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POEMS

BY

WALTER R. CASSELS

LONDON

1856

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MABEL,
A Sketch.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE.

ORAN, *a Speculative Philosopher.*
MABEL, *his Wife.*
HER FATHER.
MAURICE, }
ROGER, } *her brothers.*

MABEL.

SCENE I—A Study. Books, pictures, and sculpture about the room, interspersed with chemical and other instruments, globes, &c.; a singular blending of science with art, indicating a delicate and speculative organization in the arranger.

ORAN, MAURICE, *and* ROGER.

ORAN.

Well, well! and so ye deem I love her not,
Ye and the world that love so passing well?—
That still I trifle with her bright young life,
As the wind plays with some frail water-bell,
Wafting it wantonly about the sky,
Till at some harsher breath it breaks and dies?

MAURICE.

Nay, not thus far would our reflections go.
Friendship paints not with the foul brush of Conscience!
But thou, a man of dark and mystic aims,
Tracking out Science through forbidden ways,
Leaving the light and trodden paths to grope
'Mid fearful speculations and wild dreams,
May'st hunt thy Will-o'-the-wisp until thou lead'st
Our sister, all unwitting, to her death.

ROGER.

That shalt thou answer unto us. Thy life
Shall be to her life like the sun and shade,
Lost in one setting.

ORAN.

Ay! thou sayest well—
Thou sayest well. How oft a random shaft
Striketh King Truth betwixt the armour-joints!—
One life, one sun, one setting for us both.

Which way, then, tend your fears? What certain aim
Have all these strokes you level at my ways?

ROGER.

We say that you, against all light received,
Against all laws of prudence and of love,

Practise dark magic on our sister's soul—
That by strange motions, incantations, spells,
So work you on her spirit that strange sleep,
Sombre as Death's dark shadow, presently
Steals o'er her fragile body, dulls her sense,
And wraps her wholly in its chill embrace;
That thus, spell-bound, lost to the living world,
She lies till thou again unwind her chain,
And wak'st her feebly to this life of earth.
Thus dost thou peril her, thou blinded man!
Sett'st her dear life against thy moonstruck thought,
And slay'st thy dove on Folly's altar-steps.

MAURICE.

Ay! if you loved her, would your eyes have miss'd
The moonish faintness that o'erlaps her now,
Melting the fresh, full, ruddy glow of health
To loveliness most heavenly, yet most sad?
Her cheeks, where youth once summer'd into roses,
Glow now with faint exotic loveliness,
Not native to this harsh and gusty earth;
And from her large dark eyes there seems to gaze
Some angel with mute, melancholy looks,
As from a casement at this jarring world.

ORAN.

Ha! then you too have seen it; it is not,
O Heaven!—is not delusion, this fond dream,
But even now it works, works bliss for her.
Proceed, Sir ... you were saying ... Sir, I list ...
That in her eyes you saw angelic fire,
Pure from the dross, the dimming clouds of earth,
Deem'd now her frame ethereal, unakin
To earth's clay-moulded fabrics—such, perchance,
As entering heaven, might have left its dust
At the bright folding portals, sandal-like,
And thence, repassing in seraphic trance,
Still left unclaim'd the vesture at the gate!

ROGER.

You glory in her weakness! 'Tis too much—
Rash man, beware, a bitter end will come.

MAURICE.

I fain would think that study hath o'erwrought
Your heated brain to this short fever fit,
That soon may pass and leave your vision clear.
In truth, I note strange changes in your mien—
A wandering glance, quick, restless eagerness,
Rapt snatches of deep thought, wherein the mind
Seems cleaving heaven with wild extatic wings:
Your cheeks are pale, and all your nervous frame
Thrills 'neath some strange enthusiastic touch.
Lay by your books awhile, and breathe again,
As in those days gone by, the country air,
The sweet, calm country air, where perfume floats
Like love that finds no heart so godlike large
Can clasp it wholly in its one embrace,
But overflows creation with its bliss.
Thus shall you quickly exorcise this madness,
And cleanse your brain of these pernicious dreams.

ORAN.

This madness! I bethink me of the past,
Of all the great and noble who have toil'd
Amid the deep dark mines of burning thought,
Wearing out life to quarry forth the Truth;
Of all the seers and watchers, early and late
Waiting with eager blood-hot eyes the light
Rising afar in some untrodden East,
Full of divine and precious influence,
Calling, like Mezzuin from his minaret,
The thankless world to worship and be glad;
Of all the patient thinkers of the earth
Who talk'd with Wisdom like familiar friends,
Until their voices unaccustom'd grew,
And men stared blankly at them as they pass'd:
I do bethink me of them all, and know
How each walk'd through his labyrinth of scorn,
And was accounted mad before all men.
But patience!—Winter bears within its breast
The nascent seeds of golden harvest-time.

This only shall I tell you of my ways—
Straying, now here, now there, 'mid science' wealth,
I have discover'd a vast hidden power—
A power that perfected shall surely work
Great revolution in all human laws,—
Where stop its courses I as yet know not;
'Tis to me like the sun, that all the day
Shines godlike in my vision, and, at night,
Though darkness hide its brightness, still, I feel,
Shines on in glory over other spheres;
It is a power beneficent and good,
That grants to spirit infinite control
Over all matter, and that frees the soul
From its flesh shackles, and its sensuous means.
What else its influences, or for health,
For happiness, or blessing, I say not—
Save that such glimpses of vast powers unknown
Dawn on my wondering mind, that like a man
Standing upon some giddy pinnacle,
With a whole world seen faint and small below,
I close mine eyes for very fear and joy.
To her, my Mabel, do I bear in love
Some first-fruits of my finding—make her rich,
That, gazing through her eyes, I may behold
How sweet is heaven, how dear is happiness.
This is the sum of that I work on her;
Then, though I thank you for your good intent,
Leave me untroubled to my life of thought,
Leave her all trustful in the arms of love.

ROGER.

You love her not, false man! your heart and soul
Are steep'd in science till not e'en the heel,
Achilles-like, is vulnerable left.
Ay! wear thus feeling's semblance as you will,
Pale visionary! no more shall I pause,
But with strong hand arrest your mad career!
Soon we return arm'd with a father's power,
To snatch our sister from your fearful arts.

MAURICE.

Oh! if you love her, Sir, as once you did—
If yet upon the dial of your life
Her sun mark out the short sweet hours of joy,
And all too swiftly on the shadows glide—
If yet you prize the loving heart you hold,
From this most mad delusion waken up,
That blindly blights her whom it seeks to bless;
Cease your Utopian and unsafe essays,
And rather turn your studious care to call
The fading roses back into her cheeks,
And shed health's gladness on her feeble frame;
Reflect whilst yet you may, lest late Remorse
Stalk, ghost-like, through the chambers of your soul,
Haunting their gloomy void for evermore.

[*Exeunt Maurice and Roger.*]

SCENE II.—*The Same.*

ORAN.

ORAN.

Not love her! O my God! thou knowest me—
Thou, looking through me as the sun at noon
That searches through the being of the world—
Thou setting life against thy glory light,
As men hold up a crystal 'gainst the sun,
Making its frame as nothing in the blaze!

Lo! my heart was like a chaotic world,
Still, silent, 'mid the dreary waste of time.
Man there was not in all its desert bounds,
But hoary ruins of past wondrous things,
Old unbeliefs, fierce doubts, unsightly dreams,
That wearing out their wild hot-breathing life,
Wearily stretch'd their writhing shapes to die;
Then came she moving o'er my awe-hush'd soul,
Like God's own Spirit over earth's void waters,
And there arose order and life through all.
She was my sun, set high to rule the day,
And make my world all bright and beautiful;
She was my moon, amid the stilly night
Subduing darkness with her quiet smiles,
And stealing softly through my anxious dreams,
A sweet-soul'd hostage for departed day;
She was my summer, clothing all my life
With fragrant blossoms of delight and joy.

[*A pause.*]

Not love her! 'Tis as yesterday the time
When first my love stole fainting to her ear,
In deep scarce-worded murmurs of desire.
'Twas evening, and above the weary land
Silence lay dreaming in a golden hush;
The summer's sunset yellow'd in the wheat,
And the ripe year, with harvest promise full,
Slept on the wavy slopes and verdant leas,
Like one who through long hours of toil at last
Sees the glad work accomplish'd, and in peace
Flings him along the meadows to repose;
Below, the bells of even faintly chimed,

And sent their hymnal music up the breeze
To where I stood, half-praying, by her side.
Then all my words and thoughts that came and went,
Waving about the secret of my love,
Like billows plashing on a silent shore,
All at one gush flow'd from me o'er her heart,
And broke the banks of silence; then my love
Sank through her liquid eyes to read her soul,
Like diver that through waving water-floods
Seeketh the priceless pearl that lies below,
And there found life—found joy for evermore:
It is as yesterday that time to me,—
Sweet time, when love entwines the locks of life
With fragrant blossoms, like a one-hour's bride,
And claspeth summer with soft pleading arms,
That she, though ne'er so eager to be gone,
Still tarries smiling for a last embrace,
And drops her hoarded flowers upon the way:
It is as yesterday—my love the same—
The love that led me through all heavy tasks,
All lonely watchings by the midnight lamp,
To win the fame that still might shine on her;
And e'en—how dear the thought!—this wondrous power,
This godlike influence which has dawn'd on me,
Thus from my love takes colouring and aim!
Not love her! Well, well, I'll forget the word—
The sun shines on, though blind eyes see it not.

[*A pause.*]

It cannot be—this aim so deeply—weigh'd,
So long and calmly sifted, cannot fail.
O wondrous power! great mystery of life!
Reserved for me of all the sons of men;
Fruit ripening high upon the wall of heaven
For me to pluck with eager, trembling hands,
And press its vintage out for thirsting worlds
More blessed still that into her sweet cup
First may I pour the clearest of the wine—
For her—for her—ah, yes! for her supreme,
I struggle onward through this blinding light,
E'en at whose dazzling threshold I might stand,
Pale, trembling, like a terror-smitten soul,
Waiting bewilder'd at the gate of heaven.
Yet once again let me the plan review,
Searching within my soul of souls each part,
That doubt or danger, lurking there, may thus
By love's keen-scented instincts hunted be.—

[*A long pause.*]

Yes! it is so—this deep magnetic sleep,
That from my being passes upon her,
Bindeth the body close in deepest thrall,
But setteth free the soul. What real need
Hath spirit of these sensuous avenues,
Through which the soul looks feebly on the world?
This power then opes the prison door awhile,
And sends the spirit chainless o'er the earth.
This know I—without eyes the spirit sees,
Gains instant cognizance of hidden things,
And counts all space for nothing; knowledge comes
Upon it with the falling of the flesh,
So that there is no thing in earth or heaven
But to the unhoused spirit native is—

The mantle falls and leaves the Prophet angel!
Body, then, is the prison-house of soul,
And freedom is its highest happiness,
Its heaven, its primal being full of joy.
This power that holdeth thus the keys of life,
Can then at will give moments of release,
Which to the soul are as the water-brooks
That scanty rise amid a sun-scorch'd waste:
These, oft repeated, must at length destroy
The thraldom of the flesh, and give at will
A freer issue to the practised soul—
At lowest gladden it with gleams of bliss,
Glimpses of heaven amid this exile time.
Yes! thus, my Mabel, shall thy prison'd soul
Rise to its sister angels heavenward still;
And soon the mortal fetters shall hang loose,
Scarce clogging aught its motions glad and free.
Thus shall thy young fair frame no longer be
A prison, but a meetest dwelling-place,
Full of all infinite delights, and dear
As is its nest to the heaven-soaring lark,
That yearns down, singing, to it from the sky.
These men, did they not see it in thine eyes,
Amazed and fearful at the dazzling sight,
As some rude passer gazing up aloft
Sees from some casement, unawares, a face
That makes his great rough heart on sudden rock
With wonder and with worship—in her frame
Did they not see the mortal waxing faint,
The immortal fusing it with heavenly fire?
Ay! the charm works, and thou, my life, my love,
Reapest the first-fruits of my long, long toil.

SCENE III.—*A Boudoir. Flowers about it, in beautifully shaped Vases. A Greenhouse at one end. The window-panes delicately tinted, and hung with light fleecy draperies. MABEL working, and singing in a low voice.*

MABEL (*singing*).

At night when stars shine bright and clear,
The soft winds on the casements blow,
And round the chamber rustle low,
Like one unseen, whose voice we hear,
On tiptoe stealing to and fro—

At night when clouds are dark and drear,
They moan about the lattice sore,
And murmur sighs for evermore,
That fill us with a chilly fear,
Oft glancing at the well-barr'd door—

At night, in moonlight or in gloom,
They wander round the drooping thatch,
Like some poor exile thence to catch
Fond glimpses of each well-loved room,
And sigh beside the unraised latch—

O unseen Wind! art thou alone,
Thus breathing round the sleeping land?
Or roams with thee a spirit band,
Blending sad voices with thine own,—
Voices that once with cheerful tone
Made music round the sleeping land?

ORAN (*from the Greenhouse, unperceived*).

Ah! her dear voice. How all my nature thrills,
My heart, my brain, beneath the mellow sound,
Like some great dome with holy music fill'd!
She is the lark, above my listening soul
Hovering still with carols from Heaven's gate.
She is the perfumed breeze, that evermore
Sweeps music from the Aeolian strings of life.
She is the sea, that fills with sweetest sound
The yearning earth that folds it in its arms.
Not love her—Ah! dear heart, how utterly!

[*A pause.*]

What if amid these spirit wanderings,
This so mysterious power can grant at will,—
What if the angels, smitten with her grace,
Woo'd her away for ever from my heart?
The dove came twice again unto the ark,
With messages of peace, and hope, and joy,
But the third time return'd not. She's my dove—
Oh! wing'd she ever from my longing heart,
The waters of my life would quick subside,
And leave me stranded on the shoals of Time.
What if God saw her hovering aloft,
And smiled her in amongst his cherubim?
What if the draught of bliss should, Lethe-like,
Blot me for ever from her memory,
So that she sought me never, never more?
Oblivion! take again this fearful power—
No more shall Fate be tempted with my wealth,
Lest covetous it rob me of my all.

[*A pause.*]

And yet, these are but dreams, poor selfish fears,
That scum-like float and dim Love's limpid tide.
Shall I thus cage my bird from liberty,
And let it beat its life out on the bars,
Lest some dear bliss detain it in the heavens?
Shall I spill rashly forth this wine of joy,
Because for me within the crystal cup
Some dregs may haply rest when she has drunk?
Ah, no! for her alone shall I take thought.
The first pure sacrifice of Love is self!
There is no peril. God that sends the power
Will send the guardian angel to direct.
I work for her—Heaven speed the work of love.

[*Enters the room.*]

MABEL.

I waited for thee, love—'tis past the hour,
And on my dial slumbers Time in shade
When thou comest not to sun me.

ORAN.

I but stood
There on the threshold, following thy voice
Away, away through mazy lengths of dreams.
Music—low music from the lips we love,
Is the true siren that still lures the soul
From cares of earth to the Enchanted Isles.

MABEL.

Methinks that thou art sad to-day, my husband.
Let me share with thee pain as well as joy;
It is the sweetest right that love can claim.
We give our joys to strangers, but our grief
Sighs itself only forth for those we love.
We hang our sorrows on the loved one's ear,
Like jewell'd pendants for a bridal feast.

ORAN.

Tell me, my Mabel, if within this sleep,
To which mine art oft leads thee, there should come
Some angel bright with Heaven's reflected light,
Wooing thee upward with the songs of bliss,—
Tell me, my Mabel, wouldst thou freely go,
Leaving this fair earth-vesture only here,
Leaving me lornly gazing on the sky,
Blotting its sun out with my blinding tears?

MABEL.

There is no angel but the angel Death
Could sever me from thee who art all my life!
What Heaven is there but that which Love creates?
What songs of Bliss, save those by Love intoned?
Ah! thou to me art as the sun to Day,
That dies out with its setting utterly—
Thou art the ever-flowing crystal spring,
That keeps the fountain of my being full—
Thou art the heart that beats with measured pulse
The joyous moments of my flowing life—
Leave thee? How canst thou wrong me with the thought?

ORAN.

Dear Mabel!—Yet to-day thy brothers came,
Taxing me harshly, and in cruel terms,
With practising against thy precious life.

MABEL.

Oh, Heaven!

ORAN.

They dread these trances, whose dim fame
Hath floated on the ignorant air to them.
They deem this priceless power, new-fall'n on me,
And treasured for thy sake, my best beloved,
A most pernicious art, that may, perchance,
Work evil upon thee; say, dost thou fear?
My Mabel, hast thou faith and trust in me?
Shall I proceed, or break this magic wand,
Wherewith they deem that I am dower'd withal?

MABEL.

I trust in thee, my love, with perfect faith—
Am I not as the floating gossamer,
Steering through ether on thy guiding breath?
Am I not as the clay within thy hand,
Taking the shape and image of thy thought?
Heed not these idle tongues, that launch their doubts
In erring love against thy watchful care.

That which thou doest I accept with joy;
I wait for thee as waits a full-sail'd bark
The coming breeze to waft it o'er the sea.

ORAN.

Fear not! I do well think no peril lies
Within this power, but virtue of rare worth,
Else nevermore its wand had waved o'er thee.—
Tell me, dost bring no memory back to Earth
Of all these glorious wanderings above?
No certain visions of the hidden things
Thou seest in that far mystic spirit-land?

MABEL.

Nay! it must be as thou dost tell me oft,
The soul doth lose its secrets at Earth's gate,
And all the blinding glories it hath known
Shed but their mystic influence over life.
Therefore, it may be, 'tis I nought retain
Of that which passeth in these hours of trance.

ORAN.

Yet strive once more to grasp the fleeting dreams,
Else shall I doubt that which I fondly hope.—
Sleep, love, and let thy spirit bask awhile
In Heaven's own sunshine;—yet forget not me!

*[Makes passes over her, which shortly sink
her into a state of trance.*

'Tis done! she's free! and now this lovely frame
Lies tenantless, a casket whose pure gems
Now sparkle 'mid the opal lights of Heaven.
This earth seems very lone and cold to me
Now she is absent, though a little space!
My heart goes restless wandering around,
Seeking her through old haunts and vacant nooks,
Like one who, waking from some troubled dream,
Findeth his love soft stolen from his side,
And straightway seeketh in a dim amaze
All through the moonlight for her straying feet.

[A pause.

Where art thou, O my dove! about the sky?
Ruffling thy breast across what honey breeze?
Flashing white pinions 'gainst the golden sun,
That fain would nest thee on his ardent breast?
Art thou soft floating through the joys of Heaven,
With Earth far, far beneath thee, like a star
Struggling up through the tremulous sea of light,
That sucks its life down from the eye of day?
About the gate of Heaven there floats my dove,
Fann'd by the breath of melodies divine;
Opes there no casement soft to take her in,
And lay her in the bosom of delight?
O dove, white dove, now at the gate of Heaven!
Wilt thou wing homeward ere the eventide,
On shining pinions to thine own soft nest?

[A pause.

O wonderful! Thou mansion tenantless,
Unswapt by memory, untrod by thought,

Where all lies tranced in motionless repose;
No whisper stirring round the silent place,
No foot of guest across the startled halls,
No rustling robes about the corridors,
No voices floating on the waveless air,
No laughters, no sweet songs like angel dreams
On silver wings among the archèd domes,—
No swans upon the mere—no golden prow,
Parting the crystal tide to Pleasure's breeze,—
No flapping sail before the idle wind,—
No music pulsing out its great wild heart
In sweetest passion-beats the noontide through,—
No lovers gliding down sun-chequer'd glades,
In dreams that open wide the Eden gate,
And waft them past the guardian Seraphim.
Sleep over all the Present and the Past—
The Future standing idle at the gate,
Gazing amazed, like one who, in hot haste
Bearing great tidings to some palace porch,
Findeth the place deserted.

*[A noise without; enter in haste Father,
Maurice and Roger.]*

How now?—Friends, you are welcome!

FATHER.

Where's my child,
That you maltreat, most rash and guilty man?

ORAN.

Sir, you are over hasty in your words—
Your child is here.—

[Points to Mabel, who still lies entranced.]

FATHER.

Mabel! wake, Mabel—O my God! she's dead!

MAURICE.

How!—Dead!

ROGER.

Ay, murder'd!

FATHER.

O! my child! my child!

ORAN.

Peace! she is well—Sleep folds her in his arms,
And each upheaving of his drowsy breast
Is like a billow upon pleasure's sea,
Wafting her on to far Hesperides.

FATHER.

This is no healthy sleep that wraps her now,
Else would she waken at my anxious cry;
'Tis death-sleep, wretched man.

MAURICE.

Let's bear her hence.

ROGER.

Nay! let him now unwind his magic spells,
Or fall our vengeance on his guilty head.

ORAN.

Dismiss your fears, and cease your threats. Old man,
Soon shall I prove how much you wrong my love;
Thus do I call the spirit home again,
And wave the slumber backward from her eyes.

[Makes passes to awaken her, but without effect after long persistence.

FATHER.

Impostor! would you mock e'en Death itself,
Calling it sleep!—You see, Death mocks you back.

MAURICE.

In vain! no further seek to blind our fears.

ORAN.

'Tis strange!... stand back, Sirs ... 'tis your influence
Hath neutralized my power—stand off, I say!

[Continuing the passes in great agitation.

ROGER.

By Heaven!—It is too much—Let fall the mask!
O villain! you have done your worst at last,
And ta'en the sweetest life in all the land;
But vengeance swift shall follow on your track.

ORAN.

Hold! hold! young man, talk not of vengeance here;
This sleep shall pass and shame your blood-hot words—
If it pass'd not the vengeance were forestall'd.

[A silence—continuing the passes.

O Mabel! Mabel! hear me where thou art!
Come to the lonely heart that yearns for thee,—
Come to the eyes that seek thee through salt tears!
Patience, Sirs, now methinks the sense returns;
A smile steals o'er her lips, and roseate hues
Make morning on her downy cheek again:
Back ... back—my anguish shall unwind the charm!

[A silence.

FATHER.

Sir, I acquit you—pity you—perceive
You loved her, and have err'd against yourself;
But cease these struggles that but mock us now,
They nought avail—my child is dead!...

ORAN.

Mabel! Mabel!

HEBE.

Life's chalice is empty—pour in! pour in!

What?—Pour in Strength!

Strength for the struggle through good and ill;
Through good—that the soul may be upright still,
Unspoil'd by riches, unswerving in will,
To walk by the light of unvarnish'd truth,
Up the flower-border'd path of youth;—
Through ill—that the soul may stoutly hold
Its faith, its freedom through hunger and cold,
Steadfast and pure as the true men of old.
Strength for the sunshine, strength for the gloom,
Strength for the conflict, strength for the tomb;
Let not the heart feel a craven fear—
Draw from the fountain deep and clear;
Brim up Life's chalice—pour in! pour in!

Pour in Strength!

Life's chalice is empty—pour in! pour in!

What—Pour in Truth!

Drink! till the mists that enshroud the soul,
Like sleep's drowsy shadows backward roll,
And show the spirit its radiant goal,
That nought may blind it all its days,
Or tempt it down earth's crooked ways;
Drink! till the soul in the eastern skies
Behold the glorious star arise,
That guides its steps to the promised prize;
Drink! till the strong elixir fire
Each aim of the being with pure desire,
Nerve the courage to dare the world,
Though a thousand scoffers their arrows hurl'd;
Brim up Life's chalice—pour in! pour in!

Pour in Truth!

Life's chalice is empty—pour in! pour in!

What?—Pour in Love!

To quench the thirst of the longing heart,
Heal all its sorrows with wondrous art,
And freshness and joy to its hopes impart;
To make the blossoms of life expand,
And shed their sweetness on every hand;
To melt the frost of each sullen mood,
Cement the bond of true brotherhood,
Subdue the evil of Time with good,
And join the links which death hath riven
Betwixt this fallen sphere and Heaven,
Raising the soul above the sky
On wings of Immortality.
Brim up Life's chalice—pour in! pour in!

Pour in Love!

Life's chalice is empty—pour in! pour in!

What?—Pour in Hope!

The soul looks out through the coming years,

Blinded by doubts, and blinded by tears,
Sear'd with the iron of tyrant fears:—
Is there a break in Life's gloomy sky?
Can the heart reach it before it die?
The path is weary, the desert wide,
And Sorrow stalks by the pilgrim's side—
Oh for a draught of Hope's crystal tide
To cheer the parch'd and fainting one,
Until his toilsome race be run,
And the bright mirage fall from the sky,
Displaced by a sweet reality.
Brim up Life's chalice—pour in! pour in!
 Pour in Hope!

 Life's chalice is empty—pour in! pour in!
 What?—Pour in Faith!
What is Life's fabric, so nobly plann'd,
Its stately dome, and its ramparts grand,
If their foundation rest on the sand,
Ready to shift with Time's ebbing stream,
And melt away like a gorgeous dream?
God! let us trust Thee in very sooth,
Feel that the visions, the dreams of youth,
Its glorious hopes are all based on Truth;—
Thus shall the purpose of Life grow clear;
Love shall be freed from the bondage of fear;
And the soul calmly await the morrow
Untroubled by visions of coming sorrow.
Brim up Life's chalice—pour in! pour in!
 Pour in Faith!

SPRING.

On, like a giant, stalketh the strong Wind,
Wrapping the clouds about him, close and dark,
Rifting Creation's soul, for rage is blind,—
 No pity hath he for the Earth all stark,
Shivering beneath the loose and drifting snow,
A scanty shroud to hide the dead below.

 Dead? There is life within the mother's breast—
 So claspeth she her young ones to her heart;—
"The time will come—the time will come—rest! rest!
 Let the mad greybeard to his North depart;
Earth shall arise and mock him in his grave—
Patience a little, let the dotard rave!"

 The palsied boughs grew still—there came a pause,
And Nature's heart scarce beat for listening,
Gazing abroad from all the tempest-flaws,
 With prayerful longing for the saviour Spring;
And when she heard Spring coming up the sky,
Earth rose and threw her shroud off joyfully.

 Then she who once had wept like Niobe,
Beheld her children springing round her feet,
Raising young voices in the early day,
 That never to her ear had seem'd so sweet;

And the soft murmur of a thousand rills
Proclaim'd how Spring had loosed them on the hills.

The bright Evangel came, girt round with mirth,
And garlanded with youth, and crown'd with flowers
"Awake! arise! ye sons of the new birth,
And move to the quick measure of the hours!
Summer is coming—go ye forth to meet her,
With sweetest hymeneal songs to greet her."

So there arose straightway a joyous train,
Gather'd by every nook and hedgerow shade,
That in its passage o'er the verdant plain,
'Still in the heart a thrilling music made—
Sweet pilgrims they of Love in youth's gay time,
Leading the year on to its golden prime.

The birds sang homage to her evermore;
And myriad wingèd things, whose radiant dyes
Made sunshine beautiful, still hover'd o'er,
And bore her witness in the sunlit skies;
And rising from the tomb in glad amaze,
Came many a sainted flower to hymn her praise.

Thus from the streams, and rivers, from the sea,
From the stirr'd bosom of the mighty hills,
From every glade there rose continually
A blessing for her, till with joyous thrills
Earth's bosom heaved, and in man's heart a voice
Echoed the anthem—"Spring is come! Rejoice!"

THE BITTERN.

The reeds are idly waving o'er the marshy ground,
The rank and ragged herbage rots on many a mound,
And desolate pools and marshes deadly lie around.

There is no life nor motion, save the winds that fly
With the close-muffled clouds in silence through the sky,
There is no sound to stir it, save the Bittern's cry;

The Bittern, sitting sadly on the fluted edges
Of pillars once the prop and pride of palace ledges,
Now smear'd with damp decay and sunk in slimy sedges;

Shatter'd and sunken, with the sculptured architrave
Peering above the surface of the sluggish wave,
Like a gaunt limb thrust fleshless from a shallow grave.

The Bittern sitteth sadly on the time-worn stone,
Upon life's mouldering relics, fearfully alone,
Searing the silence oftentimes with his solemn tone.

The Bittern—monarch of the sad and dreary place,
Mocking the pride and pageant of a ruin'd race,
Whose very name's forgotten, and whose deeds have left no trace.

The pleasant songs of peace, the lute, the lover's sigh,
The statesman's eloquence, the warrior's battle-cry
Have pass'd,—and like their echo from the heedless sky,

The lonely Bittern's note comes sadly floating by.

Oh, melancholy sound! Shall thus for ever end
The glory and the greatness whither all hopes tend,
And as the Past comes booming shall the Present wend?

No ear to listen to the old and hard-earn'd glory,
That wore the heart out, made the locks grow scant and hoary,
No ear to listen, and no tongue to tell the story!

The Bittern sitteth 'midst the marshes of the Past,
Sitteth amidst the ruins, whilst the hours fleet fast,
And at his own hoarse cry he looketh round aghast.

The hours fleet fast unnoted, and the time is nigh,
When even he on noiseless wings shall soar on high,
Till his deep note is lost amid the azure sky.

GONE.

The night is dark, and evermore
The thick drops patter on the pane
The wind is weary of the rain,
And round the thatches moaneth sore;
Dark is the night, and cold the air;
And all the trees stand stark and bare,
With leaves spread dank and sere below,
Slow rotting on the plashy clay,
In the God's-acre far away,
Where she, O God! lies cold below—
Cold, cold below!

And many a bitter day and night
Have pour'd their storms upon her breast,
And chill'd her in her long, long rest,
With foul corruption's icy blight;
Earth's dews are freezing round the heart,
Where love alone so late had part;
And evermore the frost and snow
Are burrowing downward through the clay,
In the God's-acre far away,
Where she, O God! lies cold below,—
Cold, cold below!

Those eyes so full of light are dim;
And the clear chalice of her youth,
All sparkling up with love and truth,
Hath Death drain'd keenly from the brim;—
No more can mortal ear rejoice
In the soft music of her voice;
No wistful eye, through tears of woe,
Can pierce down through the heavy clay,
In the God's-acre far away,
Where she, O God! lies cold below,—
Cold, cold below.

A star shines, sudden, from the sky—
God's angel cometh, pure and bright,
Making a radiance through the night,

Unto the place where, mute, I lie,
Gazing up in rapt devotion,
Shaken by a deep emotion;
And my thoughts no longer go
Wandering o'er the plashy clay,
In the God's-acre far away,
Where she, O God! *lay* cold below—
Cold, cold below!

God's angel! ah I divinely bright!
But still the olden grace is there—
The soft brown eyes—the raven hair—
The gentle smile of calm delight,
That could such peace and joy impart—
The veil is rent from off my heart,
And gazing upward, well I know
The rain may beat upon the clay
In the God's-acre far away;
But she no longer lies below,
Enshrouded by the frost and snow—
Cold, cold below!

BEATRICE DI TENDA.

1.

It was too sweet—such dreams do ever fade
When Sorrow shakes the sleeper from his rest—
Life still to me hath been a masquerade,
Woe in Mirth's wildest, gayest mantle drest,
With the heart hidden—but the face display'd.

But now the vizard droppeth, crush'd and torn,
And there is nought left but some tinsell'd rags,
To mock the wearer in the face of morn,
As through the gaping world she feebly drags
Her day-born measure of reproach and scorn.

But that *his* hand should pluck the dream away—
And thus—and thus—O Heaven! it strikes too deep!
The knife that wounds me, if not meant to slay,
Stumbles upon my heart the while I weep:
So be it; no hand of mine its course shall stay.

False? false to him? Release me—let me go
Before Heaven's judgment-seat to make appeal;
Unfold the records of this life, and show
All that the secret pages can reveal,
That Heaven and Earth the inmost truth may know!

He cannot think it in his heart of hearts;
He cannot wear this falsehood in his soul,
Or deem me perjurd; no delusive arts
Can make him blot my name from honour's scroll:
The sun will shine forth when the cloud departs.

Patience, my heart! Error is quick, but Truth
Moves slowly, but moves surely up the earth,
Wiping from age the heresies of youth,

And kindling warmth on the once blasted hearth:
Patience, my heart! and rage will turn to ruth.

There is no blush upon my brow, though tears
Are in mine eyes, and sorrow in my heart;
This sobbing breast heaves not with traitor fears:
No sighs for sin are these that sadly start,
And bear their bitter burden to thine ears.

And though my woman's strength bend like a reed
Before the flowing of Affliction's river,
Not, not for shame, nor for one strumpet deed
Doth this weak frame bow down, or faintly quiver,
As I stand forth alone in deadly need.

No! before thee, Filippo, and the world,
Cased in its petty panoply of scorn,
With myriad slavish lips in mocking curl'd,
Spotless and innocent, though most forlorn,
Here stand I, 'gainst the shafts Falsehood hath hurl'd.

2.

Confess'd! Confess'd the guilty act! What act?
What act, my Lord, that cometh home to me
Closer than each hot word, by torment rack'd,
Flies at the bidding of false tyranny,
That makes at will the pain-wrung falsehood fact?

There are full many sins confess'd, my Lord,
In pain of body and in pain of soul;
Some from the heart unearth'd by fire and sword,
And stealing forth amid the spirit's dole,
With fiery pain-sweat seething every word;

But none, my Lord, that riseth to the sky,
Bears guilt of mine upon its blister'd tongue;
Though torture's fire is quick to forge a lie,
None from these woman's lips could ere be wrung;
No! none, though on the rack-bed bound to die.

Poor youth! This poison from his writhing throat,
Those hellish instruments have haply drawn,
And pain hath conn'd the aspish lies by rote;
But to my heart no poison'd tooth hath gnawn,
For in its pulses lies Truth's antidote.

These limbs, my Lord, can do their task no more;
The rack hath crush'd them in its wild embrace,
So that Truth's firm-set attitude is o'er,
Else had I met my judges face to face,
And challenged justice, as in days of yore.

Yet is the spirit strong within me still,
And bears me up though manhood's strength succumb,
Unbent by any blighting blast of ill,
Through fiery trials, to all false witness dumb;
They cannot stain me, though perchance they kill!

I am a woman—weak to combat wrong,
But innocent, my Lord, I live or die;
And silent, though my God doth tarry long,
He sees me throughly with His holy eye,
And in my sore, sore need, doth make me strong.

This hapless youth! I do forgive him all;
E'en now remorse must rankle in his breast,

And no cool comfort cometh at his call,
To set the tumult of his soul at rest:
God's pity on his human weakness fall!

3.

Nay, falter not, good friend; thy news is sweet;
Thanks, thanks! Ay, sweet as is the welcome wind
That wafts the calm-lock'd seaman, smooth and fleet,
O'er tropic seas unto his sigh'd-for Ind;
Ay! Death will bring rest to my weary feet!

'Tis strange—but now the word falls on mine ear
Soft as the singing of a little child,
Heaven's music on light pinions floateth near,
Through all the strife of Earth, so harsh and wild;
Time's stream is rippling on its marges clear.

The end is nigh—the end of grief and pain,
And Life's broad gates are opening to my soul;
O'er my weak heart no more shall sorrow reign,
Enfranchised soon 'twill spurn the harsh control,
And never feel its empire again.

No more, Filippo, shall my hapless life
Stand betwixt thee and pleasure,—Duty's knot
Shall soon be sever'd by the headsman's knife;
And upon memory one crimson blot
Shall be the record of a spotless wife.

'Tis well! I would not wander through a haunted mind,
Ghost-like and fearful in the evening hours;
Would God that I could leave my peace behind,
To bless thee when the night of sorrow lours,
And thou art rifted by Affliction's wind!

Shouldst thou awake when I have pass'd away,
Shouldst thou see clear the error and the wrong,
And Truth break on thee with its dazzling ray,
As sure it will, for Innocence is strong,
Then may my prayers thine every pang allay!

For thee, poor youth,—go not unto the grave
With a red lie upon thy trembling tongue—
Not for myself, but for thy soul I crave,—
Death's champions should have sinews tightly strung,
And thou wilt falter where I shall be brave.

In that dim world there flows no cooling stream,
No Lethe for the guilty and the fever'd,
There is no answer to their parching scream,
From hope and mercy they are ever sever'd,
There is no waking from their spectral dream.

Then pause or e'er thou stampest on thy soul
Eternally such misery as thine,
And writest on God's conscience-blasting scroll,
A wife's dishonour, and a tarnish'd line,
To weigh for thee thine everlasting dole...

Friend, let thine arm be strong, good sooth there's need,
Thou cuttest through a weary depth of woe!—
Well! that will pass, and soon rest come indeed,—
Ay, ay! the robe's white now ... will't long be so?...
Yet better far the crimson tide should flow,
Than the heart inly with its anguish bleed.

SERENADE.

The day is fading from the sky,
And softly shines the Star of Even,
As watching with a lover's eye
The rest of Earth the peace of Heaven;
The dew is rising cool and sweet,
And, zephyr-rock'd, the flowers are closing,
The Night steals on with noiseless feet,
Oh! gentle be my love's reposing.

The streamlet, as it flows along,
Sounds like a voice 'mid childhood's slumbers;
And from the brake the Queen of Song
Pours forth her softest, clearest numbers;
And ever through the stirless leaves
The summer moon is brightly streaming,
Light fancies on the sward it weaves,—
As radiant be my lady's dreaming.

The silent hours move swiftly on,
With many a blessed vision laden,
That all the night has softly shone
Upon the hearts of youth and maiden;
And now, in golden splendors drest,
The new-born day is gladly breaking,
Oh! blissful be my lady's rest,
And sweet as Morn be her awaking.

THE EAGLE.

The winds sweep by him on his mountain throne,
Hurling the clouds together at his feet,
Till Earth is hidden, lost, and swallow'd up
As in the flood of waters,—and he sits
Eyeing the boundless firmament above,
Proud and unruffled, till his heart exclaims,—
"I am a god, Heaven is my home,—the Earth
Serveth me but for footstool."

The strong winds
Sweep on, and wide his pinions spreadeth he,—
"Bear me afar!" and on the mighty storm
He rides triumphant, spurning the dim Earth—
Whither, O whither goest thou? What star
Shall raise its mountains for thee? What far orb
Echo the fierceness of thy battle-cry?

What dost thou when the thunder is unloosed?
"I sit amongst the crags, and feel the Earth
Tremble beneath me, whilst my heart is firm.
I gaze upon the lightning, and my lid
Quivers not. Is their aught 'neath which my gaze
Quaileth, or waxeth faint—I read the sun
Undazzled where the stars grow dim and pale.

"Men gather them to battle—host meets host—

And I am borne aloft to marshal them,—
I, the great King of Battles, that go forth
Conquering and to conquer. So do men
Worship me. Oh! the mighty crash ascends,—
The shoutings, and the glory, and the woe,
One great full chaunt of homage to mine ears,—
And there I wait the while the sacrifice
Is slain before me; then down with a swoop
I get me from my skyey throne, and dye
Deep in the ruddy stream my talons grey—
Hurrah! hurrah! blood red's the flag for me!"

The time will come, proud one, when thou shalt die!
"Die! Death I cast from me as these loose plumes
That moult out from my pinions—let them go
To Earth, and Death go with them, both I leave
To mortals. What have I to do with Time?
Let him pat forth his speed—these wings of mine
Shall match him stroke for stroke, until we reach
The limits of his empire, and I shake him off
Like dust upon the threshold of the world."

WHITHER?

Whither away, youth, whither away,
With lightsome step, and with joyous heart,
And eyes that Hope's gay glances dart?
Whither away—whither away?

Into the world, the glorious world,
To gain the prize, of the brave and bold,
To snatch the crown from the age of gold—
Into the world—into the world!

Whither away, girl, whither away?
Thy soft blue eyes are suffused with love,
And thy smile is as bright as the sunshine above,—
Whither away, whither away?

Into the world, the beautiful world,
To meet the heart that must mate with mine,
And make the measure of life divine,—
Into the world, into the world.

Whither away, old man, whither away,
With locks of white, and form bent low,
And trembling hands, and steps so slow?
Whither away,—whither away?

Out of the world, Oh! the weary world,
With its empty pleasures, and poison'd joys,
Whose draught first gladdens, and then destroys—
Out of the world, out of the world,
With shatter'd hopes, and with feeble frame,
From Life's sharp struggle, and unsped aim,—
Out of the world, Oh! the weary world.

Whither away, poor one, whither away?
Hurrying swiftly, with weeping eyes,

And hectic cheeks, and smother'd sighs,
Whither away—whither away?

Out of the world, oh! the cold, cold world!
Oh! Father, my heart ... but there is rest
For the sinking soul, and the bruised breast,
Out of the world—out of the world!

THE MORNING STAR.

Night's heavy hand is lifted up at last,
And my freed heart beats evenly again,
Unpress'd by that dull heavy weight of pain
Cast backward from the unforgotten Past;
Darkness no longer muffles Time's slow tread,
Till my own pulse-beat mark the moment fled.

Over the speeding shadows, calm and clear,
Rises the Star of Morn upon the Earth,
Eternal Prophet of the Sun-god's birth,
Shining serenely from its silver sphere
Mute mystic meanings on the strengthen'd soul,
Till all its night-bred vapours backward roll.

Oh, bright-eyed Angel of the undimm'd Light,
Standing upon Heaven's pinnacle, thy glance
Pierces like two-edged sword through many a trance,
Dividing Truth from Dreaming in its might,
Scourging Doubt's myriads from Day's temple-gate,
Leaving Life's worship pure, its heart elate.

No herald thou of Night, like Hesper fair,
Pale with the dreaded Future's shapeless gloom,
Leading the spirit to an unknown doom,
Through clouds and darkness heavy fraught with care,
Hesper the beautiful alone our guide,
Beset by blinding fears on every side.

Groping through Night's dim chambers wearily,
Longing to leave its cold sepulchral aisles,
Comest thou with thy calm assuring smiles,
Like Nemesis to lead us tenderly
Through all the dangers of the murky way,
Unto the golden portals of the Day.

Yea! Night and Death shall pass away, and we,
By resurrection sweet, arise new-born
Like thee in glory, bright one, Sons of Morn,
Without a shade on our felicity,
Eyeing the fleeting vapours of the Past,
As thou dost now Night's mists dissolving fast.

THE DELECTABLE MOUNTAINS.

How light and pleasant is the way
Across this quiet valley, whose soft mead
Springs lightly as the air that angels tread,
 Beneath our footsteps weariless all day!
This crystal river flowing by our side,
One stream of sunshine, still has seem'd a guide
 From Heaven in pure angelical array.

These purple mountains now are nigh,
That all the valley through have fill'd our eyes
With day-dreams of the distant Paradise,
 Their sun-surrounded summits can descry—
We mount them now upon Hope's bounding wing,
That makes each short swift footstep long to spring
 Suddenly upward to the shadeless sky.

The air methinks is lighter here—
And the breast heaves with full untrammell'd ease,
Drinking the life-draught of the fragrant breeze,
 That wafts its soul-sighs to another sphere.
Earth groweth little in our eyes, but fair,
Fair as though sin had never enter'd there—
 Earth groweth little as Heaven draweth near.

This rock—and then at last we stand
Upon the silent summit—scarce I dare
Gaze outward, through the clear and azure air,
 Towards the radiance of the Promised Land:
I am so weak and fallen, friend, I fear
Mine eyes will dazzle, and the light appear
 Darkness, so that I shall not see the Promised Land.

Look thou afar, and tell me true
What thou discernest!—Oh! my eyes grow dim,
And floods of golden glories seem to swim,
 Wave upon wave, through all the cloudless blue,
Blinding me with their sunny splendors quite,
So that, amid the pure excess of light,
 But vaguest visions faintly glimmer through.

Yet now, methinks, I seem to see
One spot of burning brightness, beaming clear
Through all the floating glory, like a sphere
 Quenching light with its own intensity.
Yes! yes! it is the Holy City I behold,
With God's sun, from its towers of burnish'd gold,
 Reflected broadly through immensity!

I must gaze out, although I die:
Ah! yes, I see it through my longing tears—
A great clear glow of glory there appears,
 Like a light-fountain in the eastern sky,
That as I gaze pours forth its living light,
Flooding Creation, till the dazzled sight
 Sees Heaven in all things that around it lie.

So shall it ever henceforth be—
Who, that discerneth once God's dwelling-place,
Can blot from vision the refulgent trace!
 Ay! henceforth all things shall be Heaven to me—
And as I journey on shall brightly rise
Divinest semblances of Paradise—
 Heaven mine in Time and in Eternity.

THE DARK RIVER.

Across the mountains and the hills,
Across the valleys and the swelling seas,
By lakes and rivers whose deep murmur fills
Earth's dreams with sweet prophetic melodies,
Together have we come unto this place,
And here we say farewell a little space:

You, backward turning through the land,
To tarry 'mid its beauty yet awhile—
I, o'er the River, to another strand
With cheerful heart, so part we with a smile.
Shall space have any power o'er god-like souls?
Love shall bridge o'er the stream that 'twixt us rolls!

Together wend we to the tide,
And as the first wave wets my foot, we part;—
E'en now methinks I see the other side;
And, though the stream be swift, a steady heart
And stalwart arm shall quell its cold dark waves.
Faith falters not e'en when the tempest raves.

Dark stream flowing so blackly on,
Thy turbid billows roll o'er golden sands;
Beneath the surface all thy fear is gone,
And precious gems fill full the diver's hands.
Yet how the heart lists breathless for the roar
Of billows plashing on the other shore!

The other shore!—Oh thou dim Land!
Hid by faint mists from the spent swimmer's eyes,
Until upon the sloping bank he stand,
Mute in the light of Eden-mysteries;
Thou golden Ophir of Youth's spirit-dream,
Shall I then reach thee through this turbid stream?

Friend! quail not! This same gloomy tide
Rolling its fearful breakers to the shore,
Shall be transform'd, upon the other side,
Into the crystal Life-stream, shaded o'er
By Paradisal groves, whose mellow fruit
Shall heal the sorrows of the destitute.

These ghostly vapours, brooding low,
Shall melt to sunny glories o'er my head,
And through them shall the golden city glow,
Whither I hasten singing, angel-led;
Friend! there is but a cloud-veil 'twixt us and the light,
One step beyond, and Heaven is in our sight.

Now the stream laps my vesture hem;
Back thou from my sad bosom to the world,
Leaving me here this current cold to stem;
Soon from thy sight shall I be swiftly whirl'd
Into the mystic darkness—never fear!
God's hand shall guide me unto vision clear.

Already thou art growing dim,
And distant on the fast receding shore;
The tide is strong, but still I trust in Him,
And know that I shall safely struggle o'er,
For now the splash on yonder shore I hear,
Amid sweet angel voices calm and clear.

WYTHAM WOODS.

'Mid the waving Woods of Wytham,
Now so far, so far from me,
Where the grand old beeches be,
And the deer-herds feeding by them:
'Mid the mossy Woods of Wytham,
Oft I roam in memory;

Down the grand wide-arching alleys,
Marged by plummy ferns and flowers,
Whence all through the noontide hours
Many a fearless leveret sallies;
For amid those grassy alleys
Never hound nor huntsman scours.

Still I see, through leafy casements,
Wytham Hall so quaint and old,
Remnant of the age of gold,
Gabled o'er from roof to basement
In most fanciful enlacement,
Looking far o'er wood and wold;

With the mere outspread before it;
Whitest swans upon its tide,
That in mystic beauty glide;
And the wild fowl flapping o'er it,
To the reeds that broadly shore it,
Spear-like, on the sunny side.

Through the waving Woods of Wytham,
Now so far, so far from me,
Where I roam in memory;
'Mid the leaves, or flashing by them,
Like sunshine to glorify them,
On my sunless heart gleams she.

Falling like the dreams of summer,
Making holy all the place,
Visions of that sweet pale face,
Sweeter than all dreams of summer,
Dearer than all dreams of summer,
Still in bower and glade I trace!

Still her eyes come deeply glowing
Through the leafy lattices;
And the rustle of the trees,
'Neath the west wind softly blowing,
Only emulates the flowing
Of her love-toned melodies.

Oh! those waving Woods of Wytham—
Ceased she thus to hover near
Radiant from her happy sphere,
Like sunshine to glorify them,
Never would I wander nigh them—
Madly weeping should I fly them,
Till their memory e'en grew sere.

But ah! no, in endless slimmer,
Roams my heart through Wytham Woods,
Meeting in their solitudes
Evermore that angel comer,
Sweeter than the light of summer
Making golden Wytham Woods,

Now so far, so far from me
In the world of Memory.

THE STAR IN THE EAST.

O'er the wide world I wander evermore,
Through wind and weather heedless and alone,
Alike through summer, and through winter hoar,
On cloud-capt mountain, by the sea-wash'd shore,
Seeking the star that riseth in the East.

O'er the wide world—the world that knows not why,
And stares with stupid scorn to see me go;
Whilst I with solemn secret face pass by,
To laugh in desert spots where none are nigh,
Laugh loud and shrill unto the winds, Ho! Ho!
For that which none but I and *it* do know.

To think how when I find this lucky star,
And stand beneath it, like the Wise of old,
I shall mount upward on a golden car,
Girt round with glory unto worlds afar,
While Earth amazed the wonder shall behold,
That bears me unto happiness untold!

Hush! I'll not whisper it, lest some should hear,
And hurry on before me to the spot,
Leaving me bound for ever to this sphere,
Parted for ever from my child—I here,
She in the realm that I could enter not.

Hush! I must hurry on—for many nights
Have I sought for the star about the sky,
And found it not amid the myriad lights,
Greater and lesser with their satellites,
Flashing confusedly upon mine eye.

I must unravel every golden hair
Upon the brow of Night for what I seek,
Lift every straggler from its moony lair,
Lest too *the* star should haply linger there,
Unnoted by mine eyes so faint and weak.

For as the Wise Men did in old time trace
The Holy Child by this same guiding star,
So I know well that by the Virgin's grace,
I too by it shall come unto the place
Where my sweet babe and its nurse-angels are.

Wearisome are the days, they mock me so,
Pouring down light that seems to bid me see,
Yet hides the starry pilot by its glow,
Whose light I thirst for, whilst light-fountains, flow
Around me like the swelling of the sea.

Wearisome are they, till the sun-god pales
Beneath the surges of the western wave,
And the last fold of his golden mantle trails
O'er the horizon where Earth's vision fails,

And space becomes a darkness and a grave.

I oft-times think to curse the Day, that tries
To keep my babe hid in its envious breast,
Smit with its hair of gold, and large blue eyes,
Close hid within its mantle, careless of my sighs,
That night and day must wake it from its rest.

But Patience! when the sun is in the deep,
The Star will beam upon me suddenly,
And ere the sun-god waketh from his sleep,
The dear one shall be mine for whom I weep,
Mine, mine alone for all eternity.

They call me crazed—Ha! ha!—They little know
Who are the crazed of Earth, or they, or I—
They, by their greed of gold urged to and fro,
For petty pleasures bending God's soul low—
I, seeking for my star about the sky.

When it is found,—when it is found, how great
Will be the wonder of these blind and mad!
How great will be the wonder and the hate,
Waking to see the glorious truth too late
Will *he*, too, see his error, and be sad?

The wind sweeps weirdly o'er the heaven to-night,
Weirdly and black, as though from guilty deeds,—
From some sad shipwreck, it has taken flight,
Leaving the drowning in their direful plight—
Leaving the drown'd low waving in the weeds.

No stars, no stars again! Oh woe! again
Night drowns me in its darkness and its gloom,
And I must crouch amidst the wind and rain,
Without one hope-gleam lightening my pain;
All things are leagued to darken down my doom.

Perchance it is that I am growing weak,
And faint with wandering afar, afar,
And my dim eyes see not the thing I seek;
And yet I must not ask, I must not speak,
Nor tell—the secret of the Saviour star.

No! dumb,—dumb,—I shall set me down to scan
Each twinkling orb that rolleth up through space,
Hesper, heaven's loveliest, leading up the van—
To-morrow—yes! to-morrow I shall watch, and man
Shall see this wonder when I reach the place.

Will the babe know me—ope its sweet blue eyes—
And stretch its little arms to clasp me round?
Ah! yes, God will send knowledge from the skies,
In pity for my prayers, and tears, and sighs,
Angels will sing for joy that I have found
My treasure, and *he*—he will hear the sound!

Cold—cold it is—the wind is bitter chill—
And the rain falls like curses on my head—
No! no! not curses, for the drops say still
That there's an end to sorrow, and all ill
Flows from us like the water down a hill;
The star shall shine, and all the clouds be sped....

* * * * *

The sought-for Star uprose upon the dead.

UNDER THE SEA.

Deep in the bosom of the ocean,
Where sunshine fades to twilight gloom,
The pure pearls lie, and the coral bloom
Rests unsway'd by the upper motion—
Calm and still the hours pass by
The lovely things that sleeping lie,
Deep in the bosom of the ocean.

The thunder rolls from cloud to cloud,
And the bitter blast sweeps o'er the sea,
Shaking the waters mightily;
But ne'er the tempest's voice so loud,
Sinketh down to the things that lie—
The lovely things that sleeping lie,
Deep in the bosom of the ocean.

The icebergs crack with a sullen boom,
Riven by the hands of the angry North;
And, like the Angel of Wrath sent forth,
The whirlwind stalks with the breath of doom,
Crushing, like dust 'neath its heavy tread,
The last frail spar o'er the seaman's head;
But nought can reach the things that lie—
The lovely things that sleeping lie,
Deep in the bosom of the ocean.

Deep in the bosom of God's-acre,
Beyond the reach of grief or care,
As sweetly rest the good and fair,
Where Life's rude foes can ne'er o'ertake her;
Calmly and sweetly the hours pass by
The blessèd ones who sleeping lie,
Deep in the bosom of God's-acre.

Patience! thou poor one, faint and weary,
For thou shalt come unto this rest,
And leaning on a mother's breast,
Forget the world to thee so dreary:
Calmly and sweetly the hours pass by
The happy ones who hoping lie
Deep in the bosom of God's-acre.

WIND.

Oh! weird West Wind, that comest from the sea,
Sad with the murmur of the weary waves,
Wand'ring for ever through old ocean caves,
Why troublest thou the hearts that list to thee,
With echoes of forgotten misery?

The night is black with clouds that thou art bringing
From the far waters of the stormy main,
Welling their woes forth wearily in rain,
Betwixt us and the light their dark course winging,
And dreary shadows o'er the spirit flinging.

Whence is thy power to smite the silent heart,
Till as of old the unseal'd waters run?
Whence is thy magic, Oh! thou unseen one,
To make still sorrows from their slumbers start,
And play again, unsought, their bitter part?

We are all one with Nature—every breeze
Stealeth about the chambers of the soul,
Haunting their rest with sounds of joy or dole;
And every cloud that creepeth from the seas,
Traileth its shade o'er human sympathies.

Blow! blow, thou weird wind, till the clouds be rent,
And starlight glimmer through the riven seams,
Scatter their darkness like the mist of dreams,
Till all the fleeting, spectre-gloom be spent,
And the bright Future gem the firmament.

Blow! blow! Night's "Mene Tekel" even now
Glow on her palace-walls, and she shall pass
Like the dim vapour from a burnish'd glass;
And no chill shadows o'er the soul shall go,
Borne by each weeping West Wind to and fro.

A CHALLENGE.

What art thou—friend or foe?
Stand! stand!
My heart is true as steel,
Steady still in woe and weal,
Strong to bear, though quick to feel—
Take my hand!

What art thou—friend or foe?
Stand! stand!
Only my own ease seek I,
I am deaf to Pity's cry,
If men hunger, let them die—
Traitor! stand!

What art thou—friend or foe?
Stand! stand!
I've a kiss for maiden fair,
I've a blow for who may dare,
I've a song to banish care—
Take my hand!

What art thou—friend or foe?
Stand! stand!
I'm your servant whilst you're great,
As you sink, my cares abate,
When you're poor you have my hate,—
Traitor! stand!

What art thou—friend or foe?
Stand! stand!
If you trust me, I'll be true,
If you slight me, I'll slight you,
If you wrong me, you shall rue—

Take my hand!

What art thou—friend or foe?

Stand! stand!

I can work with any tools—
Clothe myself by stripping fools—
Bend the knee whoever rules—
Traitor! stand!

What art thou—friend or foe?

Stand! stand!

I've a heart that hates all wrong,
Aids the weak against the strong,
Loves the Truth, and seeks it long—
Take my hand!

What art thou—friend or foe?

Stand! stand!

I forgive no woman's sin,
Hunt her with self-righteous mien,
Never take her, mourning, in
From the desert of her sin—
Traitor! stand!

What art thou—friend or foe!

Stand! stand!

I've a heart that melts at sorrow,
I've a store the poor may borrow
I'm the same to-day, to-morrow—
Take my hand!

AT PARTING.

Peace! Let me go, or ere it be too late;
Dip not your arrows in the honey-mead;
Paint not the wound through which my heart doth bleed;
Leave me unmock'd, unpitied to my fate—
Peace! Let me go.

Think you that words can smooth my rugged track?
Words heal the stab your soft white hands have made,
Or stir the burthen on my bosom laid?
Winds shook not Earth from Atlas' bended back—
Peace! Let me go.

What though it be the last time we shall meet—
Raise your white brow, and wreath your raven hair,
And fill with music sweet the summer air;
Not this again shall draw me to your feet—
Peace! Let me go.

No laurels from my vanquish'd heart shall wave
Round your triumphant beauty as you go,
Not thus adorn'd work out some other's woe—
Yet, if you will, pluck daisies from my grave!
Peace! Let me go.

A WITHERED ROSE-BUD.

Time sets his footprints on our little Earth,
And, walk he ne'er so softly, some sweet thing
Falls 'neath each foot-fall, crush'd amid its mirth,
Tracking the course of Life's short wandering,
With fallen remnants of its mortal part,
Freeing the soul, but weighing down the heart.

Thou flower of Love! thou little treasury
Of gentleness, and purity, and grace!
What hidden virtue hath Death reft from thee—
What unseen essence melted into space?
For now thou liest like a sinless child,
Whom God hath homeward to his bosom smiled.

The dew-shower fell on thee, the sunbeam play'd,
As Life is ever made of smiles and tears;
And oft-times has the breeze of summer sway'd,
And with its mellow music mock'd thy fears;
But now, O wonder, thou art pale and wan,
And there's a beauty and a fragrance gone!

Thus fade we—thus our hopes and joys, rose-bright,
Yield up their sweetness ere they reach their prime,
And their poor fabrics lie within our sight,
Strip'd of their radiance e'en in summer-time—
Their spirit hath gone from them, and they wither,
But wherefore hath the spirit gone, and whither?

Our knowledge is like dreams amid a sleep—
Faint-pinion'd thoughts that beat the vault of Night,
And flutter earthward—so we smile or weep
At what we know not, cannot see aright;
Life is death, and death is life, perchance,
In the dim twilight of our waking trance.

Thou art a leaf from the great Book of God,
Whose lightest word is wiser than the wise;
And, meekly resting there upon the sod,
Thou breathest upward holy mysteries,
In simple tones that steal upon the sense,
Like Childhood's prattling truth and innocence.

Then, O sweet flower, that in thy low estate
Hast in thee emblems of the life of Man,
Read to our beings whispers of the fate
That waits us at the end of Time's short span;
How short we know not—e'en the bud may be
Gather'd in harvest to eternity.

DE PROFUNDIS.

Turn thine eyes from me, Angel of Heaven—
Read not my soul, Angel of Heaven—
Sorrow is steeping my pale cheeks with weeping,
Evermore keeping her wand on my heart,

On my cold stony heart, while the tear-fountains start
To purge it from leaven too sinful for Heaven—
Read not my soul, yet, Angel of Heaven!

Why hast thou ta'en her, Angel of Heaven?
Ta'en her so soon, Angel of Heaven?
Yearning to gain her, hast thou thus slain her
Ere sin could stain her—borne her away,
Borne her far, far away, into eternal day,
Left me alone to stay—left me to weep and pray?
Why hast thou ta'en her, Angel of Heaven?
Ta'en her so soon, Angel of Heaven?

Shines the place brighter, Angel of Heaven?
Brighter for her, Angel of Heaven?
Comes there not streaming into my dreaming,
At morning's beaming, rays more divine,
Rays from her soul divine, rays giving strength to mine?
Shines she not radiantly over the skies,
Over the morning skies, ere the Earth-vapours rise,
'Twixt me and Paradise, Angel of Heaven?
Her blessed Paradise, Angel of Heaven?

Turn thine eyes to me, Angel of Heaven—
Search through and through me, Angel of Heaven;
Read my soul's yearning, wild, endlessly burning,
Tumultuously spurning Fate's bitter decree,
Fate's tyrannic decree, that tore her from me,
Bore her from me to Eternity.
Merciless Reaper, no more shalt thou keep her
From fond eyes that weep her for ever and ever,
Vain thine endeavour our spirits to sever,
Take my soul with thee, Angel of Heaven,
Bear me unto her, Angel of Heaven.

THE MOTHER.

There is a land whereon the sun's warm gaze,
God-like, all-seeing, falls right down through space,
And the weak Earth, quite smitten by its rays,
Lies scorch'd and powerless with mute silent face,
Like a tranced body, where no changing glow
Tells that the life-streams through its channels flow.

Peopled it is by nations scant and few,
Set far apart among the trackless sands,
Unlearn'd, uncultured, wild and swart of hue,
Roaming the deserts in divided bands,
Where the green pastures call them, and the deer
Troop yet within the range of bow and spear.

Unhappy Afric! can thy boundless plains,
Where the royal lion snuffs the free pure air,
And every breeze laughs at the tyrant's chains,
Be but the nest of slavery and despair,
Rearing a brood whose craven souls can be
Robb'd of the very dream of Liberty?

But, as the shore of this vast sea of sand,
Stretches afar a country rich and green,
With waving foliage shading all the land,
And flowing waters bright with sunny sheen;
And here browse countless herds of dappled deer,
Blesboks and antelopes, remote from fear.

Amid it mighty mountains proudly rise,
Great monarchs of a boundless continent,
Rearing their hoary summits to the skies,
As claiming empire of the firmament;
Gaunt silent majesties of sea and earth,
Stern-featured children of Titanic birth.

Within their shadows many peoples dwell;
Divided kingdoms gather'd round some chief,
With lodges cluster'd by some stream or well,
To yield their cattle ever cool relief
From the fierce scorching of the burning sun,
And slake their hot thirst when the toil is done.

It chanced that war, which still doth enter in
Where men are most or fewest, small or great,
Here of a sudden raised its hellish din,
And woke to fury, lust, and bloody hate;
So that with battles, forays, murders, thefts,
Rang oft the echoes of the mountain clefts.

There was one tribe that in unconscious ease
Slumber'd and thought of danger but in dreams,
Heard not the tramp of men upon the breeze,
While the stars, watching with faint trembling beams,
Saw noiseless spectres round the village creep,
Like apparitions of unquiet sleep.

Then, silence-murder'd, what a yell arose!
And the scared sleepers, rushing forth in fear,
Met death without the portals from dim foes,
Or e'er the warrior could grasp his spear,
Or fit the arrow to his unstrung bow,
Or ward the fatal stroke that laid him low.

So, with the plunder, and a captured band
Of hapless women, ere the morning light
Flitted the victors swiftly through the land,
Red with the trophies of their deadly fight,
Leaving the lion and his hungry crew
To clear the morning of this bloody dew.

To meet them joyous forth their women came,
And led them back in triumph to the fold;
Taunting their foes with many a bitter shame,
Though now they lay in Death's aims stark and cold:
Whilst the poor captives, rack'd with fear and woe,
Cower'd close together from Fate's hapless blow.

Soon there came traders from the coast, and then
The weeping captives all were marshall'd out,
And barter'd singly with the heartless men,
Each bosom trembling still with fear and doubt;
But when the truth burst on them, a hoarse cry
Of wild despair ascended to the sky.

There was one there who from the Tree of Life
Pluck'd yet the blossoms with the fruit of years;
Scarce yet a woman, though a meek-soul'd wife,
And with a babe to claim her prayers and tears,

A tender bud of early summer time
Ere breezy woods are in their verdant prime.

Her 'mongst the rest they barter'd, and the child,
Too young to sever from its mother's breast,
Left they unnoticed, whilst she, poor one, wild
'Twixt hope and fear, still held it closely prest
Unto her heart, whose throbbings, loud and deep,
Beat an alarum through the infant's sleep.

But soon her master, as he hasten'd off
With his new purchases, the infant caught,
And bid the mother, with a heartless scoff,
Fling it away: said he, "'Tis good for nought;
None of this lumber can we have, the road
Is long enough to tread without a load."

The mother clasp'd her babe with bitter cry,
But a rude hand enforced it from her arms,
And the rough steward held it up on high,
Laughing aloud the while at her alarms;
Said he unto his master; "This shall be
A bait to draw her on with willingly."

He bound around the infant's waist a line,
That fasten'd to his crupper, and then gave
The babe back to her, laughing,— "That end's thine—
The other stays with me;" "A witty slave!"
The master chuckled, and they moved away,
She following with anguish and dismay.

They journey'd o'er the desert, 'neath a sky
Scorch'd by the fiery footsteps of the sun,
Without a shade to bless the wistful eye;
And soon her fellow slaves droop'd, one by one,
Callous to blows that harshly drove them on,
Strength, hope, and love of life all seeming gone.

But she went onward with no word or plaint,
Clasping the child unto her bosom still,
Unflagging when all else began to faint,
Intent to save her little one from ill;
And they look'd on her as she sped along,
Wond'ring what made so frail a creature strong.

At eve she bent above her sleeping treasure,
With eyes that wept for pity and for love,
Filling its cup of life in richer measure,
With the blest care that watches us above;
And in the morn they bound the babe again,
And so drew on the mother in their train.

Her tender feet soon wounded were, and sore
With the rough travel, and the weary way,
And her slight limbs, o'ertask'd and loaded, bore
Less lightly up their burden day by day;
But, nature failing, Love imparted power
To bear her steps up to the resting hour.

Alas! the mother gazed with aching eyes
Upon the life-spring in her little child,
As one laid by a fountain while it dries;
Daily she watch'd it ebb, till she grew wild
With anguish at the Angel drawing near,
And bared her own breast for his fatal spear.

She lost all sense of weariness and pain,

And with hot tearless eyes still hurried on,
Bearing the child girt by its cruel chain,
All thought save of her cherish'd burden gone,
Fearful alone lest other eyes should guess
The feeble thing her longing arms did press.

At last they saw the babe was weaker growing,
That soon the little spark of life must fade,
So, spite of all her prayers, and wild tears flowing,
Beside a spring the sleeping child they laid,
And bid her onward, heedless of her woe
But on the earth she fell, and would not go.

They raised her up, and bound her on a steed,
And so march'd onward on their weary way—
For there was none to help her in her need,
And thus they travell'd eastward all the day,
But when they rested, and on each bow'd head
Sleep heavy lay, the mother rose and fled.

And speeding swiftly with a lapwing's flight,
Backward she hurried to the little spring,
Led by a power that knoweth not the night,
But flies through darkness with unerring wing;
And so e'er morning shimmer'd in the East,
She clasp'd her dead babe to her panting breast.

At morn they miss'd her, and the women said,
"She seeks her babe beside the distant well,
There wilt thou find her, if she be not dead,
For O! the love of mother who can tell."
And so the steward gallop'd back in haste,
To seek the lost one in the desert waste.

At last the spring rose in the distant sand,
With its close verdure pleasant to the eye,
And there, as, nearing it, the place he scann'd,
He saw the mother with her infant lie,
Quiet and stilly on each other's breast,
Folded together in unbroken rest;

Her arms around it thrown, that e'en in sleep
Still press'd the infant to her stricken heart,
No rest so perfect, no repose so deep,
From her sweet babe the mother's love to part.
Before him loud and bitter curses sped—
Who heard him?—for the mother too lay dead.

SONNET.

DATUR HORA QUIETI.

The sun is slowly sinking in the West;
The plough lies idle, and the weary team,
Cool'd with the freshness of the shallow stream,
Over the meadows hasten to their rest;
The breeze is hush'd, and no more turns the mill,
With its light sails upon yon rising crest;
Its busy music now awhile is still,

And not a sound heaves up from Nature's breast;
The barks upon the river smoothly ride,
With sails all furl'd, and flags that listless fall,
Unrock'd, unshaken by the flowing tide;
The cattle lazy lie within the stall;
And thus the Time-stream on doth sweetly glide,
Bearing repose and slumber unto all.

SEA MARGINS.

Ever restless, ever toiling,
Fretting fiercely on its narrow bounds,
Still filling heaven and earth with mournful sounds,
Old ocean, sullen from its rocks recoiling,
Rearing wild waves foam-crested to the sky,
Lashes again the beaches angrily:

Slowly victor-like advancing,
Marching roughly o'er the conquer'd land,
Clean sweeping olden limits from the strand,
In proud derision o'er the spoil'd Earth glancing,
Where 'neath its ruthless tide on hill or plain,
No flower or shady leaf shall bud again.

Slowly thus the ocean creeping,
Creeping coldly o'er the world of old,
Stole many an Eden from the Age of Gold,
And gazing now we see blank billows sweeping,
Long cheerless wavings of the sullen seas,
Were once the sun shone bright on flowery leas.

Over Earth, and over Being,
Over many glories of the Past,
Remorseless floods are flowing fierce and fast,
Snatching sun-lighted Tempes from our seeing,
Rolling their dreary surges o'er the shore,
Where Love had hoped to dwell for evermore.

Sadly on Time's heaving ocean,
Waving darkly o'er Youth's Paradise,
Back gaze we ever with dim tearful eyes,
Seeking old joys beyond its rude commotion,
Seeking the old world glories pass'd away,
Seeking the golden shores of Life's Cathay.

SONG.

Love took me softly by the hand,
Love led me all the country o'er,
And show'd me beauty in the land,

That I had never dreamt before,
Never before, Oh! Love! sweet Love!

There was a glory in the morn,
There was a calmness in the night,
A mildness by the south wind borne,
That I had never felt aright,
Never aright, Oh! Love! sweet Love!

But now it cannot pass away,
I see it wheresoe'er I go,
And in my heart by night and day,
Its gladness waveth to and fro,
By night and day, Oh! Love! sweet Love!

THE BELL.

Through the calm and silent air
Floats the tolling funeral bell,
Swooning over hill and dell,
Heavy laden with despair;
Mute between each muffled stroke,
Sad as though a dead voice spoke,
Out of the dim Past time spoke,
Stands my heart all mute with care.

The Bell is tolling on, and deep,
Deep and drear into my heart
All its bitter accents dart.
Peace! sad chime, I will not weep—
What is there within thy tone,
That should wring my heart alone,
Rive it with this endless moan?
Peace! and let past sorrows sleep!

Fling your music on the breeze,
Mock the sighing of the willows,
Mock the lapping of the billows,
Mock not human sympathies;
Slow chime, sad chime, mock me not,
With that loved voice ne'er forgot,
Flooding me with tears blood-hot;
Mock not soul-deep memories!

Come not from the unseen Past,
Flying up the silent gale,
With that deep and muffled wail,
Slaying me with lying tale,
Base chime, false chime from the Past!
Not in sighs of mortal pain,
Pain and anguish rise again,
Voices from the far Death-plain—
Not thus speaks she from the Past.

Peace! yet—for though she speaks not
From her Paradise in thee,
Whispers nevermore to me
In my lonely misery,

Oh! that loved voice ne'er forgot,
Thou dost wake my brooding soul,
Smit'st it till the bitter dole
Breaks aloud beyond controul,
While the briny tear-drops roll,
Drowning, cries which she hears not.

Cruel Bell! harsh Bell! ring on,
I shall turn my heart to stone,
Flinging back thy mocking tone,
Callous of thy deepest moan
Lying Bell! thy power is gone!
Spake she from her golden cloud,
Spake she to my heart aloud,
Every murmur of her voice,
Would bid my lone heart rejoice;
Every murmur of her voice,
Ah! would make my heart rejoice,
Lying Bell! thy power is gone.

LLEWELLYN.

I.—*In the Porch.*

MORGAN *and a* MONK.

MORGAN.

The tale is pitiful. 'Twas on this wise—
Llewellyn went at morn among the hills,
To hunt, as is his use. My lady, too,
With all her maidens, early sallied forth,
A pilgrimage among the neighbouring vales,
Culling of simples, nor yet comes she home;
And so the child lay sleeping in his crib,
With Gelert—you remember the old hound?
He pull'd the stag of ten down by the Holy Well—
With Gelert set to watch him like a nurse.

MONK.

The dog alone? nay! friend, but that is strange!

MORGAN.

Strange! Not a whit, for fifty times before
The hound hath kept him like his own bred whelp,
And ne'er a one could touch him; but the child
Play'd with his shaggy ears and great rough coat,
As no grown man had dared.

MONK.

I know there is
A strange nobility in dogs, to bear
The utmost sport of children, that would seize
Man by the throat e'en for a finger touch—
But to your tale—

MORGAN.

Well! suddenly at noon,
Llewellyn, baffled of his game, hied back,
Striding right grimly in his discontent,
And whistling, oft his spear upon the ground,
Slaying the visions of his fretful dreams;
And presently he thought him of his child:
So with its winsome ways to wile the time,
He went unto the chamber where it lay,
Watch'd o'er by Gelert, as his custom was:
But there, alack! or that the child had crost
The savage humour of the beast, or that
Some sudden madness had embolden'd it,
He saw the child lie bloody mid the sheets,
Slain by the hound, as it would seem, for there
Lay Gelert lapping from his chaps the blood,
That hung in gouts from every grisly curl.

MONK.

O Heaven! the woful deed! What did your lord?

MORGAN.

You know the hasty humour of the man,
That brooks no let betwixt him and his mood—
He slew the old hound with his heavy spear,
That almost licking of his feet fell dead;
For Gelert loved him well, and, crouching, took
Without a cry the blow that struck his heart.

MONK.

This is a sorry day for all the house; they say
Llewellyn had his soul set on the child.

MORGAN.

His soul! Ay, marry! many a time and oft
I've seen the man's great heart stare from his eyes,
Just like a girl's, out at the crowing boy:
And yesterday it was he perch'd him fair
Upon his broad rough shoulder, like a lamb
Laid on the topmost reaches of a hill,
And so he bore him, all his face a-glow,
When heralds came with war-notes from the king;
At which he turn'd him soft—the startled babe
Still set astride, and looking fondly up,
Said he, "See! here's the only lord that sets
His foot upon my shoulder." The man's heart
Scarce beats, I warrant, now the child is dead.

MONK.

And hath he master'd aught his sorrow now,
Or still rides passion curbless through his soul?

MORGAN.

Ah! there, good Father, lies the chiefest woe,
For in the slaying of the hound his rage
Quite spent its force, and now I fear me much
His mind bath lost its olden empery.

MONK.

Nay! Death smites passion still upon the mouth,
And its grim shade is silence—'Tis no sign.

MORGAN.

But in this one act all his fury pass'd;
And turning softly from the dead child there,
Suffering none to touch it where it lay,
He sat him down in awful calmness nigh,
And gazed forth blankly like a sculptured face;
And when we fain would pass to take the child,
A strange wild voice still warns us back again,
"Hush! for the boy is sleeping." It would seem
He will not think that Death hath struck the babe,
But blinds his willing soul, and deems it sleep.

MONK.

A longer sleep, whose waking is not here!
Poor soul! that, catching at the skirts of Truth,
Muffleth his eyes that he may see her not.

MORGAN.

Good Father! go thou to him, for this doubt
That lays its stony spell upon his heart,
Is sadder far than tears—

MONK.

It is mine office
Still to bear balm unto the bleeding heart;
Then lead on, friend, and let us trust in Heaven.

[*They pass in.*]

II.—*In the Chamber.*

LLEWELLYN *and* MONK.

MONK.

Benedicite! my son;

LLEWELLYN.

Hush! speak low,
The child is sleeping.

MONK.

Ay! we should speak low
Where Death is, though no sound can ever wake
Those whom he cradles in his bony arms.

LLEWELLYN.

Who speaks of Death in presence of a child!

MONK.

Alas! my son, the bud though ne'er so close
It fold the fragrant treasure of its youth,
Is by the nip of Winter shorn betimes.

LLEWELLYN.

Though Death should grimly stalk into the house,
And stand beside the slumber of a child,
Think you that gazing on its mimic self,
Sleep, beautiful and wondrous, in the crib,
His owlish thoughts would not wing suddenly,
Through cycles of decay, back to the time
When he was one with Sleep, and passing fair;
Think you he would not sigh, "Sleep, on! sleep on!
Thou copy and thou counterfeit of me,
And teach the world that I was beautiful."
The child is sleeping.

MONK.

O my son! my son!
These are delusions that but wrong the soul,
And keep the aching thoughts from peace and Heaven.

LLEWELLYN.

Why, Father, if Death woke him as he lay,
The lad would look up at him with a smile,
And twist his little limbs in childish sport,
Until the angel, surfeited with fear,
Would love and spare the thing that fear'd him not.
No man could see his pretty ways and frown,—
And he was full of little childish tricks,
That won the very heart out of a man
In spite of him. There's Beowulf the Curst,
With ne'er a gentle word for man or child,
But cold and crusty as a northern hill—
Why this day sen'night did my master there,
Crawl up his knees without a Yea or Nay,
And toy'd him with his sword-hilt merrily,
Till the rough man, caught with his gamesome arts,
Swore that he had the making of a man;
And, for the maids, there's none but has a word,
Or kiss to bandy with the gainsome lad;
Ay! when he wakes you'll see how he will crow,
And fill the place with laughter—he's no girl,
Puking and mewling evermore—not he.

MONK.

Good lack! my son, your heart is too much set
Upon the child, to bow before Heav'n's will,
That turns your soul back to itself with stripes;
Oh! know you not, Sir, that the child is dead?

LLEWELLYN.

You all have conn'd the same wise tale by rote—
The child is sleeping; hush! and wake him not.

MONK.

Nay! doth your mind not stumble on the truth,
Here by this old hound lying at your feet,
With all his clotted blood in crimson pools
Curdling among the rushes on the floor?

LLEWELLYN.

The hound?—the hound—Poor Gelert! well-a-day!
It was ill-done of me—a wicked stroke,
A wicked stroke—and the boy, too, asleep.

And now I mind me how he loved the dog;
How many an hour he sported in the sun,
Twining his grisly neck with summer buds;
And how the dog was patient with the boy,
Yielding him gently to his little arms—
There was a lion's heart in the old hound!
The deed's accursed—accursed—the child will wake,
And call for Gelert with his merry voice;
And when the dog no more comes stalking nigh,
With great mild head to meet the outstretch'd hands,
The child will sob his heart out for his friend;
For, Sir, his nature is right full of love,
And generous affections, never slack
To let his soul have space and mastery—
A wicked stroke!

MONK.

Ah! would his voice could sound
Ever again among your silent halls;
But the sweet treble never more shall ring
Across the chambers to your wistful ear;
Then hear it now come floating down from heav'n,
Calling your lone and bleeding heart to God.

LLEWELLYN.

His voice was very sweet, a silvery stream
Of music, rippling softly through my life—
And ne'er to hear his little prattling tongue,
Stumbling upon the threshold steps of speech,
Catching quaint sounds and fragments of discourse,
And setting them to childish uses straight—
I've sat and heard him by the hour—you'd wonder
To hear his little saws and sentences,
And now to think I'll hear him never more—
Alack! alack!—but no, it is not true—
The child is sleeping—Ay! it must be so.
What know you, Father, of an infant's sleep?
You, in your stony cell 'mid shaven friars,
All crowding down the nether side of life,
Hearing no sweeter voice than matin-bells,
No speech, but grace in cold refectories;
Ay! thence it is—Oh fool! that I should doubt!
'Tis so—'tis so—I knew that I should pluck
The cowl from your delusion—Is't not so?

MONK.

Oh son, your woful faith moves all my heart.
'Tis pitiful! but see you not the blood
That hotly streaks your sleeping lily there?
See how it laces all his garments o'er,
And signs the grievous sentence of your joy.

LLEWELLYN.

Blood?—blood?—nay, how is this?—I—very like
The sun shines redly on him—I have seen
The sky look ruddy, as with all the blood
Of battle-fields, where no man cried for grace.
Blood? look, Sir; look again—I—something clouds
Mine eyes to-day—I see more thick than wont.

MONK.

Nay! lean on me—Come! look upon your child,
And Heav'n in ruth will smite your drouthy heart,
And send the balm of tears about your soul.

III.—*In the heart of the Child.*

There is a little dove that sits
Between the arches all alone,
Cut and carved in old grey stone,
And a spider o'er it flits:

Round and round his web is spun,
With the still bird looking through,
From among the beads of dew,
Set in glories of the sun.

So the bird looks out at morn
At the larks that mount the sky,
And it gazes, still and shy,
At the new moon's scanty horn.

And the owls, that fly by night,
Mock it from the ivied tower,
Hooting at the midnight hour
Down upon it from the height.

But the little dove sits on,
Calm between the arches there,
In the holy morning air,
When the owls with night are gone.

Then the bells for matins ring,
And the grey friars past it go,
Into church in double row,
And it hears the chaunts they sing.

And the incense stealing out
Through the chinks, and through the seams,
Floats among the dusty beams,
And wreathes all the bird about.

All the children as they pass
Turn to see the bird of stone,
'Twixt the arches all alone,
Wading to it through the grass.

Is the spider's pretty net,
Hung across the arches there,
But a frail and foolish snare
For the little stone bird set?

If the place should e'er decay,
And the tower be crumbled down,
And the arches overthrown,
Would the dove then fly away?

So that, seeking it around,
All some golden summer day,
'Mid the ruins as they lay,
It should never more be found?

IV.—*In the Chamber.*

LLEWELLYN *and* MONK.

LLEWELLYN.

My little one! my joy! my hope! dead—dead—
I did not think to see this sorry sight.

MONK.

Holy St. David! is this death, or sleep?

LLEWELLYN.

Nay! Father, that is past—I am a man
Once more, and look at Sorrow in the eyes;
Let Truth e'en smite me with her two-edged blade,
But smite me, like a warrior, face to face.

MONK.

I stand all in amaze! or do I dream,
Or see I now the motion of a breath,
Ruffling the pouting lips that stand ajar?

LLEWELLYN.

Oh! Father, mock me not—I know that Death
Sits lightly on him as a dreamless sleep;
So dear a bud can never lose its sweets;
Oh! foolish heart! I thought to see him grow
In strength and beauty, like a sapling oak,
Spreading his stalwart shoots about the sky,
Till, when old age set burdens on my back,
In every bough my trembling hands should find
A staff to prop me onward to the grave;
And now—my heart is shaken somewhat sorely.

MONK.

Sir! This is wondrous—let me take the child,
For sure mine eyes do cheat me, or he lives.

LLEWELLYN.

Father, this is not well to mock me so;
My heart is sated with the draught of Hope,
And, loathing, turns from the delusive cup;
Nay! touch him not—'tis well that he should lie,
Calm and unquestion'd, on the breast of Heav'n;
Yet once again my lips must flutter his,
He may not be so distant, but that Love
May send its greeting flying on his track—
The lips are warm—my God! he lives! he lives!

[Takes the child, who awakes in his arms.]

MONK.

Faith! This is stranger than a gossip's tale!
My son! the wonderment o'ermasters you—
Nay! look not thus—let Nature have her way—
Give words to joy, and be your thanks first paid
To Heav'n, that sends you thus your child again.

LLEWELLYN.

The joy was almost more than man might bear!
And still my thoughts are lost in wild amaze—
The child unhurt—this blood—the hound—in troth,
The riddle passes my poor wits.

MONK.

Let's search
The chamber well—Heav'n shield us! what is this?

LLEWELLYN.

A wolf! and dead!—Ah! now I see it clear—
The hound kept worthy watch, and in my haste
I slew the saviour of my house and joy.
Poor Gelert! thou shalt have such recompense
As man may pay unto the dead—Thy name
Henceforth shall stand for Faithfulness, and men
For evermore shall speak thine epitaph.

A SHELL.

From what rock-hollow'd cavern deep in ocean,
Where jagged columns break the billow's beat,
Whirl'd upward by some wild mid-world commotion,
Has this rose-tinted shell steer'd to my feet?

Perchance the wave that bore it has rejoiced
Above Man's founder'd hopes, and shatter'd pride,
Whilst fierce Euroclydon swept, trumpet-voiced,
Through the frail spars, and hurl'd them in the tide,
And the lost seamen floated at its side!

Ah! thus too oft do Woe and Beauty meet,
Swept onward by the self-same tide of fate,
The bitter following swift upon the sweet,
Close, close together, yet how separate!

Frail waif from the sublime storm-shaken sea,
Thou seem'st the childhood toy of some old king,
Who 'mid the shock of nations lights on thee,
And instant backward do his thoughts take wing
To the unclouded days of infancy;
Then, sighing, thus away the foolish joy doth fling.

Forth from thine inner chambers come there out
Low murmurs of sweet mystic melodies,
Old Neptune's couch winding lone caves about,
In tones that faintly through the waves arise,
And steal to mortal ears in softest sighs.

The poet dreams of olden ages flowing
Through the time-ocean to the listening soul,
Ages when from each fountain clear and glowing,
Unto the spirit Naiad voices stole.

And still, from earth and sea, there ever pealeth
A voice far softer than leal lover's lay,
Bearing the heart, o'er which its true sense stealeth,
Far to diviner dreams of joy away,
And to the wisdom of a riper day.

THE RAVEN.

There sat a raven 'mid the pines so dark,
The pines so silent and so dark at morn
A ragged bird with feathers rough and torn,
Whetting his grimy beak upon the bark,
And croaking hoarsely to the woods forlorn.

Blood red the sky and misty in the east—
Low vapours creeping bleakly o'er the hills—
The rain will soon come plashing on the rills—
No sound in all the place of bird or beast,
Save that hoarse croak that all the woodland fills.

A slimy pool all rank with rotting weeds,
Close by the pines there at the highway side;
No ripple on its green and stagnant tide,
Where only cold and still the horse-leech breeds—
Ugh! might not here some bloody murder hide!

Pshaw! ... Cold the air slow stealing through the trees,
Scarce rustling the moist leaves beneath its tread—
A fearful breast thus holds its breath for dread!
There is no healthful music in this breeze,
It sounds ... ha! ha! ... like sighs above the dead!

What frights yon raven 'mid the pines so dark,
The pines so silent and so dark around,
With ne'er accomplish'd circlings to the ground
Ruffling his wings so ragged and so stark?
Some half-dead victim haply hath he found.

Ho! raven, now with thee I'll share the spoil!
This way, methinks, the dying game hath trod—
Ay! broken twigs, and blood upon the sod—
These thorns are sharp! well! soon will end the toil—
This bough aside, and then the prize ... My God!...

SONNETS

ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

1.

The Land stood still to listen all that day,
And 'mid the hush of many a wrangling tongue,
Forth from the cannon's mouth the signal rung,
That from the earth a man had pass'd away—
A mighty Man, that over many a field
Roll'd back the tide of Battle on the foe,—
Thus far, no further, shall thy billows go.
Who Freedom's falchion did right nobly wield,
Like potter's vessel smiting Tyrants down,
And from Earth's strongest snatching Victory's crown;
Upon the anvil of each Battle-plain,
Still beating swords to ploughshares. All is past,—
The glory, and the labour, and the pain—
The Conqueror is conquer'd here at last.

2.

Yet other men have wrought, and fought, and won,
Cutting with crimson sword Fame's Gordian knot,
And, dying, nations wonder'd—and forgot,—
But this Man's name shall circle with the sun;
And when our children's children feel the glow,
That ripens them unconsciously to men,
Asking, with upturn'd face, "What did he then?"
One answer from each quicken'd heart shall flow—
"This Man submerg'd the Doer in the Deed,
Toil'd on for Duty, nor of Fame took heed;
Hew'd out his name upon the great world's sides.
In sure-aim'd strokes of nobleness and worth,
And never more Time's devastating tides
Shall wear the steadfast record from the Earth."

3.

This Duty, known and done, which all men praise,
Is it a thing for heroes utterly?
Or claims it aught, O Man! from thee and me,
Amid the sweat and grime of working days?
Stand forth, thou Conqueror, before God's throne,
Thou ruler, thou Earth-leader, great and strong,
Behold thy work, thy doing, labour'd long,
Before that mighty Presence little grown.
Stand forth, thou Man, low toiling 'mid the lees,
That measurest Duty out in poor degrees;
Are not all deeds, beside the deeds of Heaven,
But as the sands upon the ocean shore,
Which, softly breath'd on by God's winds, are driven
Into dim deserts, thenceforth seen no more!

4.

Then make thou Life heroic, O! thou Man,
Though not in Earth's eyes, still in Heaven's, which see
Each task accomplish'd not in poor degree,
But as fain workings out of Duty's plan,—
The hewers and the drawers of the land,
No whit behind the mighty and the great,
Bearing unmoved the burden of the State,—
Alike each duty challenged at man's hand.
Life is built up of smallest atomics,
Pile upon pile the ramparts still increase,
And as those, Roman walls, o'er which in scorn
The scoffer leapt, soon held the world at bay,
So shall thy deeds of duty, lowly born,
Be thy strong tower and glory ere the set of day.

THE PASSAGE-BIRDS.

Far, far away, over land and sea,
When Winter comes with his cold, cold breath,
And chills the flowers to the sleep of death,
Far, far away over land and sea,

Like a band of spirits the Passage-birds flee.

Round the old grey spire in the evening calm,
No more they circle in sportive glee,
Hearing the hum of the vesper psalm,
And the swell of the organ so far below;
But far, far away, over land and sea,
In the still mid-air the swift Passage-birds go.

Over the earth that is scarcely seen
Through the curtain of vapour that waves between,
O'er city and hamlet, o'er hill and plain,
O'er forest green, and o'er mountain hoar,
They flit like shadows, and pass the shore,
And wing their way o'er the pathless main.

There is no rest for the weary wing,
No quivering bough where the feet can cling;
To the North, to the South, to the East, to the West,
The ocean lies with its heaving breast,
Within it, without it there is no rest.

The tempest gathers beneath them far,
The Wind-god rides on his battle-car,
And the roar of the thunder, the lightning-flash,
Break on the waves with a sullen crash;
But Silence reigns where the Passage-birds fly,
And o'er them stretches the clear blue sky.

The day wears out, and the starry night
Hushes the world to sleep, to sleep;
The dew-shower falls in the still moonlight,
And none wake now, save those who weep;
But rustling on through the starry night,
Like a band of spirits the Passage-birds flee,
Cleaving the darkness above the sea,
Swift and straight as an arrow's flight.
Is the wind their guide through the trackless sky?
For here there's no landmark to travel by.

The first faint streak of the morning glows,
Like the feeble blush on the budding rose;
And in long grey lines the clouds divide,
And march away with retreating Night,
Whilst the bright gleams of victorious Light,
Follow them goldenly far and wide:
And when the mists have all pass'd away,
And left the heavens serene and clear,
As an eye that has never shed a tear
And the universe basks in the smile of Day,
Dreamy and still, and the sleepy breeze,
Lazily moves o'er the glassy seas,
The Passage-birds flit o'er the disc of noon,
Like shadows across a mirror's face,
For now their journey wanes apace,
And the realms of Summer they'll enter soon.

The land looms far through the waters blue,
The Land of Promise, the Land of Rest;
Through cloud and storm they have travell'd true,
And joy thrills now in each throbbing breast
Down they sink, with a wheeling flight,
Whilst the song of birds comes floating high,
And they pass the lark in the sunny sky;
But down, without pausing, down they fly;
Their travel is over, their Summer shines bright.

MEMNON.

Hot blows the wild simoom across the waste,
The desert waste, amid the dreary sand,
With fiery breath swift burning up the land,
O'er the scared pilgrim, speeding on in haste,
Hurling fierce death-drifts with broad-scorching hand.

O weary Wilderness! No shady tree
To spread its arms around the fainting soul;
No spring to sparkle in the parchèd bowl;
No refuge in the drear immensity,
Where lies the Past, wreck'd 'neath a sandy sea,
Where o'er its glories blighting billows roll.

Ho! Sea, yield up thy buried dead again;
Heave back thy waves, and let the Past arise;
Restore Time's relics to the startled skies,
Till giant shadows tremble on the plain,
And awe the heart with old-world mysteries!

Old Memnon! Once again thy Poet-voice
May sing sweet paeans to the golden Morn,
Again may hail the saviour Light sun-born,
And bid the wild and desert waste rejoice,—
Again with sighs the looming darkness mourn.

Thou Watchman, waiting weary for the dawn,
Breathing low longings for its golden light,
Through the dim silence of the drowsy night,
What wistful sighs with thine are softly drawn,
Till day-beams on the darken'd spirit smite!

The dawning light of Knowledge smites thee now,
And forth from the dim Past come voices clear,
Falling in solemn music on the ear,
Which, as the haloes brighten on thy brow,
Shall still in richer harmonies draw near.

The Past comes back in music soft and sweet,
And lo! the Present like a strung harp stands
Waiting the sweeping of prophetic hands,
To send its living music, loud and fleet,
Careering calmly through unnumber'd lands.

Then swift uprising, thou Sun, thou Music-Maker!
Smiting the chords of Life with gladsome rays,
Till from each Memnon burst the song of praise,
From lips which thou hast freed, O silence-breaker!
That over Earth the sound may swell always.

* * * * *

NOTE—It will of course be remembered that the celebrated statue of Memnon was believed to utter lugubrious and mournful sounds at sunset, and during the hours of darkness, which changed to sounds of joy as the first rays of morning fell upon it.

A CONCEIT.

The Grey-beard Winter sat alone and still,
Locking his treasures in the flinty earth;
And like a miser comfortless and chill,
Frown'd upon pleasure and rejected mirth;

But Spring came, gentle Spring, the young, the fair,
And with her smiles subdued his frosty heart,
So that for very joy to see her there,
His soul, relenting, play'd the lover's part;

And nought could bring too lovely or too sweet,
To lavish on the bright Evangel's head;
No flowers too radiant for her tender feet;
No joys too blissful o'er her life to shed.

And thus the land became a Paradise,
A new-made Eden, redolent of joy,
Where beauty blossom'd under sunny skies,
And peaceful pleasure reign'd without alloy.

THE LAND'S END.

I stood on the Land's End, alone and still.
Man might have been unmade, for no frail trace
Of mortal labour startled the wild place,
And only sea-mews with their wailing shrill,
Circl'd beneath me over the dark sea,
Flashing the waves with pinions snowy white,
That glimmer'd faintly in the gloomy light
Betwixt the foaming furrows constantly.
It was a mighty cape, that proudly rose
Above the world of waters, high and steep,
With many a scar and fissure fathoms deep,
Upon whose ledges lodged the endless snows;
A noble brow to a firm-founded world,
That at the limits of its empire stood,
Fronting the ocean in its roughest mood,
And all its fury calmly backward hurl'd.
The Midnight Sun rose like an angry god,
Girt round with clouds, through which a lurid glow
Fev'rously trembled to the waves below,
And smote the waters with a fiery rod;
Above, the glory circled up the sky,
Fainter and fainter to the sullen grey,
Till the black under-drift of clouds away
Went with the gathering wind, and let it die.
A moaning sound swept o'er the heaving ocean,
Toss'd hoarsely on from angry crest to crest,
Like groans from a great soul in its unrest,
Stirring the ranks of men to fierce commotion.
My longing vision measured the wide waste,
"This cannot be the end of things; that man
Should see his path lead on so short a span,
And then the unstable ocean mock his haste!
Better have stay'd where I could still look on,
And see a sturdy world to bear my feet,
Than thus outstrip the multitude to cheat
Earth of its knowledge, and here find it gone."

A Shadow rose betwixt me and the sky,
Out of the Ocean, as it seem'd, that set
A perfect shape before mine eyes, and yet
Hid not the sky that did behind it lie;
But, through its misty substance, all things grew
Faint, pale, and ghostly, and the risen sun
Gleam'd like a fiery globe half quench'd and dun,
Through the sere shadow which the spectre threw:
It answer'd me, "Man! this is not the end;
Progression ceaseth not until the goal
Of all perfection stop the running soul,
Whither through life its aspirations tend.
Spring from thy height, then, for till thou art free
From earth, thy course is narrow and restrain'd!"
I said, "No! Spirit, nought were thus attain'd;
Better pause here than perish in the sea;
Man can but do his utmost—there's a length
He cannot overleap." The spectre smiled,
"Then trust to me; for though the sea be wild,
It cannot shake the sinews of my strength,—
Within my breast the fearful fall asleep,
And wake out of their terrors, calm and still,
Having outstripp'd the speed of time and ill,
And pass'd unconsciously the stormy deep."
Quicker and quicker drew I in my breath,
"If there be land beyond, receive me now;
I'll trust in thee—but, Spirit, who art thou?"
The winds bore on a murmur, "I am Death!"

THE OLDEN TIME.

O! well I mind the olden time,
The sweet, sweet olden time;
When I did long for eve all day,
And watch'd upon the new-mown grass
The shadows slowly eastward pass,
And o'er the meadows glide away,
Till I could steal, with heart elate,
Unto the little cottage-gate,
In the sweet, sweet olden time.

O! well I mind the olden time,
The sweet, sweet olden time;
How all the night I long'd for morn,
And bless'd the thrush whose early note
The silver chords of silence smote
With greetings to the day new-born;
For then again, with heart elate,
I hoped to meet her at the gate,
In the sweet, sweet olden time.

But now hath pass'd the olden time,
That sweet, sweet olden time;
And there is neither morn nor night
That bears a freight of hopes and fears,
To bless my soul in coming years
With any harvest of delight;

For never more, with heart elate,
Can I behold her at the gate,
As in the sweet, sweet olden time.

For the sake of that dear olden time,
That sweet, sweet olden time,
I look forth ever sadly still,
And hope the time may come again,
When Life hath borne its meed of pain,
And stoutly struggled up the hill,
When I once more, with heart elate,
May meet her at *another* gate,
Beyond the blighting breath of fate,
That chill'd the sweet, sweet olden time.

FATHER AND SON.

The King call'd forth his first-born, and took him by the hand,
"Come! boy, and see the people you must soon command:

A bold and stalwart nation, dauntless in the fight,
Strong as an iron buckler to guard their monarch's right."

Then the trumpets sounded, and his vassals came,
Gather'd round his banner, loudly rang his name;

Clash'd their burnish'd targets, waved their flashing steel
A goodly gath'ring look'd they, arm'd from head to heel.

"Child! my heart beats proudly, now I feel a king,
As I look around me on this martial ring;

There I see the sinews that support a state,
There I see the strength that makes a monarch great.

Men whose life is glory—men whose death is fame,
Living still in story past the reach of shame."

Many years pass'd over—the old King was dead,
And his child, his first-born, reignèd in his stead.

Many years he reignèd, and upon his brow
Now the frost of age lay like the winter's snow.

So he took his son forth, as his father had,
"Come! and see thy people," said he to the lad.

And they rode together through the busy town:
Many a peaceful merchant passing up and down;

Loud the workman's hammer sounded through the air
Portly look'd the craftsmen, standing 'mid their ware;

And the sounds of labour, blent with cheerful song,
Told of peace and plenty as they rode along.

Smith and craftsman pausing, youth and smiling lass,
Trader, man and master, stood to see them pass,

With a bonnet lifted, and "God bless him!" said
By many a gentle bosom, many a reverend head.

So the father turn'd him to his son and cried,
"Are not these bold subjects worth a monarch's pride?"

In their own free circles, by their quiet hearth,
Rearing him a bulwark steady as the Earth:

On their mighty anvils, with a giant's skill,
Bending stubborn iron to his lightest will:

Prosperous and happy, free in heart and soul,
These send forth my glory to the furthest Pole.

Where is there in story any fame above
That King's whose deeds are written in his people's love?"

ORION.

"A hunter of shadows, himself a shade."—HOMER.

Oh! weary sleeper by the lone sea-shore,
Where billows toil for ever 'mid the rocks,
Scourged on by winds in stormy equinox,
Rise! rise in haste, or slumber evermore!
The stern Earth calls thee, and the Ocean mocks;
Roll thy poor sightless orbs about the sky,
Through tears of blind and powerless agony;
Rise! rise in haste, or slumber evermore!

Ay! blind I stand beside the lone sea-shore;
Hearing the mighty murmur of the waves,
Shaking with giant arms earth's architraves,
Scaling the riven cloud-crag bald and boar,
Surging hoarse secrets through the central caves;
God! shall thine ocean undiscernèd roll,
Night on mine eyes, and darkness on my soul,
Groping for knowledge blindly evermore?

Wild laugh the winds, Ho! ho! about my face;
Heaven! mock me not!—with night-struck eyes upraised,
Still fronting full the dome where once I gazed,
Yearns my unsighted soul through dimmest space—
Before it let these earth-mists sink abased;
Let me behold the All before I die,
Passing, swift-wing'd, into Eternity;
Let me no more these shapeless shadows chase!

Is there not Phoebus in the golden East,
Pouring forth floods of brilliancy divine,
That fire the spirit more than Jove's own wine?
Arise! and drain the droppings of the feast!—
Heaven! there's no East for these blind eyes of mine,
Staring the sun down into black eclipse!
What hand will raise the chalice to my lips?
Give me a child to guide me—e'en the least.

Then on! thou giant, child-led, through the land,
Tottering feebly with uncertain stride,
With heavy moans along the mountain side,
Groping the darkness wildly, staff in hand,

Staying, deep-voiced, the quick steps of thy guide;
On! with wild sightless sockets to the sun,
Thirsting for the light-streams that around it run;
Far on yon summit, turning eastward, stand!

God! let me rather die than thus, child-led,
Totter about the world an infant's slave—
Ay! die, and darkly slumber in the grave!—
Peace! proud one, bow thine unsubmitting head;
Peace! soon the light-streams shall thine eyelids lave,
And wash this barren blindness from thy soul,
Till these dark mystic vapours backward roll,
And leave all nature in thy sight outspread.

We are upon the summit now. Ho! boy,
Place me where I shall see the sun arise,
When its great glory lightens up; mine eyes—
Oh! that I thus should be an infant's toy!—
See, now the morning streaks the Eastern skies!
Ay! boy, I feel the light-spring bubbling up;
My lips are parch'd, and thirsting for the cup
That now brims up my everlasting joy.

There is a low thin cloud along the sky,
That melts away apace to brightest gold!
Ay! boy, so shall my clouds melt fold on fold,
Till glory flood my vision utterly.
The sun! the sun! I see it upward roll'd,—
Day for the world, but life, fire-life for me,
Smiting asunder Death's night-mystery
With lightning-blade of strength and ecstasy!

Now, on to work and action, seeing clear—
Blindness swift throwing to Time's charnel-place—
Eyeing, unscathed, the Sun-god face to face!
Ho! light! more light! dissolving sphere on sphere!
Would that my very life could lighten space,
Shining out like some constellation bright,
Back beating all the myrmidons of Night,
With starry splendors flashing sword and spear!

THE GOLDEN WATER.

[It is scarcely necessary to say that the following fragment is founded upon the beautiful, and well-known tale in the "Arabian Nights," entitled, "The two Sisters who were jealous of their younger Sister;" and the reader need only be reminded that the two brothers of Perizade, Bahman and Perviz, had previously gone in search of the treasures described by the Devotee, and had perished in the attempt,—the fate of the latter having just been intimated to her at the commencement of this episode, by the fixture of the pearls in the magic chaplet, which Perviz had left her for that purpose.]

The days flow'd on, and each day Perizade
At morn and eve told o'er the snowy pearls,
That morn and eve ran swiftly through her hands;
The days flow'd on—one morn the pearls ran not,
And well she knew that Perviz too was lost.
Tears doubled every bead; but, evermore,
Through pain and sorrow, yearn'd her thirsting soul

For that far Golden Water in the East,
Whence one bright drop would fill her fountain full,
With glistening jets still rising in the midst.
She rose up straight, and donning man's attire,
For that the road was hard and difficult,
Took horse, and towards the sunrise swiftly rode,
Saying, "Thus much life lacks of perfectness,
In God's name on to gain it then, or die."

She sped right onward nineteen days in haste,
Morning and noontide turning not aside;
Then, as the next day dawn'd, afar she saw
The aged Dervise 'neath his lonely tree.
No other shape of man or beast in view,
Dull grey the sky, and moaning low the wind.
"O! holy man, now tell me, for God's grace,
Where in the Land the Golden Water flows?"
He, lifting slow his head with locks snow-white,
And rheumy eyes, spake out with feeble voice,
"Good youth! the place I know, yet ask me not;
Bid not these aged lips the secret tell;
That hath wooed on so many to their death.
Thirst for Earth's honours, for her wealth, her joys,
Thirst for the sweetest things beneath the sky,
But O! thirst not for that far Golden Spring,
By many sought, by none ere found till now."
She, softly, with her open hand upraised,
"Nay! Father, from afar I hither come.
And all my heart is set upon the thing,
So that there is no joy 'neath sun and moon,
No rarest charm can move me, lacking it;
Tell me then all the dangers of the quest,
That I may measure well my strength, and know
If mortal man may meet it and o'ercome."
With sad dissenting mien, and solemn voice,
That trembled 'neath its burden, thus spake he,—
"Full many of the good and bold have come
From every land the pilgrim-sun looks on,
All thirsting for this water golden bright;
These darkening eyes have seen them all pass on,
But ne'er a one return; and I am old.
Hear then, poor youth, and turn while yet you may;
A mid-day's journey hence a mountain stands,
Rugged and bare as outcast poverty,
With many a gap and chasm yawning wide,
With many a rock to drive the climber back;
And, far above, the summit hides in clouds,—
There springs the Golden Water through the rock
Brighter than sunlight in a summer noon;
But as the weary seeker toils aloft,
Rude voices rush upon him, loud and shrill,
Now far, now near, but all with anger fraught,
Rough menace, insult, and hoarse mockery;
Whereat the wondering climber, turning back,
In fury, or in fear, to meet the foe
Shouting loud threats e'en in his very ear,
Stands face to face with Death, and sinks transform'd
Into cold stone, 'mongst myriads more that lie,
And all day fright him with their dreary stare.
Ay! he that setteth forth upon this quest,
And looketh ever back for friend or foe,
For cruel laughter, or for mocking jeers,
Turns straight to stone like all beside his path;
But once upon the summit, at his feet
Flows the pure Golden Water, bright and clear."

"This frights me not, O Father; for meseems
He is unworthy who should turn aside
For any mocking voice of man or maid;
Then tell me quick the way, that I may on;
Mine eyes look only forward, and mine ears
Hear only the far flowing of the spring.
Two brothers there lie lock'd in stony sleep,—
I go to wake them on the mountain's side."
The Dervise laid his forehead in the dust,
"Allah go with thee, since it must be so!
Take thou this ebon bowl, and cast it down;
The ball will roll before thee swift and sure,
Until it stop beneath the mountain's side;
There stop thou; and, dismounting, leave thy steed,
And climb the fearful hill; but oh! beware
Thy glance turn never backward on the way!
Above, the golden fountain bubbles clear,
Whose water, sprinkled o'er these dead black stones,
Will wake the sleepers from their chilly sleep."

With lips compress'd she took the ebon bowl,
And cast it on before the startled steed;
Swiftly it roll'd, and swiftly follow'd she;
The road all desolate—no shade of tree,
No living thing about the dreary waste;
No sound but of her courser's clanging hoofs,
His shaking tassels, and his measured breath;
Afar, the mountain black against the sky.
Still onward roll'd the ball, until the sun
Stood midway in the heavens, a fiery red,
Looking through clouds with half his glory quench'd;
And then it stopp'd close at the mountain's base.
Perizade straightway leapt from off her steed,
And threw the bridle on his arching neck
With calm caress, and left him neighing low;
One glance along the mountain, black and bare,
With low mists creeping o'er its rocky sides;
Mysterious exhalations veiling all the peak;
Dead silence—O but for a passing wind
To mimic Life beside her living soul!
Then upward with quick footsteps firm and bold.
Before her myriad dull black stones lay strewn,
Fearful to see, and know that souls of men
Lay prison'd in their cold and heavy frames.—
Sudden behind her sprang a mighty cry,
"Ho! Traitress! turn, or die!" and evermore
Voices leapt out to wound her, like sharp swords,
With words of contumely, and mocking taunts,
Scoffs at her woman's heart 'mid manhood's guise,
Threats, rude defiances on every side.
At first she clomb, nigh stunn'd with wrathful cries,
Now at her side, whilst she would shrink in fear
To feel the sword's point pierce her fluttering heart,
Now from afar, below her and above,
Till she scarce breath'd, awaiting o'erturn'd rocks
To crush her in their fury as she went.
Yet, minding well the Dervise, still she held
Her pale face forward, with eyes ever bent
Towards the misty summit far away.

More slowly soon her heart beat, and she laugh'd,
Like echo, at the scornful taunts and jeers;
"Scoff on!" she cried, "How small a thing it is
That scorn pursue us like a backward shade,
Whilst there is still the broad sun on before."

Weary and steep the path through cloud and mist,
Piercing the darkness on an unknown way;
But still she onward trod, and near'd the top,
Whence voices louder, fiercer ever came,
"Back, fool! intruder! sacrilegious wretch!
Slay the mad climber! crush her to the dust!"
Once stood she half irresolute, her hands
Press'd hotly on her too oppressèd heart;
But still she thirsted for the golden spring,
And with her soul made strength to reach the top,
Sighing, "Thus much Life lacks of perfectness,
In God's name on to gain it then, or die!"

Upon the summit totter'd she at last:
Far, far below the vapours tossing lay,
A great broad sea of heaving cloud and mist;
And upward the clear sky, as soft and blue
As a child's heaven—the sun unveil'd and bright.
No wrathful voices hover'd round her now,
But low sweet music of Aeolian tone,
With all the sadness melted into joy.
Unto the spring she hurried, breathing short,
And there the Golden Water bubbled up,
Like summer morning rising in the East,—
A crystal chalice sparkled on the marge.
She fill'd it from the precious tide in haste,
And raised the clear elixir to her lips;
And then, as at a draught from Lethe's tide,
Her weariness pass'd from her suddenly,
And in her heart great peace and joy arose.

Then from the chalice pour'd she on the stones,
That lay all cold and black upon the path,
And at that mystic baptism, anew
Sprang up the chilly sleepers in amaze,
Their stony hearts back-melted into Life;
Soon follow'd her a train of noble youths,
Gather'd from East, and West, and North, and South,
The rarest and the goodliest of Earth.
Bahman and Perviz, risen with the rest,
Walk'd at her side with wonder-stricken hearts,
Gazing upon her through kind tearful eyes.
Each found his steed beside the mountain base,
And mounted, all that goodly company,
She with her crystal chalice at the head.

Then with her soft voice trembling through the crowd,
"Back let us to the world from whence we came;
And since that Life hath many Golden Springs,
Hath many joys to gain through toil and doubt,
Still let us scale the mountain for the prize,
And close our ears to Folly's wagging tongue."

They spurr'd along until the sun sank low,
And by the way arose the lonely tree,
Mere sat the Dervise, rheumy-eyed and old—
Blood-red the western sky—the clouds back waved,
And one faint star pale glimmering in the height—
There found they still the Dervise 'neath his tree,
Where he had pointed them the Eastern way,
Now sleeping the last sleep with smiling lips.
"The Golden Water found, his task is done,
And now the Watcher calmly takes his rest!"
Then on in silence through the quiet night.

YEARS AGO.

This day it was—Ah! years ago,
Long years ago, when first we met;
When first her voice thrill'd through my heart,
Aeolian-sweet, thrill'd through my heart;
And glances from her soft brown eyes,
Like gleamings out of Paradise,
Shone on my heart, and made it bright
With fulness of celestial light;
This day it seems—this day—and yet,
Ah! years ago—long years ago.

This day it was—Ah! years ago,
Long years ago, when first I knew
How all her beauty fill'd my soul,
With mystic glory fill'd my soul;
And every word and smile she gave,
Like motions of a sunlit wave,
Rock'd me with divine emotion,
Joyous, o'er Life's smiling ocean;
This day it seems—this day—and yet,
Ah! years ago—long years ago.

This day it was—Ah! years ago,
Long years ago, when first I heard,
Amid the silence of my soul,
The fearful silence of my soul,
That warning voice of doom declare—
O God! unmoved by my despair—
How her soft eyes would lose their light,
Their holy, pure, and stainless light,
And all the beauty of her being
Fade sadly, swiftly from my seeing;
This day it seems—Ah me! this day,
Though years ago—sad years ago.

This day it was—Ah! years ago,
Long years ago, when dumb I stood
Beside that little grass-green mound—
Would I had lain beneath the mound!—
And gazed out through my briny tears,
Upon the future lonely years,
Upon the cold, bleak, cheerless years,
Till Earth should ope her grassy breast,
And take me to my welcome rest,
Where she in Death's cold arms lay prest;
This day it seems—Ah me! this day,
Though years ago—sad years ago.

This day it was—Ah! years ago,
Long years ago; and yet I still
Gaze through moist eyes upon the Past,
The cherish'd, unforgotten Past;
Gaze onward through the coming days,
And wonder, with a sweet amaze,
What sunrise with its rosy light
Will bring her to my longing sight;
What sunset with its golden glow
Will o'er the long-sought slumber flow,
Amid whose visions she shall gleam,
As once she did through youth's sweet dream,
Ah! years ago—long years ago.

VULCAN.

From the darksome earth-mine lifted,
From the clay and from the rock
Loosen'd out with many a shock;
Slowly from the clay-dross sifted,
Molten in the fire bright-burning,
Ever purer, whiter turning—
Ho! the anvil, cool and steady,
For the soften'd rod make ready!

Blow, thou wind, upon the flame,
Raise it ever higher, hotter,
Till, like clay before the potter,
Soft become the iron frame,
Bending at the worker's will,
All his purpose to fulfil—
Ho! the fire-purged rod is ready
For the anvil, cool and steady!

At each stroke the sparks fly brightly
Upward from the glowing mass;
Hail! the stroke that makes them pass,
Fall it heavy, fall it lightly!
Now the stubborn strength bends humbly,
To the Master yielding dumbly;
From the metal, purged and glowing,
Forms of freest grace are flowing.

Wield thine hammer well, strong arm!
Strength to Beauty [*] wedded brings
Glory out of rudest things,
Facts from mere imaginings;
Strike from steel its hidden charm!
Little reck the rocks the blow
That makes the living water flow;
Little recks man's soul the rod
That scourges it through tears to God.

[*Footnote: Vulcan was wedded to Venus.]

SONG.

The days are past, the days are past,
When we did meet, my love and I;
And youthful joys are fading fast,
Like radiant angels up the sky;
But still with every dawning day
Come back the blessed thoughts of old,
Like sunshine in a morn of May,
To keep the heart from growing cold.

The flowers are gone, the leaves are shed,
That waved about us as we stray'd;
And many a bird for aye has fled,
That chaunted to us from the glade;

Yet every leaf and flower that springs
In beauty round the ripening year,
And every summer carol brings
New sweetness from the old time dear.

GUY OF WARWICK.

AN EPISODE.

Autumn went faintly flying o'er the land,
Trailing her golden hair along the West,
Weeping to find her waving fields despoil'd,
Her yellow leaves all floating on the wind:
And Winter grim came stalking from the North.
Around the coast rough blasts began to blow,
And toss the seas about in giant sport,
Lurking without to catch unwary sails,
And snap their bellying seams against the mast.
So Guy lay idly waiting in the port,
Gazing out eastward through the stormy mist,
Gazing out eastward morn and closing eve,
Seeking some break amid the hurtling clouds.
But many days the same wind strongly blew,
Keeping his bark close moor'd within the bay,
Jerking the cable, like a restive steed.
And waiting thus impatient to be gone,
Looking out seaward from the dripping wharf,
Strange rumours fill'd his ears, from inland come,
How all the land around his native place
Was devastated by a mighty Beast,
Most terrible to see, and passing strong.
They told him how it slew both man and brute,
Destroying every living thing around,
And laying waste the land for many a mile;
And how 'twas thought no blade, by mortal wrought,
Could cleave its way into the monster's heart;
And then they told him how his lord the King
Had late proclaim'd through all the country round,
That whosoe'er should slay the noisome Beast,
Should straight be knighted by his kingly sword,
And honour'd greatly in the rescued land.

Yet none was found so stout of heart and limb,
To venture in this perilous emprise;
"But ah!" they said, supposing him far off,
"If famous Guy were here, there were a man
Would rid us of this monster presently.
But as for him, he speeds away through France,
Bearing to other lands his strength, that, faith,
Were better spent at home amongst his kin."

And still the East wind bluster'd to the shore.

Now Guy, whose ears still tingled all the day
With these strange murmurs of the troubled land,
Began to feel his heart with pity move;
And, for his soul still fretted at delay,
Like a leash'd hound that scents the flying game,

He straight resolved to take this quarrel up,
And for his country's weal to slay the Beast.

So he arose, girt on his trusty sword,
And with his bow and quiver slung behind,
And at his belt his mighty battle-axe,
Rode calmly forth to slay the hurtful Beast.
And no man knew that he was Guy, for all
Believed him far away on foreign shores;
Which pleased him passing well, "Because," he said,
"I do this thing for Phoelice and the King,
And none shall know but Heaven that sees the deed.
But when the country feels returning joy,
Her heart will flutter with a secret thought."

And all the land was desolate and waste;
The fields stood rotting 'neath the Autumn rains,
And no man pluckt the sodden corn that lay,
Dead ripe, along the furrows 'mid the weeds;
No cattle browsed upon the long rank grass,
Or paused to gaze upon him as he rode;
The cottages, deserted all in haste,
Stood open-door'd and rifted by the winds,
With cold grey ashes scatter'd o'er the hearth.
Here he beheld the homely meal spread forth,
Which no man ate; and there, upon the floor,
An o'erturn'd cradle, whence a mother late
Had snatch'd her babe up with a cry, and fled.

And all his heart was sore with what he saw,
For he met none to wish him once "God speed;"
So he spurr'd onward swifter to the place
Where lurk'd the monster that thus spoil'd the land;
And long the road seem'd to him in his wrath.
At last he came unto the fearful spot,
Mark'd with the blanching bones of man and beast;
A thicket planted by a lonely heath,
O'ergrown with brambles and unwholesome weeds,
That clasping trees around with witch-like arms,
Poison'd their life out, and still held them dead.
And at one side there stretch'd a stagnant pool,
Unstirr'd by any grateful breeze, but thick
With slimy leaves, and rushes all forlorn,
And every footstep on the spongy bank
Fill'd straightway with the oozing of decay.
The Beast hid in the bosom of this wood;
And as Guy went he saw two eyes of fire
Burn through the darkness of the wood, like blasts
Sent from a smith's forge suddenly at night.
But, nought dismay'd, he bent his bow of steel,
And sent an arrow whirring through the leaves.
He heard the shaft ring on the monster's ribs,
And backward leap, as when a falchion strikes
Full on a warrior's casque with fiery force;
Whereat with roaring horrible to hear,
Like storm-winds belching through a cavern's mouth,
Forth rush'd the monster, furious and grim,
With open jaws and reeking breath at Guy;
Who, leaping nimbly back, put forth his strength,
And struck her full between the eyes a blow
That made the stout axe quiver in his hand.
But, nothing hurt, the madden'd Beast rush'd on,
And nigh o'erwhelm'd him in her headlong course,
Denting his breastplate, wrought of temper'd steel,
With the close home-thrust of her pointed horns.

But Guy, swift wheeling round his snorting steed,
Thought on his Phoelice, and, with mighty strength,
Launch'd forth a stroke that made the thick blood flow
In loathsome torrents from a gaping wound.
So, cheer'd at heart, he thunder'd blow on blow,
Till, with a bellow of despair and pain,
The monster tore the earth, and, writhing, died.

And when Guy saw that he had slain the Beast,
He was right glad, and full of sweet content.
And so he wiped his blood-stain'd battle-axe,
And rode with lighten'd heart in haste away
To bear the welcome tidings to the town.
And as he pass'd, or that he dreamt, or saw,
It seem'd as though the land bloom'd up again,
And sunshine fill'd the air with hope and life.
And so he bore the tidings to the town—
And when the people heard the Beast was dead,
They gather'd round with tears and cries of joy,
And scarce found words to thank and honour him.
And one brought forth her babe, and held him up,
And cried, "Look, child upon him, that your soul
May know the fashion of a noble man!"

But still he told no man that he was Guy.

And all desired to lead him to the King,
But he would not, and turn'd another way—
"Nay! friends," said he, "I need no recompense.
For in the doing of a worthy deed
Lies all the honour that a man should seek."
And thus he turn'd away unto the sea,
And would not tarry, or for prayers, or tears;
And when he came unto the quiet port,
He said no word unto his waiting men,
But gazed out seaward; and the waves were down,
The clouds fast breaking, and the West wind blew;
And many a sail sped swiftly o'er the main,
White in the sunshine as a sea-gull's wing—
And so he went on ship-board cheerily,
And they hove anchor with a right good-will,
And spreading canvas to the welcome breeze,
Bore swiftly out into the open sea;
And Guy stood silent in the dipping bows,
Gazing out seaward with a strange still smile.

AT EVENTIDE.

The day fades fast;
And backward ebbs the tide of light
From the far hills in billows bright,
Scattering foam, as they sweep past,
O'er the low clouds that bank the sky,
And barrier day off solemnly.

Above the land
Grey shadows stretch out, still and cold,
Flinging o'er water, wood, and wold,

Mysterious shapes, whose ghastly hand
Presses down sorrow on the heart,
And silence on the lips that part.

The dew-mist broods
Heavy and low o'er field and fen,
Like gloom above the souls of men;
And through the forest solitudes
The fitful night-wind rustles by,
Breathing many a wailing sigh—

O Day! O Life!
Ending in gloom together here—
Though not one star of Hope appear,
Still through the cold bleak Future gaze,
That mocks thee with its murky haze;
Soon morn shall end the doubt, the strife,
And give unto thy weeping eyes
The far night-guarded Paradise!

A DIRGE.

Winds are sighing round the drooping eaves;
Sadly float the midnight hours away;
Dun and grey athwart the ivy-leaves,
Fall the first pale chilly tints of day,
Ah me! the weary, weary tints of day.

Soon the darkness will be past and gone;
Soon the silence spread its noiseless wing;
Sleep will strike its tent and hurry on;
Life commence its weary wandering,
Ah me! its weary, weary wandering.

Not the sighing of my lonely heart,
Not the heavy grief-clouds hanging o'er,
Not its silence can with night depart:
Gloom hangs o'er it ever, evermore,
Ah me! darkness ever, evermore.

TO MY DREAM-LOVE.

Where art thou, oh! my Beautiful? Afar
I seek thee sadly, till the day is done,
And o'er the splendour of the setting sun,
Cold, calm, and silvery, floats the evening star;
Where art thou? Ah! where art thou, hid in light
That haunts me, yet still wraps thee from my sight?

Not wholly—ah! not wholly—still Love's eyes
Trace thy dim beauty through the mystic veil,

Like the young moon that glimmers faint and pale,
At noontide through the sun-web of the skies;
But ah! I ope mine arms, and thou art gone,
And only Memory knows where thou hast shone.

Night—Night the tender, the compassionate,
Binds thee, gem-like, amid her raven hair;
I dream—I see—I feel that thou art there—
And stand all weeping at Sleep's golden gate,
Till the leaves open, and the glory streams
Down through my trancèd soul in radiant dreams.

Too short—too short—soon comes the chilly morn,
To shake from love's boughs all their sleep-born bloom,
And wake my heart back to its bitter doom,
Sending me through the land down-cast, forlorn,
Whilst thou, my Beautiful, art far away,
Bearing the brightness from my joyless day.

I stand and gaze across Earth's fairest sea,
And still the plashing of the restless main,
Sounds like the clashing of a prisoner's chain,
That binds me, oh! my Beautiful, from thee.
Oh! sea-bird, flashing past on snow-white wing,
Bear my soul to her in thy wandering.

My heart is weary gazing o'er the sea;
O'er the long dreary lines that close the sky;
Through solemn sun-sets ever mournfully,
Gazing in vain, my Beautiful, for thee;
Hearing the sullen waves for evermore
Dashing around me on the lonely shore.

But tides creep lazily about the sands,
Washing frail landmarks, Lethe-like, away,
And though their records perish day by day,
Still stand I ever, with close claspèd hands,
Gazing far westward o'er the heaving sea,
Gazing in vain, my Beautiful, for thee.

A NIGHT SCENE.

The lights have faded from the little casement,
As though her closing eyes had brought on night;
And now she dreams—Ah! dreams supremely bright,
While silence reigns around from roof to basement.
And slow the moon is mounting up the sky,
Drawing Heaven's myriads in her queenly train,
Flinging rich largesse, as she passes by,
Of beauty freely over hill and plain.

Around the lattice creep the pure white roses,
And one light bough rests gently on the pane,
The diamond pane, through which the angel train
Gaze on the sister saint who there reposes;
The moonlight silvers softly o'er it now;
And round the eaves the south wind whispers lowly,
Waving the leaves like curls on maiden's brow;

The peace and stillness make the place seem holy.

The little garden where she daily strays,
Sleeps like the precinct of a place enchanted;
And many a flower by her own dear hands planted,
Waves mystically 'neath the starry rays.

There is such strange still beauty in the spot,
That in the misty moonshine oft it seems
A vision that the waking eye sees not,
But some fair plesance blooming up in dreams.

The dew distillèd perfumes richly rise,
And float unseen about the silent air,
Breathing a balmy sweetness everywhere,
Like some blest secret fresh from Paradise;
Upon the soul dim thoughts of Eden press,
Within the stillness of this inner shrine,
Where Nature has unveil'd her loveliness,
And to the angels bared her soul divine.

There is no sound upon the ear of Night;
The distant watch-dog's bay hath sunk to rest;
The thrush is brooding o'er his quiet nest;
And the light clouds sweep on with noiseless flight.
O heart, why beat so wildly—she will hear,
And start from slumber in serene surprise—
Away! away! why longer linger here
To mar the silence with thy swelling sighs!

SONNET.

O Cloud so golden, stealing o'er the sky,
Like pensive thought across a virgin mind,
Scarce sadder than the sunshine left behind;
Would that o'er heaven with thee my soul could fly,
Scanning Earth's beauty with a lover's eye,
Tracing the waving waters and the woods,
Their sleepy shades and silent solitudes,
Where all the summer through I long to lie.
O Cloud so golden stealing o'er the sky,
Sail'd I within thy bosom o'er heaven's main,
Methinks that, gazing downward on the glory,
The liquid loveliness of sea and plain,
Of mountain, isle, and leafy promontory,
My soul would melt and fall again in rain.

FLOATING DOWN THE RIVER.

My little bark glides steadily along,
Still and unshaken as a summer dream;

And never falls the oar into the stream,
For 'tis but morning, and the current strong;
So let the ripples bear me as they will;
Sweet, sweet is Life, and every sound is song;
Sorrow lies sleeping, and Joy sends me still
Swift floating down the River.

Bright shines the sun athwart the linden-trees;
One little cloud alone steals o'er the sky,
As o'er the widening stream below steal I,
Fann'd by the same faint perfume-laden breeze;
Bird-music answers sweetly through the air,
The unheard warbling of heart melodies;
Thus go I dreaming, free from faintest care,
Swift floating down the River.

Pure lie the broad-leaved lilies on the tide,
With glowing petals in the midst, that rest
Like the gold shower on Danae's lovely breast;
And the tall rushes cluster on the side.
Ho! sweet-lipp'd lily, thou must be my prize—
Thus shall I pluck thee in thy beauty's pride!
Fail'd—all too steadily my shallop hies,
Swift floating down the River.

The stream fast widens, and upon the shore
Rise busy hamlets 'mid the falling woods,
Filling their shorn and broken solitudes,
With labour's clamour ever more and more:
No more, no more in dreams of love all day,
Rich set in music from the forests hoar,
Now gaily speeds my untoss'd bark away,
Swift floating down the River.

Let me take oar, and turn mine eager prow,
Back to the quiet waveless source again,
Where no harsh sound breaks on the dreaming brain,
And winds steal softly round the careless brow,—
Swift as a dream my tiny bark hath gone,
And stoutly though I ply the oar, yet now
My weary shallop still goes sadly on,
Swift floating down the River.

Ah! never more for me—Ah! never more
Return those blessed morning hours again;
The sun beats hotly on my throbbing brain,
And no cool shade waves friendly from the shore:
My feeble oar dips powerless utterly,
And onward, onward, though I struggle sore,
Still goes my bark towards the surging sea,
Swift floating down the River.

Welcome art thou, O cool and fragrant eve!
Welcome art thou, though night pursue thee fast
With thee the burning and the toil roll past,
And there is time to gaze back and to grieve.
Hoarse ocean-murmurs fall upon mine ears,
And round me now prophetic billows heave,
As on I go, out-looking through salt tears,
Swift floating down the River,
Swift floating to the Sea.

ORPHEUS.

About the land I wander, all forlorn,
About the land, with sorrow-quenchèd eyes;
Seeking my love among the silent woods;
Seeking her by the fountains and the streams;
Calling her name unto lone mountain tops;
Sending it flying on the clouds to heaven.
I drop my tears amid the dews at morn;
I trouble all the night with prayers and sighs,
That, like a veil thick set with golden stars,
Hideth my woe, but cannot silence it;
Yet never more at morning, noon, or night,
Cometh there answer back, Eurydice,
Thy voice speaks never more, Eurydice;
O far, death-stricken, lost Eurydice!

Hear'st thou my weary cries, Eurydice?
Hearing, but answering not from out the past,
Wrapp'd in thy robe of everlasting light,
Round which the accents flutter faintly,
Like larks slow panting upward to the sun?
Or roll the golden sands of day away,
And never more the voice of my despair
Trickles among them o'er thine unmoved ear,
Though every grove doth multiply the sound,
And all the land sigh forth "Eurydice"?

My heart is all untamed for evermore;
The strings hang loose and warp'd for evermore;
The rocks resound not with my olden songs,
Nor melt in echoes on the trancèd breeze;
The streams flow on to music all their own;
The magic of my lyre hath pass'd away,
For Love ne'er sweeps sweet music from its chords;
For thou art pass'd away, Eurydice;
Thou tuner of my song, Eurydice;
And there is nought to guide the erring tones
That once breath'd but of thee, Eurydice;
That made each breeze sweet with Eurydice;
And taught each fountain and each running stream
To sing of thee, O lost Eurydice!

The serpent saw thee, O Eurydice!
The serpent slew thee, O Eurydice!
Stealing amongst the grass, Eurydice;
The long rank grass, that stretched Briarian arms
To clasp thee to itself, Eurydice!
And soon they laid thee from the sight of men;
Laid thee beneath the rankly waving grass;
Opening Earth's portals wide to let thee wend
Forth to Plutonian realms of gloom away;
And never more about the waiting land
Stray'd thy light steps at morn or shady eve.
No fountain hid thine image in its heart;
No flowers leapt up to wreath thy golden hair;
No more the fawns within the forest glade
Follow'd a foot more lightsome than their own;
The moon stole through the night in dim surprise;
And all the stars look'd pale with wondering;
For thou cam'st not, O lost Eurydice!
Earth found thee not, O lost Eurydice!
Love found thee not, O lost Eurydice!

I could not stay where thou wert not, forlorn;
I could not live, O lost Eurydice!—
Not Acheron itself could fright me back
From where thy footsteps wander'd, best beloved!
And so I sought thee e'en at Hades' gate,
Charm'd wide its leaves with melody of woe,
And dared the grave to keep me from thine arms;
I flow'd away upon a stream of song,
E'en to dark Pluto's grimly guarded throne,
Melting the cruel Cerberus himself,
The Parcae, and snake-lock'd Eumenides,
To pity of my measureless despair.
I sang thy beauty, O Eurydice!
I sigh'd my love forth, O Eurydice!
With tears and weary sighs, Eurydice!
And at thy name the pains of Hell grew light;
Ixion's wheel stopp'd in its weary rounds,
The rock of Sisyphus forgot to roll,
And draughts of comfort flow'd o'er Tantalus:—
Then from old Dis's hands the keys slipp'd down,
And words of hope and pity spake he forth.
He promised thee again if I would go,
Never back-looking, from those realms of gloom,
Those realms of gloom where thou wert, best beloved.

How could I leave thee thus, Eurydice?
Without one look, one glance, Eurydice?
And I perchance no more to gaze on thee,
Snared by some fatal falsehood from thy side?
Yet strove I hard; until at length I came
Where Lethe flow'd before me, faint and dim;
Ye gods! how could I cross it from my love,
That might wash out her memory for aye;
That I should live and dream of her no more;
That I should live and love her never more;
That I should sing no more, Eurydice;
That I should leave her in the grip of Hell,
Nor bear her forth e'en on the wings of thought.
And so I turn'd to gaze, Eurydice!
I turn'd to clasp thee, O Eurydice!—
And lo! thy form straightway dissolved away;
Thy beauty in the light dissolved away;
And Hades and all things dissolved away;
Until I found me on thy cold, cold grave,
Amid the grass that I would grew o'er me,
Clasping us close within one narrow home,
Where I no more might wake and find thee gone.—
The earth oped not unto my frantic cries;
The portals closed thee from me evermore—
Else had I melted Hell itself with prayers,
And borne thee back to Earth triumphantly.

I cried, heart-stricken, on Proserpina;
I rent the rocks around with endless prayers;
I told her all the story of our love,
I launch'd my sorrows on her woman's heart;
I sought her through the barren winter-time,
The woful winter-time for Earth and me;
And, "Oh!" I thought, "her soul will soon relent,
And rush in crystal torrents from her eyes,
Till in the joy of sympathetic tears,
She woo my love from Pluto's stony heart."
I waited, and I question'd long the Spring;
I question'd every flower and budding spray,
If thou didst come among them back again;

I conjured each bright blossom, each green leaf,
That, leaving Earth, she bears full-arm'd to Dis,
But backward flingeth ere her glad return,
That every step of glorious liberty,
Fall upon flowers throughout the happy land;
But never came response, Eurydice,—
The flowers were dumb, O lost Eurydice!
They would not see thee spring from Earth like them,
Outshining all their fainter loveliness,
And so they left me to my lorn despair;
She left me lorn, O false Proserpina!
And never more may I behold thee here,
In Spring or Summer, O Eurydice!
By day or night, O lost Eurydice!

They shall not keep me from thee, O beloved!
Dis shall not keep me from thee, O beloved;
But I shall shake his gates in my despair,
Until they open wide to let me pass;
I'll take my life up like a mighty rock,
And so beat breaches in the walls of Time;
I'll cast existence from me like a wrestler's robes,
And with my supple, naked soul throw Fate;
I'll snap the shackles whose Promethean links
Bind down my soul unto this narrow earth.—
Dost hear my voice dim floating to thee now,
Along the waves that ripple at my feet?
Thus do I come to thee, Eurydice,
Through waving water-floods, Eurydice,
I come, I come, beloved Eurydice!

THE SCULPTOR.

The dream fell on him one calm summer night,
Stealing amid the waving of the corn,
That waited, golden, for the harvest morn—
The dream fell on him through the still moonlight.

The land lay silent, and the new mown hay
Rested upon it like a dreamy sleep;
And stealing softly o'er each yellow heap,
The night-breeze bore sweet incense-breath away.

The dew lay thick upon the unstirr'd leaves;
The glow-worm glisten'd brightly as he pass'd;
The thrush still chaunted, but the swallows fast
Hied to their home beneath lone cottage eaves.

He had been straying through the land that day,
Dreaming of beauty as some dream of love;
And all the earth beneath, the heaven above,
In mirror'd glory on his spirit lay.

And, as he went, from every sight and sound,
From silence, from the sweetness in the air,
From earth, from heaven, from nature everywhere,
Gleam'd forth a deep dim thought and clasp'd him round.

The thought oppress'd him with a weary joy,
Seeking for ever for its perfect shape,
That from his eager eyes would still escape,
Flatter him onward—then his hopes destroy.

He sought it in the bosom of the hills;
He sought it in the silence of the woods,
Their sunny nooks and shady solitudes;
He sought it in the fountains and the rills.

He watch'd the stars come faintly through the skies;
And on his upturn'd brow the clear moon shone,
Flooding his heart like pale Endymion;
But still the thought hid dimly from his eyes;

Its voice came to him on the evening breeze,
That flutter'd faintly through his summer dreams—
He heard it through the flowing of the streams;
He heard it softly rustling through the trees.

Yet still the thought that murmur'd through his heart,
He found not anywhere about the land;
Ne'er saw its spirit shape before him stand,
Though from all nature it seem'd prone to start.

And thus he wander'd homeward, dreaming still
Of all the beauty that had haunted him,
With mystic meanings shadowy and dim,
By woodland, and by meadow, vale and hill:

He wander'd homeward, and in musing mood
Stay'd his slow steps beside a marble block,
Hewn from some far unstain'd Italian rock,
That for his shaping chisel waiting stood.

Then his heart spoke out to him, "Not alone
This thought divine hides in the streams and woods,
Seeking expression through their solitudes,
Perchance e'en lies it in this unhewn stone.

It may be that the soul which fills all space,
And speaks up to us from each thing we see,
In words that are for ever mystery,
Within this Parian, too, hath resting-place."

He gazed on, dreaming through the dim twilight,
And to his inner sight the marble grew
Clear and translucent, so that, gazing through,
A mystic shape form'd to his wondering sight,

That seem'd imprison'd in the Parian cell,
Seeking in vain release and utterance;
For evermore, with upward beaming glance,
Framing the words its lips could never tell.

The vision pass'd; but still with unseen power,
It stirr'd within his heart by night and day;
And swift to hew the prison walls away,
The Sculptor toil'd, love-strengthen'd, from that hour.

He wrought with patience, and at length, amazed,
Beheld the mystic form all perfect stand,
Released in beauty by his artist hand,
He scarce knew how, and wonder'd as he gazed.

It was a lovely form whose lifted arms
Yearn'd towards heaven with all its radiant frame,
As though the soul within on wings of flame

Up from the earth would waft its angel charms;

But still one touch retain'd it to the ground;
So that the love that beam'd up from its eyes
Flow'd evermore towards the distant skies,
And yet to earth the shape remain'd spell-bound.

The dream fell on him one calm summer night;
And thus in that fair form still heavenward turning
Eternal aspiration, endless yearning,
Stood now the Thought before his gladden'd sight.

THE END.

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