DEATH, what hast thou to do with me ? So saith
Love, with eyes set against the face of Death ;

What have I done, O thou strong Death, to thee,
That mine own lips should wither from thy breath ?

Though thou be blind as fire or as the sea,
Why should thy waves and storms make war on me ?

Is it for hate thou hast to find me fair,
Or for desire to kiss, if it might be,

My very mouth of song, and kill me there ?
So with keen rains vexing his crownless hair,

With bright feet bruised from no delightful way,
Through darkness and the disenchanted air,

Lost Love went weeping half a winter's day.
And the armed wind that smote him seemed to say,
 How shall the dew live when the dawn is fled,
Or wherefore should the Mayflower outlast May ?

Then Death took Love by the right hand and said,
Smiling : Come now and look upon thy dead.

 But Love cast down the glories of his eyes,
And bowed down like a flower his flowerless head.

And Death spake, saying : What ails thee in such wise,
Being god, to shut thy sight up from the skies ?

 If thou canst see not, hast thou ears to hear ?
Or is thy soul too as a leaf that dies ?

Even as he spake with fleshless lips of fear,
But soft as sleep sings in a tired man's ear,
 Behold, the winter was not, and its might
Fell, and fruits broke forth of the barren year.

And upon earth was largess of great light,
And moving music winged for world-wide flight,
 And shapes and sounds of gods beheld and heard,
And day's foot set upon the neck of night.

And with such song the hollow ways were stirred
As of a god's heart hidden in a bird,
 Or as the whole soul of the sun in spring
Should find full utterance in one flower-soft word,

And all the season should break forth and sing
From one flower's lips, in one rose triumphing ;
 Such breath and light of song as of a flame
Made ears and spirits of them that heard it ring.

And Love beholding knew not for the same
The shape that led him, nor in face nor name,
 For he was bright and great of thews and fair,
And in Love's eyes he was not Death, but Fame.

Not that grey ghost whose life is empty and bare
And his limbs moulded out of mortal air,

 A cloud of change that shifts into a shower
And dies and leaves no light for time to wear :

But a god clothed with his own joy and power,
A god re-risen out of his mortal hour

 Immortal, king and lord of time and space,
With eyes that look on them as from a tower.

And where he stood the pale sepulchral place
Bloomed, as new life might in a bloodless face,

 And where men sorrowing came to seek a tomb
With funeral flowers and tears for grief and grace,

They saw with light as of a world in bloom
The portal of the House of Fame illumine

 The ways of life wherein we toiling tread,
And watched the darkness as a brand consume.

And through the gates where rule the deathless dead
The sound of a new singer's soul was shed
That sang among his kinsfolk, and a beam
Shot from the star on a new ruler's head.

A new star lighting the Lethean stream,
A new song mixed into the song supreme
Made of all souls of singers and their might,
That makes of life and time and death a dream.

Thy star, thy song, O soul that in our sight
Wast as a sun that made for man's delight
Flowers and all fruits in season, being so near
The sun-god's face, our god that gives us light.

To him of all gods that we love or fear
Thou among all men by thy name wast dear,
Dear to the god that gives us spirit of song
To bind and burn all hearts of men that hear.

The god that makes men's words too sweet and strong
For life or time or death to do them wrong,

Who sealed with his thy spirit for a sign
And filled it with his breath thy whole life long.

Who made thy moist lips fiery with new wine
Pressed from the grapes of song the sovereign vine,

And with all love of all things loveliest
Gave thy soul power to make them more divine.

That thou might'st breathe upon the breathless rest
Of marble, till the brows and lips and breast

Felt fall from off them as a cancelled curse
That speechless sleep wherewith they lived opprest.

Who gave thee strength and heat of spirit to pierce
All clouds of form and colour that disperse,

And leave the spirit of beauty to remould
In types of clean chryselephantine verse.

Who gave thee words more golden than fine gold
To carve in shapes more glorious than of old,
And build thy songs up in the sight of time
As statues set in godhead manifold :

In sight and scorn of temporal change and clime
That meet the sun re-risen with refluent rhyme
—As god to god might answer face to face—
From lips whereon the morning strikes sublime.

Dear to the god, our god who gave thee place
Among the chosen of days, the royal race,
The lords of light, whose eyes of old and ears
Saw even on earth and heard him for a space.

There are the souls of those once mortal years
That wrought with fire of joy and light of tears
In words divine as deeds that grew thereof
Such music as he swoons with love who hears.

There are the lives that lighten from above
Our under lives, the spheral souls that move
Through the ancient heaven of song-illumined air
Whence we that hear them singing die with love.

There all the crowned Hellenic heads, and there
The old gods who made men godlike as they were,
The lyric lips wherefrom all songs take fire,
Live eyes, and light of Apollonian hair.

There, round the sovereign passion of that lyre
Which the stars hear and tremble with desire,
The ninefold light Pierian is made one
That here we see divided, and aspire,

Seeing, after this or that crown to be won ;
But where they hear the singing of the sun,
All form, all sound, all colour, and all thought
Are as one body and soul in unison.

There the song sung shines as a picture wrought,
The painted mouths sing that on earth say nought,
 The carven limbs have sense of blood and growth
And large-eyed life that seeks nor lacks not aught.

There all the music of thy living mouth
Lives, and all loves wrought of thine hand in youth
 And bound about the breasts and brows with gold
And coloured pale or dusk from north or south.

Fair living things made to thy will of old,
Born of thy lips, no births of mortal mould,
 That in the world of song about thee wait
Where thought and truth are one and manifold.

Within the graven lintels of the gate
That here divides our vision and our fate,
 The dreams we walk in and the truths of sleep,
All sense and spirit have life inseparate.

There what one thinks, is his to grasp and keep ;
There are no dreams, but very joys to reap,
 No foiled desires that die before delight,
No fears to see across our joys and weep.

There hast thou all thy will of thought and sight,
All hope for harvest, and all heaven for flight ;
 The sunrise of whose golden-mouthed glad head
To paler songless ghosts was heat and light.

Here where the sunset of our year is red
Men think of thee as of the summer dead,
 Gone forth before the snows, before thy day,
With unshod feet, with brows unchapleted.

Couldst thou not wait till age had wound, they say,
Round those wreathed brows his soft white blossoms ?

Nay,

Why shouldst thou vex thy soul with this harsh air,
Thy bright-winged soul, once free to take its way ?

Nor for men's reverence hadst thou need to wear
The holy flower of grey time-hallowed hair ;
Nor were it fit that aught of thee grew old,
Fair lover all thy days of all things fair.

And hear we not thy words of molten gold
Singing ? or is their light and heat acold

Whereat men warmed their spirits ? Nay, for all
These yet are with us, ours to hear and hold.

The lovely laughter, the clear tears, the call
Of love to love on ways where shadows fall,

Through doors of dim division and disguise,
And music made of doubts unmusical ;

The love that caught strange light from death's own eyes,¹
And filled death's lips with fiery words and sighs,

And half asleep let feed from veins of his
Her close red warm snake's mouth, Egyptian-wise :

¹ ' La Morte Amoureuse.'

And that great night of love more strange than this,¹
When she that made the whole world's bale and bliss
 Made king of the whole world's desire a slave,
And killed him in mid kingdom with a kiss ;

Veiled loves that shifted shapes and shafts, and gave,²
Laughing, strange gifts to hands that durst not crave,
 Flowers double-blossomed, fruits of scent and hue
Sweet as the bride-bed, stranger than the grave ;

All joys and wonders of old lives and new
That ever in love's shine or shadow grew,
 And all the grief whereof he dreams and grieves,
And all sweet roots fed on his light and dew ;

All these through thee our spirit of sense perceives,
As threads in the unseen woof thy music weaves,
 Birds caught and snared that fill our ears with thee,
Bay-blossoms in thy wreath of brow-bound leaves.

¹ 'Une Nuit de Cléopâtre.'

² 'Mademoiselle de Maupin.'

Mixed with the masque of death's old comedy
Though thou too pass, have here our flowers, that we
 For all the flowers thou gav'st upon thee shed,
And pass not crownless to Persephone.

Blue lotus-blooms and white and rosy-red
We wind with poppies for thy silent head,
 And on this margin of the sundering sea
Leave thy sweet light to rise upon the dead.

SONNET

(WITH A COPY OF 'MADEMOISELLE DE MAUPIN').

THIS is the golden book of spirit and sense,
The holy writ of beauty ; he that wrought
Made it with dreams and faultless words and thought
That seeks and finds and loses in the dense
Dim air of life that beauty's excellence
Wherewith love makes one hour of life distraught
And all hours after follow and find not aught.
Here is that height of all love's eminence
Where man may breathe but for a breathing-space
And feel his soul burn as an altar-fire
To the unknown God of unachieved desire,
And from the middle mystery of the place
Watch lights that break, hear sounds as of a quire,
But see not twice unveiled the veiled God's face.

AGE AND SONG.

I.

IN vain men tell us time can alter
Old loves or make old memories falter,
That with the old year the old year's life closes.
The old dew still falls on the old sweet flowers,
The old sun revives the new-fledged hours,
The old summer rears the new-born roses.

II.

Much more a Muse that bears upon her
Raiment and wreath and flower of honour,
Gathered long since and long since woven,
Fades not or falls as fall the vernal
Blossoms that bear no fruit eternal,
By summer or winter charred or cloven.

III.

No time casts down, no time upraises,
Such loves, such memories, and such praises,
As need no grace of sun or shower,
No saving screen from frost or thunder,
To tend and house around and under
The imperishable and peerless flower.

IV.

Old thanks, old thoughts, old aspirations,
Outlive men's lives and lives of nations,
Dead, but for one thing which survives—
The inalienable and unpriced treasure,
The old joy of power, the old pride of pleasure,
That lives in light above men's lives.

IN MEMORY OF BARRY CORNWALL.

(OCTOBER 4, 1874.)

I.

IN the garden of death, where the singers whose names
are deathless

One with another make music unheard of men,

Where the dead sweet roses fade not of lips long breath-
less,

And the fair eyes shine that shall weep not or change
again,

Who comes now crowned with the blossom of snow-white
years?

What music is this that the world of the dead men hears?

II.

Beloved of men, whose words on our lips were honey,

Whose name in our ears and our fathers' ears was sweet,

Like summer gone forth of the land his songs made sunny,
To the beautiful veiled bright world where the glad
ghosts meet,

Child, father, bridegroom and bride, and anguish and
rest,

No soul shall pass of a singer than this more blest.

III.

Blest for the years' sweet sake that were filled and
brightened,

As a forest with birds, with the fruit and the flower of
his song ;

For the souls' sake blest that heard, and their cares were
lightened,

For the hearts' sake blest that have fostered his name
so long ;

By the living and dead lips blest that have loved his name,
And clothed with their praise and crowned with their
love for fame.

IV.

Ah, fair and fragrant his fame as flowers that close not,
That shrink not by day for heat or for cold by night,
As a thought in the heart shall increase when the heart's
self knows not,
Shall endure in our ears as a sound, in our eyes as a
light ;
Shall wax with the years that wane and the seasons' chime,
As a white rose thornless that grows in the garden of time.

V.

The same year calls, and one goes hence with another,
And men sit sad that were glad for their sweet songs'
sake ;
The same year beckons, and elder with younger brother
Takes mutely the cup from his hand that we all shall
take.¹
They pass ere the leaves be past or the snows be come ;
And the birds are loud, but the lips that outsang them
dumb.

¹ Sydney Dobell died August 22, 1874.

VI.

Time takes them home that we loved, fair names and
famous,

To the soft long sleep, to the broad sweet bosom of
death;

But the flower of their souls he shall take not away to
shame us,

Nor the lips lack song for ever that now lack breath.

For with us shall the music and perfume that die not
dwell,

Though the dead to our dead bid welcome, and we fare-
well.

EPICEDE.

(James Lorimer Graham died at Florence, April 30, 1876.)

LIFE may give for love to death
Little ; what are life's gifts worth
To the dead wrapt round with earth
Yet from lips of living breath
Sighs or words we are fain to give,
All that yet, while yet we live,
Life may give for love to death.

Dead so long before his day,
Passed out of the Italian sun
To the dark where all is done,
Fallen upon the verge of May,

Here at life's and April's end
How should song salute my friend
Dead so long before his day ?

Not a kindlier life or sweeter
Time, that lights and quenches men,
Now may quench or light again,
Mingling with the mystic metre
Woven of all men's lives with his
Not a clearer note than this,
Not a kindlier life or sweeter.

In this heavenliest part of earth
He that living loved the light,
Light and song, may rest aright.
One in death, if strange in birth,
With the deathless dead that make
Life the lovelier for their sake
In this heavenliest part of earth.

Light, and song, and sleep at last—

Struggling hands and suppliant knees

Get no goodlier gift than these.

Song that holds remembrance fast,

Light that lightens death, attend

Round their graves who have to friend

Light, and song, and sleep at last.

TO VICTOR HUGO.

HE had no children, who for love of men,
Being God, endured of Gods such things as thou,
Father ; nor on his thunder-beaten brow
Fell such a woe as bows thine head again,
Twice bowed before, though godlike, in man's ken,
And seen too high for any stroke to bow
Save this of some strange God's that bends it now
The third time with such weight as bruised it then.
Fain would grief speak, fain utter for love's sake
Some word ; but comfort who might bid thee take ?
What God in your own tongue shall talk with thee,
Showing how all souls that look upon the sun
Shall be for thee one spirit and thy son,
And thy soul's child the soul of man to be ?

January 3, 1876.

INFERIAE.

SPRING, and the light and sound of things on earth
Requickenings, all within our green sea's girth ;
A time of passage or a time of birth
 Fourscore years since as this year, first and last.

The sun is all about the world we see,
The breath and strength of very spring ; and we
Live, love, and feed on our own hearts ; but he
 Whose heart fed mine has passed into the past.

Past, all things born with sense and blood and breath ;
The flesh hears nought that now the spirit saith.
If death be like as birth and birth as death,
 The first was fair—more fair should be the last.

Fourscore years since, and come but one month more
The count were perfect of his mortal score
Whose sail went seaward yesterday from shore
 To cross the last of many an unsailed sea.

Light, love and labour up to life's last height,
These three were stars unsetting in his sight
Even as the sun is life and heat and light
 And sets not nor is dark when dark are we.

The life, the spirit, and the work were one
'That here—ah, who shall say, that here are done?
Not I, that know not ; father, not thy son,
 For all the darkness of the night and sea.

March 5, 1877.

A BIRTH-SONG.

(For Olivia Frances Madox Rossetti, born September 20, 1875.)

OUT of the dark sweet sleep

Where no dreams laugh or weep

Borne through bright gates of birth

Into the dim sweet light

Where day still dreams of night

While heaven takes form on earth,

White rose of spirit and flesh, red lily of love,

What note of song have we

Fit for the birds and thee,

Fair nestling couched beneath the mother-dove ?

Nay, in some more divine

Small speechless song of thine

Some news too good for words,
Heart-hushed and smiling, we
Might hope to have of thee,
The youngest of God's birds,
If thy sweet sense might mix itself with ours,
If ours might understand
The language of thy land,
Ere thine become the tongue of mortal hours :

Ere thy lips learn too soon
Their soft first human tune,
Sweet, but less sweet than now,
And thy raised eyes to read
Glad and good things indeed,
But none so sweet as thou :
Ere thought lift up their flower-soft lids to see
What life and love on earth
Bring thee for gifts at birth,
But none so good as thine who hast given us thee :

Now, ere thy sense forget
The heaven that fills it yet,
 Now, sleeping or awake,
If thou couldst tell, or we
Ask and be heard of thee,
 For love's undying sake,
From thy dumb lips divine and bright mute speech
 Such news might touch our ear
 That then would burn to hear
Too high a message now for man's to reach.

Ere the gold hair of corn
Had withered wast thou born,
 To make the good time glad ;
The time that but last year
Fell colder than a tear
 On hearts and hopes turned sad,
High hopes and hearts requickening in thy dawn,
 Even theirs whose life-springs, child,

Filled thine with life and smiled,
But then wept blood for half their own withdrawn.¹

If death and birth be one,
And set with rise of sun,
 And truth with dreams divine,
Some word might come with thee
From over the still sea

 Deep hid in shade or shine,
Crossed by the crossing sails of death and birth,
 Word of some sweet new thing
 Fit for such lips to bring,
Some word of love, some afterthought of earth.

If love be strong as death,
By what so natural breath
 As thine could this be said?
By what so lovely way
Could love send word to say
 He lives and is not dead?

¹Oliver Madox Brown died Nov. 5, 1874, in his twentieth year.

Such word alone were fit for only thee,

 If his and thine have met

 Where spirits rise and set,

His whom we see not, thine whom scarce we see :

 His there new-born, as thou

 New-born among us now ;

 His, here so fruitful-souled,

 Now veiled and silent here,

 Now dumb as thou last year,

 A ghost of one year old :

If lights that change their sphere in changing meet,

 Some ray might his not give

 To thine who wast to live,

And make thy present with his past life sweet ?

 Let dreams that laugh or weep,

 All glad and sad dreams, sleep ;

 Truth more than dreams is dear.

 Let thoughts that change and fly,

Sweet thoughts and swift, go by ;

More than all thought is here.

More than all hope can forge or memory feign

The life that in our eyes,

Made out of love's life, lies,

And flower-like fed with love for sun and rain.

Twice royal in its root

The sweet small olive-shoot

Here set in sacred earth ;

Twice dowered with glorious grace

From either heaven-born race

First blended in its birth ;

Fair God or Genius of so fair an hour,

For love of either name

Twice crowned, with love and fame,

Guard and be gracious to the fair-named flower.

October 19, 1875.

EX-VOTO.

WHEN their last hour shall rise
Pale on these mortal eyes,
Herself like one that dies,
 And kiss me dying
The cold last kiss, and fold
Close round my limbs her cold
Soft shade as raiment rolled
 And leave them lying,

If aught my soul would say
Might move to hear me pray
The birth-god of my day
 That he might hearken,
This grace my heart should crave,

To find no landward grave
That worldly springs make brave,
World's winters darken,

Nor grow through gradual hours
The cold blind seed of flowers
Made by new beams and showers
From limbs that moulder,
Nor take my part with earth,
But find for death's new birth
A bed of larger girth,
More chaste and colder.

Not earth's for spring and fall,
Not earth's at heart, not all
Earth's making, though men call
Earth only mother,
Not hers at heart she bare
Me, but thy child, O fair
Sea, and thy brother's care,
The wind thy brother.

Yours was I born, and ye,
The sea-wind and the sea,
Made all my soul in me

A song for ever

A harp to string and smite
For love's sake of the bright
Wind and the sea's delight,

To fail them never :

Not while on this side death

I hear what either saith

And drink of either's breath

With heart's thanksgiving

That in my veins like wine

Some sharp salt blood of thine,

Some springtide pulse of brine,

Yet leaps up living.

When thy salt lips wellnigh

Sucked in my mouth's last sigh,

Grudged I so much to die

This death as others ?

Was it no ease to think

The chalice from whose brink

Fate gave me death to drink

Was thine,—my mother's ?

Thee too, the all-fostering earth,

Fair as thy fairest birth,

More than thy worthiest worth,

We call, we know thee,

More sweet and just and dread

Than live men highest of head

Or even thy holiest dead

Laid low below thee.

The sunbeam on the sheaf,

The dewfall on the leaf,

All joy, all grace, all grief,

Are thine for giving ;

Of thee our loves are born,
Our lives and loves, that mourn
And triumph ; tares with corn,
Dead seed with living :

All good and ill things done
In eyeshot of the sun
At last in thee made one

Rest well contented ;
All words of all man's breath
And works he doth or saith,
All wholly done to death,
None long lamented.

A slave to sons of thee,
Thou, seeming, yet art free ;
But who shall make the sea

Serve even in seeming ?
What plough shall bid it bear
Seed to the sun and the air,
Fruit for thy strong sons' fare,
Fresh wine's foam streaming ?

What oldworld son of thine,
Made drunk with death as wine,
Hath drunk the bright sea's brine
 With lips of laughter ?

Thy blood they drink ; but he
Who hath drunken of the sea
Once deeplier than of thee
 Shall drink not after.

Of thee thy sons of men
Drink deep, and thirst again ;
For wine in feasts, and then
 In fields for slaughter ;
But thirst shall touch not him
Who hath felt with sense grown dim
Rise, covering lip and limb,
 The wan sea's water.

All fire of thirst that aches
The salt sea cools and slakes
More than all springs or lakes,

Freshets or shallows ;
Wells where no beam can burn
Through frondage of the fern
That hides from hart and henn
The haunt it hallows.

Peace with all graves on earth
For death or sleep or birth
Be alway, one in worth
One with another ;
But when my time shall be,
O mother, O my sea,
Alive or dead, take me,
Me too, my mother.

A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND.

I HID my heart in a nest of roses,

Out of the sun's way, hidden apart ;

In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,

Under the roses I hid my heart.

Why would it sleep not ? why should it start,

When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred ?

What made sleep flutter his wings and part ?

Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,

And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart ;

Lie still, for the wind on the warm sea dozes,

And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.

Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart ?

Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred ?

What bids the lids of thy sleep dispart ?

Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,

It never was writ in the traveller's chart,

And sweet as the fruit on its tree that grows is,

It never was sold in the merchant's mart.

The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,

And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard ;

No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart,

Only the song of a secret bird.

ENVOI.

In the world of dreams I have chosen my part,

To sleep for a season and hear no word

Of true love's truth or of light love's art,

Only the song of a secret bird.

CYRIL TOURNEUR.

A SEA that heaves with horror of the night,
As maddened by the moon that hangs aghast
With strain and torment of the ravening blast,
Haggard as hell, a bleak blind bloody light,
No shore but one red reef of rock in sight,
Whereon the waifs of many a wreck were cast
And shattered in the fierce nights overpast
Wherein more souls toward hell than heaven took flight ;
And 'twixt the shark-toothed rocks and swallowing shoals
A cry as one of hell from all these souls
Sent thro' the sheer gorge of the slaughtering sea,
Where thousand throats, full-fed with life by death,
Fill the black air with foam and furious breath ;
And over all these one star—Chastity.

A BALLAD OF FRANÇOIS VILLON.

PRINCE OF ALL BALLAD-MAKERS.

BIRD of the bitter bright grey golden morn

Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,

First of us all and sweetest singer born

Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears

Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears ;

When song new-born put off the old world's attire

And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,

Writ foremost on the roll of them that came

Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,

Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name !

Alas the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,

That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,

And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn

And plume-plucked gaol birds for thy starveling
peers

Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears ;

Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,

When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire

Could buy thee bread or kisses ; when light fame

Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,

Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name !

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn !

Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick
tears !

Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,

That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers

Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears !

What far delight has cooled the fierce desire

That like some ravenous bird was strong to tire

On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
But left more sweet than roses to respire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name ?

ENVOI.

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire ;
Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

PASTICHE.

Now the days are all gone over
Of our singing, love by lover,
Days of summer-coloured seas
Blown adrift through beam and breeze.

Now the nights are all past over
Of our dreaming, dreams that hover
In a mist of fair false things,
Nights afloat on wide wan wings.

Now the loves with faith for mother,
Now the fears with hope for brother,
Scarce are with us as strange words,
Notes from songs of last year's birds.

Now all good that comes or goes is
As the smell of last year's roses,
As the radiance in our eyes
Shot from summer's ere he dies.

Now the morning faintlier risen
Seems no god come forth of prison,
But a bird of plume-plucked wing,
Pale with thought of evening.

Now hath hope, outraced in running,
Given the torch up of his cunning
And the palm he thought to wear
Even to his own strong child-despair

BEFORE SUNSET.

IN the lower lands of day
On the hither side of night,
There is nothing that will stay,
There are all things soft to sight ;
Lighted shade and shadowy light
In the wayside and the way,
Hours the sun has spared to smite,
Flowers the rain has left to play.

Shall those hours run down and say
No good thing of thee and me ?
Time that made us and will slay
Laughs at love in me and thee ;

BEFORE SUNSET.

But if here the flowers may see
One whole hour of amorous breath,
Time shall die, and love shall be
Lord as time was over death.

LOVE LAID HIS SLEEPLESS HEAD.

Love laid his sleepless head
On a thorny rose bed ;
And his eyes with tears were red,
And pale his lips as the dead.

And fear, and sorrow, and scorn,
Kept watch by his head forlorn,
Till the night was overworn,
And the world was merry with morn.

And Joy came up with the day,
And kissed Love's lips as he lay,
And the watchers, ghostly and grey,
Sped from his pillow away.

And his eyes at the dawn grew bright ;
And his lips waxed ruddy as light—
Sorrow may reign for a night,
But day shall bring back delight.

A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER.

I.

O TENDER time that love thinks long to see,
Sweet foot of spring that with her footfall sows
Late snowlike flowery leavings of the snows,
Be not too long irresolute to be ;
O mother-month, where have they hidden thee ?
Out of the pale time of the flowerless rose
I reach my heart out toward the springtime lands.
I stretch my spirit forth to the fair hours,
The purplest of the prime ;
I lean my soul down over them, with hands
Made wide to take the ghostly growths of flowers ;
I send my love back to the lovely time.

II.

Where has the greenwood hid thy gracious head ?
 Veiled with what visions while the grey world grieves,
 Or muffled with what shadows of green leaves,
What warm intangible green shadows spread
To sweeten the sweet twilight for thy bed ?
 What sleep enchants thee ? what delight deceives ?
Where the deep dreamlike dew before the dawn
 Feels not the fingers of the sunlight yet
 His silver web unweave,
Thy footless ghost on some unfooted lawn
 Whose air the unrisen sunbeams fear to fret
 Lives a ghost's life of daylong dawn and eve.

III.

Sunrise it sees not, neither set of star,
 Large nightfall, nor imperial plenilune,
 Nor strong sweet shape of the full-breasted noon ;
But where the silver-sandalled shadows are,

Too soft for arrows of the sun to mar,
 Moves with the mild gait of an ungrown moon :
Hard overhead the half-lit crescent swims,
 The tender-coloured night draws hardly breath,
 The light is listening ;
They watch the dawn of slender-shapen limbs,
 Virginal, born again of doubtful death,
 Chill foster-father of the weanling spring.

IV.

As sweet desire of day before the day,
 As dreams of love before the true love born,
 From the outer edge of winter overworn
The ghost arisen of May before the May
Takes through dim air her unawakened way,
 The gracious ghost of morning risen ere morn.
With little unblown breasts and child-eyed looks
 Following, the very maid, the girl-child spring,
 Lifts windward her bright brows,
Dips her light feet in warm and moving brooks,

And kindles with her own mouth's colouring
 The fearful firstlings of the plumeless boughs.

v.

I seek thee sleeping, and awhile I see,
 Fair face that art not, how thy maiden breath
 Shall put at last the deadly days to death
 And fill the fields and fire the woods with thee
 And seaward hollows where my feet would be
 When heaven shall hear the word that April saith
 To change the cold heart of the weary time,
 To stir and soften all the time to tears,
 Tears joyfuller than mirth ;
 As even to May's clear height the young days climb
 With feet not swifter than those fair first years
 Whose flowers revive not with thy flowers on earth

vi.

I would not bid thee, though I might, give back
 One good thing youth has given and borne away ;
 I crave not any comfort of the day

That is not, nor on time's retrodden track
Would turn to meet the white-robed hours or black
That long since left me on their mortal way ;
Nor light nor love that has been, nor the breath
That comes with morning from the sun to be
And sets light hope on fire ;
No fruit, no flower thought once too fair for death,
No flower nor hour once fallen from life's green tree,
No leaf once plucked or once fulfilled desire.

VII.

The morning song beneath the stars that fled
With twilight through the moonless mountain air,
While youth with burning lips and wreathless hair
Sang toward the sun that was to crown his head,
Rising ; the hopes that triumphed and fell dead,
The sweet swift eyes and songs of hours that were ;
These may'st thou not give back for ever ; these,
As at the sea's heart all her wrecks lie waste,

Lie deeper than the sea ;
But flowers thou may'st, and winds, and hours of ease,
And all its April to the world thou may'st
Give back, and half my April back to me.

CHORIAMBICS.

LOVE, what ailed thee to leave life that was made lovely,
we thought, with love ?

What sweet visions of sleep lured thee away, down from
the light above ?

What strange faces of dreams, voices that called, hands
that were raised to wave,

Lured or led thee, alas, out of the sun, down to the sun-
less grave ?

Ah, thy luminous eyes ! once was their light fed with the
fire of day ;

Now their shadowy lids cover them close, hush them
and hide away.

Ah, thy snow-coloured hands ! once were they chains,
mighty to bind me fast ;

Now no blood in them burns, mindless of love, senseless
of passion past.

Ah, thy beautiful hair ! so was it once braided for me,
for me ;

Now for death is it crowned, only for death, lover and
lord of thee.

Sweet, the kisses of death set on thy lips, colder are they
than mine ;

Colder surely than past kisses that love poured for thy
lips as wine.

Lov'st thou death ? is his face fairer than love's, brighter
to look upon ?

Seest thou light in his eyes, light by which love's pales and
is overshadowed ?

Lo, the roses of death, grey as the dust, chiller of leaf
than snow !

Why let fall from thy hand love's that were thine, roses
that loved thee so ?

Large red lilies of love, sceptral and tall, lovely for eyes
to see ;

Thornless blossom of love, full of the sun, fruits that were
reared for thee.

Now death's poppies alone circle thy hair, girdle thy
breasts as white ;

Bloodless blossoms of death, leaves that have sprung
never against the light.

Nay then, sleep if thou wilt ; love is content ; what
should he do to weep ?

Sweet was love to thee once ; now in thine eyes sweeter
than love is sleep.

AT PARTING.

FOR a day and a night Love sang to us, played with us,
Folded us round from the dark and the light ;
And our hearts were fulfilled of the music he made with us,
Made with our hearts and our lips while he stayed with us,
Stayed in mid passage his pinions from flight
For a day and a night.

From his foes that kept watch with his wings had he
hidden us,
Covered us close from the eyes that would smite,
From the feet that had tracked and the tongues that had
chidden us
Sheltering in shade of the myrtles forbidden us
Spirit and flesh growing one with delight
For a day and a night.

But his wings will not rest and his feet will not stay for us .

Morning is here in the joy of its might ;

With his breath has he sweetened a night and a day for us ;

Now let him pass, and the myrtles make way for us ;

Love can but last in us here at his height

For a day and a night.

A SONG IN SEASON.

I.

THOU whose beauty
Knows no duty
Due to love that moves thee never ;
Thou whose mercies
Are men's curses,
And thy smile a scourge for ever ;

II.

Thou that givest
Death and livest
On the death of thy sweet giving ;
Thou that sparest
Not nor carest
Though thy scorn leave no love living ;

III.

Thou whose rootless
Flower is fruitless
As the pride its heart encloses,
But thine eyes are,
As May skies are,
And thy words like spoken roses ;

IV.

Thou whose grace is
In men's faces
Fierce and wayward as thy will is ;
Thou whose peerless
Eyes are tearless,
And thy thoughts as cold sweet lilies ;

V.

Thou that takest
Hearts and makest

Wrecks of loves to strew behind thee,
Whom the swallow
Sure should follow,
Finding summer where we find thee ;

VI.

Thou that wakest
Hearts and breakest,
And thy broken hearts forgive thee,
That wilt make no
Pause and take no
Gift that love for love might give thee ;

VII.

Thou that bindest
Eyes and blindest,
Serving worst who served thee longest
Thou that speakest,
And the weakest
Heart is his that was the strongest ;

VIII.

Take in season
Thought with reason ;
Think what gifts are ours for giving ;
Hear what beauty
Owes of duty
To the love that keeps it living.

IX.

Dust that covers
Long dead lovers
Song blows off with breath that brightens ;
At its flashes
Their white ashes
Burst in bloom that lives and lightens.

X.

Had they bent not
Head or lent not

Ear to love and amorous duties,
Song had never
Saved for ever,
Love, the least of all their beauties.

XI.

All the golden
Names of olden
Women yet by men's love cherished,
All our dearest
Thoughts hold nearest,
Had they loved not, all had perished.

XII.

If no fruit is
Of thy beauties,
Tell me yet, since none may win them,
What and wherefore
Love should care for
Of all good things hidden in them?

XIII.

Pain for profit
Comes but of it,
If the lips that lure their lover's
Hold no treasure
Past the measure
Of the lightest hour that hovers.

XIV.

If they give not
Or forgive not
Gifts or thefts for grace or guerdon,
Love that misses
Fruit of kisses
Long will bear no thankless burden.

XV.

If they care not
Though love were not,

If no breath of his burn through them,
Joy must borrow
Song from sorrow,
Fear teach hope the way to woo them.

XVI.

Grief has measures
Soft as pleasure's,
Fear has moods that hope lies deep in,
Songs to sing him,
Dreams to bring him,
And a red-rose bed to sleep in.

XVII.

Hope with fearless
Looks and tearless
Lies and laughs too near the thunder ;
Fear hath sweeter
Speech and meeter
For heart's love to hide him under.

XVIII.

Joy by daytime
Fills his playtime
Full of songs loud mirth takes pride in ;
Night and morrow
Weave round sorrow
Thoughts as soft as sleep to hide in.

XIX.

Graceless faces,
Loveless graces,
Are but motes in light that quicken,
Sands that run down
Ere the sundown,
Rose leaves dead ere autumn sicken.

XX.

Fair and fruitless
Charms are bootless

Spells to ward off age's peril ;
Lips that give not
Love shall live not,
Eyes that meet not eyes are sterile.

XXI.

But the beauty
Bound in duty
Fast to love that falls off never
Love shall cherish
Lest it perish,
And its root bears fruit forever.

TWO LEADERS.

βᾶτε δόμον, μεγάλοι φιλοτίμοι
Νυκτὸς παῖδες ἄπαιδες, ὑπ' εὐφρονη πομπῇ.

I.

O GREAT and wise, clear-souled and high of heart,

One the last flower of Catholic love, that grows

Amid bare thorns their only thornless rose,

From the fierce juggling of the priests' loud mart

Yet alien, yet unspotted and apart

From the blind hard foul rout whose shameless shows

Mock the sweet heaven whose secret no man knows

With prayers and curses and the soothsayer's art ;

One like a storm-god of the northern foam

Strong, wrought of rock that breasts and breaks the sea

And thunders back its thunder, rhyme for rhyme

Answering, as though to outroar the tides of time

And bid the world's wave back—what song should be
Theirs that with praise would bring and sing you home ?

II.

With all our hearts we praise you whom ye hate,
High souls that hate us ; for our hopes are higher,
And higher than yours the goal of our desire,
Though high your ends be as your hearts are great.
Your world of Gods and kings, of shrine and state,
Was of the night when hope and fear stood nigher,
Wherein men walked by light of stars and fire
Till man by day stood equal with his fate.
Honour not hate we give you, love not fear,
Last prophets of past kind, who fill the dome
Of great dead Gods with wrath and wail, nor hear
Time's word and man's : 'Go honoured hence, g
home,
Night's childless children ; here your hour is done ;
Pass with the stars, and leave us with the sun.'

VICTOR HUGO IN 1877.

‘Dazzle mine eyes, or do I see three suns?’

ABOVE the spring-tide sundawn of the year,
A sunlike star, not born of day or night,
Filled the fair heaven of spring with heavenlier light,
Made of all ages orbéd in one sole sphere
Whose light was as a Titan’s smile or tear ;
Then rose a ray more flowerlike, starry white,
Like a child’s eye grown lovelier with delight,
Sweet as a child’s heart-lightening laugh to hear ;
And last a fire from heaven, a fiery rain
As of God’s wrath on the unclean cities, fell
And lit the shuddering shades of half-seen hell
That shrank before it and were cloven in twain ;
A beacon fired by lightning, whence all time
Sees red the bare black ruins of a crime.

CHILD'S SONG.

WHAT is gold worth, say,
Worth for work or play,
Worth to keep or pay,
Hide or throw away,

Hope about or fear ?

What is love worth, pray ?

Worth a tear ?

Golden on the mould
Lie the dead leaves rolled
Of the wet woods old,
Yellow leaves and cold,

Woods without a dove ;

Gold is worth but gold ;

Love's worth love.

TRIADS.

I.

I.

THE word of the sun to the sky,
The word of the wind to the sea,
The word of the moon to the night,
What may it be ?

2.

The sense of the flower to the fly,
The sense of the bird to the tree,
The sense of the cloud to the light,
Who can tell me ?

3.

The song of the fields to the kye,
The song of the lime to the bee,
The song of the depth to the height,
Who knows all three ?

II.

I.

The message of April to May
That May sends on into June
And June gives out to July
For birthday boon ;

2.

The delight of the dawn in the day,
The delight of the day in the noon,
The delight of a song in a sigh
That breaks the tune ;

3.

The secret of passing away,
The cast of the change of the moon,
None knows it with ear or with eye,
But all will soon.

III.

I.

The live wave's love for the shore,
The shore's for the wave as it dies,
The love of the thunder-fire
That sears the skies.

2.

We shall know not though life wax hoar,
Till all life, spent into sighs,
Burn out as consumed with desire
Of death's strange eyes ;

3.

Till the secret be secret no more
In the light of one hour as it flies,
Be the hour as of suns that expire
Or suns that rise.

FOUR SONGS OF FOUR SEASONS.

I. WINTER IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

CHILD'S SONG IN WINTER.

I.

OUTSIDE the garden
The wet skies harden ;
The gates are barred on
 The summer side :
Shut out the flower-time,
Sunbeam and shower-time ;
Make way for our time,
 The winter-tide.
Green once and cheery,
The woods, worn weary,
Sigh as the dreary
 Weak sun goes home :

A great wind grapples
The wave, and dapples
The dead green floor of the sea with foam.

II.

Through fell and moorland,
And salt-sea foreland,
Our noisy norland
 Resounds and rings ;
Waste waves thereunder
Are blown in sunder,
And winds make thunder
 With cloudwide wings ;
Sea-drift makes dimmer
The beacon's glimmer ;
Nor sail nor swimmer
 Can try the tides ;
And snowdrifts thicken
Where, when leaves quicken,
Under the heather the sundew hides.

III.

Green land and red land,

Moorside and headland,

Are white as dead land,

Are all as one ;

Nor honied heather

Nor bells to gather,

Fair with fair weather

And faithful sun :

Fierce frost has eaten

All flowers that sweeten

The fells rain-beaten ;

And winds their foes

Have made the snow's bed

Down in the rose-bed ;

Deep in the snow's bed bury the rose,

IV.

Bury her deeper

Than any sleeper ;

Sweet dreams will keep her
All day, all night ;
Though sleep benumb her
And time o'ercome her,
She dreams of summer,
And takes delight,
Dreaming and sleeping
In love's good keeping,
While rain is weeping
And no leaves cling ;
Winds will come bringing her
Comfort, and singing her
Stories and songs and good news of the spring.

v.

Draw the white curtain
Close, and be certain
She takes no hurt in
Her soft low bed ;

She feels no colder,
And grows not older,
Though snows enfold her
 From foot to head ;
She turns not chilly
Like weed and lily
In marsh or hilly
 High watershed,
Or green soft island
In lakes of highland ;
She sleeps awhile, and she is not dead.

VI.

For all the hours,
Come sun, come showers,
Are friends of flowers,
 And fairies all ;
When frost entrapt her,
They came and lapt her
In leaves, and wrapt her
 With shroud and pall ;

In red leaves wound her,
With dead leaves bound her
Dead brows, and round her
 A death-knell rang ;
Rang the death-bell for her,
Sang ' is it well for her,
Well, is it well with you, rose ? ' they sang.

VII.

O what and where is
The rose now, fairies,
So shrill the air is,
 So wild the sky ?
Poor last of roses,
Her worst of woes is
The noise she knows is
 The winter's cry ;
His hunting hollo
Has scared the swallow ;
Fain would she follow
 And fain would fly :

But wind unsettles
Her poor last petals ;
Had she but wings, and she would not die.

VIII.

Come, as you love her,
Come close and cover
Her white face over,
And forth again
Ere sunset glances
On foam that dances,
Through lowering lances
Of bright white rain ;
And make your playtime
Of winter's daytime,
As if the Maytime
Were here to sing ;
As if the snowballs
Were soft like blowballs
Blown in a mist from the stalk in the spring.

IX.

Each reed that grows in
Our stream is frozen,
The fields it flows in
 Are hard and black ;
The water-fairy
Waits wise and wary
Till time shall vary
 And thaws come back.
' O sister, water,'
The wind besought her,
' O twin-born daughter
 Of spring with me,
Stay with me, play with me,
Take the warm way with me,
Straight for the summer and oversea.'

X.

But winds will vary,
And wise and wary

The patient fairy
Of water waits ;
All shrunk and wizen,
In iron prison,
Till spring re-risen
Unbar the gates ;
Till, as with clamour
Of axe and hammer,
Chained streams that stammer
And struggle in straits
Burst bonds that shiver,
And thaws deliver
The roaring river in stormy spates

XI.

In fierce March weather
White waves break tether,
And whirled together
At either hand,

Like weeds uplifted,
The tree-trunks rifted
In spars are drifted,
 Like foam or sand,
Past swamp and sallow,
And reed-beds callow,
Through pool and shallow,
 To wind and lee,
Till, no more tongue-tied,
Full flood and young tide
Roar down the rapids and storm the sea.

XII.

As men's cheeks faded
On shores invaded,
When shorewards waded
 The lords of fight ;
When churl and craven
Saw hard on haven
The wide-winged raven
 At mainmast height ;

When monks affrighted
To windward sighted
The birds full-flighted
Of swift sea-kings ;
So earth turns paler
When Storm the sailor
Steers in with a roar in the race of his wings.

XIII.

O strong sea-sailor,
Whose cheek turns paler
For wind or hail or
For fear of thee ?
O far sea-farer,
O thunder-bearer
Thy songs are rarer
Than soft songs be.
O fleet-foot stranger,
O north-sea ranger
Through days of danger
And ways of fear,

Blow thy horn here for us,
Blow the sky clear for us,
Send us the song of the sea to hear.

XIV.

Roll the strong stream of it
Up, till the scream of it
Wake from a dream of it
 Children that sleep,
Seamen that fare for them
Forth, with a prayer for them ;
Shall not God care for them,
 Angels not keep ?
Spare not the surges
Thy stormy scourges ;
Spare us the dirges
 Of wives that weep.
Turn back the waves for us :
Dig no fresh graves for us,
Wind, in the manifold gulfs of the deep.

XV.

O stout north-easter,
Sea-king, land-waster,
For all thine haste, or
 Thy stormy skill,
Yet hadst thou never,
For all endeavour,
Strength to dissever
 Or strength to spill,
Save of his giving
Who gave our living,
Whose hands are weaving
 What ours fulfil ;
Whose feet tread under
 The storms and thunder ;
Who made our wonder to work his will.

XVI.

His years and hours,
His world's blind powers,

His stars and flowers,
His nights and days,
Sea-tide and river,
And waves that shiver,
Praise God, the giver
Of tongues to praise.
Winds in their blowing,
And fruits in growing ;
Time in its going,
While time shall be ;
In death and living,
With one thanksgiving,
Praise him whose hand is the strength of the sea.

2. SPRING IN TUSCANY.

ROSE-RED lilies that bloom on the banner ;
Rose-cheeked gardens that revel in spring ;
 Rose-mouthed acacias that laugh as they climb,
Like plumes for a queen's hand fashioned to fan her
 With wind more soft than a wild dove's wing,
 What do they sing in the spring of their time ?

If this be the rose that the world hears singing,
 Soft in the soft night, loud in the day,
 Songs for the fire-flies to dance as they hear ;
If that be the song of the nightingale, springing
 Forth in the form of a rose in May,
 What do they say of the way of the year ?

What of the way of the world gone Maying,
 What of the work of the buds in the bowers,
 What of the will of the wind on the wall,
Fluttering the wall-flowers, sighing and playing,
 Shrinking again as a bird that cowers,
 Thinking of hours when the flowers have to fall ?

Out of the throats of the loud birds showering,
 Out of the folds where the flag-lilies leap,
 Out of the mouths of the roses stirred,
Out of the herbs on the walls reflowering,
 Out of the heights where the sheer snows sleep,
 Out of the deep and the steep, one word,

One from the lips of the lily-flames leaping,
 The glad red lilies that burn in our sight,
 The great live lilies for standard and crown ;
One from the steeps where the pines stand sleeping,
 One from the deep land, one from the height,
 One from the light and the might of the town.

The lowlands laugh with delight of the highlands,
Whence May winds feed them with balm and breath
From hills that beheld in the years behind
A shape as of one from the blest souls' islands,
Made fair by a soul too fair for death,
With eyes on the light that should smite them blind.

Vallombrosa remotely remembers,
Perchance, what still to us seems so near,
That time not darkens it, change not mars,
The foot that she knew when her leaves were September's,
The face lift up to the star-blind seer,
That saw from his prison arisen his stars.

And Pisa broods on her dead, not mourning,
For love of her loveliness given them in fee ;
And Prato gleams with the glad monk's gift
Whose hand was there as the hand of morning ;
And Siena, set in the sand's red sea,
Lifts loftier her head than the red sand's drift.

And far to the fair south-westward lightens,
 Girdled and sandalled and plumed with flowers,
 At sunset over the love-lit lands,
The hill-side's crown where the wild hill brightens,
 Saint Fina's town of the Beautiful Towers,
 Hailing the sun with a hundred hands.

Land of us all that have loved thee dearest,
 Mother of men that were lords of man,
 Whose name in the world's heart works as a spell,
My last song's light, and the star of mine earliest,
 As we turn from thee, sweet, who wast ours for a span,
 Fare well we may not who say farewell.

3. SUMMER IN AUVERGNE.

THE sundawn fills the land
Full as a feaster's hand
Fills full with bloom of bland

Bright wine his cup ;

Flows full to flood that fills
From the arch of air it thrills

Those rust-red iron hills

With morning up ;

Dawn, as a panther springs,
With fierce and fine-fledged wings

Leaps on the land that rings

From her bright feet

Thro' all its lava-black
Cones that cast answer back
And cliffs of footless track
Where thunders meet.

The light speaks wide and loud
From deeps blown clean of cloud
As tho' day's heart were proud
And heaven's were glad ;
The towers brown-striped and grey
Take fire from heaven of day
As tho' the prayers they pray
Their answers had.

Higher in these high first hours
Wax all the keen church towers,
And higher all hearts of ours
Than the old hills' crown,

Higher than the pillared height
Of that strange cliff-side bright
With basalt towers whose might
Strong time bows down.

'Shut out the flower time
Half sun's half shower time,
Make way for our time,'
Wild winds have cried.
What is love worth? nay,
Tell me, dear.

And the old fierce ruin there
Of the old wild princes' lair
Whose blood in mine hath share
Gapes gaunt and great
Toward heaven that long ago
Watched all the wan land's woe

Whereon the wind would blow
Of their bleak hate.

Dead are those deeds ; but yet
Their memory seems to fret
Lands that might else forget
That old world's brand ;
Dead all their sins and days ;
Yet in this red clime's rays
Some fiery memory stays
That scars their land.

4. AUTUMN IN CORNWALL.

THE year lies fallen and faded
On cliffs by clouds invaded,
With tongues of storms upbraided,
 With wrath of waves bedinned ;
And inland, wild with warning,
As in deaf ears or scorning,
The clarion even and morning
 Rings of the south-west wind.

The wild bents wane and wither
In blasts whose breath bows hither
Their grey-grown heads and thither,
 Unblest of rain or sun ,

The pale fierce heavens are crowded
With shapes like dreams beclouded,
As though the old year enshrouded
Lay, long ere life were done.

Full-charged with old-world wonders,
From dusk Tintagel thunders
A note that smites and sunders
The hard froze-fields of air ;
A trumpet stormier sounded
Than once from lists rebounded
Where strong men sense-confounded
Fell thick in tourney there,

From scarce a duskier dwelling
Such notes of wail rose welling
Thro' the outer darkness, telling
In the awful singer's ears

What souls the darkness covers,
What love-lost soul of lovers,
Whose cry still hangs and hovers
 In each man's born that hears.

For there by Hector's brother
And yet some thousand other
He that had grief to mother
 Passed pale from Dante's sight ;
With one fast-linked as fearless,
Perchance, there only tearless ;
Iseulte and Tristram, peerless
 And perfect queen and knight.

A shrill-winged sound comes flying
North, as of wild souls crying
The cry of things undying,
 That know what life must be ;

Or as the old year's heart, stricken
Too sore for hope to quicken
By thoughts like thorns that, thicken,
Broke breaking with the sea.

THE WHITE CZAR.

[In an English magazine of 1877 there appeared a version of some insolent lines addressed by 'A Russian Poet to the Empress of India.' To these the first of the two following sonnets was designed to serve by way of counterblast. The writer will scarcely be suspected of royalism or imperialism ; but it seemed to him that an insult levelled by Muscovite lips at the ruler of England might perhaps be less unfitly than unofficially resented by an Englishman who was also a republican.]

I.

GEHAZI by the hue that chills thy cheek

And Pilate by the hue that sears thine hand

Whence all earth's waters cannot wash the brand

That signs thy soul a manslayer's though thou speak

All Christ, with lips most murderous and most meek—

Thou set thy foot where England's used to stand !

Thou reach thy rod forth over Indian land !

Slave of the slaves that call thee lord, and weak

As their foul tongues who praise thee ! son of them

Whose presence put the snows and stars to shame

In centuries dead and damned that reek below

Curse-consecrated, crowned with crime and flame,

To them that bare thee like them shalt thou go

Forth of man's life—a leper white as snow.

II.

Call for clear water, wash thine hands, be clean,

Cry, *What is truth?* O Pilate ; thou shalt know

Haply too soon, and gnash thy teeth for woe

Ere the outer darkness take thee round unseen

That hides the red ghosts of thy race obscene

Bound nine times round with hell's most dolorous flow

And in its pools thy crownless head lie low

By his of Spain who dared an English queen.

With half a world to hearten him for fight,
Till the wind gave his warriors and their might
 To shipwreck and the corpse-encumbered sea ;
But thou, take heed, ere yet thy lips wax white,
 Lest as it was with Philip so it be,
 O white of name and red of hand, with thee.

RIZPAH.

How many sons, how many generations,
For how long years hast thou bewept, and known
Nor end of torment nor surcease of moan,
Rachel or Rizpah, wofullest of nations,
Crowned with the crowning sign of desolations,
And couldst not even scare off with hand or groan
Those carrion birds devouring bone by bone
The children of thy thousand tribulations ?
Thou wast our warrior once ; thy sons long dead
Against a foe less foul than this made head,
Poland, in years that sound and shine afar ;
Ere the east beheld in thy bright sword-blade's stead
The rotten corpse-light of the Russian star
That lights towards hell his bondslaves and their Czar

TO LOUIS KOSSUTH.

LIGHT of our fathers' eyes, and in our own
Star of the unsetting sunset ! for thy name,
That on the front of noon was as a flame
In the great year nigh twenty years ago
When all the heavens of Europe shook and shone
With stormy wind and lightning, keeps its fame
And bears its witness all day through the same ;
Not for past days and great deeds past alone,
Kossuth, we praise thee as our Landor praised,
But that now too we know thy voice upraised,
Thy voice, the trumpet of the truth of God,
Thine hand, the thunder-bearer's, raised to smite
As with heaven's lightning for a sword and rod
Men's heads abased before the Muscovite.

TRANSLATIONS FROM THE FRENCH OF VILLON.

THE COMPLAINT OF THE FAIR ARMOURESS.

I

MESEEMETH I heard cry and groan
That sweet who was the armourer's maid ;
For her young years she made sore moan,
And right upon this wise she said ;
“ Ah fierce old age with foul bald head,
To spoil fair things thou art over fain ;
Who holdeth me ? who ? would God I were dead !
Would God I were well dead and slain !

2

“ Lo, thou hast broken the sweet yoke
That my high beauty held above
All priests and clerks and merchant-folk ;
There was not one but for my love

Would give me gold and gold enough,
Though sorrow his very heart had riven,
To win from me such wage thereof
As now no thief would take if given.

3

“I was right chary of the same,
God wot it was my great folly,
For love of one sly knave of them,
Good store of that same sweet had he ;
For all my subtle wiles, perdie,
God wot I loved him well enow ;
Right evilly he handled me,
But he loved well my gold, I trow.

4

“Though I gat bruises green and black,
I loved him never the less a jot ;
Though he bound burdens on my back,
If he said ‘ Kiss me, and heed it not,’

Right little pain I felt, God wot,
When that foul thief's mouth, found so sweet,
Kissed me—Much good thereof I got !
I keep the sin and the shame of it.

5

“ And he died thirty year agone.
I am old now, no sweet thing to see ;
By God, though, when I think thereon,
And of that good glad time, woe's me,
And stare upon my changed body
Stark naked, that has been so sweet,
Lean, wizen, like a small dry tree,
I am nigh mad with the pain of it.

6

“ Where is my faultless forehead's white,
The lifted eyebrows, soft gold hair,
Eyes wide apart and keen of sight,
With subtle skill in the amorous air ;

The straight nose, great nor small, but fair,
 The small carved ears of shapeliest growth,
 Chin dimpling, colour good to wear,
 And sweet red splendid kissing mouth?

7

“The shapely slender shoulders small,
 Long arms, hands wrought in glorious wise,
 Round little breasts, the hips withal
 High, full of flesh, not scant of size,
 Fit for all amorous masteries ;

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8

“A writhled forehead, hair gone grey,
 Fallen eyebrows, eyes gone blind and red,
 Their laughs and looks all fled away,
 Yea, all that smote men’s hearts are fled ;

The bowed nose, fallen from goodlihead ;
 Foul flapping ears like water-flags ;
 Peaked^u chin, and cheeks all waste and dead,
 And lips that are two skinny rags :

9

“ Thus endeth all the beauty of us.

The arms made short, the hands made lean,
 The shoulders bowed and ruinous,
 The breasts, alack ! all fallen in ;
 The flanks too, like the breasts, grown thin

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10

“ So we make moan for the old sweet days,
 Poor old light women, two or three
 Squatting above the straw-fire's blaze,
 The bosom crushed against the knee,

Like faggots on a heap we be,
Round fires soon lit, soon quenched and done ;
And we were once so sweet, even we !
Thus fareth many and many an one."

A DOUBLE BALLAD OF GOOD COUNSEL.

Now take your fill of love and glee,
And after balls and banquets hie ;
In the end ye'll get no good for fee
But just heads broken by and by ;
Light loves make beasts of men that sigh ;
They changed the faith of Solomon
And left not Samson lights to spy ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

Sweet Orpheus, lord of minstrelsy,
For this with flute and pipe came nigh
The danger of the dog's heads three
That ravening at hell's door doth lie ;

Fain was Narcissus, fair and sly,
For love's love lightly lost and won,
In a deep well to drown and die ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

Sardana, flower of chivalry,
Who conquered Crete with horn and cry,
For this was fain a maid to be
And learn with girls the thread to ply ;
King David, wise in prophecy,
Forgot the fear of God for one
Seen washing either shapely thigh ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

For this did Amnon, craftily
Feigning to eat of cakes of rye,
Deflower his sister fair to see,
Which was foul incest ; and hereby

Was Herod moved, it is no lie,
To lop the head of Baptist John
For dance and jig and psaltery ;
Good luck has he that deals with none !

Next of myself I tell, poor me,
How thrashed like clothes at wash was I
Stark naked, I must needs agree ;
Who made me eat so sour a pie
But Katherine of Vaucelles ? thereby
Noé took third part of that fun ;
Such wedding-gloves are ill to buy,
Good luck has he that deals with none !

But for that young man fair and free
To pass those young maids lightly by,
Nay, would you burn him quick, not he ;
Like broom-horsed witches though he fry,

They are sweet as civet in his eye ;
But trust them, and you're fooled anon ;
For white or brown, and low or high,
Good luck has he that deals with none !

FRAGMENT ON DEATH.

AND Paris be it or Helen dying,
 Who dies soever, dies with pain.
He that lacks breath and wind for sighing,
 His gall bursts on his heart ; and then
 He sweats, God knows what sweat ! again,
No man may ease him of his grief ;
 Child, brother, sister, none were fain
To bail him thence for his relief.

Death makes him shudder, swoon, wax pale,
 Nose bend, veins stretch, and breath surrender,
Neck swell, flesh soften, joints that fail
 Crack their strained nerves and arteries slender.

O woman's body found so tender,
Smooth, sweet, so precious in men's eyes,
Must thou too bear such count to render?
Yes; or pass quick into the skies.¹

¹[In the original here follows Villon's masterpiece, the matchless *Ballad of Dead Ladies*, so incomparably rendered in the marvellous version of Mr. Rossetti; followed in its turn by the succeeding poem, as inferior to its companion as is my attempt at translation of it to his triumph in that higher and harder field.—A. C. S.]

BALLAD OF THE LORDS OF OLD TIME.

AFTER THE FORMER ARGUMENT.

WHAT more? Where is the third Calixt,
Last of that name now dead and gone,
Who held four years the Papalist?
Alphonso king of Aragon
The gracious lord, duke of Bourbon,
And Arthur, duke of old Britaine
And Charles the Seventh, that worthy one?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

The Scot too, king of mount and mist,
With half his face vermilion,
Men tell us, like an amethyst
From brow to chin that blazed and shone,

The Cypriote king of old renown,
Alas ! and that good king of Spain,
Whose name I cannot think upon ?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

No more to say of them I list,
'Tis all but vain, all dead and done :
For death may no man born resist,
Nor make appeal when death comes on.

I make yet one more question ;
Where's Lancelot, king of far Bohain ?
Where's he whose grandson called him son ?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

Where is Guesclin, the good Breton ?
The lord of the eastern mountain-chain,
And the good late duke of Alençon ?
Even with the good knight Charlemain.

BALLAD OF THE WOMEN OF PARIS.

ALBEIT the Venice girls get praise

For their sweet speech and tender air,

And tho' the old women have wise ways

Of chaffering for amorous ware,

Yet at my peril dare I swear,

Search Rome, where God's grace mainly tarries,

Florence and Savoy, everywhere,

There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

The Naples women, as folk prattle,

Are sweetly spoken and subtle enough :

German girls are good at tattle,

And Prussians make their boast thereof ;

Take Egypt for the next remove,
Or that waste land the Tartar harries,
Spain or Greece, for the matter of love,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

Breton and Swiss know nought of the matter,
Gascony girls or girls of Toulouse ;
Two fishwomen with a half hour's chatter
Would shut them up by threes and twos ;
Calais, Lorraine, and all their crews,
(Names enow the mad song marries)
England and Picardy, search them and choose,
There's no good girl's lip out of Paris.

Prince, give praise to our French ladies
For the sweet sound their speaking carries ;
'Twixt Rome and Cadiz many a maid is,
But no good girl's lip out of Paris.

BALLAD WRITTEN FOR A BRIDEGROOM

WHICH VILLON GAVE TO A GENTLEMAN NEWLY MARRIED TO
SEND TO HIS WIFE THAT HE HAD WON WITH THE SWORD.

AT daybreak, when the falcon claps his wings,
No whit for grief, but noble heart and high,
With loud glad noise he stirs himself and springs,
And takes his meat and toward his lure draws nigh ;
Such good I wish you ! Yea, and heartily
I am fired with hope of true love's meed to get ;
Know that Love writes it in his book ; for why,
This is the end for which we twain are met.

Mine own heart's lady with no gainsayings
You shall be always wholly till I die ;
And in my right against all bitter things
Sweet laurel with fresh rose its force shall try ;

Seeing reason wills not that I cast love by
(Nor here with reason shall I chide or fret)
Nor cease to serve, but serve more constantly ;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

And, which is more, when grief about me clings
Through Fortune's fit and fume of jealousy,
Your sweet kind eye beats down her threatenings
As wind doth smoke ; such power sits in your eye.
Thus in your field my seed of harvestry
Thrives, for the fruit is like me that I set ;
God bids me tend it with good husbandry ;
This is the end for which we twain are met.

Princess, give ear to this my summary ;
That heart of mine your heart's love should forget,
Shall never be : like trust in you put I :
This is the end for which we twain are met.

BALLAD AGAINST THE ENEMIES OF FRANCE.

MAY he fall in with beasts that scatter fire,
Like Jason, when he sought the fleece of gold,
Or change from man to beast three years entire,
As King Nebuchadnezzar did of old ;
Or else have times as shameful and as bad
As Trojan folk for ravished Helen had ;
Or gulfed with Proserpine and Tantalus
Let hell's deep fen devour him dolorous,
With worse to bear than Job's worst sufferance,
Bound in his prison-maze with Dædalus,
Who could wish evil to the state of France !

May he four months, like bitterns in the mire,
Howl with head downmost in the lake-springs cold,

Or to bear harness like strong bulls for hire

To the Great Turk for money down be sold,

Or thirty years like Magdalen live sad,

With neither wool nor web of linen clad ;

Drown like Narciss', or swing down pendulous

Like Absalom with locks luxurious,

Or like Judas fallen to reprobance ;

Or find such death as Simon sorcerous,

Who could wish evil to the state of France !

May the old times come of fierce Octavian's ire,

And in his belly molten coin be told ;

May he like Victor in the mill expire,

Crushed between moving millstones on him rolled,

Or in deep sea drenched breathless, more adrad

Than in the whale's bulk Jonas, when God bade :

From Phœbus' light, from Juno's treasure-house

Driven, and from joys of Venus amorous,

And cursed of God most high to the utterance,

As was the Syrian king Antiochus,

Who could wish evil to the state of France !

ENVOY.

Prince, may the bright winged brood of Æolus

To sea-king Glaucus' wild wood cavernous

Bear him bereft of peace and hope's least glance,

For worthless is he to get good of us,

Who could wish evil to the state of France !

(Amen, and Amen.)

THE DISPUTE OF THE HEART AND BODY OF
FRANÇOIS VILLON.

Who is this I hear?—Lo, this is I, thine heart,

That holds on merely now by a slender string.

Strength fails me, shape and sense are rent apart,

The blood in me is turned to a bitter thing

Seeing thee skulk here like a dog shivering.—

Yea, and for what?—For that thy sense found sweet.—

What irks it thee?—I feel the sting of it.—

Leave me at peace.—Why?—Nay now, leave me at
peace ;

I will repent when I grow ripe in wit.—

I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

What art thou, trow?—A man worth praise, perfay.—

This is thy thirtieth year of wayfaring.—

'Tis a mule's age.—Art thou a boy still?—Nay.—

Is it hot lust that spurs thee with its sting,

Grasping thy throat? Know'st thou not anything?—

Yea, black and white, when milk is specked with
flies,

I can make out.—No more?—Nay, in no wise.

Shall I begin again the count of these?—

Thou art undone.—I will make shift to rise.—

I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

I have the sorrow of it, and thou the smart.

Wert thou a poor mad fool or weak of wit,

Then might'st thou plead this pretext with thine
heart;

But if thou know not good from evil a whit,

Either thy head is hard as stone to hit,

Or shame, not honour, gives thee most content.

What canst thou answer to this argument?—

When I am dead I shall be well at ease.—

God ! what good luck !—Thou art over eloquent.—

I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Whence is this ill ?—From sorrow and not from sin.

When Saturn packed my wallet up for me,

I well believe he put these ills therein.—

Fool, wilt thou make thy servant lord of thee ?

Hear now the wise King's counsel ; thus saith he ;

All power upon the stars a wise man hath ;

There is no planet that shall do him scathe.—

Nay, as they made me I grow and I decrease.—

What say'st thou ?—Truly this is all my faith.—

I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

Wouldst thou live still ?—God help me that I may !—

Then thou must—What ? turn penitent and pray ?—

Read always.—What ?—Grave words and good to
say ;

Leave off the ways of fools, lest they displease.—
Good ; I will do it.—Wilt thou remember ?—Yea.—
Abide not till there come an evil day.

I say no more.—I care not though thou cease.—

EPISTLE IN FORM OF A BALLAD TO HIS FRIENDS.

HAVE pity, pity, friends, have pity on me,
Thus much at least, may it please you, of your grace !
I lie not under hazel or hawthorn-tree
Down in this dungeon ditch, mine exile's place
By leave of God and fortune's foul disgrace.
Girls, lovers, glad young folk and newly wed,
Jumpers and jugglers, tumbling heel o'er head,
Swift as a dart, and sharp as needle-ware,
Throats clear as bells that ring the kine to shed,
Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there ?
Singers that sing at pleasure, lawlessly,
Light, laughing, gay of word and deed, that race

And run like folk light-witted as ye be

And have in hand nor current coin nor base,

Ye wait too long, for now he's dying apace.

Rhymers of lays and roundels sung and read,

Ye'll brew him broth too late when he lies dead.

Nor wind nor lightning, sunbeam nor fresh air,

May pierce the thick wall's bound where lies his bed ;

Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there ?

O noble folk from tithes and taxes free,

Come and behold him in this piteous case,

Ye that nor king nor emperor holds in fee,

But only God in heaven ; behold his face

Who needs must fast, Sundays and holidays,

Which makes his teeth like rakes ; and when he hath fed

With never a cake for banquet but dry bread,

Must drench his bowels with much cold watery fare,

With board nor stool, but low on earth instead ;

Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there ?

Princes afore-named, old and young aforesaid,

Get me the king's seal and my pardon sped,

And hoist me in some basket up with care :

So swine will help each other ill bested,

For where one squeaks they run in heaps ahead.

Your poor old friend, what, will you leave him there ?

THE EPITAPH IN FORM OF A BALLAD

WHICH VILLON MADE FOR HIMSELF AND HIS COMRADES, EXPECTING TO BE HANGED ALONG WITH THEM.

MEN, brother men, that after us yet live,
Let not your hearts too hard against us be ;
For if some pity of us poor men ye give,
The sooner God shall take of you pity.
Here are we five or six strung up, you see,
And here the flesh that all too well we fed
Bit by bit eaten and rotten, rent and shred,
And we the bones grow dust and ash withal ;
Let no man laugh at us discomforted,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

If we call on you, brothers, to forgive,
Ye should not hold our prayer in scorn, though we

Were slain by law ; ye know that all alive
Have not wit alway to walk righteously ;
Make therefore intercession heartily
With him that of a virgin's womb was bred,
That his grace be not as a dry well-head
For us, nor let hell's thunder on us fall ;
We are dead, let no man harry or vex us dead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

The rain has washed and laundered us all five,
And the sun dried and blackened ; yea, perdie,
Ravens and pies with beaks that rend and rive
Have dug our eyes out, and plucked off for fee
Our beards and eyebrows ; never are we free,
Not once, to rest ; but here and there still sped,
Drive at its wild will by the wind's change led,
More pecked of birds than fruit on garden-wall ;
Men, for God's love, let no gibe here be said,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

Prince Jesus, that of all art lord and head,
Keep us, that hell be not our bitter bed ;
We have nought to do in such a master's hall.
Be not ye therefore of our fellowhead,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR.

FROM THE FRENCH OF VICTOR HUGO.

TAKE heed of this small child of earth ;
 He is great : he hath in him God most high,
Children before their fleshly birth
 Are lights alive in the blue sky.

In our light, bitter world of wrongs
 They come ; God gives us them awhile.
His speech is in their stammering tongue,
 And his forgiveness in their smile.

Their sweet light rests upon our eyes.
 Alas ! their right to joy is plain.
If they are hungry, Paradise
 Weeps, and, if cold, Heaven thrills with pain.

The want that saps their sinless flower

Speaks judgment on sin's ministers.

Man holds an angel in his power.

Ah ! deep in heaven what thunder stirs,

When God seeks out these tender things

Whom in the shadow where we sleep

He sends us clothed about with wings

And finds them ragged babes that weep !

SONNET.

POUR mettre une couronne au front d'une chanson,
Il semblait qu'en passant son pied semât des roses,
Et que sa main cueillit comme des fleurs écloses
Les étoiles au fond du ciel en floraison.

Sa parole de marbre et d'or avait le son
Des clairons de l'été chassant les jours moroses ;
Comme en Thrace Apollon banni des grands cieux roses,
Il regardait du cœur l'Olympe, sa maison.

Le soleil fut pour lui le soleil du vieux monde,
Et son œil recherchait dans les flots embrasés
La sillon immortel d'où s'élança sur l'onde

Vénus, que la mer molle enivrait de baisers :
Enfin, dieu ressaisi de sa splendeur première,
Il trône, et son sèpulcre est bâti de lumière.

NOCTURNE.

LA nuit écoute et se penche sur l'onde
Pour y cueillir rien qu'un souffle d'amour ;
Pas de lueur, pas de musique au monde,
Pas de sommeil pour moi ni de séjour.
O mère, ô Nuit, de ta source profonde
Verse-nous, verse enfin l'oubli du jour.

Verse l'oubli de l'angoisse et du jour ;
Chante ; ton chant assoupit l'âme et l'onde :
Fais de ton sein pour mon âme un séjour,
Elle est bien, ô mère, de ce monde,
Où le baiser ne veut pas dire amour,
Où l'âme aimée est moins que toi profonde.

Car toute chose aimée est moins profonde,
O Nuit, que toi, fille et mère du jour,
Toi dont l'attente est le répit du monde,
Toi dont le souffle est plein de mots d'amour,
Toi dont l'haleine enfle et réprime l'onde,
Toi dont l'ombre a tout le ciel pour séjour.

La misère humble et lasse, sans séjour,
S'abrite et dort sous ton aile profonde ;
Tu fais à tous l'aumône de l'amour ;
Toutes les soifs viennent boire à ton onde,
Tout ce qui pleure et se dérobe au jour,
Toutes les faims et tous les maux du monde.

Moi seul je veille et ne vois dans ce monde
Que ma douleur qui n'ait point de séjour
Où s'abriter sur ta rive profonde
Et s'endormir sous tes yeux loin du jour ;
Je vais toujours cherchant au bord de l'onde
Le sang du beau pied blessé de l'amour.

La mer est sombre où tu naquis, amour,
Pleine des pleurs et des sanglots du monde ;
On ne voit plus le gouffre où nait le jour
Luire et frémir sous ta lueur profonde ;
Mais dans les cœurs d'homme où tu fais séjour
La douleur monte et baisse une onde.

ENVOI.

Fille de l'onde et mère de l'amour,
Du haut séjour plein de ta paix profonde
Sur ce bas monde épands un peu de jour

IN OBITUM THEOPHILI POETÆ.

O LUX Pieridum et laurigeri deliciæ dei,
Vox leni Zephyro lenior, ut veris amans novi
Tollit floridulis implicitum primitiis caput,
Ten' ergo abripuit non rediturum, ut redeunt novo
Flores vere novi, te quoque, mors irrevocabilem ?
Cur vatem neque te Musa parens, te neque Gratiaë,
Nec servare sibi te potuit fidum animi Venus ?
Quæ nunc ipsa magis vel puero te Cinyreïo,
Te desiderium et flebilibus lumen amoribus,
Amissum queritur, sanguineis fusa comam genis.
Tantis tu lacrymis digne, comes dulcis Apollini,
Carum nomen eris dîs superis atque sodalibus
Nobis, quîs eadem quæ tibi vivo patuit via
Non æquis patet, at te sequimur passibus haud tuis,

At mæsto cinerem carmine non illacrymabilem
Tristesque exuvias floribus ac fletibus integris
Unà contegimus, nec citharâ nec sine tibiâ
Votoque unanimæ vocis Ave dicimus et Vale.

ODE.

(LE TOMBEAU DE THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.)

QUELLE fleur, ô Mort, quel joyau, quel chant,
Quel vent, quel rayon de soleil couchant,
Sur ton front penché, sur ta main avide,
Sur l'âpre pâleur de ta lèvre aride,
Vibre encore et luit ?
Ton sein est sans lait, ton oreille est vide,
Ton œil fait de nuit.

Ta bouche est sans souffle et ton front sans ride ;
Mais l'éclair voilé d'une flamme humide,
Flamme éclore au cœur d'un ciel pluvieux,
Rallume ta lèvre et remplit tes yeux
De lueurs d'opale ;
Ta bouche est vermeille et ton front joyeux,
O toi qui fus pâle.

Comme aux jours divins la mère des dieux,
Reine au sein fécond, au corps radieux,
Tu surgis au bord de la tombe amère ;
Tu nous apparais, ô Mort, vierge et mère,
 Effroi des humains,
Le divin laurier sur la tête altière
 Et la lyre aux mains.

Nous reconnaissons, courbés vers la terre,
Que c'est la splendeur de ta face austère
Qui dore la nuit de nos longs malheurs ;
Que la vie ailée aux mille couleurs,
 Dont tu n'es que l'âme,
Refait par tes mains les prés et les fleurs,
 La rose et la femme.

Lune constante ! astre ami des douleurs
Qui luis à travers la brume des pleurs !
Quelle flamme au fond de ta clarté molle

Eclate et rougit, nouvelle auréole,
voilé ?

Quelle étoile, ouvrant ses ailes, s'envole
Du ciel étoilé ?

Pleurant ce rayon de jour qu'on lui vole,
L'homme exècre en vain la Mort triste et folle ;
Mais l'astre qui fut à nos yeux si beau,
Là-haut, loin d'ici, dans un ciel nouveau
Plein d'autres étoiles,
Se lève, et pour lui la nuit du tombeau
Entr'ouvre ses voiles.

L'âme est dans le corps comme un jeune oiseau
Dont l'aile s'agite au bord du berceau ;
La mort, déliant cette aile inquiète,
Quand nous écoutons la bouche muette
Qui nous dit adieu,
Fait de l'homme infime et sombre un poète,
Du poète un dieu.

AD CATULLUM.

CATULLE frater, ut velim comes tibi
Remota per vireta, per cavum nemus
Sacrumque Ditis haud inhospiti specus,
Pedem referre, trans aquam Stygis ducem
Secutus unum et unicum, Catulle, te,
Ut ora vatis optimi reviserem,
Tui meique vatis ora, quem scio
Venustiozem adisse vel tuo lacum,
Benigniora semper arva vel tuis,
Ubi serenus accipit suos deus,
Tegitque myrtus implicata laureâ,
Manuque mulcet halituque consecrat
Fovetque blanda mors amabili sinu,
Et ore fama fervido colit viros

Alitque qualis unus ille par tibi
Britannus unicusque in orbe præstitit
Amicus ille noster, ille ceteris
Poeta major, omnibusque floribus
Priore Landor inclytum rosâ caput
Revinxit extulitque, quam tuâ manu
Recepit ac refovit integram suâ.

DEDICATION.

1878.

SOME nine years gone, as we dwelt together
In the sweet hushed heat of the south French weather

Ere autumn fell on the vine-tressed hills
Or the season had shed one rose-red feather,

Friend, whose fame is a flame that fills
All eyes it lightens and hearts it thrills

With joy to be born of the blood which bred
From a land that the grey sea girds and chills

The heart and spirit and hand and head
Whose might is as light on a dark day shed,
On a day now dark as a land's decline
Where all the peers of your praise are dead ;

In a land and season of corn and vine
I pledged you a health from a beaker of mine
 But halfway filled to the lip's edge yet
With hope for honey and song for wine.

Nine years have risen and eight years set
Since there by the wellspring our hands on it met ;
 And the pledge of my songs that were then to be,
I could wonder not, friend, though a friend should forget.

For life's helm rocks to the windward and lee,
And time is as wind, and as waves as we ;
 And song is as foam that the sea-winds fret,
Though the thought at its heart should be deep as the sea.

APPENDIX.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

The subjoined poem will not be included in the English edition of "Poems and Ballads (Second Series)," of which, in all other respects, the present volume is an exact reprint from advance sheets.

The publisher would, under ordinary circumstances, naturally hesitate to add to the collection without the author's sanction; but the book having been so often announced, and so long delayed, it is deemed inadvisable to cause further disappointment to an eager multitude of admirers, and to incur the indefinite delay involved in waiting to confer with Mr. Swinburne.

The publisher is persuaded that the high courage of treatment and the exquisite skill shown in this latest rendering of the old story of Tristram and Iseult furnish ample excuse, if any be needed, for its reproduction here.

TRISTRAM AND ISEULT.

PRELUDE.

LOVE, that is first and last of all things made,
The light that moving has man's life for shade,
The spirit that for temporal veil has on
The souls of all men woven in unison,
One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought
And lights of sunny and starry deed and thought,
And alway through new act and passion new
Shines the divine same body and beauty through,
The body spiritual of fire and light
That is to worldly noon as noon to night ;
Love, that is flesh upon the spirit of man
And spirit within the flesh whence breath began ;
Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in chime ;
Love, that is blood within the veins of time ;

That wrought the whole world without stroke of hand,
Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of land,
And with the pulse and motion of his breath
Through the great heart of the earth strikes life and death,
The sweet twain chords that make the sweet time live
Through day and night of things alternative,
Through silence and through sound of stress and strife,
And ebb and flow of dying death and life ;
Love, that sounds loud or light in all men's ears,
Whence all men's eyes take fire from sparks of tears ;
That binds on all men's feet or chains or wings,
Love that is root and fruit of terrene things ;
Love, that the whole world's waters shall not drown,
The whole world's fiery forces not burn down ;
Love, that what time his own hands guard his head
The whole world's wrath and strength shall not strike dead ;
Love, that if once his own hands make his grave
The whole world's pity and sorrow shall not save ;
Love, that for every life shall not be sold,
Nor bought nor bound with iron nor with gold ;

So strong that heaven, could love bid heaven farewell,
Would turn to fruitless and unflowering hell ;
So sweet that hell, to hell could love be given,
Would turn to splendid and sonorous heaven.
Love that is fire within thee and light above,
And lives by grace of nothing but of love ;
Through many and lovely thoughts and much desire
Led these twain to the life of tears and fire ;
Through many and lovely days and much delight
Led these twain to the lifeless life of night.

Yea, but what then ? albeit all this were thus,
And soul smote soul and left it ruinous ;
And love led love as eyeless men lead men,
Through chance by chance to deathward,—Ah, what then ?
Hath love not likewise led them further yet,
Out through the years where memories rise and set,
Some large as suns, some moon-like warm and pale,
Some starry-sighted, some through clouds that sail
Seen as red flame through spectral float of fume,
Each with the blush of its own special bloom

On the fair face of its own coloured light,
Distinguishable in all the host of night,
Divisible from all the radiant rest
And separable in splendour? Hath the best
Light of love's all, of all that burn and move,
A better heaven than heaven is? Hath not love
Made for all these their sweet particular air
To shine in, their own beams and names to bear,
Their ways to wander and their wards to keep,
Till story and song and glory and all things sleep?
Hath he not plucked from death of lovers dead
Their musical sweet memories, and kept red
The rose of their remembrance in men's eyes,
The sunsets of their stories in his skies,
The blush of their dead blood in lips that speak
Of their dead lives, and in the listener's cheek
That trembles with the kindling pity lit
In gracious hearts for a sweet fever-fit,
A fiery pity enkindled of pure thought
By tales that make their honey out of nought,

The faithless faith that lives without belief
Its light life through, the griefless ghost of grief?
Yea, as warm night refashions the sere blood
In storm-struck petal or in sun-struck bud,
With tender hours and tempering dew to cure
The hunger and thirst of day's distemperature
And ravin of the dry discolouring hours,
Hath he not bid relume their flameless flowers
With summer fire and heat of lamping song,
And bid the short-lived things, long dead, live long,
And thought remake their wan funereal fames,
And the sweet shining signs of women's names
That mark the months out and the weeks anew
He moves in changeless change of seasons through
To make the days up of his dateless year,
Flame from Queen Helen to Queen Guenevere?
For first of all the spherèd signs whereby
Love severs light from darkness, and most high
In the white front of January there glows
The rose-red sign of Helen like a rose :

And gold-eyed as the shore-flower shelterless
Whereon the sharp-breathed sea blows bitterness,
A storm-star that the seafarers of love
Strain their wind-wearied eyes for glimpses of,
Shoots keen through February's grey frost and damp
The lamp-like star of Hero for a lamp ;
The star that Marlowe sang into our skies
With mouth of gold, and morning in his eyes ;
And in clear March across the rough blue sea
The spherèd sapphire of Alcyone
Makes bright the blown brows of the wind-foot year ;
And shining like a sunbeam smitten tear
Full ere it fall, the fair next sign in sight
Burns opal-wise with April-coloured light
When air is quick with song and rain and flame,
My birth-month star that in love's heaven hath name
Iseult, a light of blossom and beam and shower,
My Singing sign that makes the song-tree flower ;
Next like a pale and burning pearl beyond
The rose-white sphere of flower-named Rosamond

Signs the sweet head of Maytime ; and for June
Flares like an angered and storm-reddening moon
Her signal sphere, whose Carthaginian pyre
Shadowed her traitor's flying sail with fire ;
Next, glittering as the wine-bright jacinth-stone,
A star south-risen that first to music shone,
The keen girl-star of golden Juliet bears
Light northward to the month whose forehead wears
Her name for flower upon it, and his trees
Mix their deep English song with Veronese ;
And like an awful sovereign chrysolite
Burning, the supreme fire that blinds the night
The hot gold head of Venus kissed by Mars,
A sun-flower among small sphered flowers of stars,
The light of Cleopatra fills and burns
The hollow of heaven whence ardent August yearns ;
And fixed and shining as the sister-shed
Sweet tears for Phaethon disorbed and dead,
The pale bright autumn's amber-coloured sphere,
That through September sees the saddening year

As love sees change through sorrow, hath to name
Francesca's ; and the star that watches flame
The embers of the harvest overgone
Is Thisbe's, slain of love in Babylon,
Set in the golden girdle of sweet signs
A blood-bright ruby ; last save one light shines
An eastern wonder of sphery chrysopras,
The star that made men mad, Angelica's ;
And latest named and lordliest, with a sound
Of swords and harps in heaven that ring it round,
Last love-light and last love-song of the year's,
Gleams like a glorious emerald Guenevere's.
These are the signs wherethrough the year sees move,
Full of the sun, the sun-god which is love,
A fiery body blood-red from the heart
Outward, with fire-white wings made wide apart,
That close not and unclose not, but upright
Steered without wind by their own light and might,
Sweep through the flameless fire of air that rings
From heaven to heaven with thunder of wheels and wings

And antiphones of motion-moulded rhyme
Through spaces out of space and timeless time.

So shine above dead chance and conquered change
The spherèd signs, and leave without their range
Doubt and desire, and hope with fear for wife,
Pale pains, and pleasures long worn out of life.
Yea, even the shadows of them spiritless,
Through the dim door of sleep that seem to press,
Forms without form, a piteous people and blind,
Men and no men, whose lamentable kind
The shadow of death and shadow of life compel
Through semblances of heaven and false-faced hell,
Through dreams of light and dreams of darkness tost
On waves unnavigable, are these so lost?
Shapes that wax pale and shift in swift strange wise,
Void faces with unspeculative eyes,
Dim things that gaze and glare, dead mouths that move,
Featureless heads discrowned of hate and love,
Mockeries and masks of motion and mute breath,
Leavings of life, the superflux of death—

If these things and no more than these things be
Left when man ends or changes, who can see ?
Or who can say with what more subtle sense
Their subtler natures taste in air less dense
A life less thick and palpable than ours,
Warmed with faint fires and sweetened with dead flowers
And measured by low music ? how time fares
In that wan time-forgotten world of theirs,
Their pale poor world too deep for sun or star
To live in, where the eyes of Helen are,
And hers who made as God's own eyes to shine
The eyes that met them of the Florentine,
Eyes heavenly ere they knew her, but when they knew
Heavenly past name of heaven their godhead grew,
Grew great and waxed and wonderfully lit
All time for all men with the shadow of it ;
Ah, and these too felt on them as God's grace
The pity and glory of this man's breathing face—
For these too, these my lovers, these my twain,
Saw Dante, saw God visible by pain,

With lips that thundered and with feet that trod
Before men's eyes incognisable God—
Saw love and wrath and light and night and fire
Live with one life and at one mouth respire,
And in one golden sound their whole soul heard
Sounding, one sweet immitigable word.

They have the night, who had like us the day ;
We, whom day binds, shall have the night as they.
We, from the fetters of the light unbound,
Healed of our wound of living, shall sleep sound.
All gifts but one the jealous God may keep
From our soul's longing, one he cannot—sleep.
This, though he grudge all other grace to prayer,
This grace his closed hand cannot choose but spare.
This, though his ear be sealed to all that live,
Be it lightly given or lothly, God must give.
We, as the men our memory sleeps upon,
We too shall surely pass out of the sun ;
Out of the sound and eyeless light of things,
Wide as the stretch of life's time-wandering wings,

Wide as the naked world and shadowless,
And long-lived as the world's own weariness.
Us too, when all the fires of time are cold,
The heights shall hide us and the depths shall hold.
Us too, when all the tears of time are dry,
The night shall lighten from her tearless eye.
Blind is the day and eyeless all its light,
But the large unbewildered eye of night
Hath sense and speculation ; and the sheer
Limitless length of lifeless life and clear,
The timeless space wherein the brief worlds move
Clothed with light life and fruitful with light love,
With hopes that threaten, and with fears that cease,
Past fear and hope, hath in it only peace.

Yet of these lives inlaid with hopes and fears,
Spun fine as fire and jewelled thick with tears,
These lives made out of loves that long since were,
Lives made as ours of earth and burning air,
Fugitive flame, and water of secret springs,
And clothed with joys and sorrows as with wings,

Some yet are good, if aught be good, to save
Some while from washing wreck and wrecking wave.
Was such not theirs, the twain I take, and give
Out of my life to make their dead life live
Some days of mine, and blow my living breath
Between the lips for their sake of their death ?
So many and many ere me have given my twain
Love and live song and honey-hearted pain,
Whose root is sweetness and whose fruit is sweet,
So many and with such joy have tracked their feet,
What should I do to follow ? yet I too,
I have the heart to follow, many or few
Be the feet gone before me ; for the way,
Rose-red with remnant roses of the day
Westward, and eastward white with stars that break,
Between the green and foam is fair to take
For any sail the sea-wind steers for me
From morning into morning, sea to sea.

THE SAILING OF THE SWALLOW.

ABOUT the middle music of the spring
Came from the green shore of the Irish king
A fair ship stoutly sailing, eastward bound
And south by Wales and its grey land-line round
To the loud rocks and ringing reaches home
That take the wild wrath of the Cornish foam,
Past Lyonesse unswallowed of the tides
And high Carlion that now the steep sea hides
To the wind-hollowed heights and gusty bays
Of sheer Tintagel, fair with famous days.
Above the stem a gilded swallow shone,
Wrought with straight wings and eyes of glittering stone
As flying sunward oversea, to bear
Green summer with it through the singing air.
And on the deck between the rowers at dawn,
As the bright sail with brightening wind was drawn,

Sat with full face against the strengthening light
Iseult, more fair than foam or dawn was white.
Her gaze was glad past love's own singing of,
And her face lovely past desire of love.
Past thought and speech her maiden motions were,
And a more golden sunrise was her hair.
The very veil of her bright flesh was made
As of light woven and moonbeam-coloured shade
More fine than moonbeam ; her warm eyelids shone
As snow sun-stricken that endures the sun,
And through their curled and coloured clouds of deep
Luminous lashes thick as dreams in sleep
Shone as the sea's depth swallowing up the sky's
The springs of unimaginable eyes.
As the wave's subtler emerald is pierced through
With the utmost heaven's inextricable blue,
And both are woven and molten in one sleight
Of amorous colour and implicated light
Under the golden guard and gaze of noon,
So glowed their awless amorous plenilune,

Azure and gold and ardent grey, made strange
With fiery difference and deep interchange
Inexplicable of glories multiform ;
Now as the sullen sapphire swells toward storm
Foamless, their bitter beauty grew acold,
And now afire with ardour of fine gold.
Her flower-soft lips were meek and passionate,
For love upon them like a shadow sate
Patient, a foreseen vision of sweet things,
A dream with eyes fast shut and plumeless wings
That knew not what man's love or life should be,
Nor had it sight nor heart to hope or see
What thing should come, but childlike satisfied
Watched out its virgin vigil in soft pride
And unkissed expectation ; and the glad
Clear cheeks and throat and tender temples had
Such maiden heat as if a rose's blood
Beat in the live heart of a lily-bud.
Between the small round breasts a white way led
Heavenward, and from slight foot to slender head

The whole fair body flower-like swayed and shone
Moving, and what her light hand leant upon
Grew blossom-scented : her warm arms began
To round and ripen for delight of man
That they should clasp and circle : her fresh hands,
Like regent lilies of reflowering lands
Whose vassal firstlings, crown and star and plume,
Bow down to the empire of that sovereign bloom,
Shone sceptreless, and from her face there went
A silent light as of a God content ;
Save when, more swift and keen than love or shame,
Some flash of blood, light as the laugh of flame,
Broke it with sudden beam and shining speech,
As dream by dream shot through her eyes, and each
Outshone the last that lightened, and not one
Shewed her such things as should be borne and done.
Though hard against her shone the sunlike face
That in all change and wreck of time and place
Should be the star of her sweet living soul.
Nor had love made it as his written scroll

For evil will and good to read in yet ;
But smooth and mighty, without scar or fret,
Fresh and high-lifted was the helmless brow
As the oak-tree flower that tops the topmost bough,
Ere it drop off before the perfect leaf ;
And nothing save his name he had of grief,
The name his mother, dying as he was born,
Made out of sorrow in very sorrow's scorn,
And set it on him smiling in her sight,
Tristram ; who now, clothed with sweet youth and might,
As a glad witness wore that bitter name,
The second symbol of the world for fame.
Famous and full of fortune was his youth
Ere the beard's bloom had left his cheek unsmooth,
And in his face a lordship of strong joy
And height of heart no chance could curb or cloy
Lightened, and all that warmed them at his eyes
Loved them as young larks love the blue strong skies.
So like the morning through the morning moved
Tristram, a light to look on and be loved.

Song sprang between his lips and hands, and shone
Singing, and strengthened and sank down thereon
As a bird settles to the second flight,
Then from beneath his harping hands with might
Leapt, and made way and had its fill and died,
And all whose hearts were fed upon it sighed
Silent, and in their hearts the fire of tears
Burned as wine drunken not with lips but ears.
And gazing on his fervent hands that made
The might of music all their souls obeyed
With trembling strong subservience of delight,
Full many a queen that had him once in sight
Thought in the secret place of her hot heart
In what strong battle had these hands borne part
How oft, and were so young and sweet of skill ;
And those red lips whereon the song burned still,
What words and cries of battle had they flung
Athwart the swing and shriek of swords, so young ;
And eyes as glad as summer, what strange youth
Fed them so full of happy heart and truth,

That had seen sway from side to sundering side
The steel flow of that terrible spring-tide
That the moon rules not, but the fire and light
Of men's hearts mixed in the mid mirth of fight.
Therefore the joy and love of him they had
Made thought more amorous in them and more glad
For his fame's sake remembered, and his youth
Gave his fame flowerlike fragrance and soft growth
As of a rose requickening, when he stood
Fair in their eye, a flower of faultless blood.
And that sad queen to whom his life was death,
A rose plucked forth of summer in mid breath,
A star fall'n out of season in mid throe
Of that life's joy that makes the star's life glow,
Made their love sadder toward him and more strong.
And in mid change of time and fight and song
Chance cast him westward on the low sweet strand
Where songs are sung of the green Irish land,
And the sky loves it, and the sea loves best,
And as a bird is taken to man's breast

The sweet-souled land where sorrow sweetest sings
Is wrapt round with them as with hands and wings
And taken to the sea's heart as a flower.

There in the luck and light of his good hour
Came to the king's court like a noteless man
Tristram, and while some half a season ran
Abode before him harping in his hall,

And taught sweet craft of new things musical
To the dear maiden mouth and innocent hands
That for his sake are famous in all lands.

Yet was not love between them, for their fate
Lay wrapt in its appointed hour at wait,
And had no flower to show yet, and no sting.

But once being vexed with some past wound the king
Bade give him comfort of sweet baths, and then
Should Iseult watch him as his handmaiden,
For his more honour in men's sight, and ease
The hurts he had with holy remedies
Made by her mother's magic in strange hours
Out of live roots and life-compelling flowers.

And finding by the wound's shape in his side
This was the knight by whom their strength had died
And all their might in one man overthrown
Had left their shame in sight of all men shown,
She would have slain him swordless with his sword ;
Yet seemed he to her so great and fair a lord
She heaved up hand and smote not ; and he said,
Laughing—" What comfort shall this man be dead,
Damsel ? what hurt is for my blood to heal ?
But set your hand not near the toothèd steel
Lest the fang strike it."—" Yea, the fang," she said,
" Should it not sting the very serpent dead
That stung mine uncle ? for his slayer art thou,
And half my mother's heart is bloodless now
Through thee, that mad'st the veins of all her kin
Bleed in his wounds whose veins through thee ran thin."
Yet thought she how their hot chief's violent heart
Had flung the fierce word forth upon their part
That bade to battle the best knight that stood
On Arthur's, and so dying of his wild mood

Had set upon his conqueror's flesh the seal
Of his mishallowed and anointed steel,
Whereof the venom and enchanted might
Made the sign burn here branded in her sight.
These things she stood recasting, and her soul
Subsiding in her, thought like thin flame stole
Through all its maiden courses, and filled up
Its hidden ways as wine fulfils a cup.
So past she from him humbly, and he went
Home with hands reconciled and heart content,
To bring fair peace between the Cornish strand
And the long wrangling wars of that loud land.
And when the peace was struck between them twain
Forth must he fare by those green straits again,
And bring back Iseult for a plighted bride
And set to reign at Mark his uncle's side.
So now with feast made and all triumphs done
They sailed between the moonfall and the sun
Under the spent stars eastward ; but the queen
Out of wise heart and subtle love had seen

Such things as might be, dark as in a glass,
And lest some doom of these should come to pass
Bethought her with her secret soul alone
To work some charm for marriage unison
And strike the heart of Iseult to her lord
With a spell stronger than the stroke of sword.
Therefore with marvellous herbs and spells she wrought
To win the very wonder of her thought,
And brewed it with her secret hands and blest
And drew and gave out of her secret breast
To one her chosen and Iseult's handmaiden,
Brangwain, and bade her hide from sight of men
This marvel covered in a golden cup,
So covering in her heart the counsel up
As in the gold the wondrous wine lay close ;
And when the last shout with the last cup rose
About the bride and bridegroom bound to bed,
Then should this one word of her will be said
To her new-married maiden child, that she
Should drink with Mark this draught in unity,

And no lip touch it for her sake but theirs :
For with long love and consecrating prayers
The wine was hallowed for their mouths to pledge,
And if a drop fell from the beaker's edge
That drop should Iseult hold as dear as blood
Shed from her mother's heart to do her good.
And having drunk they twain should be one heart
Who were one flesh till fleshly death should part—
Death, who parts all. So Brangwain swore, and kept
The hid thing by her while she waked or slept.
And now they sat to see the sun again
Whose light of eye had looked on no such twain
Since Galahault in the rose-time of the year
Brought Launcelot first to sight of Guenevere.

And Tristram caught her changing eyes and said :
“ As this day raises daylight from the dead
Might not this face the life of a dead man ? ”

And Iseult, gazing where the sea was wan
Out of the sun's way, said ; “ I pray you not
Praise me, but tell me there in Camelot,

Saving the queen, who hath most name of fair ?
I would I were a man and dwelling there,
That I might win me better praise than yours,
Even such as you have ; for your praise endures,
That with great deeds ye wring from mouths of men,
But ours—for shame, where is it ? Tell me then,
Since woman may not wear a better here,
Who of this praise hath most save Guenevere ? ”

And Tristram, lightening with a laugh held in—
“ Surely a little praise is this to win,
A poor praise and a little ! but of these
Hapless, whom love serves only with bowed knees,
Of such poor women fairer face hath none
That lifts her eyes against the eye o’ the sun
Than Arthur’s sister, whom the north sees call
Mistress of isles ; so yet majestic
Above the crowns on younger heads she moves,
Outlightening with her eyes our late-born loves.”

“ Ah,” said Iseult, “ is she more tall than I ?
Look, I am tall ; ” and touched the mast hard by

Reaching far up the flower that was her hand ;
“ And look, fair lord, now, when I rise and stand,
How high with feet unlifted I can touch
Standing straight up ; could this queen do thus much ?
Nay, over tall she must be then, like me :
I should love lesser women. May this be,
That she is still the second stateliest there,
So more than many so much younger fair,
She, born before the king too, was she not ?
And has the third knight after Launcelot
And after you to serve her ? nay, sir, then
God made her for a love-sign among men.”

“ Ay,” Tristram answered, “ for a sign, a sign—
Would God it were not ! for no planets shine
With half such fearful forecast of men’s fate
As a fair face so more unfortunate.”

Then with a smile that lit not on her brows
But moved upon her red mouth tremulous
Light as a sea-bird’s motion oversea,
“ Yea,” quoth Iseult, “ the happier hap for me,

With no such face to bring men no such fate.
Yet her might all we women born too late
Praise for good hap, who so enskied above
Not more in age excels us than man's love."

There came a glooming light on Tristram's face
Answering : " God keep you better in His grace
Than to sit down beside her in men's sight.
For if men be not blind whom God gives light
And lie not in whose lips he bids truth live,
Great grief shall she be given, and greater give.
For Merlin witnessed of her years ago
That she should work woe and should suffer woe
Beyond the race of women : and in truth
Her face, too bright and dark for age or youth,
Hath on it such a light of cloud and fire,
With charm and change of keen or dim desire,
And over all a fearless look of fear
Hung like a veil across its changing cheer,
Made up of fierce foreknowledge and sharp scorn.
That it were better she had not been born.

For not love's self can help a face which hath
Such insubmissive anguish of wan wrath,
Blind prescience and self-contemptuous hate
Of her own soul and heavy-footed fate,
Writ broad upon its beauty: none the less
Its fire of bright and burning bitterness
Takes with as quick a flame the sense of men
As any sunbeam, nor is quenched again
With any drop of dewfall; yea, I think
No herb of force or blood-compelling drink
Would heal a heart that ever it made hot.
Ay, and men too that greatly love her not,
Seeing the great love of her and Lamoracke,
Make no great marvel, nor look strangely back
When with his gaze about her she goes by
Pale as a breathless and star-quickenning sky
Between moonrise and sunset, and moves out
Clothed with the passion of his eyes about
As night with all her stars, yet night is black;
And she, clothed warm with love of Lamoracke,

Girt with his worship as with girdling gold,
Seems all at heart unhungered and acold,
Seems sad at heart and loveless of the light,
As night, star-clothed or naked, is but night."

And with her sweet eyes sunken, and the mirth
Dead in their look as earth lies dead in earth
That reigned on earth and triumphed, Iseult said ;
"Is it her shame of something done and dead
Or fear of something to be born and done
That so in her soul's eye puts out the sun?"

And Tristram answered : "Surely, as I think,
This gives her soul such bitterness to drink,
The sin born blind, the sightless sin unknown,
Wrought when the summer in her blood was blown,
But scarce aflower, and spring first flushed her will
With bloom of dreams no fruitage should fulfil,
When out of vision and desire was wrought
The sudden sin that from the living thought
Leaps a live deed and dies not : then there came
On that blind sin swift eyesight like a flame

Touching the dark to death, and made her mad
With helpless knowledge that too late forbade
What was before the bidding ; and she knew
How sharp a life dead love should lead her through
To what sure end how fearful ; and though yet
Nor with her blood nor tears her way be wet
And she looked bravely with set face on fate,
Yet she knows well the serpent hour at wait
Somewhere to sting and spare not ; ay, and he,
Arthur "——

“The king,” quoth Iseult suddenly,
“Doth the king too live so in sight of fear ?
They say sin touches not a man so near
As shame a woman ; yet he too should be
Part of the penance, being more deep than she
Set in the sin.”

“Nay,” Tristram said, “for thus
It fell by wicked hap and hazardous,
That wittingly he sinned no more than youth
May sin and be assoiled of God and truth,

Repenting ; for in his first year of reign
As he stood splendid with his foeman slain
And light of new-blown battles, flushed and hot
With hope and life, came greeting from King Lot
Out of his wind-worn islands oversea,
And homage to my king and fealty
Of those north seas wherein the strange shapes swim,
As from his man ; and Arthur greeted him
As his good lord and courteously, and bade
To his high feast ; who coming with him had
This Queen Morgause of Orkney, his fair wife,
In the green middle Maytime of her life,
And in scarce April was our king's as then
And goodliest was he of all flowering men,
And of what graft as yet himself knew not ;
But cold as rains in autumn was King Lot
And grey-grown out of season : so there sprang
Swift love between them, and all spring through sang
Light in their joyous hearing ; for none knew
The bitter bond of blood between them two,

Twain fathers but one mother, till too late
The sacred mouth of Merlin set forth fate
And brake the secret seal on Arthur's birth,
And shewed his ruin and his rule on earth
Inextricable, and light on lives to be.
For surely, though time slay us, yet shall we
Have such high name and lordship of good days
As shall sustain us living, and men's praise
Shall burn a beacon lit above us dead.
And of the king how shall not this be said
When any of us from any mouth has praise,
That such were men in only this king's days,
In Arthur's ? yea, come shine or shade, no less
His name shall be one name with knightliness.
His fame one light with sunlight. Yet in sooth
His age shall bear the burdens of his youth
And bleed from his own bloodshed ; for indeed
Blind to him blind his sister brought forth seed,
And of the child between them shall be born
Destruction : so shall God not suffer scorn,

Nor in men's souls and lives his law lie dead."

And as one moved and marvelling Iseult said :

" Great pity it is and strange it seems to me
God could not do them so much right as we,
Who slay not men for witless evil done ;
And these the nobles under the great sun
For sin they knew not he that knew shall slay,
And smite blind men for stumbling in fair day.
What good is it to God that such should die ?
Shall the sun's light grow sunnier in the sky
Because their light of spirit is put out ? "

And sighing, she looked from wave to cloud about,
And even with that the full-grown feet of day
Sprang upright on the quivering water-way,
And his face burned against her meeting face
Most like a lover's lightening from his place
Who gazes to his bride-ward ; the sea shone
And shivered like spread wings of angels blown
By the sun's breath before him ; and a low
Sweet gale shook all the foam-flowers of thin snow

As into rainfall of sea-roses shed
Leaf by wild leaf on the green garden-bed
That tempests till and sea-winds turn and plough :
For rosy and fiery round the running prow
Fluttered the flakes and feathers of the spray,
And bloomed like blossoms cast by God away
To waste on the ardent water ; the wan moon
Withered to westward as a face in swoon
Death-stricken by glad tidings : and the height
Throbbed and the centre quivered with delight
And the depth quailed with passion as of love,
Till like the heart of a new-mated dove
Air, light, and wave seemed full of burning rest,
With motion as of one God's beating breast.

And her heart sprang in Iseult, and she drew
With all her spirit and life the sunrise through,
And through her lips the keen triumphant air
Sea-scented, sweeter than land-roses were,
And through her eyes the whole rejoicing east
Sun-satisfied, and all the heaven at feast

Spread for the morning ; and the imperious mirth
Of wind and light that moved upon the earth,
Making the spring, and all the fruitful might
And strong regeneration of delight
That swells the seedling leaf and sapling man,
Since the first life in the first world began
To burn and burgeon through void limbs and veins,
And the first love with sharp sweet procreant pains
To pierce and bring forth roses : nay, she felt
Through her own soul the sovereign morning melt,
And all the sacred passion of the sun ;
And as the young clouds flamed and were undone
About him coming, touched and burnt away
In rosy ruin and yellow spoil of day,
The sweet veil of her body and corporal sense
Felt the dawn also cleave it, and incense
With light from inward and with effluent heat
The kindling soul through fleshly hands and feet.
And as the august great blossom of the dawn
Burst, and the full sun scarce from sea withdrawn

Seemed on the fiery water a flower afloat,
So as a fire the mighty morning smote
Throughout her, and incensed with the influent hour
Her whole soul's one great mystical red flower
Burst, and the bud of her sweet spirit broke
Rose-fashion, and the strong spring at a stroke
Thrilled, and was cloven, and from the full sheath came
The whole rose of the woman red as flame :
And all her Mayday blood as from a swoon
Flushed, and May rose up in her and was June.
So for a space the morning in her burned :
Then with half summer in her eyes she turned,
And on her lips was April yet, and smiled,
In the eyes all woman, in the lips half child.
And the soft speech between them grew again
With questionings and records of what men
Were mightiest, and what names for love or fight
Shone starriest overhead of queen or knight.
There Tristram spake of many a noble thing,
High feast and storm of tourney round the king,

Strange quest by perilous lands of marsh and brake
And circling woods branch-knotted like a snake
And places pale with sins that they had seen
Where was no life of red fruit or of green
But all was as a dead face wan and dun ;
And bowers of evil builders whence the sun
Turns silent, and the moon moves without light
Above them through the sick and star-crossed night ;
And of their hands through whom such holds lay waste,
And all their strengths dishevelled and defaced
Fell ruinous, and were not from north to south :
And of the might of Merlin's ancient mouth,
The son of no man's loins, begot by doom
In speechless sleep out of a spotless womb ;
For sleeping among graves where none had rest
And ominous houses of dead bones unblest
Among the grey grass rough as old rent hair
And wicked herbage whitening like despair
And blown upon with blasts of dolorous breath
From the gaunt openings and rare doors of death,

A maid unspotted, senseless of the spell,
Felt not about her breathe some thing of hell
Whose child and hers was Merlin ; and to him
Great light from God gave sight of all things dim
And wisdom of all wondrous things, to say
What root should bear what fruit of night or day,
And sovereign speech and counsel above man ;
Wherefore his youth like age was wise and wan,
And his age sorrowful and fain to sleep ;
Yet should sleep never, neither laugh nor weep,
Till in some deep place of some land or sea
The heavenly hands of holier Nimue
That was the nurse of Launcelot, and most sweet
Of all that move with magical soft feet
Among us, being of lovelier blood and breath,
Should shut him in with sleep as kind as death,
For she could pass between the quick and dead ;
And of her love toward Pelleas, for whose head
Love-wounded and world-wearied she had won
A place beyond all pain in Avalon ;

And of the fire that wasted afterward
The loveless eyes and bosom of Ettarde,
In whose false love his faultless heart had burned ;
And now being rapt from her, her lost heart yearned
To seek him, and passed hungering out of life :
And after all the thunder-hours of strife
That roared between King Claudas and King Ban,
How Nimue's mighty nursling waxed to man,
And how from his first field such grace he got
That all men's hearts bowed down to Launcelot,
And how the high prince Galahault held him dear
And led him even to love of Guenevere
And to that kiss which made break forth as fire
The laugh that was the flower of his desire,
The laugh that lightened at her lips for bliss
To win from Love so great a lover's kiss :
And of the toil of Balen all his days
To reap but thorns for fruit and tears for praise,
Whose hap was evil as his heart was good,
And all his works and ways by wold and wood

Led through much pain to one last labouring day
When the blood washed the tears out from his way :
And of the kin of Arthur, and their might ;
The misborn head of Mordred, sad as night,
With cold waste cheeks and eyes as keen as pain,
And the close angry lips of Agravaine ;
And gracious Gawain, scattering words as flowers,
The kindest head of worldly paramours ;
And the fair hand of Gareth, found in fight
Strong as a sea-beast's tusches and as white :
And of the king's self, glorious yet and glad
For all the toil and doubt of doom he had,
Clothed with men's loves and full of kingly days.

Then Iseult said : " Let each knight have his praise
And each good man good witness of his worth ;
But when men laud the second name on earth,
Whom would they praise to have no worldly peer
Save him whose love makes glorious Guenevere ? "

" Nay," Tristram said, " such man as he is none."

" What," said she, " there is none such under sun

Of all the large earth's living? yet I deemed
Men spake of one—but maybe men that dreamed,
Fools and tongue-stricken, witless, babblers' breed—
That for all high things was his peer indeed
Save this one highest, to be so loved and love."

And Tristram: "Little wit had these thereof;
For there is none such in the world as this."

"Ay, upon land," quoth Iseult, "none such is,
I doubt not, nor where fighting folk may be;
But were there none such between sky and sea,
The world's whole worth were poorer than I wist."

And Tristram took her flower-white hand and kissed,
Laughing; and through his fair face as in shame
The light blood lightened. "Hear ye no such name?
She said; and he, "If there be such a word,
I wot the queen's poor harper hath not heard."
Then, as the fuller-feathered hours grew long,
Began to speed their warm slow feet with song.

“ Love, is it morning risen or night deceased
That makes the mirth of the triumphant east ?

Is it joy given or bitterness put by
That makes the sweetest drinking at love's feast ?

O love, love, love, that day should live and die !

“ Is it with soul's thirst or with body's drouth
That summer yearns out sunward to the south,

With all the flowers that when thy birth drew nigh
Were molten in one rose to make thy mouth ?

O love, what care though day should live and die ?

“ Is the sun glad of all the love on earth,
The spirit and sense and work of things and worth ?

Is the moon sad because the month must fly
And bring her death that can but bring back birth ?

For all these things as day must live and die.

“ Love, is it day that makes thee thy delight
Or thou that seest day made out of thy light ?

Love, as the sun and sea are thou and I,
Sea without sun dark, sun without sea bright ;

The sun is one though day should live and die.

“ O which is elder, night or light, who knows ?
And life and love, which first of these twain grows ?

For life is born of love to wail and cry,
And love is born of life to heal his woes,
And light of night, that day should live and die.

“ O sun of heaven above the worldly sea,
O very love, what light is this of thee !
My sea of soul is deep as thou art high,
But all thy light is shed through all of me,
As love through love, while day shall live and die.”

“ Nay,” said Iseult, “ your song is hard to read.”

“ Ay ? ” said he : “ or too light a song to heed,
Too slight to follow, it may be ? Who shall sing
Of love but as a churl before a king
If by love’s worth men rate his worthiness ?
Yet as the poor churl’s worth to sing is less,
Surely the more shall be the great king’s grace
To shew for churlish love a kindlier face.”

“ No churl,” she said, “ but one in soothsayer’s wise
Who says true things that help no more than lies.

I have heard men sing of love a simpler way
Than these wrought riddles made of night and day,
Like jewelled reins whereon the rhyme-bells hang."

And Tristram smiled and changed his song and sang.

"The breath between my lip of lips not mine,
Like spirit in sense that makes pure sense divine,
Is as life in them from the living sky
That entering fills my heart with blood of thine

And thee with me, while day shall live and die.

"Thy soul is shed into me with thy breath,
And in my heart each heartbeat of thee saith
How in thy life the life-springs of me lie,
Even one life to be gathered of one death

In me and thee, though day may live and die.

"Ah, who knows now if in my veins it be
My blood that feels life sweet, or blood of thee,
And this thine eyesight kindled in mine eye
That shews me in thy flesh the soul of me,

For thine made mine, while day may live and die ?

“ Ah, who knows yet if one be twain or one,

And sunlight separable again from sun,

And I from thee with all my lifesprings dry,

And thou from me with all thine heartbeats done.

Dead separate souls while day shall live and die ?

“ I see my soul within thine eyes, and hear

My spirit in all thy pulses thrill with fear,

And in my lips the passion of thee sigh,

And music of me made in mine own ear ;

Am I not thou while day shall live and die ?

“ Art thou not I as I thy love am thou ?

So let all things pass from us ; we are now,

For all that was and will be, who knows why ?

And all that is and is not, who knows how ?

Who knows ? God knows why day should live and die.”

And Iseult mused and spake no word, but sought

Through all the hushed ways of her tongueless thought

What face or covered likeness of a face

In what veiled hour or dream-determined place

She seeing might take for love's face, and believe
This was the spirit to whom all spirits cleave.
For that sweet wonder of the twain made one
And each one twain, incorporate sun with sun,
Star with star molten, soul with soul imbued,
And all the soul's works, all their multitude,
Made one thought and one vision and one song,
Love—this thing, this, laid hand on her so strong
She could not choose but yearn till she should see.
So went she musing down her thoughts ; but he,
Sweet-hearted as a bird that takes the sun
With his clear eyes, and feels the glad good run
Through his bright blood and his rejoicing wings,
And opens all himself to heaven and sings,
Made her mind light and full of noble mirth
With words and songs the gladdest grown on earth,
Till she was blithe and high of heart as he.
So swam the Swallow through the springing sea.

And while they sat at speech as at a feast,
There came a light wind hardening from the east
And blackening, and made comfortless the skies ;
And the sea thrilled as with heart-sundering sighs
One after one drawn, with each breath it drew,
And the green hardened into iron blue,
And the soft light went out of all its face.
Then Tristram girt him for an oarsman's place
And took his oar and smote, and toiled with might
In the east wind's full face and the strong sea's spite
Laboring ; and all the rowers rowed hard, but he
More mightily than any wearier three.
And Iseult watched him rowing with sinless eyes
That loved him but in holy girlish wise
For noble joy in his fair manliness
And trust and tender wonder ; none the less
She thought if God had given her grace to be
Man, and make war on danger of earth and sea,
Even such a man she would be ; for his stroke
Was mightiest as the mightier water broke,

And in sheer measure like strong music drave
Clean through the wet weight of the wallowing wave,
And as a tune before a great king played
For triumph was the tune their strong strokes made,
And sped the ship through with smooth strife of oars
Over the mid sea's grey foam-paven floors,
For all the loud breach of the waves at will.
So for an hour they fought the storm out still,
And the shorn foam spun from the blades, and high
The keel sprang from the wave-ridge, and the sky
Glared at them for a breath's space through the rain ;
Then the bows with a sharp shock plunged again
Down, and the sea clashed on them, and so rose
The bright stem like one panting from swift blows,
And as a swimmer's joyous beaten head
Rears itself laughing, so in that sharp stead
The light ship lifted her long quivering bows
As might the man his buffeted strong brows
Out of the wave-breach ; for with one stroke yet
Went all men's oars together, strongly set

As to loud music, and with hearts uplift
They smote their strong way through the drench and drift
Till the keen hour had chafed itself to death
And the east wind fell fitfully, breath by breath,
Tired ; and across the thin and slackening rain
Sprang the face southward of the sun again.
Then all they rested and were eased at heart,
And Iseult rose up where she sat apart,
And with her sweet soul deepening her deep eyes
Cast the furs from her and subtle embroideries
That wrapped her from the storming rain and spray,
And shining like all April in one day,
Hair, face, and throat dashed with the straying showers,
She turned, a sunbeam-coloured flower of flowers,
And laughed on Tristram with her eyes, and said
“ I too have heart then, I was not afraid.”
And answering some light courteous word of grace
He saw her clear face lighten on his face
Unwittingly, with unenamoured eyes,
For the last time. A live man in such wise

Looks in the deadly face of his fixed hour
And laughs with lips wherein he hath no power
To keep the life yet some five minutes' space.
So Tristram looked on Iseult face to face
And knew not, and she knew not. The last time—
The last that should be told in any rhyme
Heard anywhere on mouths of singing men
That ever should sing praise of them again ;
The last hour of their hurtless hearts at rest,
The last that peace should touch them breast to breast,
The last that sorrow far from them should sit,
This last was with them, and they knew not it.

For Tristram being athirst with strong toil spake,
Saying : —“ Iseult, for all dear love's labour's sake
Give me to drink, and give me for a pledge
The touch of four lips on the beaker's edge.”
And Iseult sought and would not wake Brangwain
Who slept as one half dead with fear and pain,
Being tender-natured ; so with hushed light feet
Went Iseult round her, with soft looks and sweet

Pitying her pain ; so sweet a spirited thing

She was, and daughter of a kindly king.

And spying what strange bright secret charge was
kept

Fast in that maid's white bosom while she slept,

She sought and drew the gold cup forth and smiled

Marvelling, with such light wonder as a child

That hears of glad sad life in magic lands ;

And bare it back to Tristram with pure hands

Holding the love-draught that should be for flame

To burn out of them fear and faith and shame,

And lighten all their life up in men's sight,

And make them sad for ever. Then the knight

Bowed toward her and craved whence had she this strange
thing

That might be spoil of some dim Asian king,

By starlight stolen from some waste place of sands,

And a maid bore it here in harmless hands.

And Iseult, laughing—" Other lords that be

Feast, and their men feast after them ; but we,

Our men must keep the best wine back to feast
Till they be full and we of all men least
Feed after them and fain to fare so well :
So with mine handmaid and your squire it fell
That hid this bright thing from us in a wile :”
And with light lips yet full of their swift smile
And hands that wist not though they dug a grave,
Undid the hasps of gold, and drank, and gave,
And he drank after, a deep glad kingly draught :
And all their life changed in them, for they quaffed
Death ; if it be death so to drink, and fare
As men who change and are what these twain were.
And shuddering with eyes full of fear and fire
And heart-stung with a serpentine desire
He turned and saw the terror in her eyes
That yearned upon him shining in such wise
As a star midway in the midnight fixed.

 Their Galahault was the cup, and she that mixed ;
Nor other hand there needed, nor sweet speech
To lure their lips together ; each on each

Hung with strange eyes and hovered as a bird
Wounded, and each mouth trembled for a word ;
Their heads neared, and their hands were drawn in one.
And they saw dark, though still the unshken sun
Far through fine rain shot fire into the south,
And their four lips became one burning mouth.



A
CENTURY *of* ROUNDELS

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

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188-? □

Dedication.

TO

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI.

*Songs light as these may sound, though deep and strong
The heart spake through them, scarce should hope to please
Ears tuned to strains of loftier thoughts than throng
Songs light as these.*

*Yet grace may set their sometime doubt at ease,
Nor need their too rash reverence fear to wrong
The shrine it serves at and the hope it sees.*

*For childlike loves and laughers thence prolong
Notes that bid enter, fearless as the breeze,
Even to the shrine of holiest-hearted song,
Songs light as these.*



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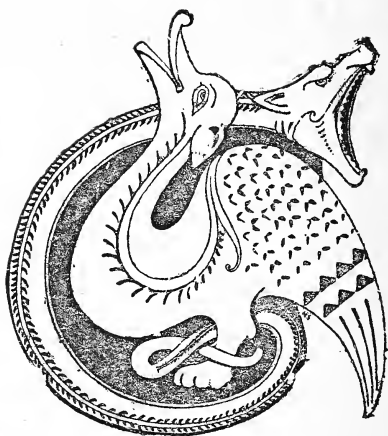
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IN HARBOUR.

I.

GOODNIGHT and goodbye to the life whose signs denote
us

As mourners clothed with regret for the life gone by ;
To the waters of gloom whence winds of the dayspring
float us

Goodnight and goodbye.

A time is for mourning, a season for grief to sigh ;
But were we not fools and blind, by day to devote us
As thralls to the darkness, unseen of the sundawn's eye ?

We have drunken of Lethe at length, we have eaten of
lotus ;

What hurts it us here that sorrows are born and die ?

We have said to the dream that caressed and the dread
that smote us

Goodnight and goodbye.

In Harbour.

II.

Outside of the port ye are moored in, lying
Close from the wind and at ease from the tide,
What sounds come swelling, what notes fall dying
Outside ?

They will not cease, they will not abide :
Voices of presage in darkness crying
Pass and return and relapse aside.

Ye see not, but hear ye not wild wings flying
To the future that wakes from the past that died ?
Is grief still sleeping, is joy not sighing
Outside ?



THE WAY OF THE WIND.

THE wind's way in the deep sky's hollow
None may measure, as none can say
How the heart in her shows the swallow
 The wind's way.

Hope nor fear can avail to stay
Waves that whiten on wrecks that wallow,
Times and seasons that wane and slay.

Life and love, till the strong night swallow
Thought and hope and the red last ray,
Swim the waters of years that follow
 The wind's way.



'HAD I WIST.'

HAD I wist, when life was like a warm wind playing
Light and loud through sundawn and the dew's bright
mist,

How the time should come for hearts to sigh in saying
'Had I wist'—

Surely not the roses, laughing as they kissed,
Not the lovelier laugh of seas in sunshine swaying,
Should have lured my soul to look thereon and list.

Now the wind is like a soul cast out and praying
Vainly, prayers that pierce not ears when hearts resist :
Now mine own soul sighs, adrift as wind and straying,
'Had I wist.'



RECOLLECTIONS.

I.

YEARS upon years, as a course of clouds that thicken
Thronging the ways of the wind that shifts and veers,
Pass, and the flames of remembered fires requicken
 Years upon years.

Surely the thought in a man's heart hopes or fears
Now that forgetfulness needs must here have stricken
Anguish, and sweetened the sealed-up springs of tears.

Ah, but the strength of regrets that strain and sicken,
Yearning for love that the veil of death endears,
Slackens not wing for the wings of years that quicken—
 Years upon years.

Recollections.

II.

Years upon years, and the flame of love's high altar
Trembles and sinks, and the sense of listening ears
Heeds not the sound that it heard of love's blithe psalter
 Years upon years.

Only the sense of a heart that hearkens hears,
Louder than dreams that assail and doubts that palter,
Sorrow that slept and that wakes ere sundawn peers.

Wakes, that the heart may behold, and yet not falter,
Faces of children as stars unknown of, spheres
Seen but of love, that endures though all things alter,
 Years upon years.

Recollections.

III.

Years upon years, as a watch by night that passes,
Pass, and the light of their eyes is fire that sears
Slowly the hopes of the fruit that life amasses
Years upon years.

Pale as the glimmer of stars on moorland meres
Lighten the shadows reverberate from the glasses
Held in their hands as they pass among their peers.

Lights that are shadows, as ghosts on graveyard grasses,
Moving on paths that the moon of memory cheers,
Shew but as mists over cloudy mountain passes
Years upon years.



TIME AND LIFE.

I.

TIME, thy name is sorrow, says the stricken
Heart of life, laid waste with wasting flame
Ere the change of things and thoughts requicken,
Time, thy name.

Girt about with shadow, blind and lame,
Ghosts of things that smite and thoughts that sicken
Hunt and hound thee down to death and shame.

Eyes of hours whose paces halt or quicken
Read in bloodred lines of loss and blame,
Writ where cloud and darkness round it thicken,
Time, thy name.

Time and Life.

II.

Nay, but rest is born of me for healing,
—So might haply time, with voice repress,
Speak : is grief the last gift of my dealing ?
Nay, but rest.

All the world is wearied, east and west,
Tired with toil to watch the slow sun wheeling,
Twelve loud hours of life's laborious quest.

Eyes forspent with vigil, faint and reeling,
Find at last my comfort, and are blest,
Not with rapturous light of life's revealing—
Nay, but rest.



A DIALOGUE.

I.

DEATH, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee :
Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,
One shelter where our spirits fain would be,
Death, if thou wilt ?

No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt,
Imperial : but some roof of wildwood tree,
Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt.

Some low sweet roof where love might live, set free
From change and fear and dreams of grief or guilt ;
Canst thou not leave life even thus much to see,
Death, if thou wilt ?

A Dialogue.

II.

Man, what art thou to speak and plead with me?
What knowest thou of my workings, where and how
What things I fashion? Nay, behold and see,
Man, what art thou?

Thy fruits of life, and blossoms of thy bough,
What are they but my seedlings? Earth and sea
Bear nought but when I breathe on it must bow.

Bow thou too down before me : though thou be
Great, all the pride shall fade from off thy brow,
When Time and strong Oblivion ask of thee,
Man, what art thou?

A Dialogue.

III.

Death, if thou be or be not, as was said,
Immortal ; if thou make us nought, or we
Survive : thy power is made but of our dread,
 Death, if thou be.

Thy might is made out of our fear of thee :
Who fears thee not, hath plucked from off thine head
The crown of cloud that darkens earth and sea.

Earth, sea, and sky, as rain or vapour shed,
Shall vanish ; all the shows of them shall flee :
Then shall we know full surely, quick or dead,
 Death, if thou be.



PLUS ULTRA.

FAR beyond the sunrise and the sunset rises
Heaven, with worlds on worlds that lighten and respond :
Thought can see not thence the goal of hope's surmises
Far beyond.

Night and day have made an everlasting bond
Each with each to hide in yet more deep disguises
Truth, till souls of men that thirst for truth despond.

All that man in pride of spirit slights or prizes,
All the dreams that make him fearful, fain, or fond,
Fade at forethought's touch of life's unknown surprises
Far beyond.



A DEAD FRIEND.

I.

GONE, O gentle heart and true,
Friend of hopes foregone,
Hopes and hopeful days with you
Gone ?

Days of old that shone
Saw what none shall see anew,
When we gazed thereon.

Soul as clear as sunlit dew,
Why so soon pass on,
Forth from all we loved and knew
Gone ?

A Dead Friend.

II.

Friend of many a season fled,
What may sorrow send
Toward thee now from lips that said
'Friend'?

Sighs and songs to blend
Praise with pain uncomforted
Though the praise ascend?

Darkness hides no dearer head :
Why should darkness end
Day so soon, O dear and dead
Friend?

A Dead Friend.

III.

Dear in death, thou hast thy part
Yet in life, to cheer
Hearts that held thy gentle heart
Dear.

Time and chance may sear
Hope with grief, and death may part
Hand from hand's clasp here :

Memory, blind with tears that start,
Sees through every tear
All that made thee, as thou art,
Dear.

A Dead Friend.

IV.

True and tender, single-souled,
What should memory do
Weeping o'er the trust we hold
True ?

Known and loved of few,
But of these, though small their fold,
Loved how well were you !

Change, that makes of new things old,
Leaves one old thing new ;
Love which promised truth, and told
True.

A Dead Friend.

v.

Kind as heaven, while earth's control
Still had leave to bind
Thee, thy heart was toward man's whole
Kind.

Thee no shadows blind
Now : the change of hours that roll
Leaves thy sleep behind.

Love, that hears thy death-bell toll
Yet, may call to mind
Scarce a soul as thy sweet soul
Kind.

A Dead Friend.

VI.

How should life, O friend, forget
Death, whose guest art thou?
Faith responds to love's regret,
How?

Still, for us that bow
Sorrowing, still, though life be set,
Shines thy bright mild brow.

Yea, though death and thou be met,
Love may find thee now
Still, albeit we know not yet
How.

A Dead Friend.

VII.

Past as music fades, that shone
While its life might last ;
As a song-bird's shadow flown
Past !

Death's reverberate blast
Now for music's lord has blown
Whom thy love held fast.

Dead thy king, and void his throne :
Yet for grief at last
Love makes music of his own
Past.





PAST DAYS.

I.

DEAD and gone, the days we had together,
Shadow-stricken all the lights that shone
Round them, flown as flies the blown-foam's feather,
Dead and gone.

Where we went, we twain, in time foregone,
Forth by land and sea, and cared not whether,
If I go again, I go alone.

Bound am I with time as with a tether ;
Thee perchance death leads enfranchised on,
Far from deathlike life and changeful weather,
Dead and gone.

Past Days.

II.

Above the sea and sea-washed town we dwelt,
We twain together, two brief summers, free
From heed of hours as light as clouds that melt
 Above the sea.

Free from all heed of aught at all were we,
Save chance of change that clouds or sunbeams dealt
And gleam of heaven to windward or to lee.

The Norman downs with bright gray waves for belt
Were more for us than inland ways might be ;
A clearer sense of nearer heaven was felt
 Above the sea.

Past Days.

III.

Cliffs and downs and headlands which the forward-
hasting

Flight of dawn and eve empurples and embrowns,

Wings of wild sea-winds and stormy seasons wasting

Cliffs and downs,

These, or ever man was, were : the same sky frowns,

Laughs, and lightens, as before his soul, forecasting

Times to be, conceived such hopes as time discrowns.

These we loved of old : but now for me the blasting

Breath of death makes dull the bright small seaward
towns,

Clothes with human change these all but everlasting

Cliffs and downs.





AUTUMN AND WINTER.

I.

THREE months bade wane and wax the wintering moon
Between two dates of death, while men were fain
Yet of the living light that all too soon
 Three months bade wane.

Cold autumn, wan with wrath of wind and rain,
Saw pass a soul sweet as the sovereign tune
That death smote silent when he smote again.

First went my friend, in life's mid light of noon,
Who loved the lord of music : then the strain
Whence earth was kindled like as heaven in June
 Three months bade wane.

Autumn and Winter.

II.

A herald soul before its master's flying
Touched by some few moons first the darkling goal
Where shades rose up to greet the shade, espying
 A herald soul ;

Shades of dead lords of music, who control
Men living by the might of men undying,
With strength of strains that make delight of dole.

The deep dense dust on death's dim threshold lying
Trembled with sense of kindling sound that stole
Through darkness, and the night gave ear, descrying
 A herald soul.

Autumn and Winter.

III.

One went before, one after, but so fast
They seem gone hence together, from the shore
Whence we now gaze : yet ere the mightier passed
 One went before ;

One whose whole heart of love, being set of yore
On that high joy which music lends us, cast
Light round him forth of music's radiant store.

Then went, while earth on winter glared aghast,
The mortal god he worshipped, through the door
Wherethrough so late, his lover to the last,
 One went before.

Autumn and Winter.

IV.

A star had set an hour before the sun
Sank from the skies wherethrough his heart's pulse yet
Thrills audibly : but few took heed, or none,
A star had set.

All heaven rings back, sonorous with regret,
The deep dirge of the sunset : how should one
Soft star be missed in all the concourse met ?

But, O sweet single heart whose work is done,
Whose songs are silent, how should I forget
That ere the sunset's fiery goal was won
A star had set ?





THE DEATH OF RICHARD WAGNER.

I.

MOURNING on earth, as when dark hours descend,
Wide-winged with plagues, from heaven ; when hope
and mirth

Wane, and no lips rebuke or reprehend
Mourning on earth.

The soul wherein her songs of death and birth,
Darkness and light, were wont to sound and blend,
Now silent, leaves the whole world less in worth.

Winds that make moan and triumph, skies that bend,
Thunders, and sound of tides in gulf and firth,
Spake through his spirit of speech, whose death should
send
Mourning on earth.

The Death of Richard Wagner.

II.

The world's great heart, whence all things strange and
rare

Take form and sound, that each inseparate part
May bear its burden in all tuned thoughts that share

The world's great heart—

The fountain forces, whence like steeds that start
Leap forth the powers of earth and fire and air,
Seas that revolve and rivers that depart—

Spake, and were turned to song : yea, all they were,
With all their works, found in his mastering art
Speech as of powers whose uttered word laid bare

The world's great heart.

The Death of Richard Wagner.

III.

From the depths of the sea, from the wellsprings of
earth, from the wastes of the midmost night,
From the fountains of darkness and tempest and thun-
der, from heights where the soul would be,
The spell of the mage of music evoked their sense, as
an unknown light

From the depths of the sea.

As a vision of heaven from the hollows of ocean, that
none but a god might see,
Rose out of the silence of things unknown of a presence,
a form, a might,
And we heard as a prophet that hears God's message
against him, and may not flee.

Eye might not endure it, but ear and heart with a
rapture of dark delight,
With a terror and wonder whose care was joy, and a
passion of thought set free,
Felt inly the rising of doom divine as a sundawn risen
to sight

From the depths of the sea.



TWO PRELUDES.

I.

LOHENGRIN.

Love, out of the depth of things,
As a dewfall felt from above,
From the heaven whence only springs
Love—

Love, heard from the heights thereof,
The clouds and the watersprings,
Draws close as the clouds remove.

And the soul in it speaks and sings,
A swan sweet-souled as a dove, .
An echo that only rings
Love.

Two Preludes.

II.

TRISTAN UND ISOLDE.

Fate, out of the deep sea's gloom,
When a man's heart's pride grows great,
And nought seems now to foredoom
Fate,

Fate, laden with fears in wait,
Draws close through the clouds that loom,
Till the soul see, all too late,

More dark than a dead world's tomb,
More high than the sheer dawn's gate,
More deep than the wide sea's womb,
Fate.





THE LUTE AND THE LYRE.

DEEP desire, that pierces heart and spirit to the root,
Finds reluctant voice in verse that yearns like soaring
fire,
Takes exultant voice when music holds in high pursuit
Deep desire.

Keen as burns the passion of the rose whose buds
respire,
Strong as grows the yearning of the blossom toward the
fruit,
Sounds the secret half unspoken ere the deep tones tire.

Slow subsides the rapture that possessed love's flower-
soft lute,
Slow the palpitation of the triumph of the lyre :
Still the soul feels burn a flame unslaked though these
be mute,
Deep desire.



PLUS INTRA.

Soul within sense, immeasurable, obscure,
Insepulchred and deathless, through the dense
Deep elements may scarce be felt as pure
 Soul within sense.

From depth and height by measurers left immense,
Thro' sound and shape and colour, comes the unsure
Vague utterance, fitful with supreme suspense.

All that may pass, and all that must endure,
Song speaks not, painting shews not : more intense
And keen than these, art wakes with music's lure
 Soul within sense.



CHANGE.

BUT now life's face beholden
Seemed bright as heaven's bare brow
With hope of gifts withholden
But now.

From time's full-flowering bough
Each bud spake bloom to embolden
Love's heart, and seal his vow.

Joy's eyes grew deep with olden
Dreams, born he wist not how ;
Thought's meanest garb was golden ;
But now !



A BABY'S DEATH.

I.

A LITTLE SOUL scarce fledged for earth
Takes wing with heaven again for goal
Even while we hailed as fresh from birth
A little soul.

Our thoughts ring sad as bells that toll,
Not knowing beyond this blind world's girth
What things are writ in heaven's full scroll.

Our fruitfulness is there but dearth,
And all things held in time's control
Seem there, perchance, ill dreams, not worth
A little soul.

A Baby's Death.

II.

The little feet that never trod
Earth, never strayed in field or street,
What hand leads upward back to God
The little feet ?

A rose in June's most honied heat,
When life makes keen the kindling sod,
Was not so soft and warm and sweet.

Their pilgrimage's period
A few swift moons have seen complete
Since mother's hands first clasped and shod
The little feet.

A Baby's Death.

III.

The little hands that never sought
Earth's prizes, worthless all as sands,
What gift has death, God's servant, brought
 The little hands ?

We ask : but love's self silent stands,
Love, that lends eyes and wings to thought
To search where death's dim heaven expands.

Ere this, perchance, though love know nought,
Flowers fill them, grown in lovelier lands,
Where hands of guiding angels caught
 The little hands.

A Baby's Death.

IV.

The little eyes that never knew
Light other than of dawning skies,
What new life now lights up anew
 The little eyes ?

Who knows but on their sleep may rise
Such light as never heaven let through
To lighten earth from Paradise ?

No storm, we know, may change the blue
Soft heaven that haply death descries ;
No tears, like these in ours, bedew
 The little eyes.

A Baby's Death.

v.

Was life so strange, so sad the sky,
So strait the wide world's range,
He would not stay to wonder why
Was life so strange ?

Was earth's fair house a joyless grange
Beside that house on high
Whence Time that bore him failed to estrange ?

That here at once his soul put by
All gifts of time and change,
And left us heavier hearts to sigh
' Was life so strange ? '

A Baby's Death.

—

Angel by name love called him, seeing so fair
The sweet small frame !
Meet to be called, if ever man's child were,
Angel by name.

Rose-bright and warm from heaven's own heart he came,
And might not bear
The cloud that covers earth's wan face with shame.

His little light of life was all too rare
And soft a flame :
Heaven yearned for him till angels hailed him there
Angel by name.

A Baby's Death.

VII.

The song that smiled upon his birthday here
Weeps on the grave that holds him undefiled
Whose loss makes bitterer than a soundless tear
The song that smiled.

His name crowned once the mightiest ever styled
Sovereign of arts, and angel : fate and fear
Knew then their master, and were reconciled.

But we saw born beneath some tenderer sphere
Michael, an angel and a little child,
Whose loss bows down to weep upon his bier
The song that smiled.





ONE OF TWAIN.

I.

ONE of twain, twin-born with flowers that waken,
Now hath passed from sense of sun and rain :
Wind from off the flower-crowned branch hath shaken
One of twain.

One twin flower must pass, and one remain :
One, the word said soothly, shall be taken,
And another left : can death refrain ?

Two years since was love's light song mistaken,
Blessing then both blossoms, half in vain ?
Night outspeeding light hath overtaken
One of twain.

One of Twain.

Night and light ? O thou of heart unwary,
Love, what knowest thou here at all aright,
Lured, abused, misled as men by fairy
Night and light ?

Haply, where thine eyes behold but night,
Soft as o'er her babe the smile of Mary
Light breaks flowerwise into new-born sight.

What though night of light to thee be chary ?
What though stars of hope like flowers take flight ?
Seest thou all things here, where all see vary
Night and light ?





DEATH AND BIRTH.

DEATH and birth should dwell not near together :
Wealth keeps house not, even for shame, with dearth :
Fate doth ill to link in one brief tether
 Death and birth.

Harsh the yoke that binds them, strange the girth
Seems that girds them each with each : yet whether
Death be best, who knows, or life on earth ?

Ill the rose-red and the sable feather
Blend in one crown's plume, as grief with mirth :
Ill met still are warm and wintry weather,
 Death and birth.



BIRTH AND DEATH.

BIRTH and death, twin-sister and twin-brother,
Night and day, on all things that draw breath,
Reign, while time keeps friends with one another
 Birth and death.

Each brow-bound with flowers diverse of wreath,
Heaven they hail as father, earth as mother,
Faithful found above them and beneath.

Smiles may lighten tears, and tears may smother
Smiles, for all that joy or sorrow saith :
Joy nor sorrow knows not from each other
 Birth and death



BENEDICTION.

BLEST in death and life beyond man's guessing
Little children live and die, possest
Still of grace that keeps them past expressing
 Blest.

Each least chirp that rings from every nest,
Each least touch of flower-soft fingers pressing
Aught that yearns and trembles to be prest,

Each least glance, gives gifts of grace, redressing
Grief's worst wrongs : each mother's nurturing breast
Feeds a flower of bliss, beyond all blessing
 Blest.



TUDE RÉALISTE.

I.

A BABY'S feet, like sea-shells pink,
Might tempt, should heaven see meet,
An angel's lips to kiss, we thi
A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat
They stretch and spread and wink
Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink
Gleam half so heavenly sweet
As shine on life's untrodden brink
A baby's feet.

Étude Réaliste.

II.

A baby's hands, like rosebuds furled,
 Whence yet no leaf expands,
Ope if you touch, though close upcurled,
 A baby's hands.

Then, even as warriors grip their brands
 When battle's bolt is hurled,
They close, clenched hard like tightening bands.

No rosebuds yet by dawn impearled
 Match, even in loveliest lands,
The sweetest flowers in all the world—
 A baby's hands.

Étude Réaliste.

III.

A baby's eyes, ere speech begin,
Ere lips learn words or sighs,
Bless all things bright enough to win
A baby's eyes.

Love, while the sweet thing laughs and lies,
And sleep flows out and in,
Lies perfect in them Paradise.

Their glance might cast out pain and sin,
Their speech make dumb the wise,
By mute glad godhead felt within
A baby's eyes.





BABYHOOD.

I.

A BABY shines as bright
If winter or if May be
On eyes that keep in sight
A baby.

Though dark the skies or grey be,
It fills our eyes with light,
If midnight or midday be.

Love hails it, day and night,
The sweetest thing that may be,
Yet cannot praise aright
A baby.

Babyhood.

II.

All heaven, in every baby born,
All absolute of earthly leaven,
Reveals itself, tho' man may scorn
All heaven.

Yet man might feel all sin forgiven,
All grief appeased, all pain outworn,
By this one revelation given.

Soul, now forgot thy burdens borne :
Heart, be thy joys now seven times seven :
Love shows in light more bright than morn
All heaven.

Babyhood.

III.

What likeness may define, and stray not
From truth's exactest way,
A baby's beauty? Love can say not
What likeness may.

The Mayflower loveliest held in May
Of all that shine and stay not
Laughs not in rosier disarray.

Sleek satin, swansdown, buds that play not
As yet with winds that play,
Would fain be matched with this, and may not :
What likeness may?

Babyhood.

IV.

ROSE, round whose bed
Dawn's cloudlets close
Earth's brightest-bred
Rose!

No song, love knows,
May praise the head
Your curtain shows.

Ere sleep has fled,
The whole child glows
One sweet live red
Rose.





FIRST FOOTSTEPS.

A LITTLE way, more soft and sweet
Than fields aflower with May,
A babe's feet, venturing, scarce complete
A little way.

Eyes full of dawning day
Look up for mother's eyes to meet,
Too blithe for song to say.

Glad as the golden spring to greet
Its first live leaflet's play,
Love, laughing, leads the little feet
A little way.



A NINTH BIRTHDAY.

FEBRUARY 4, 1883.

I.

THREE times thrice hath winter's rough white wing
Crossed and curdled wells and streams with ice
Since his birth whose praises love would sing
Three times thrice.

Earth nor sea bears flower nor pearl of price
Fit to crown the forehead of my king,
Honey meet to please him, balm, nor spice.

Love can think of nought but love to bring
Fit to serve or do him sacrificé
Ere his eyes have looked upon the spring
Three times thrice.

A Ninth Birthday.

II.

Three times thrice the world has fallen on slumber,
Shone and waned and withered in a trice,
Frost has fettered Thames and Tyne and Humber
Three times thrice,

Fogs have swoln too thick for steel to slice,
Cloud and mud have soiled with grime and umber
Earth and heaven, defaced as souls with vice,

Winds have risen to wreck, snows fallen to cumber,
Ships and chariots, trapped like rats or mice,
Since my king first smiled, whose years now number
Three times thrice.

A Ninth Birthday.

III.

Three times thrice, in wine of song full-flowing,
Pledge, my heart, the child whose eyes suffice,
Once beheld, to set thy joy-bells going
Three times thrice.

Not the lands of palm and date and rice
Glow more bright when summer leaves them glowing,
Laugh more light when suns and winds entice.

Noon and eve and midnight and cock-crowing,
Child whose love makes life as paradise,
Love should sound your praise with clarions blowing
Three times thrice.





NOT A CHILD.

I.

NOT a child : I call myself a boy,'
Says my king, with accent stern yet mild,
Now nine years have brought him change of joy ;
 'Not a child.'

How could reason be so far beguiled,
Err so far from sense's safe employ,
Stray so wide of truth, or run so wild ?

Seeing his face bent over book or toy,
Child I called him, smiling : but he smiled
Back, as one too high for vain annoy—
 Not a child.

Not a Child.

II.

Not a child ? alack the year !
What should ail an undefiled
Heart, that he would fain appear
Not a child ?

Men, with years and memories piled
Each on other, far and near,
Fain again would so be styled :

Fain would cast off hope and fear,
Rest, forget, be reconciled :
Why would you so fain be, dear,
Not a child ?

Not a Child.

III.

Child or boy, my darling, which you will,
Still your praise finds heart and song employ,
Heart and song both yearning toward you still,
Child or boy.

All joys else might sooner pall or cloy
Love than this which inly takes its fill,
Dear, of sight of your more perfect joy.

Nay, be aught you please, let all fulfil
All your pleasure ; be your world your toy :
Mild or wild we love you, loud or still,
Child or boy.





TO DORA DORIAN.

CHILD of two strong nations, heir
Born of high-souled hope that smiled
Seeing for each brought forth a fair
Child,

By thy gracious brows, and wild
Golden-clouded heaven of hair,
By thine eyes elate and mild,

Hope would fain take heart to swear
Men should yet be reconciled,
Seeing the sign she bids thee bear,
Child,



THE ROUNDEL.

A ROUNDEL is wrought as a ring or a starbright sphere,
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound un-
sought,

That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure
his ear

A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught—
Love, laughter, or mourning—remembrance of rapture
or fear—

That fancy may fashion to hang in the ear of thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us
hear

Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,

A roundel is wrought.



AT SEA.

'FAREWELL and adieu' was the burden prevailing
Long since in the chant of a home-faring crew ;
(And the heart in us echoes, with laughing or wailing,
Farewell and adieu.)

Each year that we live shall we sing it anew,
With a water untravelled before us for sailing
And a water behind us that wrecks may bestrew.

The stars of the past and the beacons are paling,
The heavens and the waters are hoarier of hue ;
But the heart in us chants not an all unavailing
Farewell and adieu.



WASTED LOVE.

WHAT shall be done for sorrow
With love whose race is run ?
Where help is none to borrow,
What shall be done ?

In vain his hands have spun
The web, or drawn the furrow :
No rest their toil hath won.

His task is all gone thorough,
And fruit thereof is none :
And who dare say to-morrow
What shall be done ?



BEFORE SUNSET.

LOVE'S twilight wanes in heaven above,
On earth ere twilight reigns :
Ere fear may feel the chill thereof,
Love's twilight wanes.

Ere yet the insatiate heart complains
'Too much, and scarce enough,'
The lip so late athirst refrains.

Soft on the neck of either dove
Love's hands let slip the reins :
And while we look for light of love
Love's twilight wanes.



A SINGING LESSON.

FAR-FETCHED and dear-bought, as the proverb re-
hearses,
Is good, or was held so, for ladies : but nought
In a song can be good if the turn of the verse is
Far-fetched and dear-bought.

As the turn of a wave should it sound, and the thought
Ring smooth, and as light as the spray that disperses
Be the gleam of the words for the garb thereof wrought.

Let the soul in it shine through the sound as it pierces
Men's hearts with possession of music unsought.
For the bounties of song are no jealous god's mercies,
Far-fetched and dear-bought.



FLOWER-PIECES.

.I.

LOVE LIES BLEEDING.

LOVE lies bleeding in the bed whereover
Roses lean with smiling mouths or pleading :
Earth lies laughing where the sun's dart clove her :
 Love lies bleeding.

Stately shine his purple plumes, exceeding
Pride of princess : nor shall maid or lover
Find on earth a fairer sign worth heeding.

Yet may love, sore wounded, scarce recover
Strength and spirit again, with life receding :
Hope and joy, wind-winged, about him hover :
 Love lies bleeding.

Flower-Pieces.

II.

LOVE IN A MIST.

Light love in a mist, by the midsummer moon mis-
guided,
Scarce seen in the twilight garden if gloom insist,
Seems vainly to seek for a star whose gleam has derided
Light love in a mist.

All day in the sun, when the breezes do all they list,
His soft blue raiment of cloudlike blossom abided
Unrent and unwithered of winds and of rays that kissed.

Blithe-hearted or sad, as the cloud or the sun subsided,
Love smiled in the flower with a meaning whereof none
wist
Save two that beheld, as a gleam that before them glided,
Light love in a mist.



THREE FACES.

I.

VENTIMIGLIA.

THE sky and sea glared hard and bright and blank :
Down the one steep street, with slow steps firm and free
A tall girl paced, with eyes too proud to thank
 The sky and sea.

One dead flat sapphire, void of wrath or glee,
Through bay on bay shone blind from bank to bank
The weary Mediterranean, drear to see.

More deep, more living, shone her eyes that drank
The breathless light and shed again on me,
Till pale before their splendour waned and shrank
 The sky and sea.

Three Faces.

II.

GENOA.

Again the same strange might of eyes, that saw
In heaven and earth nought fairer, overcame
My sight with rapture of reiterate awe,
 Again the same.

The self-same pulse of wonder shook like flame
The spirit of sense within me : what strange law
Had bid this be, for blessing or for blame ?

To what veiled end that fate or chance foresaw
Came forth this second sister face, that came
Absolute, perfect, fair without a flaw,
 Again the same ?

Three Faces.

III.

VENICE.

Out of the dark pure twilight, where the stream
Flows glimmering, streaked by many a birdlike bark
That skims the gloom whence towers and bridges gleam
 Out of the dark,

Once more a face no glance might choose but mark
Shone pale and bright, with eyes whose deep slow beam
Made quick the twilight, lifeless else and stark.

The same it seemed, or mystery made it seem,
As those before beholden ; but St. Mark
Ruled here the ways that showed it like a dream
 Out of the dark.



EROS.

I.

EROS, from rest in isles far-famed,
With rising Anthesterion rose,
And all Hellenic heights acclaimed
Eros.

The sea one pearl, the shore one rose,
All round him all the flower-month flamed
And lightened, laughing off repose.

Earth's heart, sublime and unashamed,
Knew, even perchance as man's heart knows,
The thirst of all men's nature named
Eros.

Eros.

II.

Eros, a fire of heart untamed,
A light of spirit in sense that glows,
Flamed heavenward still ere earth defamed
Eros.

Nor fear nor shame durst curb or close
His golden godhead, marred and maimed,
Fast round with bonds that burnt and froze.

Ere evil faith struck blind and lamed
Love, pure as fire or flowers or snows,
Earth hailed as blameless and unblamed
Eros.

Eros.

III.

Eros, with shafts by thousands aimed
At laughing lovers round in rows,
Fades from their sight whose tongues proclaimed
 Eros.

But higher than transient shapes or shows
The light of love in life inflamed
Springs, toward no goal that these disclose.

Above those heavens which passion claimed
Shines, veiled by change that ebbs and flows,
The soul in all things born or framed,
 Eros.



SORROW.

SORROW, on wing through the world for ever,
Here and there for awhile would borrow
Rest, if rest might haply deliver
Sorrow.

One thought lies close in her heart gnawn through
With pain, a weed in a dried-up river,
A rust-red share in an empty furrow.

Hearts that strain at her chain would sever
The link where yesterday frets to-morrow!
All things pass in the world, but never
Sorrow.



SLEEP.

SLEEP, when a soul that her own clouds cover
Wails that sorrow should always keep
Watch, nor see in the gloom above her
Sleep,

Down, through darkness naked and steep,
Sinks, and the wings of his comforts cover
Close the soul, though her wound be deep.

God beloved of us, all men's lover,
All most weary that smile or weep
Feel thee afar or anear them hover,
Sleep.



ON AN OLD ROUNDEL.

Translated by D. G. Rossetti from the French of Villon.

I.

DEATH, from thy rigour a voice appealed,
And men still hear what the sweet cry saith,
Crying aloud in thine ears fast sealed,
Death.

As a voice in a vision that vanisheth,
Through the grave's gate barred and the portal steeled
The sound of the wail of it travelleth.

Wailing aloud from a heart unhealed,
It woke response of melodious breath
From lips now too by thy kiss congealed,
Death.

On an Old Roundel.

II.

Ages ago, from the lips of a sad glad poet
Whose soul was a wild dove lost in the whirling snow,
The soft keen plaint of his pain took voice to show it
Ages ago.

So clear, so deep, the divine drear accents flow,
No soul that listens may choose but thrill to know it,
Pierced and wrung by the passionate music's throe.

For us there murmurs a nearer voice below it,
Known once of ears that never again shall know
Now mute as the mouth which felt death's wave
o'erflow it
Ages ago.



A LANDSCAPE BY COURBET.

Low lies the mere beneath the moorside, still
And glad of silence : down the wood sweeps clear
To the soft verge where fed with many a rill
 Low lies the mere.

The wind speaks only summer : eye nor ear
Sees aught at all of dark, hears aught of shrill,
From sound or shadow felt or fancied here.

Strange, as we praise the dead man's might and skill,
Strange that harsh thoughts should make such heavy
 cheer,
While, clothed with peace by heaven's most gentle will,
 Low lies the mere.



A FLOWER-PIECE BY FANTIN.

HEART'S EASE or pansy, pleasure or thought,
Which would the picture give us of these?
Surely the heart that conceived it sought
Heart's ease.

Surely by glad and divine degrees
The heart impelling the hand that wrought
Wrought comfort here for a soul's disease.

Deep flowers, with lustre and darkness fraught,
From glass that gleams as the chill still seas
Lean and lend for a heart distraught
Heart's ease.





A NIGHT-PIECE BY MILLET.

WIND and sea and cloud and cloud-forsaking
Mirth of moonlight where the storm leaves free
Heaven awhile, for all the wrath of waking
Wind and sea.

Bright with glad mad rapture, fierce with glee,
Laughs the moon, borne on past cloud's o'ertaking
Fast, it seems, as wind or sail can flee.

One blown sail beneath her, hardly making
Forth, wild-winged for harbourage yet to be
Strives and leaps and pants beneath the breaking
Wind and sea.



' MARZO PAZZO.'

MAD March, with the wind in his wings wide-spread,
Leaps from heaven, and the deep dawn's arch
Hails re-risen again from the dead
Mad March.

Soft small flames on rowan and larch
Break forth as laughter on lips that said
Naught till the pulse in them beat love's march.

But the heartbeat now in the lips rose-red
Speaks life to the world, and the winds that parch
Bring April forth as a bride to wed
Mad March.





DEAD LOVE.

DEAD love, by treason slain, lies stark,
White as a dead stark-stricken dove :
None that pass by him pause to mark
Dead love.

His heart, that strained and yearned and strove
As toward the sundawn strives the lark,
Is cold as all the old joy thereof.

Dead men, re-risen from dust, may hark
When rings the trumpet blown above :
It will not raise from out the dark
Dead love.



DISCORD.

UNRECONCILED by life's fleet years, that fled
With changeful clang of pinions wide and wild,
Though two great spirits had lived, and hence had sped
Unreconciled ;

Though time and change, harsh time's imperious child,
That wed strange hands together, might not wed
High hearts by hope's misprision once beguiled ;

Faith, by the light from either's memory shed,
Sees, radiant as their ends were undefiled,
One goal for each—not twain among the dead
Unreconciled.





CONCORD.

RECONCILED by death's mild hand, that giving
Peace gives wisdom, not more strong than mild,
Love beholds them, each without misgiving
Reconciled.

Each on earth alike of earth reviled,
Hated, feared, derided, and forgiving,
Each alike had heaven at heart, and smiled.

Both bright names, clothed round with man's thanks-
giving ;
Shine, twin stars above the storm-drifts piled,
Dead and deathless, whom we saw not living
Reconciled.





MOURNING.

ALAS my brother ! the cry of the mourners of old
That cried on each other,
All crying aloud on the dead as the death-note rolled,
Alas my brother !

As flashes of dawn that mists from an east wind smother
With fold upon fold,
The past years gleam that linked us one with another.

Time sunders hearts as of brethren whose eyes behold
No more their mother :
But a cry sounds yet from the shrine whose fires wax
cold,
Alas my brother !



APEROTOS EROS.

STRONG as death, and cruel as the grave,
Clothed with cloud and tempest's blackening breath,
Known of death's dread self, whom none outbrave,
Strong as death,

Love, brow-bound with anguish for a wreath,
Fierce with pain, a tyrant-hearted slave,
Burns above a world that groans beneath.

Hath not pity power on thee to save,
Love? hath power no pity? Nought he saith,
Answering : blind he walks as wind or wave,
Strong as death.





TO CATULLUS.

My brother, my Valerius, dearest head
Of all whose crowning bay-leaves crown their mother,
Rome, in the notes first heard of thine I read
My brother.

(No dust that death or time can strew may smother
Love and the sense of kinship inly bred
From loves and hates at one with one another.)

To thee was Cæsar's self nor dear nor dread,
Song and the sea were sweeter each than other :
How should I living fear to call thee dead
My brother?



'INSULARUM OCELLE.'

SARK, fairer than aught in the world than the lit skies
cover,

Laughs inly behind her cliffs, and the seafarers mark
As a shrine where the sunlight serves, though the blown
clouds hover,

Sark.

We mourn, for love of a song that outsang the lark,
That nought so lovely beholden of Sirmio's lover
Made glad in Propontis the flight of his Pontic bark.

Here earth lies lordly, triumphal as heaven is above her,
And splendid and strange as the sea that upbears as an
ark,

As a sign for the rapture of storm-spent eyes to discover,
Sark.



IN SARK.

ABREAST and ahead of the sea is a crag's front cloven
asunder
With strong sea-breach and with wasting of winds
whence terror is shed
As a shadow of death from the wings of the darkness
on waters that thunder
Abreast and ahead.

At its edge is a sepulchre hollowed and hewn for a lone
man's bed,
Propped open with rock and agape on the sky and the
sea thereunder,
But roofed and walled in well from the wrath of them
slept its dead.

In Sark.

Here might not a man drink rapture of rest, or delight
above wonder,
Beholding, a soul disembodied, the days and the nights
that fled,
With splendour and sound of the tempest around and
above him and under,
Abreast and ahead?





IN GUERNSEY.

I.

THE heavenly bay, ringed round with cliffs and moors,
Storm-stained ravines, and crags that lawns inlay,
Soothes as with love the rocks whose guard secures
 The heavenly bay.

O friend, shall time take ever this away,
This blessing given of beauty that endures,
This glory shown us, not to pass but stay ?

Though sight be changed for memory, love ensures
What memory, changed by love to sight, would say—
The word that seals for ever mine and yours
 The heavenly bay.

In Guernsey.

II.

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,
What new delight of waters, may this be,
The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned
My mother sea ?

Once more I give me body and soul to thee, -
Who hast my soul for ever : cliff and sand
Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand
Strike out from shore : more close it brings to me,
More near and dear than seems my fatherland,
My mother sea.

In Guernsey.

III.

Across and along, as the bay's breadth opens, and o'er
us

Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and strong
Impels us, and broader the wide waves brighten before
us

Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not
wrong ;

The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's chorus ;
Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the song ?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that
wore us,

We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that
throng,

Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us
Across and along.

In Guernsey.

IV.

On Dante's track by some funereal spell
Drawn down through desperate ways that lead not back
We seem to move, bound forth past flood and fell
 On Dante's track.

The grey path ends : the gaunt rocks gape : the black
Deep hollow tortuous night, a soundless shell,
Glares darkness : are the fires of old grown slack ?

Nay, then, what flames are these that leap and swell
As 'twere to show, where earth's foundations crack,
The secrets of the sepulchres of hell
 On Dante's track ?

In Guernsey.

v.

By mere men's hands the flame was lit, we know,
From heaps of dry waste whin and casual brands :
Yet, knowing, we scarce believe it kindled so
 By mere men's hands.

Above, around, high-vaulted hell expands,
Steep, dense, a labyrinth walled and roofed with woe
Whose mysteries even itself not understands.

The scorn in Farinata's eyes aglow
Seems visible in this flame : there Geryon stands :
No stage of earth's is here, set forth to show
 By mere men's hands.

In Guernsey.

VI.

Night, in utmost noon forlorn and strong, with heart
athirst and fasting,
Hungers here, barred up for ever, whence as one whom
dreams affright
Day recoils before the low-browed lintel threatening
doom and casting
Night.

All the reefs and islands, all the lawns and highlands,
clothed with light,
Laugh for love's sake in their sleep outside : but here
the night speaks, blasting
Day with silent speech and scorn of all things known
from depth to height.

Lower than dive the thoughts of spirit-stricken fear in
souls forecasting
Hell, the deep void seems to yawn beyond fear's reach,
and higher than sight
Rise the walls and roofs that compass it about with
everlasting
Night.

In Guernsey.

VII.

The house accurst, with cursing sealed and signed,
Heeds not what storms about it burn and burst :
No fear more fearful than its own may find
 The house accurst.

Barren as crime, anhungered and athirst,
Blank miles of moor sweep inland, sere and blind,
Where summer's best rebukes not winter's worst.

The low bleak tower with nought save wastes behind
Stares down the abyss whereon chance reared and nursed
This type and likeness of the accurst man's mind,
 The house accurst.

In Guernsey.

VIII.

Beloved and blest, lit warm with love and fame,
The house that had the light of the earth for guest
Hears for his name's sake all men hail its name
 Beloved and blest.

This eyrie was the homeless eagle's nest
When storm laid waste his eyrie : hence he came
Again when storm smote sore his mother's breast.

Bow down men bade us, or be clothed with blame
And mocked for madness : worst, they sware, was best
But grief shone here, while joy was one with shame,
 Beloved and blest.



C.

ENVOI.

FLY, white butterflies, out to sea,
Frail pale wings for the winds to try,
Small white wings that we scarce can see,
Fly.

Here and there may a chance-caught eye
Note in a score of you twain or three
Brighter or darker of mould or dye.

Some fly light as a laugh of glee,
Some fly soft as a low long sigh :
All to the haven where each would be,
Fly.



LOVE AND SCORN.

Love, loyalest and lordliest born of things,
Immortal that shouldst be, though all else end,
In plighted hearts of fearless friend with friend,
Whose hand may curb or clip thy plume-plucked wings ?
Not Grief's nor Time's : though these be lords and kings
Crowned, and their yoke bid vassal passions bend,
They may not pierce the spirit of sense, or blend
Quick poison with the soul's live watersprings.
The true clear heart whose core is manful trust
Fears not that very death may turn to dust
Love lit therein as toward a brother born,
If one touch make not all its fine gold rust,
If one breath blight not all its glad ripe corn,
And all its fire be turned to fire of scorn.

Scorn only, scorn begot of bitter proof
By keen experience of a trustless heart,
Bears burning in her new-born hand the dart
Wherewith love dies heart-stricken, and the roof

Love and Scorn.

Falls of his palace, and the storied woof

Long woven of many a year with life's whole art

Is rent like any rotten weed apart,

And hardly with reluctant eyes aloof

Cold memory guards one relic scarce exempt

Yet from the fierce corrosion of contempt,

And hardly saved by pity. Woe are we

That once we loved, and love not ; but we know

The ghost of love, surviving yet in show,

Where scorn has passed, is vain as grief must be.

O sacred, just, inevitable scorn,

Strong child of righteous judgment, whom with grief

The rent heart bears, and wins not yet relief,

Seeing of its pain so dire a portent born,

Must thou not spare one sheaf of all the corn,

One doit of all the treasure ? not one sheaf,

Not one poor doit of all ? not one dead leaf

Of all that fell and left behind a thorn ?

Is man so strong that one should scorn another ?

Is any as God, not made of mortal mother,

That love should turn in him to gall and flame ?

Nay : but the true is not the false heart's brother :

Love cannot love disloyalty : the name

That else it wears is love no more, but shame.



*ON THE MONUMENT ERECTED TO
MAZZINI AT GENOA.*

ITALIA, mother of the souls of men,

Mother divine,

Of all that served thee best with sword or pen,

All sons of thine,

Thou knowest that here the likeness of the best

Before thee stands :

The head most high, the heart found faithfulest,

The purest hands.

Above the fume and foam of time that flits,

The soul, we know,

Now sits on high where Alighieri sits

With Angelo.

Not his own heavenly tongue hath heavenly speech

Enough to say

What this man was, whose praise no thought may reach,

No words can weigh.

On the Monument Erected to Mazzini.

Since man's first mother brought to mortal birth
Her first-born son
Such grace befell not ever man on earth
As crowns this One.

Of God nor man was ever this thing said :
That he could give
Life back to her who gave him, that his dead
Mother might live.

But this man found his mother dead and slain,
With fast sealed eyes,
And bade the dead rise up and live again,
And she did rise :

And all the world was bright with her through him :
But dark with strife,
Like heaven's own sun that storming clouds bedim,
Was all his life.

Life and the clouds are vanished ; hate and fear
Have had their span
Of time to hurt and are not : He is here
The sunlike man.

On the Monument Erected to Mazzini.

City superb, that hadst Columbus first
 For sovereign son,
Be prouder that thy breast hath later nursed
 This mightier One.

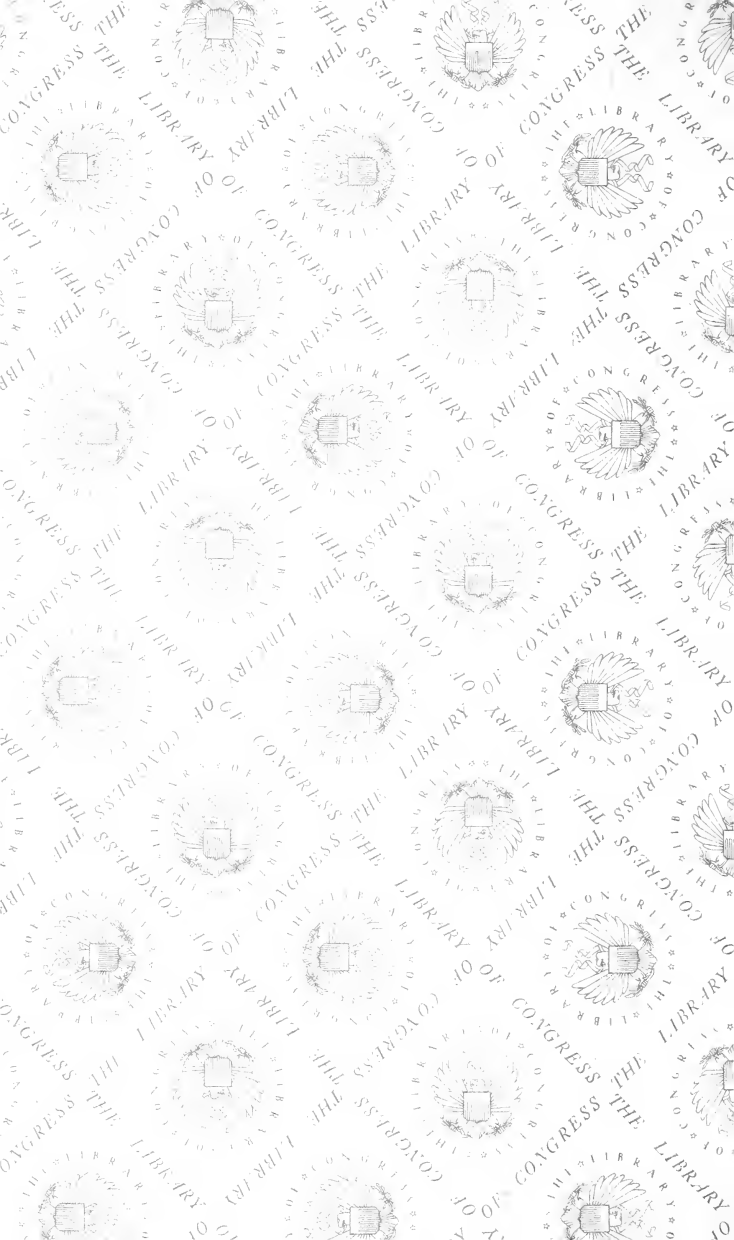
Glory be his forever, while this land
 Lives and is free.
As with controlling breath and sovereign hand
 He bade her be.

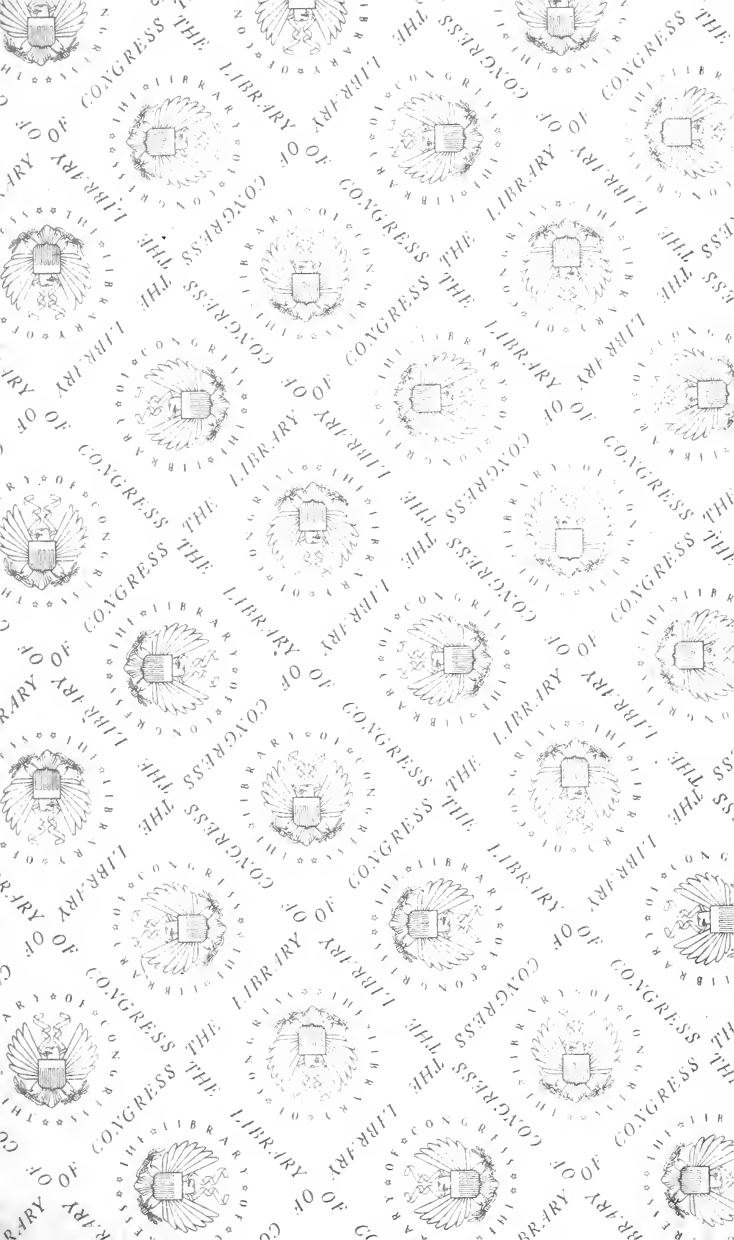
Earth shows to heaven the names by thousands told
 That crown her fame :
But highest of all that heaven and earth behold
 Mazzini's name.



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