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POEMS AND LYRICS OF THE JOY OF EARTH.

POEMS AND BALLADS OF TRAGIC LIFE.

A READING OF EARTH.

MODERN LOVE: A Reprint. Together with

THE SAGE ENAMOURED and THE HONEST LADY

MACMILLAN AND CO., LONDON.

POEMS



POEMS

THE EMPTY PURSE
WITH ODES TO THE COMIC SPIRIT
TO YOUTH IN MEMORY
AND VERSES

BY

GEORGE MEREDITH

London

MACMILLAN AND CO.

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WIND ON THE LYRE

THAT was the chirp of Ariel
You heard, as overhead it flew,
The farther going more to dwell,
And wing our green to wed our blue ;
But whether note of joy or knell,
Not his own Father-singer knew ;
Nor yet can any mortal tell,
Save only how it shivers through ;
The breast of us a sounded shell,
The blood of us a lighted dew.

THE YOUTHFUL QUEST

His Lady queen of woods to meet,
 He wanders day and night :
The leaves have whisperings discreet,
 The mossy ways invite.

Across a lustrous ring of space,
 By covert hoods and caves,
Is promise of her secret face
 In film that onward waves.

For darkness is the light astrain,
 Astrain for light the dark.
A grey moth down a larches' lane
 Unwinds a ghostly spark.

Her lamp he sees, and young desire
 Is fed while cloaked she flies.
She quivers shot of violet fire
 To ash at look of eyes.

THE EMPTY PURSE

A SERMON TO OUR LATER PRODIGAL SON

THOU, run to the dry on this wayside bank,
Too plainly of all the propellers bereft !

 Quenched youth, and is that thy purse ?
Even such limp slough as the snake has left
Slack to the gale upon spikes of whin,
For cast-off coat of a life gone blank
In its frame of a grin at the seeker, is thine ;
 And thine to crave and to curse
 The sweet thing once within.

Accuse him : some devil committed the theft,
Which leaves of the portly a skin,
No more ; of the weighty a whine.

Pursue him : and first, to be sure of his track,
Over devious ways that have led to this,
In the stream's consecutive line,
Let memory lead thee back
To where waves Morning her fleur-de-lys,
Unflushed at the front of the roseate door
Unopened yet : never shadow there
Of a Tartarus lighted by Dis
For souls whose cry is, alack !
An ivory cradle rocks, a peep
Through his eyelashes' laugh, a breathing pearl.

There the young chief of the animals wore
A likeness to heavenly hosts, unaware
Of his love of himself ; with the hours at leap.
In a dingle away from a rutted highroad,
Around him the earliest throstle and merle,
Our human smile between milk and sleep,
 Effervescent of Nature he crowed.
Fair was that season ; furl over furl
The banners of blossom ; a dancing floor
This earth ; very angels the clouds ; and fair
Thou on the tablets of forehead and breast :
Careless, a centre of vigilant care.
Thy mother kisses an infant curl.
The room of the toys was a boundless nest,
 A kingdom the field of the games,
 Till entered the craving for more,

And the worshipped small body had aims.
A good little idol, as records attest,
When they tell of him lightly appeased in a scream
By sweets and caresses : he gave but sign,
That the heir of a purse-plumped dominant race,
Accustomed to plenty, not dumb would pine.
Almost magician, his earliest dream
Was lord of the unpossessed
For a look ; himself and his chase,
As on puffs of a wind at whirl,
Made one in the wink of a gleam.
She kisses a locket curl,
She conjures to vision a cherub face,
When her butterfly counted his day
All meadow and flowers, mishap
Derided, and taken for play
The fling of an urchin's cap.

When her butterfly showed him an eaglet born,
For preying too heedlessly bred,
What a heart clapped in thee then !
With what fuller colours of morn !

And high to the uttermost heavens it flew,
Swift as on poet's pen.

It flew to be wedded, to wed
The mystery scented around :

Issue of flower and dew,

Issue of light and sound :

Thinner than either ; a thread

Spun of the dream they threw

To kindle, allure, evade.

It ran the sea-wave, the garden's dance,

To the forest's dark heart down a dappled glade ;

Led on by a perishing glance,

By a twinkle's eternal waylaid.

Woman, the name was, when she took form ;
Sheaf of the wonders of life. She fled,
Close imaged ; she neared, far seen. How she made
Palpitate earth of the living and dead !
Did she not show thee the world designed
Solely for loveliness ? Nested warm,
The day was the morrow in flight. And for thee,
She muted the discords, tuned, refined ;
Drowned sharp edges beneath her cloak.
Eye of the waters, and throb of the tree,
Sliding on radiance, winging from shade,
With her witch-whisper o'er ruins, in reeds,
She sang low the song of her promise delayed :
Beckoned and died, as a finger of smoke
Astream over woodland. And was not she
History's heroines white on storm ?
Remember her summons to valorous deeds.

Shone she a lure of the honey-bag swarm,
Most was her beam on the knightly : she led
For the honours of manhood more than the prize ;
 Waved her magnetical yoke
 Whither the warrior bled,
 Ere to the bower of sighs.

And shy of her secrets she was ; under deeps
Plunged at the breath of a thirst that woke
The dream in the cave where the Dreaded sleeps.

Away over heaven the young heart flew,
And caught many lustres, till some one said
(Or was it the thought into hearing grew ?),

Not thou as commoner men !

Thy stature puffed and it swayed,
It stiffened to royal-erect ;
A brassy trumpet brayed ;

A whirling seized thy head ;
The vision of beauty was flecked.
Note well the how and the when,
The thing that prompted and sped.

Thereanon the keen passions clapped wing,
Fixed eye, and the world was prey.
No simple world of thy greenblade Spring,
Nor world of thy flowerful prime
On the topmost Orient peak
Above a yet vaporous day.
Flesh was it, breast to beak :
A four-walled windowless world without ray,
Only darkening jets on a river of slime,
Where harsh over music as woodland jay,
A voice chants, Woe to the weak !
And along an insatiate feast,

Women and men are one
In the cup transforming to beast.

Magian worship they paid to their sun,
Lord of the Purse ! Behold him climb.

Stalked ever such figure of fun
For monarch in great-grin pantomime ?
See now the heart dwindle, the frame distend ;
The soul to its anchorite cavern retreat,
From a life that reeks of the rotted end ;
While he—is he pictureable ? replete,
Gourd-like swells of the rank of the soil,

Hollow, more hollow at core.

And for him did the hundreds toil

Despised ; in the cold and heat,

This image ridiculous bore

On their shoulders for morsels of meat !

Gross, with the fumes of incense full,
With parasites tickled, with slaves begirt,
He strutted, a cock, he bellowed, a bull,
 He rolled him, a dog, in dirt.
And dog, bull, cock, was he, fanged, horned, plumed ;
Original man, as philosophers vouch ;
Carnivorous, cannibal ; length-long exhumed,
Frightfully living and armed to devour ;
The primitive weapons of prey in his pouch ;
 The bait, the line and the hook :
 To feed on his fellows intent.
 God of the Danaé shower,
 He had but to follow his bent.
He battened on fowl not safely hatched,
 On sheep astray from the crook ;
 A lure for the foolish in fold.
To carrion turning what flesh he touched.

And O the grace of his air,
As he at the goblet sips,
A centre of girdles loosed,
With their grisly label, Sold !

Credulous hears the fidelity swear,
Which has roving eyes over yielded lips :
To-morrow will fancy himself the seduced,
The stuck in a treacherous slough,
Because of his faith in a purchased pair,
False to a vinous vow.

In his glory of banquet strip him bare,
And what is the creature we view ?
Our pursy Apollo Apollyon's tool ;
A small one, still of the crew
By serpent Apollyon blest :

His plea in apology, blindfold Fool.
A fool surcharged, propelled, unwarned ;
 Not viler, you hear him protest :
Of a popular countenance not incorrect.
But deeds are the picture in essence, deeds
 Paint him the hooved and horned,
 Despite the poor pother he pleads,
 And his look of a nation's elect.

We have him, our quarry confessed !
And scan him : the features inspect
Of that bestial multiform : cry,
Corroborate I, O Samian Sage !
 The book of thy wisdom, proved
 On me, its last hieroglyph page,
 Alive in the horned and hooved ?
 Thou ! will he make reply.

Thus has the plenary purse
Done often : to do will engage
Anew upon all of thy like, or worse.

And now is thy deepest regret
To be man, clean rescued from beast :
From the grip of the Sorcerer, Gold,
Celestially released.

But now from his cavernous hold,
Free may thy soul be set,
As a child of the Death and the Life, to learn,
Refreshed by some bodily sweat,
The meaning of either in turn,

What issue may come of the two :—

A morn beyond mornings, beyond all reach

Of emotional arms at the stretch to enfold :

A firmament passing our visible blue.

To those having nought to reflect it, 'tis nought ;

To those who are misty, 'tis mist on the beach

From the billow withdrawing ; to those who see

Earth, our mother, in thought,

Her spirit it is, our key.

Ay, the Life and the Death are her words to us here,

Of one significance, pricking the blind.

This is thy gain now the surface is clear :

To read with a soul in the mirror of mind,

Is man's chief lesson.—Thou smilest ! I preach !

Acid smiling, my friend, reveals

Abysses within ; frigid preaching a street

Paved unconcernedly smooth
For the lecturer straight on his heels,
Up and down a policeman's beat ;
Bearing tonics not labelled to soothe.

Thou hast a disgust of the sermon in rhyme.
It is not attractive in being too chaste.
The popular tale of adventure and crime
Would equally sicken an overdone taste.
So, then, onward. Philosophy, thoughtless to soothe,
Lifts, if thou wilt, or there leaves thee supine.

Thy condition, good sooth, has no seeming of sweet ;
It walks our first crags, it is flint for the tooth,
For the thirsts of our nature brine.
But manful has met it, manful will meet.
And think of thy privilege : supple with youth,
To have sight of the headlong swine,

Once fouling thee, jumping the dips !

As the coin of thy purse poured out :

An animal's holiday past :

And free of them thou, to begin a new bout ;

To start a fresh hunt on a resolute blast :

No more an imp-ridden to bournes of eclipse :

Having knowledge to spur thee, a gift to compare ;

Rubbing shoulder to shoulder, as only the book

Of the world can be read, by necessity urged.

For witness, what blinkers are they who look

From the state of the prince or the millionaire !

They see but the fish they attract,

The hungers on them converged ;

And never the thought in the shell of the act,

Nor ever life's fangless mirth.

But first, that the poisonous of thee be purged,

Go into thyself, strike Earth.

She is there, she is felt in a blow struck hard.

Thou findest a pugilist countering quick,
Cunning at drives where thy shutters are barred ;
Not, after the studied professional trick,
Blue-sealing ; she brightens the sight. Strike Earth,
Antaeus, young giant, whom fortune trips !

And thou com'st on a saving fact,
To nourish thy planted worth.

Be it clay, flint, mud, or the rubble of chips,
Thy roots have grasp in the stern-exact :
The redemption of sinners deluded ! the last

Dry handful, that bruises and saves.

To the common big heart are we bound right fast,
When our Mother admonishing nips
At the nakedness bare of a clout,
And we crave what the commonest craves.

This wealth was a fortress-wall,
Under which grew our grim little beast-god stout ;

Self-worshipped, the foe, in division from all ;
With crowds of illogical Christians, no doubt ;
 Till the rescuing earthquake cracked.

 Thus are we man made firm ;

 Made warm by the numbers compact.

We follow no longer a trumpet-snout,
 At a trot where the hog is tracked,
 Nor wriggle the way of the worm.

 Thou wilt spare us the cynical pout
At humanity : sign of a nature bechurled.

 No stenchy anathemas cast

 Upon Providence, women, the world.

Distinguish thy tempers and trim thy wits.

The purchased are things of the mart, not classed
Among resonant types that have freely grown.

Thy knowledge of women might be surpassed :

As any sad dog's of sweet flesh when he quits

 The wayside wandering bone !

No revilings of comrades as ingrates : thee

The tempter, misleader, and criminal (screened

 By laws yet barbarous) own.

If some one performed Fiend's deputy,

 He was for awhile the Fiend.

 Still, nursing a passion to speak,

As the punch-bowl does, in the moral vein,

 When the ladle has finished its leak,

And the vessel is loquent of nature's inane,

 Hie where the demagogues roar

Like a Phalaris bull, with the victim's force :

 Hurrah to their jolly attack

 On a City that smokes of the Plain ;

A city of sin's death-dyes,
Holding revel of worms in a corse ;
A city of malady sore,
Over-ripe for the big doom's crack :
A city of hymnical snore ;
Connubial truths and lies
Demanding an instant divorce,
Clean as the bright from the black.

It were well for thy system to sermonize.

There are giants to slay, and they call for their Jack.

Then up stand thou in the midst :
Thy good grain out of thee thresh,
Hand upon heart : relate
What things thou legally did'st
For the Archseducer of flesh.

Omitting the murmurs at women and fate,

Confess thee an instrument armed
To be snare of our wanton, our weak,
Of all by the sensual charmed.

For once shall repentance be done by the tongue :

Speak, though execrate, speak
A word on grandmotherly Laws
Giving rivers of gold to our young,
In the days of their hungers impure ;
To furnish them beak and claws,
And make them a banquet's lure.

Thou the example, saved
Miraculously by this poor skin !

Thereat let the Purse be waved :
The snake-slough sick of the snaky sin :
A devil, if devil as devil behaved
Ever, thou knowest, look thou but in,

Where he shivers, a culprit fettered and shaved ;
O a bird stripped of feather, a fish clipped of fin !

And commend for a washing the torrents of wrath,
Which hurl at the foe of the dearest men prize,

 Rough-rolling boulders and froth.

Gigantical enginery they can command,
For the crushing of enemies not of great size :

 But hold to thy desperate stand.

Men's right of bequeathing their all to their own
(With little regard for the creatures they squeezed) :

Their mill and mill-water and nether mill-stone

Tied fast to their infant ; lo, this is the last

Of their hungers, by prudent devices appeased.

The law they decree is their ultimate slave ;

Wherein we perceive old Voracity glassed.

It works from their dust, and it reeks of their grave.

Point them to greener, though Journals be guns ;
To brotherly fields under fatherly skies ;
Where the savage still primitive learns of a debt
He has owed since he drummed on his belly for war ;
And how for his giving, the more will he get ;
For trusting his fellows, leave friends round his sons.
Till they see, with the gape of a startled surprise,
Their adored tyrant-monster a brute to abhor,
The sun of their system a father of flies !

So, for such good hope, take their scourge unashamed ;
'Tis the portion of them who civilize,

Who speak the word novel and true :

How the brutish antique of our springs may be tamed,
Without loss of the strength that should push us to flower ;
How the God of old time will act Satan of new,
If we keep him not straight at the higher God aimed ;

For whose habitation within us we scour
This house of our life ; where our bitterest pains
Are those to eject the Infernal, who heaps
Mire on the soul. Take stripes or chains ;
 Grip at thy standard reviled.
And what if our body be dashed from the steeps ?
 Our spoken in protest remains.
 A young generation reaps.

The young generation ! ah, there is the child
Of our souls down the Ages ! to bleed for it, proof
That souls we have, with our senses filed,
 Our shuttles at thread of the woof.
 May it be braver than ours,
To encounter the rattle of hostile bolts,
To look on the rising of Stranger Powers.
May it know how the mind in expansion revolts

From a nursery Past with dead letters aloof,
And the piping to stupor of Precedents shun,
In a field where the forefather print of the hoof
Is not yet overgrassed by the watering hours,
And should prompt us to Change, as to promise of sun,
Till brain-rule splendidly towers.

For that large light we have laboured and tramped
Thorough forest and bogland, still to perceive
Our animate morning stamped
With the lines of a sombre eve.

A timorous thing ran the innocent hind,
When the wolf was the hypocrite fang under hood,
The snake a lithe lurker up sleeve,

And the lion effulgently ramped.
Then our forefather hoof did its work in the wood,
By right of the better in kind.
But now will it breed yon bestial brood
Three-fold thrice over, if bent to bind,
As the healthy in chains with the sick,
Unto despot usage our issuing mind.
It signifies battle or death's dull knell.

Precedents icily written on high,
Challenge the Tentatives hot to rebel.
Our Mother, who speeds her bloomful quick
For the march, reads which the impediment well.
She smiles when of sapience is their boast.
O loose of the tug between blood run dry
And blood running flame may our offspring run!
May brain democratic be king of the host!

Less then shall the volumes of History tell
Of the step in progression, the slip in relapse,
That counts us a sand-slack inch hard won,
Beneath an oppressive incumbent perhaps.

Let the senile lords in a parchment sky,
And the generous turbulents drunken of morn,
 Their battle of instincts put by,
 A moment examine this field :
On a Roman street cast thoughtful eye,
Along to the mounts from the bog-forest weald.
It merits a glance at our history's maps,
To see across Britain's old shaggy unshorn,
Through the Parties in strife internecine, foot
The ruler's close-reckoned direct to the mark.
From the head ran the vanquisher's orderly route,
In the stride of his forts through the tangle and dark.

From the head runs the paved firm way for advance,
And we shoulder, we wrangle! The light on us shed,
Shows dense beetle blackness in swarm, lurid Chance,
The Goddess of gamblers, above. From the head,
Then when it worked for the birth of a star
Fraternal with heaven's in beauty and ray,
Sprang the Acropolis. Ask what crown
Comes of our tides of the blood at war,
For men to bequeath generations down!
And ask what thou wast when the Purse was brimmed:
What high-bounding ball for the Gods at play:
A Conservative youth! who the cream-bowl skimmed,
Desiring affairs to be left as they are.

So, thou takest Youth's natural place in the fray,
As a Tentative, combating Peace,
Our lullaby word for decay.—
There will come an immediate decree

In thy mind for the opposite party's decease,
If he bends not an instant knee.
Expunge it : extinguishing counts poor gain.
And accept a mild word of police :—
Be mannerly, measured ; refrain
From the puffings of him of the bagpipe cheeks.
Our political, even as the merchant main,
A temperate gale requires
For the ship that haven seeks ;
Neither God of the winds nor his bellowsy squires.

Then observe the antagonist, con
His reasons for rocking the lullaby word.
You stand on a different stage of the stairs.
He fought certain battles, yon senile lord.
In the strength of thee, feel his bequest to his heirs.
We are now on his inches of ground hard won,
For a perch to a flight o'er his resting fence.

Does it knock too hard at thy head if I say,

That Time is both father and son ?

Tough lesson, when senses are floods over sense !—

Discern the paternal of Now

As the Then of thy present tense.

You may pull as you will either way,

You can never be other than one.

So, be filial. Giants to slay,

Demand knowing eyes in their Jack.

There are those whom we push from the path with respect.

Bow to that elder, though seeing him bow

To the backward as well, for a thunderous back

Upon thee. In his day he was not all wrong.

Unto some foundered zenith he strove, and was wrecked.

He scrambled to shore with a worship of shore.

The Future he sees as the slippery murk ;

The Past as his doctrinal library lore.
He stands now the rock to the wave's wild wash.
Yet thy lumpish antagonist once did work
 Heroical, one of our strong.
His gold to retain and his dross reject,
Engage him, but humour, not aiming to quash.
 Detest the dead squat of the Turk,
 And suffice it to move him along.

Drink of faith in the brains a full draught
Before the oration : beware
Lest rhetoric moonily waft
Whither horrid activities snare.
Rhetoric, juice for the mob
Despising more luminous grape,
Oft at its fount has it laughed
In the cataracts rolling for rape
Of a Reason left single to sob !

'Tis known how the permanent never is writ
In blood of the passions : mercurial they,
Shifty their issue : stir not that pit
 To the game our brutes best play.

But with rhetoric loose, can we check man's brute ?
Assemblies of men on their legs invoke
Excitement for wholesome diversion : there shoot
Electrical sparks between their dry thatch
And thy waved torch, more to kindle than light.
'Tis instant between you : the trick of a catch
 (To match a Batrachian croak)
Will thump them a frenzy or fun in their veins.
Then may it be rather the well-worn joke
Thou repeatest, to stop conflagration, and write

Penance for rhetoric. Strange will it seem,
When thou readest that form of thy homage to brains !

For the secret why demagogues fail,
Though they carry hot mobs to the red extreme,
And knock out or knock in the nail
(We will rank them as flatly sincere,
Devoutly detesting a wrong,
Engines o'ercharged with our human steam),
Question thee, seething amid the throng.
And ask, whether Wisdom is born of blood-heat ;
Or of other than Wisdom comes victory here ;—
Aught more than the banquet and roundelay,
That is closed with a terrible terminal wail,
A retributive black ding-dong ?
And ask of thyself : This furious Yea
Of a speech I thump to repeat,

In the cause I would have prevail,

For seed of a nourishing wheat,

Is it accepted of Song?

Does it sound to the mind through the ear,

Right sober, pure sane? has it disciplined feet?

Thou wilt find it a test severe;

Unerring whatever the theme.

Rings it for Reason a melody clear,

We have bidden old Chaos retreat;

We have called on Creation to hear;

All forces that make us are one full stream.

Simple islander! thus may the spirit in verse,

Showing its practical value and weight,*

Pipe to thee clear from the Empty Purse,

Lead thee aloft to that high estate.—

The test is conclusive, I deem:

It embraces or mortally bites.
We have then the key-note for debate :
A Senate that sits on the heights
Over discords, to shape and amend.

And no singer is needed to serve
The musical God, my friend.
Needs only his law on a sensible nerve :
A law that to Measure invites,
Forbidding the passions contend.

Is it accepted of Song?
And if then the blunt answer be Nay,
Dislink thee sharp from the ramping horde,
Slaves of the Goddess of hoar-old sway,
The Queen of delirious rites,
Queen of those issueless mobs, that rend

For frenzy the strings of a fruitful accord,
Pursuing insensate, seething in throng,
Their wild idea to its ashen end.
Off to their Phrygia, shriek and gong,
Shorn from their fellows, behold them wend !

But thou, should the answer ring Ay,
Hast warrant of seed for thy word :
The musical God is nigh
To inspirit and temper, tune it, and steer
Through the shoals : is it worthy of Song,
There are souls all woman to hear,
Woman to bear and renew.
For he is the Master of Measure, and weighs,
Broad as the arms of his blue,
Fine as the web of his rays,
Justice, whose voice is a melody clear,

The one sure life for the numbered long.

From him are the brutal and vain,

The vile, the excessive, out-thrust :

He points to the God on the upmost throne :

He is the saver of grain,

The sifter of spirit from dust.

He, Harmony, tells how to Measure pertain

The virilities : Measure alone

Has votaries rich in the male :

Fathers embracing no cloud,

Sowing no harvestless main :

Alike by the flesh and the spirit endowed

To create, to perpetuate ; woo, win, wed ;

Send progeny streaming, have earth for their own,

Over-run the insensates, disperse with a puff

Simulacra, though solid they sail,

And seem such imperial stuff :

Yes, the living divide off the dead.

Then thou with thy furies outgrown,
Not as Cybele's beast will thy head lash tail
So præter-determinedly thermonous,

Nor thy cause be an Attis far fled.

Thou under stress of the strife,

Shalt hear for sustainment supreme,

The cry of the conscience of Life :

Keep the young generations in hail,

And bequeath them no tumbled house !

There hast thou the sacred theme,

Therein the inveterate spur,

Of the Innermost. See her one blink

In vision past eyeballs. Not thee

She cares for, but us. Follow her.

Follow her, and thou wilt not sink.

With thy soul the Life espouse :
This Life of the visible, audible, ring
With thy love tight about ; and no death will be ;
 The name be an empty thing,
 And woe a forgotten old trick :
And battle will come as a challenge to drink ;
As a warrior's wound each transient sting.
She leads to the Uppermost link by link ;
Exacts but vision, desires not vows.
Above us the singular number to see ;
The plural warm round us ; ourself in the thick,
A dot or a stop : that is our task ;
Her lesson in figured arithmetic,
For the letters of Life behind its mask ;
Her flower-like look under fearful brows.

As for thy special case, O my friend, one must think
Massilia's victim, who held the carouse

For the length of a carnival year,
Knew worse : but the wretch had his opening choice.
For thee, by our law, no alternatives were :
Thy fall was assured ere thou camest to a voice.

He cancelled the ravaging Plague,
With the roll of his fat off the cliff.
Do thou with thy lean as the weapon of ink,
Though they call thee an angler who fishes the vague
And catches the not too pink,
Attack one as murderous, knowing thy cause
Is the cause of community. Iterate,
Iterate, iterate, harp on the trite :
Our preacher to win is the supple in stiff :
Yet always in measure, with bearing polite :
The manner of one that would expiate
His share in grandmotherly Laws,

Which do the dark thing to destroy,
Under aspect of water so guilelessly white
For the general use, by the devils befouled.

Enough, poor prodigal boy !
Thou hast listened with patience ; another had howled.
Repentance is proved, forgiveness is earned.
And 'tis bony : denied thee thy succulent half
Of the parable's blessing to swineherd returned :
A Sermon thy slice of the Scriptural calf !

By my faith, there is feasting to come,
Not the less, when our Earth we have seen
Beneath and on surface, her deeds and designs :
Who gives us the man-loving Nazarene,
The martyrs, the poets, the corn and the vines.
By my faith in the head, she has wonders in loom ;

Revelations, delights. I can hear a faint crow
Of the cock of fresh mornings, far, far, yet distinct ;

As down the new shafting of mines,

A cry of the metally gnome.

When our Earth we have seen, and have linked
With the home of the Spirit to whom we unfold,
Imprisoned humanity open will throw
Its fortress gates, and the rivers of gold

For the congregate friendliness flow.

Then the meaning of Earth in her children behold :
Glad eyes, frank hands, and a fellowship real :
And laughter on lips, as the birds' outburst
At the flooding of light. No robbery then
The feast, nor a robber's abode the home,
For a furnished model of our first den !

Nor Life as a stationed wheel ;

Nor History written in blood or in foam,

For vendetta of Parties in cursing accursed.

The God in the conscience of multitudes feel,
And we feel deep to Earth at her heart,
We have her communion with men,
New ground, new skies for appeal.

Yield into harness thy best and thy worst ;
Away on the trot of thy servitude start,
Through the rigours and joys and sustainments of air.
If courage should falter, 'tis wholesome to kneel.
Remember that well, for the secret with some,
Who pray for no gift, but have cleansing in prayer,
And free from impurities tower-like stand.

I promise not more, save that feasting will come
To a mind and a body no longer inversed :
The sense of large charity over the land ;
Earth's wheaten of wisdom dispensed in the rough,
And a bell ringing thanks for a sustenance meal

Through the active machine : lean fare,
But it carries a sparkle ! And now enough,
And part we as comrades part,
To meet again never or some day or soon.

Our season of drought is reminder rude :—

No later than yesternoon,

I looked on the horse of a cart,

By the wayside water-trough.

How at every draught of his bride of thirst

His nostrils widened ! The sight was good :

Food for us, food, such as first

Drew our thoughts to earth's lowly for food.

JUMP-TO-GLORY JANE

I

A REVELATION came on Jane,
The widow of a labouring swain :
And first her body trembled sharp,
Then all the woman was a harp
With winds along the strings ; she heard,
Though there was neither tone nor word.

II

For past our hearing was the air,
Beyond our speaking what it bare,
And she within herself had sight
Of heaven at work to cleanse outright,
To make of her a mansion fit
For angel hosts inside to sit.

III

They entered, and forthwith entranced,
Her body braced, her members danced ;
Surprisingly the woman leapt ;
And countenance composed she kept ;
As gossip neighbours in the lane
Declared, who saw and pitied Jane.

IV

These knew she had been reading books,
The which was witnessed by her looks
Of late : she had a mania
For mad folk in America,
And said for sure they led the way,
But meat and beer were meant to stay.

V

That she had visited a fair,
Had seen a gauzy lady there,
Alive with tricks on legs alone,
As good as wings, was also known :
And longwhiles in a sullen mood,
Before her jumping, Jane would brood.

VI

A good knee's height, they say, she sprang ;
Her arms and feet like those who hang :
As if afire the body sped,
And neither pair contributed.
She jumped in silence : she was thought
A corpse to resurrection caught.

VII

The villagers were mostly dazed ;
They jeered, they wondered, and they praised.
'Twas guessed by some she was inspired,
And some would have it she had hired
An engine in her petticoats,
To turn their wits and win their votes.⁷

VIII

Her first was Winny Earnes, a kind
Of woman not to dance inclined ;
But she went up, entirely won,
Ere Jump-to-glory Jane had done ;
And once a vixen wild for speech,
She found the better way to preach.

IX

No long time after, Jane was seen
Directing jumps at Daddy Green ;
And that old man, to watch her fly,
Had eyebrows made of arches high ;
Till homeward he likewise did hop,
Oft calling on himself to stop !

X

It was a scene when man and maid,
Abandoning all other trade,
And careless of the call to meals,
Went jumping at the woman's heels.
By dozens they were counted soon,
Without a sound to tell their tune.

XI

Along the roads they came, and crossed
The fields, and o'er the hills were lost,
And in the evening reappeared :
Then short like hobbled horses reared,
And down upon the grass they plumped :
Alone their Jane to glory jumped.

XII

At morn they rose, to see her spring
All going as an engine thing ;
And lighter than the gossamer
She led the bobbars following her,
Past old acquaintances, and where
They made the stranger stupid stare.

XIII

When turnips were a filling crop,
In scorn they jumped a butcher's shop :
Or, spite of threats to flog and souse,
They jumped for shame a public-house :
And much their legs were seized with rage
If passing by the vicarage.

XIV

The tightness of a hempen rope
Their bodies got ; but laundry soap
Not handsomer can rub the skin
For token of the washed within.
Occasionally coughers cast
A leg aloft and coughed their last.

XV

The weaker maids and some old men,
Requiring rafters for the pen
On rainy nights, were those who fell.
The rest were quite a miracle,
Refreshed as you may search all round
On Club-feast days and cry, Not found !

XVI

For these poor innocents, that slept
Against the sky, soft women wept :
For never did they any theft ;
'Twas known when they their camping left,
And jumped the cold out of their rags ;
In spirit rich as money-bags.

XVII

They jumped the question, jumped reply ;
And whether to insist, deny,
Reprove, persuade, they jumped in ranks
Or singly, straight the arms to flanks,
And straight the legs, with just a knee
For bending in a mild degree.

XVIII

The villagers might call them mad ;
An endless holiday they had,
Of pleasure in a serious work :
They taugt by leaps where perils lurk,
And with the lambkins practised sports
For 'scaping Satan's pounds and quarts.

XIX

It really seemed on certain days, .
When they bobbed up their Lord to praise,
And bobbing up they caught the glance
Of light, our secret is to dance,
And hold the tongue from hindering peace ;
To dance out preacher and police.

XX

Those flies of boys disturbed them sore
On Sundays and when daylight wore :
With withies cut from hedge or copse,
They treated them as whipping-tops,
And flung big stones with cruel aim ;
Yet all the flock jumped on the same.

XXI

For what could persecution do
To worry such a blessed crew,
On whom it was as wind to fire,
Which set them always jumping higher ?
The parson and the lawyer tried,
By meek persistency defied.

XXII

But if they bore, they could pursue
As well, and this the Bishop too ;
When inner warnings proved him plain
The chase for Jump-to-glory Jane.
She knew it by his being sent
To bless the feasting in the tent.

XXIII

Not less than fifty years on end,
The Squire had been the Bishop's friend :
And his poor tenants, harmless ones,
With souls to save ! fed not on buns,
But angry meats : she took her place
Outside to show the way to grace.

XXIV

In apron suit the Bishop stood ;
The crowding people kindly viewed.
A gaunt grey woman he saw rise
On air, with most beseeching eyes :
And evident as light in dark
It was, she set to him for mark.

XXV

Her highest leap had come : with ease
She jumped to reach the Bishop's knees :
Compressing tight her arms and lips,
She sought to jump the Bishop's hips :
Her aim flew at his apron-band,
That he might see and understand.

XXVI

The mild inquiry of his gaze
Was altered to a peaked amaze,
At sight of thirty in ascent ;
To gain his notice clearly bent :
And greatly Jane at heart was vexed
By his ploughed look of mind perplexed.

XXVII

In jumps that said, Beware the pit !
More eloquent than speaking it—
That said, Avoid the boiled, the roast ;
The heated nose on face of ghost,
Which comes of drinking : up and o'er
The flesh with me ! did Jane implore.

XXVIII

She jumped him high as huntsmen go
Across the gate ; she jumped him low,
To coax him to begin and feel
His infant steps returning, peel
His mortal pride, exposing fruit,
And off with hat and apron suit.

XXIX

We need much patience, well she knew,
And out and out, and through and through,
When we would gentlefolk address,
However we may seek to bless :
At times they hide them like the beasts
From sacred beams ; and mostly priests.

XXX

He gave no sign of making bare,
Nor she of faintness or despair.
Inflamed with hope that she might win,
If she but coaxed him to begin,
She used all arts for making fain ;
The mother with her babe was Jane.

XXXI

Now stamped the Squire, and knowing not
Her business, waved her from the spot.
Encircled by the men of might,
The head of Jane, like flickering light,
As in a charger, they beheld
Ere she was from the park expelled.

XXXII

Her grief, in jumps of earthly weight,
Did Jane around communicate :
For that the moment when began
The holy but mistaken man,
In view of light, to take his lift,
They cut him from her charm adrift !

XXXIII

And he was lost : a banished face
For ever from the ways of grace,
Unless pinched hard by dreams in fright.
They saw the Bishop's wavering sprite
Within her look, at come and go,
Long after he had caused her woe.

XXXIV

Her greying eyes (until she sank
At Fredsham on the wayside bank,
Like cinder heaps that whitened lie
From coals that shot the flame to sky)
Had glassy vacancies, which yearned
For one in memory discerned.

XXXV

May those who ply the tongue that cheats,
And those who rush to beer and meats,
And those whose mean ambition aims
At palaces and titled names,
Depart in such a cheerful strain
As did our Jump-to-glory Jane !

XXXVI

Her end was beautiful : one sigh.
She jumped a foot when it was nigh.
A lily in a linen clout
She looked when they had laid her out.
It is a lily-light she bears
For England up the ladder-stairs.

ODES

TO THE COMIC SPIRIT

SWORD of Common Sense!—

Our surest gift : the sacred chain

Of man to man : firm earth for trust

In structures vowed to permanence :—

Thou guardian issue of the harvest brain !

Implacable perforce of just ;

With that good treasure in defence,

Which is our gold crushed out of joy and pain

Since first men planted foot and hand was king :

Bright, nimble of the marrow-nerve
To wield thy double edge, retort
Or hold the deadlier reserve,
And through thy victim's weapon sting :
Thine is the service, thine the sport
This shifty heart of ours to hunt
Across its webs and round the many a ring
Where fox it is, or snake, or mingled seeds
Occasion heats to shape, or the poor smoke
Struck from a puff-ball, or the troughster's grunt ;—
Once lion of our desert's trodden weeds ;
And but for thy straight finger at the yoke,
Again to be the lordly paw,
Naming his appetites his needs,
Behind a decorative cloak :
Thou, of the highest, the unwritten Law
We read upon that building's architrave
In the mind's firmament, by men upraised

With sweat of blood when they had quitted cave
For fellowship, and rearward looked amazed,
Where the prime motive gapes a lurid jaw ,
Thou, soul of wakened heads, art armed to warn,
Restrain, lest we backslide on whence we sprang ;
Scarce better than our dwarf beginning shoot,
Of every gathered pearl and blossom shorn .
Through thee, in novel wiles to win disguise,
Seen are the pits of the disruptor, seen
His rebel agitation at our root :
Thou hast him out of hawking eyes ;
Nor ever morning of the clang
Young Echo sped on hill from horn
In forest blown when scent was keen
Off earthy dews besprinkling blades
Of covert grass more merrily rang
The yelp of chase down alleys green,
Forth of the headlong-pouring glades,

Over the dappled fallows wild away,
Than thy fine unaccented scorn
At sight of man's old secret brute,
Devout for pasture on his prey,
Advancing, yawning to devour ;
With step of deer, with voice of flute,
Haply with visage of the lily flower.

Let the cock crow and ruddy morn
His handmaiden appear ! Youth claims his hour.
The generously ludicrous
Espouses it. But see we sons of day,
On whom Life leans for guidance in our fight,
Accept the throb for lord of us ;
For lord, for the main central light
That gives direction, not the eclipse ;

Or dost thou look where niggard Age,
Demanding reverence for wrinkles, whips
A tumbled top to grind a wolf's worn tooth ;—
Hoar despot on our final stage,
In dotage of a stunted Youth ;—
Or it may be some venerable sage,
Not having thee awake in him, compact
Of wisdom else, the breast's old tempter trips ;
Or see we ceremonial state,
Robing the gilded beast, exact
Abjection, while the crackskull name of Fate
Is used to stamp and hallow printed fact ;
A cruel corner lengthens up thy lips ;
These are thy game wherever men engage :
These and, majestic in a borrowed shape,
The major and the minor potentate,
Creative of their various ape ;—
The tiptoe mortals triumphing to write

Upon a perishable page
An inch above their fellows' height ;—
The criers of foregone wisdom, who impose
Its slough on live conditions, much for the greed
Of our first hungry figure wide agape ;—
Call up thy hounds of laughter to their run.
These, that would have men still of men be foes,
Eternal fox to prowl and pike to feed ;
Would keep our life the whirly pool
Of turbid stuff dishonouring History ;
The herd the drover's herd, the fool the fool,
Ourself our slavish self's infernal sun ;
These are the children of the heart untaught
By thy quick founts to beat abroad, by thee
Untamed to tone its passions under thought,
The rich humaneness reading in thy fun.
Of them a world of coltish heels for school,
We have ; a world with driving wrecks bestrewn.

'Tis written of the Gods of human mould,
Those Nectar Gods, of glorious stature hewn
To quicken hymns, that they did hear incensed,
Satiric comments overbold,
From one whose part was by decree
The jester's ; but they boiled to feel him bite.
Better for them had they with Reason fenced
Or smiled corrected ! They in the great Gods' might,
Their prober crushed, as fingers flea.
Crumbled Olympus when the sovereign sire
His fatal kick to Momus gave, albeit
Men could behold the sacred Mount aspire,
The Satirist pass by on limping feet.
Those Gods who saw the ejected laugh alight
Below, had then their last of airy glee ;
They in the cup sought Laughter's drownèd sprite,

Fed to dire fatness off uncurbed conceit.
Eyes under saw them waddle on their Mount,
And drew them down ; to flattest earth they rolled.
This know we veritable. O Sage of Mirth !
Can it be true, the story men recount
Of the fall'n plight of the great Gods on earth ?
How they being deathless, though of human mould,
With human cravings, undecaying frames,
Must labour for subsistence ; are a band
Whom a loose-cheeked, wide-lipped gay cripple leads
At haunts of holiday on summer sand :
And lightly he will hint to one that heeds,
Names in pained designation of them, names
Ensphered on blue skies and on black, which twirl
Our hearing madly from our seeing dazed,
Add Bacchus unto both ; and he entreats
(His baby dimples in maternal chaps
Running wild labyrinths of line and curl)

Compassion for his masterful Trombone,
Whose thunder is the brass of how he blazed
Of old : for him of the mountain-muscle feats,
Who guts a drum to fetch a snappish groan :
For his fierce bugler horning onset, whom
A truncheon-battered helmet caps. . . .
The creature is of earnest mien
To plead a sorrow darker than the tomb.
His Harp and Triangle, in tone subdued,
He names ; they are a rayless red and white ;
The dawn-hued libertine, the gibbous prude.
And, if we recognize his Tambourine,
He asks ; exhausted names her : she has become
A globe in cupolas ; the blowziest queen
Of overflowing dome on dome ;
Redundancy contending with the tight,
Leaping the dam ! He fondly calls, his girl,
The buxom tripper with the goblet-smile,

Refreshful. O but now his brows are dun,
Bunched are his lips, as when distilling guile,
To drop his venomous : the Dame of dames,
Flower of the world, that honey one,
She of the earthly rose in the sea-pearl,
To whom the world ran ocean for her kiss ;
He names her, as a worshipper he names,
And indicates with a contemptuous thumb.
The lady meanwhile lures the mob, alike
Ogles the bursters of the horn and drum.
Curtain her close ! her open arms
Have suckers for beholders : she to this ?
For that she could not, save in fury, hear
A sharp corrective utterance flick
Her idle manners, for the laugh to strike
Beauty so breeding beauty, without peer
Above the snows, among the flowers ? She reaps
This mouldy garner of the fatal kick ?

Gross with the sacrifice of Circe-swarms,
Astarte of vile sweets that slay, malign,
From Greek resplendent to Phoenician foul,
The trader in attractions sinks, all brine
To thoughts of taste ; is't love?—bark, dog ! hoot, owl !
And she is blushless : ancient worship weeps.
Suicide Graces dangle down the charms
Sprawling like gourds on outer garden-heaps.
She stands in her unholy oily leer
A statue losing feature, weather-sick
Mid draggled creepers of twined ivy sere.
The curtain cried for magnifies to see !—
We cannot quench our one corrupting glance :
The vision of the rumour will not flee.
Doth the Boy own such Mother?—shoot his dart
To bring her, countless as the crested deeps,
Her subjects of the uncorrected heart ?
False is that vision, shrieks the devotee ;

Incredible, we echo ; and anew
Like a far growling lightning-cloud it leaps.
Low humourist this leader seems ; perchance
Pitched from his University career,
Adept at classic fooling. Yet of mould
Human those Gods were : deathless too :
On high they not as meditatives paced :
Prodigiously they did the deeds of flesh :
Descending, they would touch the lowest here :
And she, that lighted form of blue and gold,
Whom the seas gave, all earth, all earth embraced ;
Exulting in the great hauls of her mesh ;
Desired and hated, desperately dear ;
Most human of them was. No more pursue !
Enough that the black story can be told.
It preaches to the eminently placed :
For whom disastrous wreckage is nigh due,
Paints omen. Truly they our throbbler had ;

The passions plumping, passions playing leech,
Cunning to trick us for the day's good cheer.
Our uncorrected human heart will swell
To notions monstrous, doings mad
As billows on a foam-lashed beach ;
Borne on the tides of alternating heats,
Will drug the brain, will doom the soul as well ;
Call the closed mouth of that harsh final Power
To speak in judgement : Nemesis, the fell :
Of those bright Gods assembled, offspring sour ;
The last surviving on the upper seats ;
As with men Reason when their hearts rebel.

Ah, what a fruitless breeder is this heart,
Full of the mingled seeds, each eating each.
Not wiser of our mark than at the start,
It surges like the wrath-faced father Sea

To countering winds ; a force blind-eyed,
On endless rounds of aimless reach ;
Emotion for the source of pride,
The grounds of faith in fixity
Above our flesh ; its cravings urging speech,
Inspiring prayer ; by turns a lump
Swung on a time-piece, and by turns
A quivering energy to jump
For seats angelical : it shrinks, it yearns,
Loves, loathes ; is flame or cinders ; lastly cloud
Capping a sullen crater : and mankind
We see cloud-capped, an army of the dark,
Because of thy straight leadership declined ;
At heels of this or that delusive spark :
Now when the multitudinous races press
Elbow to elbow hourly more,
A thickened host ; when now we hear aloud
Life for the very life implore

A signal of a visioned mark ;
Light of the mind, the mind's discourse,
The rational in graciousness,
Thee by acknowledgement enthroned,
To tame and lead that blind-eyed force
In harmony of harness with the crowd,
For payment of their dues ; as yet disowned,
Save where some dutiful lone creature, vowed
To holy work, deems it the heart's intent ;
Or where a silken circle views it cowed,
The seeming figure of concordance, bent
On satiating tyrant lust
Or barren fits of sentiment.

Thou wilt not have our paths befouled
By simulation ; are we vile to view,
The heavens shall see us clean of our own dust,

Beneath thy breezy flitting wing :
They make their mirror upon faces true ; .
And where they win reflection, lucid heave
The under tides of this hot heart seen through.
Beneficently wilt thou clip
All oversteppings of the plumed,
The puffed, and bid the masker strip,
And into the crowned windbag thrust,
Tearing the mortal from the vital thing,
A lightning o'er the half-illumed,
Who to base brute-dominion cleave,
Yet mark effects, and shun the flash,
Till their drowsed wits a beam conceive,
To spy a wound without a gash,
The magic in a turn of wrist,
And how are wedded heart and head regaled
When Wit o'er Folly blows the mort,
And their high note of union spreads

Wide from the timely word with conquest charged ;
Victorious laughter, of no loud report,
If heard ; derision as divinely veiled
As terrible Immortals in rose-mist,
Given to the vision of arrested men :
Whereat they feel within them weave
Community its closer threads,
And are to our fraternal state enlarged ;
Like warm fresh blood is their enlivened ken :
They learn that thou art not of alien sort,
Speaking the tongue by vipers hissed,
Or of the frosty heights unscaled,
Or of the vain who simple speech distort,
Or of the vapours pointing on to nought
Along cold skies ; though sharp and high thy pitch :
As when sole homeward the belated treads,
And hears aloft a clamour wailed,
That once had seemed the broomstick witch

Horridly violating cloud for drought :
He from the rub of minds dispersing fears,
Hears migrants marshalling their midnight train ;
Homeliest order in black sky appears,
Not less than in the lighted village steads.
So do those half-illumed wax clear to share
A cry that is our common voice ; the note
Of fellowship upon a loftier plane,
Above embattled castle-wall and moat ;
And toning drops as from pure heaven it sheds.
So thou for washing a phantasmal air,
For thy sweet singing keynote of the wise,
Laughter—the joy of Reason seeing fade
Obstruction into Earth's renewing beds,
Beneath the stroke of her good servant's blade—
Thenceforth art as their earth-star hailed ;
Gain of the years, conjunction's prize.
The greater heart in thy appeal to heads,

They see, thou Captain of our civil Fort !
By more elusive savages assailed
On each ascending stage ; untired
Both inner foe and outer to cut short,
And blow to chaff pretenders void of grist :
Showing old tiger's claws, old crocodile's
Yard-grin of eager grinders, slim to sight,
Like forms in running water, oft when smiles,
When pearly tears, when fluent lips delight :
But never with the slayer's malice fired :
As little as informs an infant's fist
Clenched at the sneeze ! Thou would'st but have us be
Good sons of mother soil, whereby to grow
Branching on fairer skies, one stately tree ;
Broad of the tilth for flowering at the Court :
Which is the tree bound fast to wave its tress ;
Of strength controlled sheer beauty to bestow.
Ambrosial heights of possible acquist,

Where souls of men with soul of man consort,
And all look higher to new loveliness
Begotten of the look : thy mark is there ;
While on our temporal ground alive,
Rightly though fearfully thou wieldest sword,
Of finer temper now a numbered learn
That they resisting thee themselves resist ;
And not thy bigger joy to smite and drive,
Prompt the dense herd to butt, and set the snare
Witching them into pitfalls for hoarse shouts.
More now, and hourly more, and of the Lord
Thou lead'st to, doth this rebel heart discern,
When pinched ascetic and red sensualist
Alternately recurrent freeze or burn,
And of its old religions it has doubts.
It fears thee less when thou hast shown it bare ;
Less hates, part understands, nor much resents,
When the prized objects it has raised for prayer,

For fitful prayer ;—repentance dreading fire,
Impelled by aches ; the blindness which repents
Like the poor trampled worm that writhes in mire ;—
Are sounded by thee, and thou darest probe
Old Institutions and Establishments,
Once fortresses against the floods of sin,
For what their worth ; and questioningly prod
For why they stand upon a racing globe,
Impeding blocks, less useful than the clod ;
Their angel out of them, a demon in.

This half-enlightened heart, still doomed to fret,
To hurl at vanities, to drift in shame
Of gain or loss, bewailing the sure rod,
Shall of predestination wed thee yet.
Something it gathers of what things should drop
At entrance on new times ; of how thrice broad

The world of minds communicative ; how
A straggling Nature classed in school, and scored
With stripes admonishing, may yield to plough
Fruitfullest furrows, nor for waxing tame
Be feeble on an Earth whose gentler crop
Is its most living, in the mind that steers,
By Reason led, her way of tree and flame,
Beyond the genuflexions and the tears ;
Upon an Earth that cannot stop,
Where upward is the visible aim ;
And ever we espy the greater God,
For simple pointing at a good adored :
Proof of the closer neighbourhood. Head on,
Sword of the many, light of the few ! untwist
Or cut our tangles till fair space is won
Beyond a briared wood of austere brow,
Relieved of discord by thy timely word
At intervals refreshing life : for thou

Art verily Keeper of the Muse's Key ;
Thyself no vacant melodist ;
On lower land elective even as she ;
Holding, as she, all dissonance abhorred ;
Advising to her measured steps in flow ;
And teaching how for being subjected free
Past thought of freedom we may come to know
The music of the meaning of Accord.

YOUTH IN MEMORY

DAYS, when the ball of our vision
Had eagles that flew unabashed to sun ;
When the grasp on the bow was decision,
And arrow and hand and eye were one ;
When the Pleasures, like waves to a swimmer,
Came heaving for rapture ahead !—
Invoke them, they dwindle, they glimmer
As lights over mounds of the dead.

Behold the winged Olympus, off the mead,
With thunder of wide pinions, lightning speed,

Wafting the shepherd-boy through ether clear,
To bear the golden nectar-cup.
So flies desire at view of its delight,
When the young heart is tiptoe perched on sight.
We meanwhile who in hues of the sick year,
The Spring-time paint to prick us for our lost,
Mount but the fatal half way up,
Whereon shut eyes ! This is decreed,
For Age that would to youthful heavens ascend,
By passion for the arms' possession tossed,
It falls the way of sighs and hath their end ;
A spark gone out to more sepulchral night.
Good if the arrowy eagle of the height,
Be then the little bird that hops to feed.

Lame falls the cry to kindle days
Of radiant orb and daring gaze.

It does but clank our mortal chain.
For Earth reads through her felon old,
The many-numbered of her fold,
Who forward tottering backward strain,
And would be thieves of treasure spent,
With their grey season soured.
She could write out their history in their thirst
To have again the much devoured,
And be the bud at burst ;
In honey fancy join the flow,
Where Youth swims on as once they went,
All choiric for spontaneous glee
Of active eager lungs and thews ;
They now bared roots beside the river bent ;
Whose privilege themselves to see ;
Their place in yonder tideway know ;
The current glass peruse ;
The depths intently sound ;

And sapped by each returning flood,
Accept for monitory nourishment,
Those worn roped features under crust of mud,
Reflected in the silvery smooth around :
Not less the branching and high singing tree,
A home of nests, a landmark and a tent,
Until their hour for losing hold on ground.
Even such good harvest of the things that flee,
Earth offers her subjected, and they choose
Rather of Bacchic Youth one beam to drink,
And warm slow marrow with the sensual wink.
So block they at her source the Mother of the Muse.

Who cheerfully the little bird becomes,
Without a fall, and pipes for peck at crumbs,
May have her dolings to the lightest touch ;
As where some cripple muses by his crutch,

Unwitting that the spirit in him sings :
‘ When I had legs, then had I wings,
As good as any born of eggs,
To feed on all aërial things,
When I had legs ! ’
And if not to embrace he sighs,
She gives him breath of Youth awhile,
Perspective of a breezy mile,
Companionable hedgeways, lifting skies ;
Scenes where his nested dreams upon their hoard
Brooded, or up to empyrean soared :
Enough to link him with a dotted line.
But cravings for an eagle’s flight,
To top white peaks and serve wild wine
Among the rosy undecayed,
Bring only flash of shade
From her full throbbing breast of day in night.
By what they crave are they betrayed :

And cavernous is that young dragon's jaw,
Crimson for all the fiery reptile saw
In time now coveted, for teeth to flay,
Once more consume, were Life recurrent May.
They to their moment of drawn breath,
Which is the life that makes the death,
The death that makes ethereal life would bind :
The death that breeds the spectre do they find.
Darkness is wedded and the waste regrets
Beating as dead leaves on a fitful gust,
By souls no longer dowered to climb
Beneath their pack of dust,
Whom envy of a lustrous prime,
Eclipsed while yet invoked, besets,
And dooms to sink and water sable flowers,
That never gladdened eye or loaded bee.
Strain we the arms for Memory's hours,
We are the seized Persephone.

Responsive never to the soft desire
For one prized tune is this our chord of life.
'Tis clipped to deadness with a wanton knife,
In wishes that for ecstasies aspire.
Yet have we glad companionship of Youth,
Elysian meadows for the mind,
Dare we to face deeds done, and in our tomb
Filled with the parti-coloured bloom
Of loved and hated, grasp all human truth
Sowed by us down the mazy paths behind.
To feel that heaven must we that hell sound through :
Whence comes a line of continuity,
That brings our middle station into view,
Between those poles ; a novel Earth we see,
In likeness of us, made of banned and blest ;
The sower's bed, but not the reaper's rest :

An Earth alive with meanings, wherein meet
Buried, and breathing, and to be.
Then of the junction of the three,
Even as a heart in brain, full sweet
May sense of soul, the sum of music, beat.

Only the soul can walk the dusty track
Where hangs our flowering under vapours black,
And bear to see how these pervade, obscure,
Quench recollection of a spacious pure.
They take phantasmal forms, divide, convolve,
Hard at each other point and gape,
Horrible ghosts ! in agony dissolve,
To reappear with one they drape
For criminal, and, Father ! shrieking name,
Who such distorted issue did beget.
Accept them, them and him, though hiss thy sweat

Off brow on breast, whose furnace flame
Has eaten, and old Self consumes.
Out of the purification will they leap,
Thee renovating while new light illumines
The dusky web of evil, known as pain,
That heavily up healthward mounts the steep ;
Our fleshly road to beacon-fire of brain :
Midway the tameless oceanic brute
Below, whose heave is topped with foam for fruit,
And the fair heaven reflecting inner peace
On righteous warfare, that asks not to cease.

Forth of such passage through black fire we win
Clear hearing of the simple lute,
Whereon, and not on other, Memory plays
For them who can in quietness receive
Her restorative airs : a ditty thin

As note of hedgerow bird in ear of eve,
Or wave at ebb, the shallow catching rays
On a transparent sheet, where curves a glass
To truer heavens than when the breaker neighs
Loud at the plunge for bubbly wreck in roar.
Solidity and bulk and martial brass,
Once tyrants of the senses, faintly score
A mark on pebbled sand or fluid slime,
While present in the spirit, vital there,
Are things that seemed the phantoms of their time ;
Eternal as the recurrent cloud, as air
Imperative, refreshful as dawn-dew.
Some evanescent hand on vapour scrawled
Historic of the soul, and heats anew
Its coloured lines where deeds of flesh stand bald.
True of the man, and of mankind 'tis true.
Did we stout battle with the Shade, Despair,
Our cowardice, it blooms ; or haply warred

Against the primal beast in us, and flung ;
Or cleaving mists of Sorrow, left it starred
Above self-pity slain : or it was Prayer
First taken for Life's cleanser ; or the tongue
Spake for the world against this heart ; or rings
Old laughter, from the founts of wisdom sprung ;
Or clap of wing of joy, that was a throb
From breast of Earth, and did no creature rob :
These quickening live. But deepest at her springs,
Most filial, is an eye to love her young.
And had we it, still see with it, alive
Is our lost garden, flower, bird and hive.
Blood of her blood, aim of her aim, are then
The green-robed and grey-crested sons of men :
She tributary to her aged restores
The living in the dead ; she will inspire
Faith homelier than on the Yonder shores,
Abhorring these as mire,

Uncertain steps, in dimness gropes,
With mortal tremours pricking hopes,
And, by the final Bacchic of the lusts
Propelled, the Bacchic of the spirit trusts :
A fervour drunk from mystic hierophants ;
Not utterly misled, though blindly led,
Led round fermenting eddies. Faith she plants
In her own firmness as our midway road :
Which rightly Youth has read, though blindly read ;
Her essence reading in her toothsome goad ;
Spur of bright dreams experience disenchants.
But love we well the young, her road midway
The darkneses runs consecrated clay.
Despite our feeble hold on this green home,
And the vast outer strangeness void of dome,
Shall we be with them, of them, taught to feel,
Up to the moment of our prostrate fall,
The life they deem voluptuously real,

Is more than empty echo of a call,
Or shadow of a shade, or swing of tides ;
As brooding upon age, when veins congeal,
Grey palsy nods to think. With us for guides,
Another step above the animal,
To views in Alpine thought are they helped on.
Good if so far we live in them when gone !

And there the arrowy eagle of the height,
Becomes the little bird that hops to feed,
Glad of a crumb, for tempered appetite
To make it wholesome blood and fruitful seed.
Then Memory strikes on no slack string,
Nor sectional will varied Life appear :
Perforce of soul discerned in mind, we hear
Earth with her Onward chime, with Winter Spring.
And ours the mellow note, while sharing joys

No more subjecting mortals who have learnt
To build for happiness on equipoise,
The Pleasures read in sparks of substance burnt ;
Know in our seasons an integral wheel,
That rolls us to a mark may yet be willed.
This, the truistic rubbish under heel
Of all the world, we peck at and are filled.

VERSES

PENETRATION AND TRUST

I

SLEEK as a lizard at round of a stone,
The look of her heart slipped out and in.
Sweet on her lord her soft eyes shone,
As innocents clear of a shade of sin.

II

He laid a finger under her chin,
His arm for her girdle at waist was thrown :
Now, what will happen and who will win,
With me in the fight and my lady lone?

III

He clasped her, clasping a shape of stone ;
Was fire on her eyes till they let him in.
Her breast to a God of the daybeams shone,
And never a corner for serpent sin.

IV

Tranced she stood, with a chattering chin ;
Her shrunken form at his feet was thrown :
At home to the death my lord shall win,
When it is no tyrant who leaves me lone !

NIGHT OF FROST IN MAY

WITH splendour of a silver day,
A frosted night had opened May :
And on that plumed and armoured night,
As one close temple hove our wood,
Its border leafage virgin white.
Remote down air an owl hallooed.
The black twig dropped without a twirl ;
The bud in jewelled grasp was nipped ;

The brown leaf cracked a scorching curl ;
A crystal off the green leaf slipped.
Across the tracks of r̄imy tan,
Some busy thread at whiles would shoot ;
A limping minnow-rillet ran,
To hang upon an icy foot.

In this shrill hush of quietude,
The ear conceived a severing cry.
Almost it let the sound elude,
When chuckles three, a warble shy,
From hazels of the garden came,
Near by the crimson-windowed farm.
They laid the trance on breath and frame,
A prelude of the passion-charm.

Then soon was heard, not sooner heard
Than answered, doubled, trebled, more,

Voice of an Eden in the bird
Renewing with his pipe of four
The sob : a troubled Eden, rich
In throb of heart : unnumbered throats
Flung upward at a fountain's pitch,
The fervour of the four long notes,
That on the fountain's pool subside,
Exult and ruffle and upspring :
Endless the crossing multiplied
Of silver and of golden string.
There chimed a bubbled underbrew
With witch-wild spray of vocal dew.

It seemed a single harper swept
Our wild wood's inner chords and waked
A spirit that for yearning ached
Ere men desired and joyed or wept.

Or now a legion ravishing
Musician rivals did unite
In love of sweetness high to sing
The subtle song that rivals light ;
From breast of earth to breast of sky :
And they were secret, they were nigh :
A hand the magic might disperse ;
The magic swung my universe.

Yet sharpened breath forbade to dream,
Where all was visionary gleam ;
Where Seasons, as with cymbals, clashed ;
And feelings, passing joy and woe,
Churned, gurgled, spouted, interflashed,
Nor either was the one we know :
Nor pregnant of the heart contained
In us were they, that griefless plained,

That plaining soared ; and through the heart
Struck to one note the wide apart :—
A passion surgent from despair ;
A paining bliss in fervid cold ;
Off the last vital edge of air,
Leap heavenward of the lofty-souled,
For rapture of a wine of tears ;
As had a star among the spheres
Caught up our earth to some mid-height
Of double life to ear and sight,
She giving voice to thought that shines
Keen-brilliant of her deepest mines ;
While steely drips the rillet clinked,
And hoar with crust the cowslip swelled.

Then was the lyre of earth beheld,
Then heard by me : it holds me linked ;

Across the years to dead-ebb shores
I stand on, my blood-thrill restores.
But would I conjure into me
Those issue notes, I must review
What serious breath the woodland drew ;
The low throb of expectancy ;
How the white mother-muteness pressed
On leaf and meadow-herb ; how shook,
Nigh speech of mouth, the sparkle-crest
Seen spinning on the bracken-crook.

THE TEACHING OF THE NUDE

I

A SATYR spied a Goddess in her bath,
Unseen of her attendant nymphs ; none knew.
Forthwith the creature to his fellows drew,
And looking backward on the curtained path,
He strove to tell ; he could but heave a breast
Too full, and point to mouth, with failing leers :
Vainly he danced for speech, he giggled tears,
Made as if torn in two, as if tight pressed,

As if cast prone ; then fetching whimpered tunes
For words, flung heel and set his hairy flight
Through forest-hollows, over rocky height.
The green leaves buried him three rounds of moons.
A senatorial Satyr named what herb
Had hurried him outrunning reason's curb.

II

'Tis told how when that hieaway unchecked,
To' dell returned, he seemed of tempered mood :
Even as the valley of the torrent rude,
The torrent now a brook, the valley wrecked.
In him, to hale him high or hurl ahead,
Goddess and Goatfoot hourly wrestled sore ;
Hourly the immortal prevailing more :
Till one hot noon saw Meliboeus peep

From thicket-sprays to where his full-blown dame,
In circle by the lusty friskers gripped,
Laughed the showered rose-leaves while her limbs
 were stripped.

She beckoned to our Satyr, and he came.

Then twirled she mounds of ripeness, wreath of arms.

His hoof kicked up the clothing for such charms.

BREATH OF THE BRIAR

I

O BRIAR-SCENTS, on yon wet wing
Of warm South-west wind brushing by,
You mind me of the sweetest thing
That ever mingled frank and shy :
When she and I, by love enticed,
Beneath the orchard-apples met,
In equal halves a ripe one sliced,
And smelt the juices ere we ate.

11

That apple of the briar-scent,
Among our lost in Britain now,
Was green of rind, and redolent
Of sweetness as a milking cow.
The briar gives it back, well nigh
The damsel with her teeth on it ;
Her twinkle between frank and shy,
My thirst to bite where she had bit.

EMPEDOCLES

HE leaped. With none to hinder,
Of Aetna's fiery scoriae
In the next vomit-shower, made he
A more peculiar cinder.
And this great Doctor, can it be,
He left no saner recipe
For men at issue with despair?
Admiring, even his poet owns,
While noting his fine lyric tones,
The last of him was heels in air!

Comes Reverence, her features
Amazed to see high Wisdom hear,
With glimmer of a faunish leer,
One mock her pride of creatures.
Shall such sad incident degrade
A stature casting sunniest shade?
O Reverence! let Reason swim;
Each life its critic deed reveals;
And him reads Reason at his heels,
If heels in air the last of him!

TO COLONEL CHARLES

(DYING GENERAL C.B.B.)

I

AN English heart, my commandant,
A soldier's eye you have, awake
To right and left ; with looks askant
On bulwarks not of adamant,
Where white our Channel waters break.

II

Where Grisnez winks at Dungeness
Across the ruffled strip of salt,
You look, and like the prospect less.
On men and guns would you lay stress,
To bid the Island's foemen halt.

III

While loud the Year is raising cry
At birth to know if it must bear
In history the bloody dye,
An English heart, a soldier's eye,
For the old country first will care.

IV

And how stands she, artillerist,
Among the vapours waxing dense,
With cannon charged? 'Tis hist! and hist!
And now she screws a gouty fist,
And now she counts to clutch her pence.

V

With shudders chill as aconite,
The couchant chewer of the cud
Will start at times in pussy fright
Before the dogs, when reads her sprite
The streaks predicting streams of blood.

VI

She thinks they may mean something ; thinks
They may mean nothing : haply both.
Where darkness all her daylight drinks,
She fain would find a leader lynx,
Not too much taxing mental sloth.

VII

Cleft like the fated house in twain,
One half is, Arm ! and one, Retrench !
Gambetta's word on dull MacMahon :
'The cow that sees a passing train :'
So spies she Russian, German, French.

•

VIII

She? no, her weakness : she unbraced
Among those athletes fronting storms !
The muscles less of steel than paste,
Why, they of nature feel distaste
For flash, much more for push, of arms.

IX

The poet sings, and well know we,
That 'iron draws men after it.'
But towering wealth may seem the tree
Which bears the fruit *Indemnity*,
And draw as fast as battle's fit,

X

If feeble be the hand on guard,
Alas, alas! And nations are
Still the mad forces, though the scarred
Should they once deem our emblem Pard
Wagger of tail for all save war ;—

XI

Mechanically screwed to flail
His flanks by Presses conjuring fear ;—
A money-bag with head and tail ;—
Too late may valour then avail !
As you beheld, my cannonier,

XII

When with the staff of Benedek,
On the plateau of Königgrätz,
You saw below that wedging speck ;
Foresaw proud Austria rammed to wreck,
Where Chlum drove deep in smoky jets.

February 1887.

ENGLAND BEFORE THE STORM

I

THE day that is the night of days,
With cannon-fire for sun ablaze,
We spy from any billow's lift ;
And England still this tidal drift !
Would she to sainted forethought vow
A space before the thunders flood,
That martyr of its hour might now
Spare her the tears of blood.

II

Asleep upon her ancient deeds,
She hugs the vision plethora breeds,
And counts her manifold increase
Of treasure in the fruits of peace.
What curse on earth's improvident,
When the dread trumpet shatters rest,
Is wreaked, she knows, yet smiles content
 As cradle rocked from breast.

III

She, impious to the Lord of Hosts,
The valour of her offspring boasts,
Mindless that now on land and main
His heeded prayer is active brain.

No more great heart may guard the home,
Save eyed and armed and skilled to cleave
Yon swallower wave with shroud of foam,
We see not distant heave.

IV

They stand to be her sacrifice,
The sons this mother flings like dice,
To face the odds and brave the Fates ;
As in those days of starry dates,
When cannon cannon's counterblast
Awakened, muzzle muzzle bowled,
And high in swathe of smoke the mast
Its fighting rag outrolled.

TARDY SPRING

Now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes ;
Swift fly the fleeces,
Thick the blossom-flakes.

Now hill to hill has made the stride,
And distance waves the without end :
Now in the breast a door flings wide ;
Our farthest smiles, our next is friend.

And song of England's rush of flowers
Is this full breeze with mellow stops,
That spins the lark for shine, for showers ;
He drinks his hurried flight, and drops.
The stir in memory seem these things,
Which out of moistened turf and clay,
Astrain for light push patient rings,
Or leap to find the waterway.
'Tis equal to a wonder done,
Whatever simple lives renew
Their tricks beneath the father sun,
As though they caught a broken clue :
So hard was earth an eyewink back ;
But now the common life has come,
The blotting cloud a dappled pack,
The grasses one vast underhum.
A City clothed in snow and soot,
With lamps for day in ghostly rows,

Breaks to the scene of hosts afoot,
The river that reflective flows :
And there did fog down crypts of street
Play spectre upon eye and mouth :—
Their faces are a glass to greet
This magic of the whirl for South.
A burly joy each creature swells
With sound of its own hungry quest ;
Earth has to fill her empty wells,
And speed the service of the nest ;
The phantom of the snow-wreath melt,
That haunts the farmer's look abroad,
Who sees what tomb a white night built,
Where flocks now bleat and sprouts the clod.
For iron Winter held her firm ;
Across her sky he laid his hand ;
And bird he starved, he stiffened worm ;
A sightless heaven, a shaven land.

Her shivering Spring feigned fast asleep,
The bitten buds dared not unfold :
We raced on roads and ice to keep
Thought of the girl we love from cold.

But now the North wind ceases,
The warm South-west awakes,
The heavens are out in fleeces,
And earth's green banner shakes.



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