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[Illustration: MISS INGELOW'S FORMER HOME.

BOSTON, LINCOLNSHIRE, ENG.

ST. BOTOLPH'S CHURCH IN THE DISTANCE.]

POEMS BY JEAN INGELOW

VOLUME II.

_TO JEAN INGELOW.

When youth was high, and life was new
And days sped musical and fleet,
She stood amid the morning dew,
And sang her earliest measures sweet,—
Sang as the lark sings, speeding fair
To touch and taste the purer air,
To gain a nearer view of Heaven;
'Twas then she sang "The Songs of Seven."

Now, farther on in womanhood,

With trained voice and ripened art,
She gently stands where once she stood,
And sings from out her deeper heart.
Sing on, dear Singer! sing again;
And we will listen to the strain,
Till soaring earth greets bending Heaven,
And seven-fold songs grow seventy-seven.

SUSAN COOLIDGE_

POEMS

BY

JEAN INGELOW

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

BOSTON

ROBERTS BROTHERS

1896

AUTHOR'S COMPLETE EDITION.

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A STORY OF DOOM

POEMS

ROSAMUND.

His blew His winds, and they were scattered.

'One soweth and another reapeth.'

Ay,

Too true, too true. One soweth—unaware
Cometh a reaper stealthily while he dreams—
Bindeth the golden sheaf, and in his bosom
As 't were between the dewfall and the dawn
Bears it away. Who other was to blame?
Is it I? Is it I?—No verily, not I,
'T was a good action, and I smart therefore;
Oblivion of a righteous enmity
Wrought me this wrong. I pay with my self ruth
That I had ruth toward mine enemy;
It needed not to slay mine enemy,
Only to let him lie and succourless
Drift to the foot o' the Everlasting Throne;
Being mine enemy, he had not accused
One of my nation there of unkind deeds
Or ought the way of war forbids.

Let be!

I will not think upon it. Yet she was—
O, she was dear; my dutiful, dear child.
One soweth—Nay, but I will tell this out,
The first fyte was the best, I call it such
For now as some old song men think on it.

I dwell where England narrows running north;
And while our hay was cut came rumours up
Humming and swarming round our heads like bees:

'Drake from the bay of Cadiz hath come home,
And they are forth, the Spaniards with a force
Invincible.'

'The Prince of Parma, couched
At Dunkirk, e'en by torchlight makes to toil
His shipwright thousands—thousands in the ports
Of Flanders and Brabant. An hundred hendes
Transports to his great squadron adding, all

For our confusion.'

'England's great ally

Henry of France, by insurrection fallen,
Of him the said Prince Parma mocking cries,
He shall not help the Queen of England now
Not even with his tears, more needing them
To weep his own misfortune.'

Was that all

The truth? Not half, and yet it was enough
(Albeit not half that half was well believed),
For all the land stirred in the half belief
As dreamers stir about to wake; and now
Comes the Queen's message, all her lieges bid
To rise, 'lieftnants, and the better sort
Of gentlemen' whereby the Queen's grace meant,
As it may seem the sort that willed to rise
And arm, and come to aid her.

Distance wrought

Safety for us, my neighbours and near friends,
The peril lay along our channel coast
And marked the city, undefended fair
Rich London. O to think of Spanish mail
Ringing—of riotous conquerors in her street,
Chasing and frightening (would there were no more
To think on) her fair wives and her fair maids.
—But hope is fain to deem them forth of her.

Then Spain to the sacking; then they tear away
Arras and carved work. O then they break
And toss, and mar her quaint orfèverie
Priceless—then split the wine kegs, spill the mead,
Trail out the pride of ages in the dust;
Turn over with pikes her silken merchandise,
Strip off the pictures of her kings, and spoil
Their palaces that nigh five hundred years
Have rued no alien footsteps on the floor,
And work—for the days of miracle are gone—
All unimaginable waste and woe.

Some cried, 'But England hath the better cause;
We think not those good days indeed are done;
We look to Heaven for aid on England's side.'
Then other, 'Nay, the harvest is above,
God comforts there His own, and ill men leaves
To run long scores up in this present world,
And pay in another.

Look not here for aid.

Latimer, poor old saint, died in the street
With nigh, men say, three hundred of his kind,
All bid to look for worse death after death,
Succourless, comfortless, unfriended, curst.
Mary, and Gardiner, and the Pope's man Pole
Died upon down, lulled in a silken shade,
Soothed with assurance of a waiting heaven,
And Peter peering through the golden gate,
With his gold key in 's hand to let them in.'

'Nay, leave,' quoth I, 'the martyrs to their heaven,
And all who live the better that they died.
But look you now, a nation hath no heaven,
A nation's life and work and wickedness
And punishment—or otherwise, I say
A nation's life and goodness and reward
Are here. And in my nation's righteous cause
I look for aid, and cry, SO HELP ME GOD

As I will help my righteous nation now
With all the best I have, and know, and am,
I trust Thou wilt not let her light be quenched;
I go to aid, and if I fall—I fall,
And, God of nations, leave my soul to Thee.'

Many did say like words, and all would give
Of gold, of weapons, and of horses that
They had to hand or on the spur o' the time
Could gather. My fair dame did sell her rings,
So others. And they sent us well equipped
Who minded to be in the coming fray
Whether by land or sea; my hope the last,
For I of old therewith was conversant.

Then as we rode down southward all the land
Was at her harvesting. The oats were cut
Ere we were three days down, and then the wheat,
And the wide country spite of loathèd threat
Was busy. There was news to hearten us:
The Hollanders were coming roundly in
With sixty ships of war, all fierce, and full
Of spleen, for not alone our sake but theirs
Willing to brave encounter where they might.

So after five days we did sight the Sound,
And look on Plymouth harbour from the hill.
Then I full glad drew bridle, lighted straight,
Ran down and mingled with a waiting crowd.

Many stood gazing on the level deep
That scarce did tremble; 't was in hue as sloes
That hang till winter on a leafless bough,
So black bulged down upon it a great cloud
And probed it through and through with forkèd stabs
Incessant, and rolled on it thunder bursts
Till the dark water lowered as one afraid.

That was afar. The land and nearer sea
Lay sweltering in hot sunshine. The brown beach
Scarce whispered, for a soft incoming tide
Was gentle with it. Green the water lapped
And sparkled at all edges. The night-heavens
Are not more thickly speckled o'er with stars
Than that fair harbour with its fishing craft.
And crowds of galleys shooting to and fro
Did feed the ships of war with their stout crews,
And bear aboard fresh water, furniture
Of war, much lesser victual, sallets, fruit,
All manner equipment for the squadron, sails,
Long spars.

Also was chaffering on the Hoe,
Buying and bargaining, taking of leave
With tears and kisses, while on all hands pushed
Tall lusty men with baskets on their heads
Piled of fresh bread, and biscuit newly drawn.

Then shouts, 'The captains!'
 Raleigh, Hawkins, Drake,
Old Martin Frobisher, and many more;
Howard, the Lord High Admiral, headed them—
They coming leisurely from the bowling green,
Elbowed their way. For in their stoutness loth
To hurry when ill news first brake on them,
They playing a match ashore—ill news I say,
'The Spaniards are toward'—while panic-struck

The people ran about them, Drake cries out,
Knowing their fear should make the danger worse,
'Spaniards, my masters! Let the Spaniards wait.
Fall not a-shouting for the boats; is time
To play the match out, ay to win, and then
To beat the Spaniards.'

So the rest gave way
At his insistance, playing that afternoon
The bravest match (one saith) was ever scored.

'T was no time lost; nay, not a moment lost;
For look you, when the winning cast was made,
The town was calm, the anchors were all up,
The boats were manned to row them each to his ship,
The lowering cloud in the offing had gone south
Against the wind, and all was work, stir, heed,
Nothing forgot, nor grudged, nor slurred, and most
Men easy at heart as those brave sailors seemed.

And specially the women had put by
On a sudden their deep dread; yon Cornish coast
Neared of his insolency by the foe,
With his high seacastles numerous, seaforts
Many, his galleys out of number, manned
Each by three hundred slaves chained to the oar;
All his strong fleet of lesser ships, but great
As any of ours—why that same Cornish coast
Might have lain farther than the far west land,
So had a few stout-hearted looks and words
Wasted the meaning, chilled the menace of
That frightful danger, imminent, hard at hand.

'The captains come, the captains!' and I turned
As they drew on. I marked the urgency
Flashing in each man's eye: fain to be forth
But willing to be held at leisure. Then
Cried a fair woman of the better sort
To Howard, passing by her pannier'd ass,
'Apples, Lord Admiral, good captains all,
Look you, red apples sharp and sweet are these,'

Quoth he a little chafed, 'Let be, let be,
No time is this for bargaining, good dame.
Let be;' and pushing past, 'Beshrew thy heart
(And mine that I should say it), bargain! nay.
I meant not bargaining,' she falters; crying,
'I brought them my poor gift. Pray you now take,
Pray you.'

He stops, and with a childlike smile
That makes the dame amend, stoops down to choose,
While I step up that love not many words,
'What should he do,' quoth I, 'to help this need
That hath a bag of money, and good will?'
'Charter a ship,' he saith, nor e'er looks up,
'And put aboard her victual, tackle, shot,
Ought he can lay his hand on—look he give
Wide sea room to the Spanish hounds, make sail
For ships of ours, to ease of wounded men,
And succour with that freight he brings withal.'

His foot, yet speaking, was aboard his boat,
His comrades, each red apples in the hand,
Come after, and with blessings manifold
Cheering, and cries, 'Good luck, good luck!' they speed.

'T was three years three months past.

O yet methinks

I hear that thunder crash i' the offing; hear
Their words who when the crowd melted away
Gathered together. Comrades we of old,
About to adventure us at Howard's best
On the unsafe sea. For he, a Catholic,
As is my wife, and therefore my one child,
Detested and defied th' most Catholic King
Philip. He, trusted of her grace—and cause
She had, the nation following suit—he deemed,
'T was whisper'd, ay and Raleigh, and Francis Drake
No less, the event of battle doubtfuller
Than English tongue might own; the peril dread
As ought in this world ever can be deemed
That is not yet past praying for.

So far

So good. As birds awaked do stretch their wings
The ships did stretch forth sail, full clad they towered
And right into the sunset went, hull down
E'en with the sun.

To us in twilight left,

Glory being over, came despondent thought
That mocked men's eager act. From many a hill,
As if the land complained to Heaven, they sent
A towering shaft of murky incense high,
Livid with black despair in lieu of praise.
The green wood hissed at every beacon's edge
That widen'd fear. The smell of pitchpots fled
Far over the field, and tongues of fire leaped up,
Ay, till all England woke, and knew, and wailed.

But we i' the night through that detested reek
Rode eastward. Every mariner's voice was given
'Gainst any fear for the western shires. The cry
Was all, 'They sail for Calais roads, and thence,
The goal is London.'

Nought slept, man nor beast.

Ravens and rooks flew forth, and with black wings,
Affrighted, swept our eyes. Pale eddying moths
Came by in crowds and whirled them on the flames.

We rode till pierced those beacon fires the shafts
O' the sun, and their red smouldering ashes dulled.
Beside them, scorched, smoke-blackened, weary, leaned
Men that had fed them, dropped their tired arms
And dozed.

And also through that day we rode,
Till reapers at their nooning sat awhile
On the shady side of corn-shocks: all the talk
Of high, of low, or them that went or stayed
Determined but unhopeful; desperate
To strike a blow for England ere she fell.

And ever loomed the Spaniard to our thought,
Still waxed the fame of that great Armament—
New horsemen joining, swelled it more and more—
Their bulky ship galleons having five decks,
Zabraes, pataches, galleys of Portugal,
Caravels rowed with oars, their galliasses
Vast, and complete with chapels, chambers, towers.
And in the said ships of free mariners
Eight thousand, and of slaves two thousand more,
An army twenty thousand strong. O then
Of culverin, of double culverin,
Ordnance and arms, all furniture of war,

Victual, and last their fierceness and great spleen,
Willing to founder, burn, split, wreck themselves,
But they would land, fight, overcome, and reign.

Then would we count up England. Set by theirs,
Her fleet as walnut shells. And a few pikes
Stored in the belfries, and a few brave men
For wielding them. But as the morning wore,
And we went ever eastward, ever on,
Poured forth, poured down, a marching multitude
With stir about the towns; and waggons rolled
With offerings for the army and the fleet.
Then to our hearts valour crept home again,
The loathèd name of Alva fanning it;
Alva who did convert from our old faith
With many a black deed done for a white cause
(So spake they erewhile to it dedicate)
Them whom not death could change, nor fire, nor sword,
To thirst for his undoing.

Ay, as I am a Christian man, our thirst
Was comparable with Queen Mary's. All
The talk was of confounding heretics,
The heretics the Spaniards. Yet methought,
'O their great multitude! Not harbour room
On our long coast for that great multitude.
They land—for who can let them—give us battle,
And after give us burial. Who but they,
For he that liveth shall be flying north
To bear off wife and child. Our very graves
Shall Spaniards dig, and in the daisied grass
Trample them down.'

Ay, whoso will be brave,
Let him be brave beforehand. After th' event
If by good pleasure of God it go as then
He shall be brave an' liketh him. I say
Was no man but that deadly peril feared.

Nights riding two. Scant rest. Days riding three,
Then Foulkstone. Need is none to tell all forth
The gathering stores and men, the charter'd ship
That I, with two, my friends, got ready for sea.
Ready she was, so many another, small
But nimble; and we sailing hugged the shore,
Scarce venturing out, so Drake had willed, a league,
And running westward aye as best we might,
When suddenly—behold them!

On they rocked,
Majestical, slow, sailing with the wind.
O such a sight! O such a sight, mine eyes,
Never shall you see more!

In crescent form,
A vasty crescent nigh two leagues across
From horn to horn, the lesser ships within,
The great without, they did bestride as 't were
And make a township on the narrow seas.

It was about the point of dawn: and light.
All grey the sea, and ghostly grey the ships;
And after in the offing rocked our fleet,
Having lain quiet in the summer dark.

O then methought, 'Flash, blessed gold of dawn,
And touch the topsails of our Admiral,
That he may after guide an emulous flock,
Old England's innocent white bleating lambs.

Let Spain within a pike's length hear them bleat,
Delivering of their pretty talk in a tongue
Whose meaning cries not for interpreter.'

And while I spoke, their topsails, friend and foe,
Glittered—and there was noise of guns; pale smoke
Lagged after, curdling on the sun-fleck'd main.
And after that? What after that, my soul?
Who ever saw weakling white butterflies
Chasing of gallant swans, and charging them,
And spitting at them long red streaks of flame?
We saw the ships of England even so
As in my vaunting wish that mocked itself
With 'Fool, O fool, to brag at the edge of loss.'
We saw the ships of England even so
Run at the Spaniards on a wind, lay to,
Bespatter them with hail of battle, then
Take their prerogative of nimble steerage,
Fly off, and ere the enemy, heavy in hand,
Delivered his reply to the wasteful wave
That made its grave of foam, race out of range,
Then tack and crowd all sail, and after them
Again.

So harassed they that mighty foe,
Moving in all its bravery to the east.
And some were fine with pictures of the saints,
Angels with flying hair and peaked wings,
And high red crosses wrought upon their sails;
From every mast brave flag or ensign flew,
And their long silken pennons serpented
Loose to the morning. And the galley slaves,
Albeit their chains did clink, sang at the oar.

The sea was striped e'en like a tiger skin
With wide ship wakes.

And many cried, amazed,
'What means their patience?'
'Lo you,' others said,
'They pay with fear for their great costliness.
Some of their costliest needs must other guard;
Once guarded and in port look to yourselves,
They count one hundred and fifty. It behoves
Better they suffer this long running fight—
Better for them than that they give us battle,
And so delay the shelter of their roads.

'Two of their caravels we sank, and one
(Fouled with her consort in the rigging) took
Ere she could catch the wind when she rode free.
And we have riddled many a sail, and split
Of spars a score or two. What then? To-morrow
They look to straddle across the strait, and hold
Having aye Calais for a shelter—hold
Our ships in fight. To-morrow shall give account
For our to-day. They will not we pass north
To meddle with Parma's flotilla; their hope
Being Parma, and a convoy they would be
For his flat boats that bode invasion to us;
And if he reach to London—ruin, defeat.'

Three fleets the sun went down on, theirs of fame
Th' Armada. After space old England's few;
And after that our dancing cockle-shells,
The volunteers. They took some pride in us,
For we were nimble, and we brought them powder,

Shot, weapons. They were short of these. Ill found,
Ill found. The bitter fruit of evil thrift.
But while obsequious, darting here and there,
We took their messages from ship to ship,
From ship to shore, the moving majesties
Made Calais Roads, cast anchor, all their less
In the middle ward; their greater ships outside
Impregnable castles fearing not assault.

So did we read their thought, and read it wrong,
While after the running fight we rode at ease,
For many (as is the way of Englishmen)
Having made light of our stout deeds, and light
O' the effects proceeding, saw these spread
To view. The Spanish Admiral's mighty host,
Albeit not broken, harass'd.

Some did tow
Others that we had plagued, disabled, rent;
Many full heavily damaged made their berths.

Then did the English anchor out of range.
To close was not their wisdom with such foe,
Rather to chase him, following in the rear.
Ay, truly they were giants in our eyes
And in our own. They took scant heed of us,
And we looked on, and knew not what to think,
Only that we were lost men, a lost Isle,
In every Spaniard's mind, both great and small.

But no such thought had place in Howard's soul,
And when 't was dark, and all their sails were furled,
When the wind veered a few points to the west,
And the tide turned ruffling along the roads,
He sent eight fireships forging down to them.

Terrible! Terrible!
Blood-red pillars of reek
They looked on that vast host and troubled it,
As on th' Egyptian host One looked of old.

Then all the heavens were rent with a great cry,
The red avengers went right on, right on,
For none could let them; then was ruin, reek, flame;
Against th' unwieldy huge leviathans
They drave, they fell upon them as wild beasts,
And all together they did plunge and grind,
Their reefed sails set a-blazing, these flew loose
And forth like banners of destruction sped.
It was to look on as the body of hell
Seething; and some, their cables cut, ran foul
Of one the other, while the ruddy fire
Sped on aloft. One ship was stranded. One
Foundered, and went down burning; all the sea
Red as an angry sunset was made fell
With smoke and blazing spars that rode upright,
For as the fireships burst they scattered forth
Full dangerous wreckage. All the sky they scored
With flying sails and rocking masts, and yards
Licked of long flames. And flitting tinder sank
In eddies on the plagued mixed mob of ships
That cared no more for harbour, and were fain
At any hazard to be forth, and leave
Their berths in the blood-red haze.

It was at twelve
O' the clock when this fell out, for as the eight

Were towed, and left upon the friendly tide
To stalk like evil angels over the deep
And stare upon the Spaniards, we did hear
Their midnight bells. It was at morning dawn
After our mariners thus had harried them
I looked my last upon their fleet,—and all,
That night had cut their cables, put to sea,
And scattering wide towards the Flemish coast
Did seem to make for Greveline.

As for us,
The captains told us off to wait on them,
Bearers of wounded enemies and friends,
Bearers of messages, bearers of store.

We saw not ought, but heard enough: we heard
(And God be thanked) of that long scattering chase
And driving of Sidonia from his hope,
Parma, who could not ought without his ships
And looked for them to break the Dutch blockade,
He meanwhile chafing lion-like in his lair.
We heard—and he—for all one summer day,
Fenning and Drake and Raynor, Fenton, Cross,
And more, by Greveline, where they once again
Did get the wind o' the Spaniards, noise of guns.
For coming with the wind, wielding themselves
Which way they listed (while in close array
The Spaniards stood but on defence), our own
Went at them, charged them high and charged them sore,
And gave them broadside after broadside. Ay,
Till all the shot was spent both great and small.
It failed; and in regard of that same want
They thought it not convenient to pursue
Their vessels farther.

They were huge withal,
And might not be encountered one to one,
But close conjoined they fought, and poured great store
Of ordnance at our ships, though many of theirs,
Shot thorow and thorow, scarce might keep afloat.

Many were captured fighting, many sank.
This news they brought returned perforce, and left
The Spaniards forging north. Themselves did watch
The river mouth, till Howard, his new store
Gathered, encounter coveting, once more
Made after them with Drake.

And lo! the wind
Got up to help us. He yet flying north
(Their doughty Admiral) made all his wake
To smoke, and would not end to fight, but strewed
The ocean with his wreckage. And the wind
Drave him before it, and the storm was fell,
And he went up to th' uncouth northern sea.
There did our mariners leave him. Then did joy
Run like a sunbeam over the land, and joy
Rule in the stout heart of a regnant Queen.

But now the counsel came, 'Every man home,
For after Scotland rounded, when he curves
Southward, and all the batter'd armament,
What hinders on our undefended coast
To land where'er he listeth? Every man
Home.'

And we mounted and did open forth
Like a great fan, to east, to north, to west,

And rumour met us flying, filtering
Down through the border. News of wicked joy,
The wreckers rich in the Faroes, and the Isles
Orkney, and all the clansmen full of gear
Gathered from helpless mariners tempted in
To their undoing; while a treacherous crew
Let the storm work upon their lives its will,
Spoiled them and gathered all their riches up.
Then did they meet like fate from Irish kernes,
Who dealt with them according to their wont.

In a great storm of wind that tore green leaves
And dashed them wet upon me, came I home.
Then greeted me my dame, and Rosamund,
Our one dear child, the heir of these my fields—
That I should sigh to think it! There, no more.

Being right weary I betook me straight
To longed-for sleep, and I did dream and dream
Through all that dolourous storm; though noise of guns
Daunted the country in the moonless night,
Yet sank I deep and deeper in the dream
And took my fill of rest.

A voice, a touch,

'Wake.' Lo! my wife beside me, her wet hair
She wrung with her wet hands, and cried, 'A ship!
I have been down the beach. O pitiful!
A Spanish ship ashore between the rocks,
And none to guide our people. Wake.'

Then I

Raised on mine elbow looked; it was high day;
In the windy pother seas came in like smoke
That blew among the trees as fine small rain,
And then the broken water sun-besprent
Glitter'd, fell back and showed her high and fast
A caravel, a pinnacle that methought
To some great ship had longed; her hap alone
Of all that multitude it was to drive
Between this land of England her right foe,
And that most cruel, where (for all their faith
Was one) no drop of water mote they drink
For love of God nor love of gold.

I rose

And hasted; I was soon among the folk,
But late for work. The crew, spent, faint, and bruised
Saved for the most part of our men, lay prone
In grass, and women served them bread and mead,
Other the sea laid decently alone
Ready for burial. And a litter stood
In shade. Upon it lying a goodly man,
The govourner or the captain as it seemed,
Dead in his stiff gold-broider'd bravery,
And epaulet and sword. They must have loved
That man, for many had died to bring him in,
Their boats stove in were stranded here and there.
In one—but how I know not—brought they him,
And he was laid upon a folded flag,
Many times doubled for his greater ease,
That was our thought—and we made signs to them
He should have sepulture. But when they knew
They must needs leave him, for some marched them off
For more safe custody, they made great moan.

After, with two my neighbours drawing nigh,
One of them touched the Spaniard's hand and said,

'Dead is he but not cold;' the other then,
'Nay in good truth methinks he be not dead.'
Again the first, 'An' if he breatheth yet
He lies at his last gasp.' And this went off,
And left us two, that by the litter stayed,
Looking on one another, and we looked
(For neither willed to speak), and yet looked on.
Then would he have me know the meet was fixed
For nine o' the clock, and to be brief with you
He left me. And I had the Spaniard home.
What other could be done? I had him home.
Men on his litter bare him, set him down
In a fair chamber that was nigh the hall.

And yet he waked not from his deathly swoon,
Albeit my wife did try her skill, and now
Bad lay him on a bed, when lo the folds
Of that great ensign covered store of gold,
Rich Spanish ducats, raiment, Moorish blades
Chased in right goodly wise, and missals rare,
And other gear. I locked it for my part
Into an armoury, and that fair flag
(While we did talk full low till he should end)
Spread over him. Methought, the man shall die
Under his country's colours; he was brave,
His deadly wound to that doth testify.

And when 't was seemly order'd, Rosamund,
My daughter, who had looked not yet on death,
Came in, a face all marvel, pity, and dread—
Lying against her shoulder sword-long flowers,
White hollyhocks to cross upon his breast.
Slowly she turned as of that sight afeard,
But while with daunted heart she moved anigh,
His eyelids quiver'd, quiver'd then the lip,
And he, reviving, with a sob looked up
And set on her the midnight of his eyes.

Then she, in act to place the burial gift
Bending above him, and her flaxen hair
Fall'n to her hand, drew back and stood upright
Comely and tall, her innocent fair face
Cover'd with blushes more of joy than shame.
'Father,' she cried, 'O father, I am glad.
Look you! the enemy liveth.' 'T is enough,
My maiden,' quoth her mother, 'thou may'st forth,
But say an Avè first for him with me.'

Then they with hands upright at foot o' his bed
Knelt, his dark dying eyes at gaze on them,
Till as I think for wonder at them, more
Than for his proper strength, he could not die.

So in obedient wise my daughter risen,
And going, let a smile of comforting cheer
Lift her sweet lip, and that was all of her
For many a night and day that he beheld.

And then withal my dame, a leech of skill,
Tended the Spaniard fain to heal his wound,
Her women aiding at their best. And he
'Twixt life and death awaken'd in the night
Full oft in his own tongue would make his moan,
And when he whisper'd any word I knew,
If I was present, for to pleasure him,
Then made I repetition of the same.

'Cordova,' quoth he faintly, 'Cordova,'
'T was the first word he mutter'd. 'Ay, we know,'
Quoth I, 'the stoutness of that fight ye made
Against the Moors and their Mahometry,
And dispossess'd the men of fame, the fierce
Khalifs of Cordova—thy home belike,
Thy city. A fair city Cordova.'

Then after many days, while his wound healed,
He with abundant seemly sign set forth
His thanks, but as for language had we none,
And oft he strove and failed to let us know
Some wish he had, but could not, so a week,
Two weeks went by. Then Rosamund my girl,
Hearing her mother plain on this, she saith,
'So please you, madam, show the enemy
A Psalter in our English tongue, and fetch
And give him that same book my father found
Wrapped in the ensign. Are they not the same
Those holy words? The Spaniard being devout,
He needs must know them.'

'Peace, thou pretty fool!
Is this a time to teach an alien tongue?'
Her mother made for answer. 'He is sick,
The Spaniard.' 'Cry you mercy,' quoth my girl,
'But I did think 't were easy to let show
How both the Psalters are of meaning like;
If he know Latin, and 't is like he doth,
So might he choose a verse to tell his thought.'

Then said I (ay, I did!) 'The girl shall try,'
And straight I took her to the Spaniard's side,
And he, admiring at her, all his face
Changed to a joy that almost showed as fear,
So innocent holy she did look, so grave
Her pitiful eyes.

She sat beside his bed,
He covered with the ensign yet; and took
And showed the Psalters both, and she did speak
Her English words, but gazing was enough
For him at her sweet dimple, her blue eyes
That shone, her English blushes. Rosamund,
My beautiful dear child. He did but gaze,
And not perceive her meaning till she touched
His hand, and in her Psalter showed the word.

Then was all light to him; he laughed for joy,
And took the Latin Missal. O full soon,
Alas, how soon, one read the other's thought!
Before she left him, she had learned his name
Alonzo, told him hers, and found the care
Made night and day uneasy—Cordova,
There dwelt his father, there his kin, nor knew
Whether he lived or died, whether in thrall
To the Islanders for lack of ransom pined
Or rued the galling yoke of slavery.

So did he cast him on our kindness. I—
And care not who may know it—I was kind,
And for that our stout Queen did think foul scorn
To kill the Spanish prisoners, and to guard
So many could not, liefer being to rid
Our country of them than to spite their own,
I made him as I might that matter learn,
Eking scant Latin with my daughter's wit,

And told him men let forth and driven forth
Did crowd our harbours for the ports of Spain,
By one of whom, he, with good aid of mine,
Should let his tidings go, and I plucked forth
His ducats that a meet reward might be.
Then he, the water standing in his eyes,
Made old King David's words due thanks convey.

Then Rosamund, this all made plain, arose
And curtesy'd to the Spaniard. Ah, methinks
I yet behold her, gracious, innocent,
And flaxen-haired, and blushing maidenly,
When turning she retired, and his black eyes,
That hunger'd after her, did follow on;
And I bethought me, 'Thou shalt see no more,
Thou goodly enemy, my one ewe lamb.'

O, I would make short work of this. The wound
Healed, and the Spaniard rose, then could he stand,
And then about his chamber walk at ease.

Now we had counsell'd how to have him home,
And that same trading vessel beating up
The Irish Channel at my will, that same
I charter'd for to serve me in the war,
Next was I minded should mine enemy
Deliver to his father, and his land.
Daily we looked for her, till in our cove,
Upon that morn when first the Spaniard walked,
Behold her rocking; and I hasted down
And left him waiting in the house.

Woe 's me!

All being ready speed I home, and lo
My Rosamund, that by the Spaniard sat
Upon a cushion'd settle, book in hand.
I needs must think how in the deep alcove
Thick chequer'd shadows of the window-glass
Did fall across her kirtle and her locks,
For I did see her thus no more.

She held

Her Psalter, and he his, and slowly read
Till he would stop her at the needed word.
'O well is thee,' she read, my Rosamund,
'O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be.
Thy wife—' and there he stopped her, and he took
And kissed her hand, and show'd in 's own a ring,
Taking no heed of me, no heed at all.

Then I burst forth, the choler red i' my face
When I did see her blush, and put it on.
'Give me,' quoth I, and Rosamund, afraid,
Gave me the ring. I set my heel on it,
Crushed it, and sent the rubies scattering forth,
And did in righteous anger storm at him.
'What! what!' quoth I, 'before her father's eyes,
Thou universal villain, thou ingrate,
Thou enemy whom I shelter'd, fed, restored,
Most basest of mankind!' And Rosamund,
Arise, her forehead pressed against mine arm,
And 'Father,' cries she, 'father.'

And I stormed

At him, while in his Spanish he replied
As one would speak me fair. 'Thou Spanish hound!
'Father,' she pleaded. 'Alien vile,' quoth I,
'Plucked from the death, wilt thou repay me thus?

It is but three times thou hast set thine eyes
On this my daughter.' 'Father,' moans my girl;
And I, not willing to be so withstood,
Spoke roughly to her. Then the Spaniard's eyes
Blazed—then he stormed at me in his own tongue,
And all his Spanish arrogance and pride
Broke witless on my wrathful English. Then
He let me know, for I perceived it well,
He reckon'd him mine equal, thought foul scorn
Of my displeasure, and was wroth with me
As I with him. 'Father,' sighed Rosamund.
'Go, get thee to thy mother, girl,' quoth I.
And slowly, slowly, she betook herself
Down the long hall; in lowly wise she went
And made her moans.

But when my girl was gone
I stood at fault, th' occasion master'd me;
Belike it master'd him, for both felt mute.
I calmed me, and he calmed him as he might.
For I bethought me I was yet an host,
And he bethought him on the worthiness
Of my first deeds.

So made I sign to him.
The tide was up, and soon I had him forth,
Delivered him his goods, commended him
To the captain o' the vessel, then plucked off
My hat, in seemly fashion taking leave,
And he was not outdone, but every way
Gave me respect, and on the deck we two
Parted, as I did hope, to meet no more.

Alas! my Rosamund, my Rosamund!
She did not weep, no. Plain upon me, no.
Her eyes mote well have lost the trick of tears:
As new-washed flowers shake off the down-dropt rain,
And make denial of it, yet more blue
And fair of favour afterward, so they.
The wild woodrose was not more fresh of blee
Than her soft dimpled cheek: but I beheld,
Come home, a token hung about her neck,
Sparkling upon her bosom for his sake,
Her love, the Spaniard, she denied it not,
All unaware, good sooth, such love was bale.

And all that day went like another day,
Ay, all the next; then was I glad at heart;
Methought, 'I am glad thou wilt not waste thy youth
Upon an alien man, mine enemy,
Thy nation's enemy. In truth, in truth,
This likes me very well. My most dear child,
Forget yon grave dark mariner. The Lord
Everlasting,' I besought, 'bring it to pass.'

Stealeth a darker day within my hall,
A winter day of wind and driving foam.
They tell me that my girl is sick—and yet
Not very sick. I may not hour by hour,
More than one watching of a moon that wanes,
Make chronicle of change. A parlous change
When he looks back to that same moon at full.

Ah! ah! methought, 't will pass. It did not pass,
Though never she made moan. I saw the rings
Drop from her small white wasted hand. And I,
Her father, tamed of grief, I would have given

My land, my name to have her as of old.
Ay, Rosamund I speak of with the small
White face. Ay, Rosamund. O near as white,
And mournfuller by much, her mother dear
Drooped by her couch; and while of hope and fear
Lifted or left, as by a changeful tide,
We thought 'The girl is better,' or we thought
'The girl will die,' that jewel from her neck
She drew, and prayed me send it to her love;
A token she was true e'en to the end.
What matter'd now? But whom to send, and how
To reach the man? I found an old poor priest,
Some peril 't was for him and me, she writ
My pretty Rosamund her heart's farewell,
She kissed the letter, and that old poor priest,
Who had eaten of my bread, and shelter'd him
Under my roof in troublous times, he took,
And to content her on this errand went,
While she as done with earth did wait the end.

Mankind bemoan them on the bitterness
Of death. Nay, rather let them chide the grief
Of living, chide the waste of mother-love
For babes that joy to get away to God;
The waste of work and moil and thought and thrift
And father-love for sons that heed it not,
And daughters lost and gone. Ay, let them chide
These. Yet I chide not. That which I have done
Was rightly done; and what thereon befell
Could make no right a wrong, e'en were 't to do
Again.

I will be brief. The days drag on,
My soul forebodes her death, my lonely age.
Once I despondent in the moaning wood
Look out, and lo a caravel at sea,
A man that climbs the rock, and presently
The Spaniard!

I did greet him, proud no more.
He had braved durance, as I knew, ay death,
To land on th' Island soil. In broken words
Of English he did ask me how she fared.
Quoth I, 'She is dying, Spaniard; Rosamund
My girl will die;' but he is fain, saith he,
To talk with her, and all his mind to speak;
I answer, 'Ay, my whilome enemy,
But she is dying.' 'Nay, now nay,' quoth he,
'So be she liveth,' and he moved me yet
For answer; then quoth I, 'Come life, come death,
What thou wilt, say.'

Soon made we Rosamund
Aware, she lying on the settle, wan
As a lily in the shade, and while she not
Believed for marvelling, comes he roundly in,
The tall grave Spaniard, and with but one smile,
One look of ruth upon her small pale face,
All slowly as with unaccustom'd mouth,
Betakes him to that English he hath conned,
Setting the words out plain:

'Child! Rosamund!

Love! An so please thee, I would be thy man.
By all the saints will I be good to thee.
Come.'

Come! what think you, would she come? Ay, ay.
They love us, but our love is not their life.
For the dark mariner's love lived Rosamund.

Soon for his kiss she bloomed, smiled for his smile.
(The Spaniard reaped e'en as th' Evangel saith,
And bore in 's bosom forth my golden sheaf.)
She loved her father and her mother well,
But loved the Spaniard better. It was sad
To part, but she did part; and it was far
To go, but she did go. The priest was brought,
The ring was bless'd that bound my Rosamund,
She sailed, and I shall never see her more.

One soweth and another reapeth. Ay,
Too true! too true!

ECHO AND THE FERRY.

Ay, Oliver! I was but seven, and he was eleven;
He looked at me pouting and rosy. I blushed where I stood.
They had told us to play in the orchard (and I only seven!
A small guest at the farm); but he said, 'Oh, a girl was no good!'
So he whistled and went, he went over the stile to the wood.
It was sad, it was sorrowful! Only a girl—only seven!
At home in the dark London smoke I had not found it out.
The pear-trees looked on in their white, and blue birds flash'd about,
And they too were angry as Oliver. Were they eleven?
I thought so. Yes, everyone else was eleven—eleven!

So Oliver went, but the cowslips were tall at my feet,
And all the white orchard with fast-falling blossom was litter'd;
And under and over the branches those little birds twitter'd,
While hanging head downwards they scolded because I was seven.
A pity. A very great pity. One should be eleven.

But soon I was happy, the smell of the world was so sweet,
And I saw a round hole in an apple-tree rosy and old.
Then I knew! for I peeped, and I felt it was right they should scold!
Eggs small and eggs many. For gladness I broke into laughter;
And then some one else—oh, how softly!—came after, came after
With laughter—with laughter came after.

And no one was near us to utter that sweet mocking call,
That soon very tired sank low with a mystical fall.
But this was the country—perhaps it was close under heaven;
Oh, nothing so likely; the voice might have come from it even.
I knew about heaven. But this was the country, of this
Light, blossom, and piping, and flashing of wings not at all.
Not at all. No. But one little bird was an easy forgiver:
She peeped, she drew near as I moved from her domicile small,
Then flashed down her hole like a dart—like a dart from the quiver.
And I waded atween the long grasses and felt it was bliss.

—So this was the country; clear dazzle of azure and shiver
And whisper of leaves, and a humming all over the tall
White branches, a humming of bees. And I came to the wall—
A little low wall—and looked over, and there was the river,
The lane that led on to the village, and then the sweet river
Clear shining and slow, she had far far to go from her snow;
But each rush gleamed a sword in the sunlight to guard her long flow,
And she murmur'd, methought, with a speech very soft—very low.
'The ways will be long, but the days will be long,' quoth the river,
'To me a long liver, long, long!' quoth the river—the river.

I dreamed of the country that night, of the orchard, the sky,
The voice that had mocked coming after and over and under.
But at last—in a day or two namely—Eleven and I
Were very fast friends, and to him I confided the wonder.
He said that was Echo. 'Was Echo a wise kind of bee
That had learned how to laugh: could it laugh in one's ear and then fly
And laugh again yonder?' 'No; Echo'—he whispered it low—
'Was a woman, they said, but a woman whom no one could see
And no one could find; and he did not believe it, not he,
But he could not get near for the river that held us asunder.
Yet I that had money—a shilling, a whole silver shilling—
We might cross if I thought I would spend it.' 'Oh yes, I was willing'—
And we ran hand in hand, we ran down to the ferry, the ferry,
And we heard how she mocked at the folk with a voice clear and merry
When they called for the ferry; but oh! she was very—was very
Swift-footed. She spoke and was gone; and when Oliver cried,
'Hie over! hie over! you man of the ferry—the ferry!'
By the still water's side she was heard far and wide—she replied
And she mocked in her voice sweet and merry, 'You man of the ferry,
You man of—you man of the ferry!'

'Hie over!' he shouted. The ferryman came at his calling,
Across the clear reed-border'd river he ferried us fast;—
Such a chase! Hand in hand, foot to foot, we ran on; it surpass'd
All measure her doubling—so close, then so far away falling,
Then gone, and no more. Oh! to see her but once unaware,
And the mouth that had mocked, but we might not (yet sure she was there!),
Nor behold her wild eyes and her mystical countenance fair.

We sought in the wood, and we found the wood-wren in her stead;
In the field, and we found but the cuckoo that talked overhead;
By the brook, and we found the reed-sparrow deep-nested, in brown—
Not Echo, fair Echo! for Echo, sweet Echo! was flown.
So we came to the place where the dead people wait till God call.
The church was among them, grey moss over roof, over wall.
Very silent, so low. And we stood on a green grassy mound
And looked in at a window, for Echo, perhaps, in her round
Might have come in to hide there. But no; every oak-carven seat
Was empty. We saw the great Bible—old, old, very old,
And the parson's great Prayer-book beside it; we heard the slow beat
Of the pendulum swing in the tower; we saw the clear gold
Of a sunbeam float down to the aisle and then waver and play
On the low chancel step and the railing, and Oliver said,
'Look, Katie! look, Katie! when Lettice came here to be wed
She stood where that sunbeam drops down, and all white was her gown;
And she stepped upon flowers they strew'd for her.' Then quoth small Seven:
'Shall I wear a white gown and have flowers to walk upon ever?'
All doubtful: 'It takes a long time to grow up,' quoth Eleven;
'You're so little, you know, and the church is so old, it can never
Last on till you're tall.' And in whispers—because it was old
And holy, and fraught with strange meaning, half felt, but not told,
Full of old parsons' prayers, who were dead, of old days, of old folk,
Neither heard nor beheld, but about us, in whispers we spoke.
Then we went from it softly and ran hand in hand to the strand,
While bleating of flocks and birds' piping made sweeter the land.
And Echo came back e'en as Oliver drew to the ferry,
'O Katie!' 'O Katie!' 'Come on, then!' 'Come on, then!' 'For, see,
The round sun, all red, lying low by the tree'—'by the tree.'
'By the tree.' Ay, she mocked him again, with her voice sweet and merry:
'Hie over!' 'Hie over!' 'You man of the ferry'—'the ferry.'
'You man of the ferry—
You man of—you man of—the ferry.'

Ay, here—it was here that we woke her, the Echo of old;
All life of that day seems an echo, and many times told.

Shall I cross by the ferry to-morrow, and come in my white
To that little low church? and will Oliver meet me anon?
Will it all seem an echo from childhood pass'd over—pass'd on?
Will the grave parson bless us? Hark, hark! in the dim failing light
I hear her! As then the child's voice clear and high, sweet and merry
Now she mocks the man's tone with 'Hie over! Hie over the ferry!'
'And, Katie.' 'And, Katie.' 'Art out with the glow-worms to-night,
My Katie?' 'My Katie?' For gladness I break into laughter
And tears. Then it all comes again as from far-away years;
Again, some one else—oh, how softly!—with laughter comes after,
Comes after—with laughter comes after.

PRELUDES TO A PENNY READING.

A Schoolroom.

_SCHOOLMASTER (*not certificated*), VICAR, and CHILD.

VICAR. Why did you send for me? I hope all's right?

Schoolmaster. Well, sir, we thought this end o' the room was dark.

V. Indeed! So 't is. There's my new study lamp—

S. 'T would stand, sir, well beside yon laurel wreath. Shall I go fetch it?

V. Do, we must not fail. Bring candles also.

[*Exit Schoolmaster. Vicar arranges chairs.*]

Now, small six years old,
And why may you be here?

Child. I'm helping father;
But, father, why d'you take such pains?

V. Sweet soul,
That's what I'm for!

C. What, and for nothing else?

V. Yes! I'm to bring thee up to be a man.

C. And what am I for?

V. There, I'm busy now.

C. Am I to bring you up to be a child?

V. Perhaps! Indeed, I have heard it said thou art.

C. Then when may I begin?

V. I'm busy, I say. Begin to-morrow an thou canst, my son, And mind to do it well.

[*Exit Vicar and Child.*]

Enter a group of women, and some children.

Mrs. Thorpe. Fine lot o' lights!

Mrs. Jillifer. Should be! Would folk put on their Sunday best I' the week unless they looked to have it seen? What, you here, neighbour!

Mrs. Smith. Ay, you may say that.
Old Madam called; said she, 'My son would feel
So sorry if you did not come,' and slipped
The penny in my hand, she did; said I,
'Ma'am, that's not it. In short, some say your last
Was worth the penny and more. I know a man,
A sober man, who said, and stuck to it,
Worth a good twopence. But I'm strange, I'm shy.'
'We hope you'll come for once,' said she. In short,
I said I would to oblige 'em.

Mrs. Green. Ah, 't was well.

Mrs. S. But I feel strange, and music gets i' my throat,
It always did. And singers be so smart,
Ladies and folk from other parishes,
Candles and cheering, greens and flowers and all
I was not used to such in my young day;
We kept ourselves at home.

Mrs. J. Never say 'used,'
The most of us have many a thing to do
We were not used to. If you come to that,
Why none of us are used to growing old,
It takes us by surprise, as one may say,
That work, when we begin 't, and yet 't is work
That all of us must do.

Mrs. G. Nay, nay, not all.

Mrs. J. I ask your pardon, neighbour; you be right. Not all.

Mrs. G. And my sweet maid scarce three months dead.

Mrs. J. I ask your pardon truly.

Mrs. G. No, my dear,
Thou'lt never see old days. I cannot stint
To fret, the maiden was but twelve years old,
So toward, such a scholar.

Mrs. S. Ay, when God,
That knows, comes down to choose, He'll take the best.

Mrs. T. But I'm right glad you came, it pleases *them*.
My son, that loves his book, 'Mother,' said he,
'Go to the Reading when you have a chance,
For there you get a change, and you see life.'
But Reading or no Reading, I am slow
To learn. When parson after comes his rounds,
'Did it,' to ask with a persuading smile,
'Open your mind?' the woman doth not live
Feels more a fool.

Mrs. J. I always tell him 'Yes,' For he means well. Ay, and I like the songs. Have you heard say what they shall read to-night?

Mrs. S. Neighbour, I hear 'tis something of the East. But what, I ask you, is the East to us, And where d'ye think it lies?

Mrs. J. The children know, At least they say they do; there's nothing deep Nor nothing strange but they get hold on it.

Enter Schoolmaster and a dozen children.

S. Now ladies, ladies, you must please to sit

More close; the room fills fast, and all these lads
And maidens either have to sing before
The Reading, or else after. By your leave
I'll have them in the front, I want them here.

[*The women make room.*

Enter ploughmen, villagers, servants, and children.

And mark me, boys, if I hear cracking o' nuts,
Or see you flicking acorns and what not
While folks from other parishes observe,
You'll hear on it when you don't look to. Tom
And Jemmy and Roger, sing as loud's ye can,
Sing as the maidens do, are they afraid?
And now I'm stationed handy facing you,
Friends all, I'll drop a word by your good leave.

Young ploughman. Do, master, do, we like your words a vast. Though there be nought to back 'em up,
ye see, As when we were smaller.

S. Mark me, then, my lads.

When Lady Laura sang, 'I don't think much,'
Says her fine coachman, 'of your manners here.
We drove eleven miles in the dark, it rained,
And ruts in your cross roads are deep. We're here,
My lady sings, they sit all open-mouthed,
And when she's done they never give one cheer.'

Old man. Be folks to clap if they don't like the song?

S. Certain, for manners.

Enter VICAR, wife, various friends with violins and a flute. They come to a piano, and one begins softly to tune his violin, while the Vicar speaks.

V. Friends, since there is a place where you must hear
When I stand up to speak, I would not now
If there were any other found to bid
You welcome. Welcome, then; these with me ask
No better than to please, and in good sooth
I ever find you willing to be pleased.
When I demand not more, but when we fain
Would lead you to some knowledge fresh, and ask
Your careful heed, I hear that some of you
Have said, 'What good to know, what good to us?
He puts us all to school, and our school days
Should be at end. Nay, if they needs must teach,
Then let them teach us what shall mend our lot;
The laws are strict on us, the world is hard.'
You friends and neighbours, may I dare to speak?
I know the laws are strict, and the world hard,
For ever will the world help that man up
That is already coming up, and still
And ever help him down that's going down.
Yet say, 'I will take the words out of thy mouth,
O world, being yet more strict with mine own life.
Thou law, to gaze shall not be worth thy while
On whom beyond thy power doth rule himself.'
Yet seek to know, for whoso seek to know
They seek to rise, and best they mend their lot.
Methinks, if Adam and Eve in their garden days
Had scorned the serpent, and obediently
Continued God's good children, He Himself
Had led them to the Tree of Knowledge soon
And bid them eat the fruit thereof, and yet
Not find it apples of death.

Vicar's wife (aside). Now, dearest John, We're ready. Lucky too! you always go Above the people's heads.

Young farmer stands forward. Vicar presenting him.

SONG.

I.

Sparkle of snow and of frost,
Blythe air and the joy of cold,
Their grace and good they have lost,
As print o' her foot by the fold.
Let me back to yon desert sand,
Rose-lipped love—from the fold,
Flower-fair girl—from the fold,
Let me back to the sultry land.
The world is empty of cheer,
Forlorn, forlorn, and forlorn,
As the night-owl's sob of fear,
As Memnon moaning at morn.
For love of thee, my dear,
I have lived a better man,
O my Mary Anne,
My Mary Anne.

II.

Away, away, and away,
To an old palm-land of tombs,
Washed clear of our yesterday
And where never a snowdrop blooms,
Nor wild becks talk as they go
Of tender hope we had known,
Nor mosses of memory grow
All over the wayside stone.

III.

Farewell, farewell, and farewell,
As voice of a lover's sigh
In the wind let yon willow wave
'Farewell, farewell, and farewell.'
The sparkling frost-stars brave
On thy shrouded bosom lie;
Thou art gone apart to dwell,
But I fain would have said good-bye.
For love of thee in thy grave
I have lived a better man,
O my Mary Anne,
My Mary Anne.

Mrs. Thorpe (aside). O hearts! why, what a song!
To think on it, and he a married man!

Mrs. Jillifer (aside). Bless you, that makes for nothing, nothing at all,
They take no heed upon the words. His wife,
Look you, as pleased as may be, smiles on him.

Mrs. T. (aside). Neighbours, there's one thing beats me. We've enough
O' trouble in the world; I've cried my fill
Many and many a time by my own fire:
Now why, I'll ask you, should it comfort me
And ease my heart when, pitiful and sweet,

One sings of other souls and how they mourned?
A body would have thought that did not know
Songs must be merry, full of feast and mirth.
Or else would all folk flee away from them.

Mrs. S. (aside). 'Tis strange, and I too love the sad ones best.

Mrs. T. (aside). Ay, how they clap him!
'Tis as who should say,
Sing! we were pleased; sing us another song;
As if they did not know he loves to sing.
Well may he, not an organ pipe they blow
On Sunday in the church is half so sweet;
But he's a hard man.

Mrs. J. (aside). Mark me, neighbours all,
Hard though he be—ay, and the mistress hard—
If he do sing 'twill be a sorrowful
Sad tale of sweethearts, that shall make you wish
Your own time would come over again, although
Were partings in 't and tears. Hist! now he sings.

Young farmer sings again.

'Come hither, come hither.' The broom was in blossom all over yon rise;
There went a wide murmur of brown bees about it with songs from the wood.
'We shall never be younger! O love, let us forth, for the world 'neath our
eyes,
Ay, the world is made young e'en as we, and right fair is her youth and
right good.'

Then there fell the great yearning upon me, that never yet went into words;
While lovesome and moansome thereon spake and falter'd the dove to the
dove.
And I came at her calling, 'Inherit, inherit, and sing with the birds;'
I went up to the wood with the child of my heart and the wife of my love.

O pure! O pathetic! Wild hyacinths drank it, the dream light, apace
Not a leaf moved at all 'neath the blue, they hung waiting for messages
kind;
Tall cherry-trees dropped their white blossom that drifted no whit from
its place,
For the south very far out to sea had the lulling low voice of the
wind.

And the child's dancing foot gave us part in the ravishment almost a pain,
An infinite tremor of life, a fond murmur that cried out on time,
Ah short! must all end in the doing and spend itself sweetly in vain,
And the promise be only fulfilment to lean from the height of its prime?

'We shall never be younger;' nay, mock me not, fancy, none call from yon
tree;
They have thrown me the world they went over, went up, and, alas! For
my part
I am left to grow old, and to grieve, and to change; but they change not
with me;
They will never be older, the child of my love, and the wife of my
heart.

Mrs. J. I told you so!

Mrs. T. (aside). That did you, neighbour. Ay, Partings, said you, and tears: I liked the song.

Mrs. G. Who be these coming to the front to sing?

Mrs. J. (aside). Why, neighbour, these be sweethearts, so 'tis said,

And there was much ado to make her sing;
She would, and would not; and he wanted her,
And, mayhap, wanted to be seen with her.
'Tis Tomlin's pretty maid, his only one.

Mrs. G. (aside). I did not know the maid, so fair she looks.

Mrs. J. (aside). He's a right proper man she has at last;
Walks over many a mile (and counts them nought)
To court her after work hours, that he doth,
Not like her other—why, he'd let his work
Go all to wrack, and lay it to his love,
While he would sit and look, and look and sigh.
Her father sent him to the right-about.
'If love,' said he, 'won't make a man of you,
Why, nothing will! 'Tis mainly that love's for.
The right sort makes,' said he, 'a lad a man;
The wrong sort makes,' said he, 'a man a fool.'

Vicar presents a young man and a girl.

DUET.

She. While he dreams, mine old grand sire,
And yon red logs glow,
Honey, whisper by the fire,
Whisper, honey low.

He. Honey, high's yon weary hill,
Stiff's yon weary loam;
Lacks the work o' my goodwill,
Fain I'd take thee home.
O how much longer, and longer, and longer,
An' how much longer shall the waiting last?
Berries red are grown, April birds are flown,
Martinmas gone over, ay, and harvest past.

She. Honey, bide, the time's awry,
Bide awhile, let be.
He. Take my wage then, lay it by,
Till 't come back with thee.
The red money, the white money,
Both to thee I bring—
She. Bring ye ought beside, honey?
He. Honey, ay, the ring.

Duet. But how much longer, and longer, and longer,
O how much longer shall the waiting last?
Berries red are grown, April birds are flown,
Martinmas gone over, and the harvest past.

[*Applause.*]

Mrs. S. (aside). O she's a pretty maid, and sings so small
And high, 'tis like a flute. And she must blush
Till all her face is roses newly blown.
How folks do clap. She knows not where to look.
There now she's off; he standing like a man
To face them.

Mrs. G. (aside). Makes his bow, and after her;
But what's the good of clapping when they're gone?

Mrs. T. (aside). Why 'tis a London fashion as I'm told,
And means they'd have 'em back to sing again.

Mrs. J. (aside). Neighbours, look where her father, red as fire,
Sits pleased and 'shamed, smoothing his Sunday hat;
And Parson bustles out. Clap on, clap on.
Coming? Not she! There comes her sweetheart though.

Vicar presents the young man again.

SONG.

I.

Rain clouds flew beyond the fell,
No more did thunders lower,
Patter, patter, on the beck
Dropt a clearing shower.
Eddying floats of creamy foam
Flecked the waters brown,
As we rode up to cross the ford,
Rode up from yonder town.
Waiting on the weather,
She and I together,
Waiting on the weather,
Till the flood went down.

II.

The sun came out, the wet leaf shone,
Dripped the wild wood vine.
Betide me well, betide me woe,
That hour's for ever mine.
With thee Mary, with thee Mary,
Full oft I pace again,
Asleep, awake, up yonder glen,
And hold thy bridle rein.
Waiting on the weather,
Thou and I together,
Waiting on the weather,
Till the flood shall wane.

III.

And who, though hope did come to nought,
Would memory give away?
I lighted down, she leaned full low,
Nor chid that hour's delay.
With thee Mary, with thee Mary,
Methought my life to crown,
But we ride up, but we ride up,
No more from yonder town.
Waiting on the weather,
Thou and I together,
Waiting on the weather,
Till the flood go down.

Mrs. J. (aside). Well, very well; but what of fiddler Sam?
I ask you, neighbours, if't be not his turn.
An honest man, and ever pays his score;
Born in the parish, old, blind as a bat,
And strangers sing before him; 't is a shame!

Mrs. S. (aside). Ay, but his daughter—

Mrs. J. (aside). Why, the maid's a maid
One would not set to guide the chant in church,
But when she sings to earn her father's bread,

The mildest mother's son may cry 'Amen.'

Mrs. S. (aside). They say he plays not always true.

Mrs. J. (aside) What then?

Mrs. T. (aside). Here comes my lady. She's too fat by half
For love songs. O! the lace upon her gown,
I wish I had the getting of it up,
'T would be a pretty penny in my pouch.

Mrs. J. (aside). Be quiet now for manners.

Vicar presents a lady, who sings.

I

Dark flocks of wildfowl riding out the storm
Upon a pitching sea,
Beyond grey rollers vex'd that rear and form,
When piping winds urge on their destiny,
To fall back ruined in white continually.
And I at our trysting stone,
Whereto I came down alone,
Was fain o' the wind's wild moan.
O, welcome were wrack and were rain
And beat of the battling main,
For the sake of love's sweet pain,
For the smile in two brown eyes,
For the love in any wise,
To bide though the last day dies;
For a hand on my wet hair,
For a kiss e'en yet I wear,
For—bonny Jock was there.

II.

Pale precipices while the sun lay low
Tinct faintly of the rose,
And mountain islands mirror'd in a flow,
Forgotten of all winds (their manifold
Peaks, reared into the glory and the glow),
Floated in purple and gold.
And I, o'er the rocks alone,
Of a shore all silent grown,
Came down to our trysting stone,
And sighed when the solemn ray
Paled in the wake o' the day.
'Wellaway, wellaway,—
Comfort is not by the shore,
Going the gold that it wore,
Purple and rose are no more,
World and waters are wan,
And night will be here anon,
And—bonny Jock's gone.'

[Moderate applause, and calls for fiddler Sam.

Mrs. Jillifer (aside). Now, neighbours, call again and be not shamed;
Stand by the parish, and the parish folk,
Them that are poor. I told you! here he comes.
Parson looks glum, but brings him and his girl.

The fiddler Sam plays, and his daughter sings.

Touch the sweet string. Fly forth, my heart,
Upon the music like a bird;
The silvery notes shall add their part,
And haply yet thou shalt be heard.
Touch the sweet string.

The youngest wren of nine
Dimpled, dark, and merry,
Brown her locks, and her two eyne
Browner than a berry.

When I was not in love
Maidens met I many;
Under sun now walks but one,
Nor others mark I any.

Twin lambs, a mild-eyed ewe,
That would her follow bleating,
A heifer white as snow
I'll give to my sweet sweeting.

Touch the sweet string. If yet too young,
O love of loves, for this my song,
I'll pray thee count it all unsung,
And wait thy leisure, wait it long.
Touch the sweet string.

[*Much applause.*]

Vicar. You hear them, Sam. You needs must play
again,
Your neighbours ask it.

Fiddler. Thank ye, neighbours all,
I have my feelings though I be but poor;
I've tanged the fiddle here this forty year,
And I should know the trick on 't.

The fiddler plays, and his daughter sings.

For Exmoor— For Exmoor, where the red deer run, my weary heart doth cry. She that will a rover
wed, far her foot shall his. Narrow, narrow, shows the street, dull the narrow sky. (*Buy my cherries,
whiteheart cherries, good my masters, buy.*)

For Exmoor—
O he left me, left alone, aye to think and sigh,
'Lambs feed down yon sunny coombe, hind and yearling
shy,
Mid the shrouding vapours walk now like ghosts on high.'
(*Buy my cherries, blackheart cherries, lads and lassies, buy.*)

For Exmoor—
Dear my dear, why did ye so? Evil days have I,
Mark no more the antler'd stag, hear the curlew cry.
Milking at my father's gate while he leans anigh.
(*Buy my cherries, whiteheart, blackheart, golden girls, O buy.*)

Mrs. T. (aside). I've known him play that Exmoor
song afore.
'Ah me! and I'm from Exmoor. I could wish
To hear 't no more.

Mrs. S. (aside). Neighbours, 't is mighty hot. Ay, now they throw the window up, that's well, A body
could not breathe.

[*The fiddler and his daughter go away.*]

Mrs. Jillifer (aside). They'll hear no parson's preaching,
no not they!

But innocenter songs, I do allow,
They could not well have sung than these to-night.
That man knows just so well as if he saw
They were not welcome.

The Vicar stands up, on the point of beginning to read, when the tuning and twang of the fiddle is heard close outside the open window, and the daughter sings in a clear cheerful voice. A little tittering is heard in the room, and the Vicar pauses discomfited.

I.

O my heart! what a coil is here!
Laurie, why will ye hold me dear?
Laurie, Laurie, lad, make not wail,
With a wiser lass ye'll sure prevail,
For ye sing like a woodland nightingale.
And there's no sense in it under the sun;
For of three that woo I can take but one,
So what's to be done—what's to be done?
And
There's no sense in it under the sun.

II.

Hal, brave Hal, from your foreign parts
Come home you'll choose among kinder hearts.
Forget, forget, you're too good to hold
A fancy 't were best should faint, grow cold,
And fade like an August marigold;
For of three that woo I can take but one,
And what's to be done—what's to be done?
There's no sense in it under the sun,
And
Of three that woo I can take but one.

III.

Geordie, Geordie, I count you true,
Though language sweet I have none for you.
Nay, but take me home to the churning mill
When cherry boughs white on yon mounting hill
Hang over the tufts o' the daffodil.
For what's to be done—what's to be done?
Of three that woo I must e'en take one,
Or there's no sense in it under the sun,
And
What's to be done—what's to be done?

V. (aside). What's to be done, indeed!

Wife (aside). Done! nothing, love.
Either the thing has done itself, or *they*
Must undo. Did they call for fiddler Sam?
Well, now they have him.

[*More tuning heard outside.*]

Mrs. J. (aside). Live and let live's my motto.

Mrs. T. So 't is mine.
Who's Sam, that he must fly in Parson's face?
He's had his turn. He never gave these lights,
Cut his best flowers—

Mrs. S. (aside). He takes no pride in us.
Speak up, good neighbour, get the window shut.

Mrs. J. (rising). I ask your pardon truly, that I do—
La! but the window—there's a parlous draught;
The window punishes rheumatic folk—
We'd have it shut, sir.

Others. Truly, that we would.

V. Certainly, certainly, my friends, you shall.

[The window is shut, and the Reading begins amid marked attention.]

KISMET.

Into the rock the road is cut full deep,
At its low ledges village children play,
From its high rifts fountains of leafage weep,
And silvery birches sway.

The boldest climbers have its face forsworn,
Sheer as a wall it doth all daring flout;
But benchlike at its base, and weather-worn,
A narrow ledge leans out.

There do they set forth feasts in dishes rude
Wrought of the rush—wild strawberries on the bed
Left into August, apples brown and crude,
Cress from the cold well-head.

Shy gamesome girls, small daring imps of boys,
But gentle, almost silent at their play—
Their fledgling daws, for food, make far more noise
Ranged on the ledge than they.

The children and the purple martins share
(Loveliest of birds) possession of the place;
They veer and dart cream-breasted round the fair
Faces with wild sweet grace.

Fresh haply from Palmyra desolate,
Palmyra pale in light and storyless—
From perching in old Tadmor mate by mate
In the waste wilderness.

These know the world; what do the children know?
They know the woods, their groaning noises weird,
They climb in trees that overhang the slow
Deep mill-stream, loved and feared.

Where shaken water-wheels go creak and clack,
List while a lorn thrush calls and almost speaks;
See willow-wrens with elderberries black
Staining their slender beaks.

They know full well how squirrels spend the day;
They peeped when field-mice stole and stored the seed,
And voles along their under-water way
Donned collars of bright beads.

Still from the deep-cut road they love to mark

Where set, as in a frame, the nearer shapes
Rise out of hill and wood; then long downs dark
As purple bloom on grapes.

But farms whereon the tall wheat musters gold,
High barley whitening, creases in bare hills,
Reed-feathered, castle-like brown churches old,
Nor churning water-mills,

Shall make ought seem so fair as that beyond—
Beyond the down, which draws their fealty;
Blow high, blow low, some hearts do aye respond
The wind is from the sea.

Above the steep-cut steps as they did grow,
The children's cottage homes embowered are seen;
Were this a world unfallen, they scarce could show
More beauteous red and green.

Milk-white and vestal-chaste the hollyhock
Grows tall, clove, sweetgale nightly shed forth spice,
Long woodbines leaning over scent the rock
With airs of Paradise.

Here comforted of pilot stars they lie
In charmèd dreams, but not of wold nor lea.
Behold a ship! her wide yards score the sky;
She sails a steel-blue sea.

As turns the great amassment of the tide,
Drawn of the silver despot to her throne,
So turn the destined souls, so far and wide
The strong deep claims its own.

Still the old tale; these dreaming islanders,
Each with hot Sunderbunds a somewhat owns
That calls, the grandsire's blood within them stirs
Dutch Java guards his bones.

And these were orphan'd when a leak was sprung
Far out from land when all the air was balm;
The shipmen saw their faces as they hung,
And sank in the glassy calm.

These, in an orange-sloop their father plied,
Deck-laden deep she sailed from Cadiz town,
A black squall rose, she turned upon her side,
Drank water and went down.

They too shall sail. High names of alien lands
Are in the dream, great names their fathers knew;
Madras, the white surf rearing on her sands,
E'en they shall breast it too.

See threads of scarlet down fell Roa creep,
When moaning winds rend back her vapourous veil;
Wild Orinoco wedge-like split the deep,
Raging forth passion-pale;

Or a blue berg at sunrise glittering tall,
Great as a town adrift come shining on
With sharp spires, gemlike as the mystical
Clear city of Saint John.

Still the old tale; but they are children yet;
O let their mothers have them while they may!
Soon it shall work, the strange mysterious fret
That mars both toil and play.

The sea will claim its own; and some shall mourn;
They also, they, but yet will surely go;
So surely as the planet to its bourne,
The chamois to his snow.

'Father, dear father, bid us now God-speed;
We cannot choose but sail, it thus befell.'
'Mother, dear mother—' 'Nay, 't is all decreed.
Dear hearts, farewell, farewell!'

DORA.

A waxing moon that, crescent yet,
In all its silver beauty set,
And rose no more in the lonesome night
To shed full-orbed its longed-for light.
Then was it dark; on wold and lea,
In home, in heart, the hours were drear.
Father and mother could no light see,
And the hearts trembled and there was fear.
—So on the mount, Christ's chosen three,
Unware that glory it did shroud,
Feared when they entered into the cloud.

She was the best part of love's fair
Adornment, life's God-given care,
As if He bade them guard His own,
Who should be soon anear His throne.
Dutiful, happy, and who say
When childhood smiles itself away,
'More fair than morn shall prove the day.'
Sweet souls so nigh to God that rest,
How shall be bettering of your best!
That promise heaven alone shall view,
That hope can ne'er with us come true,
That prophecy life hath not skill,
No, nor time leave that it fulfil.

There is but heaven, for childhood never
Can yield the all it meant, for ever.
Or is there earth, must wane to less
What dawned so close by perfectness.

How guileless, sweet, by gift divine,
How beautiful, dear child, was thine—
Spared all their grief of thee bereaven.
Winner, who had not greatly striven,
Hurts of sin shall not thee soil,
Carking care thy beauty spoil.
So early blest, so young forgiven.

Among the meadows fresh to view,
And in the woodland ways she grew,
On either side a hand to hold,
Nor the world's worst of evil knew,
Nor rued its miseries manifold,
Nor made discovery of its cold.
What more, like one with morn content.
Or of the morrow diffident,
Unconscious, beautiful she stood,
Calm, in young stainless maidenhood.

Then, with the last steps childhood trod,
Took up her fifteen years to God.

Farewell, sweet hope, not long to last,
All life is better for thy past.
Farewell till love with sorrow meet,
To learn that tears are obsolete.

SPERANZA.

Her younger sister, that Speranza hight.

England puts on her purple, and pale, pale
With too much light, the primrose doth but wait
To meet the hyacinth; then bower and dale
Shall lose her and each fairy woodland mate.
April forgets them, for their utmost sum
Of gift was silent, and the birds are come.

The world is stirring, many voices blend,
The English are at work in field and way;
All the good finches on their wives attend,
And emmets their new towns lay out in clay;
Only the cuckoo-bird only doth say
Her beautiful name, and float at large all day.

Everywhere ring sweet clamours, chirrupping,
Chirping, that comes before the grasshopper;
The wide woods, flurried with the pulse of spring,
Shake out their wrinkled buds with tremor and stir;
Small noises, little cries, the ear receives
Light as a rustling foot on last year's leaves.

All in deep dew the satisfied deep grass
Looking straight upward stars itself with white,
Like ships in heaven full-sailed do long clouds pass
Slowly o'er this great peace, and wide sweet light.
While through moist meads draws down yon rushy mere
Influent waters, sobbing, shining, clear.

Almost is rapture poignant; somewhat ails
The heart and mocks the morning; somewhat sighs,
And those sweet foreigners, the nightingales,
Made restless with their love, pay down its price,
Even the pain; then all the story unfold
Over and over again—yet 't is not told.

The mystery of the world whose name is life
(One of the names of God) all-conquering wends
And works for aye with rest and cold at strife.
Its pedigree goes up to Him and ends.
For it the lucent heavens are clear o'erhead,
And all the meads are made its natal bed.

Dear is the light, and eye-sight ever sweet,
What see they all fair lower things that nurse,
No wonder, and no doubt? Truly their meat,
Their kind, their field, their foes; man's eyes are more;
Sight is man's having of the universe,
His pass to the majestic far shore.

But it is not enough, ah! not enough

To look upon it and be held away,
And to be sure that, while we tread the rough,
Remote, dull paths of this dull world, no ray
Shall pierce to us from the inner soul of things,
Nor voice thrill out from its deep master-strings.

'To show the skies, and tether to the sod!
A daunting gift!' we mourn in our long strife.
And God is more than all our thought of God;
E'en life itself more than our thought of life,
And that is all we know—and it is noon,
Our little day will soon be done—how soon!

O let us to ourselves be dutiful:
We are not satisfied, we have wanted all,
Not alone beauty, but that Beautiful;
A lifted veil, an answering mystical.
Ever men plead, and plain, admire, implore,
'Why gavest Thou so much—and yet—not more?

We are but let to look, and Hope is weighed.'
Yet, say the Indian words of sweet renown,
'The doomèd tree withholdeth not her shade
From him that bears the axe to cut her down;'
Is hope cut down, dead, doomed, all is vain:
The third day dawns, she too has risen again

(For Faith is ours by gift, but Hope by right),
And walks among us whispering as of yore:
'Glory and grace are thrown thee with the light;
Search, if not yet thou touch the mystic shore;
Immanent beauty and good are nigh at hand,
For infants laugh and snowdrops bloom in the land.

Thou shalt have more anon.' What more? in sooth,
The mother of to-morrow is to-day,
And brings forth after her kind. There is no ruth
On the heart's sigh, that 'more' is hidden away,
And man's to-morrow yet shall pine and yearn;
He shall surmise, and he shall not discern,

But list the lark, and want the rapturous cries
And passioning of morning stars that sing
Together; mark the meadow-orchis rise
And think it freckled after an angel's wing;
Absent desire his land, and feel this, one
With the great drawing of the central sun.

But not to all such dower, for there be eyes
Are colour-blind, and souls are spirit-blind.
Those never saw the blush in sunset skies,
Nor the others caught a sense not made of words
As if were spirits about, that sailed the wind
And sank and settled on the boughs like birds.

Yet such for aye divided from us are
As other galaxies that seem no more
Than a little golden millet-seed afar.
Divided; swarming down some flat lee shore,
Then risen, while all the air that takes no word
Tingles, and trembles as with cries not heard.

For they can come no nearer. There is found
No meeting point. We have pierced the lodging-place
Of stars that cluster'd with their peers lie bound,
Embedded thick, sunk in the seas of space,
Fortunate orbs that know not night, for all

Are suns;—but we have never heard that call,

Nor learned it in our world, our citadel
With outworks of a Power about it traced;
Nor why we needs must sin who would do well,
Nor why the want of love, nor why its waste,
Nor how by dying of One should all be sped,
Nor where, O Lord, thou hast laid up our dead.

But Hope is ours by right, and Faith by gift.
Though Time be as a moon upon the wane,
Who walk with Faith far up the azure lift
Oft hear her talk of lights to wax again.
'If man be lost,' she cries, 'in this vast sea
Of being,—lost—he would be lost with Thee

Who for his sake once, as he hears, lost all.
For Thou wilt find him at the end of the days:
Then shall the flocking souls that thicker fall
Than snowflakes on the everlasting ways
Be counted, gathered, claimed.—Will it be long?
Earth has begun already her swan-song.

Who, even that might, would dwell for ever pent
In this fair frame that doth the spirit inhearse,
Nor at the last grow weary and content,
Die, and break forth into the universe,
And yet man would not all things—all—were new.'
Then saith the other, that one robed in blue:

'What if with subtle change God touch their eyes
When he awakes them,—not far off, but here
In a new earth, this: not in any wise
Strange, but more homely sweet, more heavenly dear,
Or if He roll away, as clouds disperse
Somewhat, and lo, that other universe.

O how 't were sweet new waked in some good hour,
Long time to sit on a hillside green and high
There like a honeybee domed in a flower
To feed unneath the azure bell o' the sky,
Feed in the midmost home and fount of light
Sown thick with stars at noonday as by night

To watch the flying faultless ones wheel down,
Alight, and run along some ridged peak,
Their feet adust from orbs of old renown,
Procyon or Mazzaroth, haply;—when they speak
Other-world errands wondrous, all discern
That would be strange, there would be much to learn.

Ay, and it would be sweet to share unblamed
Love's shining truths that tell themselves in tears,
Or to confess and be no more ashamed
The wrongs that none can right through earthly years;
And seldom laugh, because the tenderness
Calm, perfect, would be more than joy—would bless.

I tell you it were sweet to have enough,
And be enough. Among the souls forgiven
In presence of all worlds, without rebuff
To move, and feel the excellent safety leaven
With peace that awe must loss and the grave survive—
But palpitating moons that are alive

Nor shining fogs swept up together afar,
Vast as a thought of God, in the firmament;

No, and to dart as light from star to star
Would not long time man's yearning soul content:
Albeit were no more ships and no more sea,
He would desire his new earth presently.

Leisure to learn it. Peoples would be here;
They would come on in troops, and take at will
The forms, the faces they did use to wear
With life's first splendours—raiment rich with skill
Of broidery, carved adornments, crowns of gold;
Still would be sweet to them the life of old.

Then might be gatherings under golden shade,
Where dust of water drifts from some sheer fall,
Cooling day's ardour. There be utterance made
Of comforted love, dear freedom after thrall,
Large longings of the Seer, through earthly years
An everlasting burden, but no tears.

Egypt's adopted child might tell of lore
They taught him underground in shrines all dim,
And of the live tame reptile gods that wore
Gold anklets on their feet. And after him,
With fairest eyes ere met of mortal ken,
Glorious, forgiven, might speak the mother of men.

Talk of her apples gather'd by the marge
Of lapsing Gihon. 'Thus one spoke, I stood,
I ate.' Or next the mariner-saint enlarge
Right quaintly on his ark of gopher wood
To wandering men through high grass meads that ran
Or sailed the sea Mediterranean.

It might be common—earth afforested
Newly, to follow her great ones to the sun,
When from transcendent aisles of gloom they sped
Some work august (there would be work) now done.
And list, and their high matters strive to scan
The seekers after God, and lovers of man,

Sitting together in amity on a hill,
The Saint of Visions from Greek Patmos come—
Aurelius, lordly, calm-eyed, as of will
Austere, yet having rue on lost, lost Rome,
And with them One who drank a fateful bowl,
And to the unknown God trusted his soul.

The mitred Cranmer pitied even there
(But could it be?) for that false hand which signed
O, all pathetic—no. But it might bear
To soothe him marks of fire—and glad some kind
The man, as all of joy him well beseemed
Who 'lighted on a certain place and dreamed.'

And fair with the meaning of life their divine brows,
The daughters of well-doing famed in song;
But what! could old-world love for child, for spouse,
For land, content through lapsing eons long?
Oh for a watchword strong to bridge the deep
And satisfy of fulness after sleep.

What know we? Whispers fall, '*And the last first,
And the first last.*' The child before the king?
The slave before that man a master erst?
The woman before her lord? Shall glory fling
The rolls aside—time raze out triumphs past?
They sigh, '*And the last first, and the first last.*'

Answers that other, 'Lady, sister, friend,
It is enough, for I have worshipped Life;
With Him that is the Life man's life shall blend,
E'en now the sacred heavens do help his strife.
There do they knead his bread and mix his cup,
And all the stars have leave to bear him up.

Yet must he sink and fall away to a sleep,
As did his Lord. This Life his worshipped
Religion, Life. The silence may be deep,
Life listening, watching, waiting by His dead,
Till at the end of days they wake full fain
Because their King, the Life, doth love and reign.

I know the King shall come to that new earth,
And His feet stand again as once they stood,
In His man's eyes will shine Time's end and worth
The chiefest beauty and the chiefest good,
And all shall have the all and in it bide,
And every soul of man be satisfied.

THE BEGINNING.

They tell strange things of the primeval earth,
But things that be are never strange to those
Among them. And we know what it was like,
Many are sure they walked in it; the proof
This, the all gracious, all admired whole
Called life, called world, called thought, was all as one.
Nor yet divided more than that old earth
Among the tribes. Self was not fully come—
Self was asleep, embedded in the whole.

I too dwelt once in a primeval world,
Such as they tell of, all things wonderful;
Voices, ay visions, people grand and tall
Thronged in it, but their talk was overhead
And bore scant meaning, that one wanted not
Whose thought was sight as yet unbound of words,
This kingdom of heaven having entered through
Being a little child.

Such as can see,
Why should they doubt? The childhood of a race.
The childhood of a soul, hath neither doubt
Nor fear. Where all is super-natural
The guileless heart doth feed on it, no more
Afraid than angels are of heaven.

Who saith
Another life, the next one shall not have
Another childhood growing gently thus,
Able to bear the poignant sweetness, take
The rich long awful measure of its peace,
Endure the presence sublime.

I saw
Once in that earth primeval, once—a face,
A little face that yet I dream upon.'

'Of this world was it?'

'Not of this world—no,
In the beginning—for methinks it was
In the beginning but an if you ask
How long ago, time was not then, nor date
For marking. It was always long ago,
E'en from the first recalling of it, long
And long ago.

And I could walk, and went,
Led by the hand through a long mead at morn,
Bathed in a ravishing excess of light.
It throbbed, and as it were fresh fallen from heaven,
Sank deep into the meadow grass. The sun
Gave every blade a bright and a dark side,
Glitter'd on buttercups that topped them, slipped
To soft red puffs, by some called holy-hay.
The wide oaks in their early green stood still
And took delight in it. Brown specks that made
Very sweet noises quivered in the blue;
Then they came down and ran along the brink
Of a long pool, and they were birds.

The pool

Pranked at the edges with pale peppermint,
A rare amassment of veined cuckoo flowers
And flags blue-green was lying below. This all
Was sight it condescended not to words
Till memory kissed the charmed dream.

The mead

Hollowing and heaving, in the hollows fair
With dropping roses fell away to it,
A strange sweet place; upon its further side
Some people gently walking took their way
Up to a wood beyond; and also bells
Sang, floated in the air, hummed—what you will.'

'Then it was Sunday?'

'Sunday was not yet;

It was a holiday, for all the days
Were holy. It was not our day of rest
(The earth for all her rolling asks not rest,
For she was never weary).

It was sweet,

Full of dear leisure and perennial peace,
As very old days when life went easily,
Before mankind had lost the wise, the good
Habit of being happy.

For the pool

A beauteous place it was as might be seen,
That led one down to other meads, and had
Clouds and another sky. I thought to go
Deep down in it, and walk that steep clear slope.

Then she who led me reached the brink, her foot
Staying to talk with one who met her there.
Here were fresh marvels, sailing things whose vans
Floated them on above the flowering flags.
We moved a little onward, paused again,
And here there was a break in these, and here
There came the vision; for I stooped to gaze
So far as my small height would let me—gaze
Into that pool to see the fishes dart,
And in a moment from her under hills

Came forth a little child who lived down there,
Looked up at me and smiled. We could not talk,
But looked and loved each other. I a hand
Held out to her, so she to me, but ah,
She would not come. Her home, her little bed,
Was doubtless under that soft shining thing
The water, and she wanted not to run
Among red sorrel spires, and fill her hand
In the dry warmed grass with cowslip buds.
Awhile our feeding hearts all satisfied,
Took in the blue of one another's eyes,
Two dimpled creatures, rose-lipped innocent.
But when we fain had kissed—O! the end came,
For snatched aloft, held in the nurse's arms,
She parting with her lover I was borne
Far from that little child.

And no one knew
She lived down there, but only I; and none
Sought for her, but I yearned for her and left
Part of myself behind, as the lambs leave
Their wool upon a thorn.'

'And was she seen
Never again, nor known for what she was?'

'Never again, for we did leave anon
The pasture and the pool. I know not where
They lie, and sleep a heaven on earth, but know
From thenceforth yearnings for a lost delight;
On certain days I dream about her still.'

IN THE NURSERY.

Where do you go, Bob, when you 're fast asleep?'
'Where? O well, once I went into a deep
Mine, father told of, and a cross man said
He'd make me help to dig, and eat black bread.
I saw the Queen once, in her room, quite near.
She said, "You rude boy, Bob, how came you here?"'

'Was it like mother's boudoir?'

'Grander far,
Gold chairs and things—all over diamonds—Ah!'

'You're sure it was the Queen?'
'Of course, a crown
Was on her, and a spangly purple gown.'

'I went to heaven last night.'

'O Lily, no,
How could you?'

'Yes I did, they told me so,
And my best doll, my favourite, with the blue
Frock, Jasmine, I took her to heaven too.'
'What was it like?'

'A kind of—I can't tell—
A sort of orchard place in a long dell,

With trees all over flowers. And there were birds
Who could do talking, say soft pretty words;
They let me stroke them, and I showed it all
To Jasmine. And I heard a blue dove call,
"Child, this is heaven." I was not frightened when
It spoke, I said "Where are the angels then?"

'Well.'

'So it said, "Look up and you shall see."
There were two angels sitting in the tree,
As tall as mother; they had long gold hair.
They let drop down the fruit they gather'd there
And little angels came for it—so sweet.
Here they were beggar children in the street,
And the dove said they had the prettiest things,
And wore their best frocks every day.'

'And wings,
Had they no wings?'

'O yes, and lined with white
Like swallow wings, so soft—so very light
Fluttering about.'

'Well.'

'Well, I did not stay,
So that was all.'

'They made you go away?'

'I did not go—but—I was gone.'

'I know.'

'But it's a pity, Bob, we never go
Together.'

'Yes, and have no dreams to tell,
But the next day both know it all quite well.'

'And, Bob, if I could dream you came with me
You would be there perhaps.'

'Perhaps—we'll see.'

THE AUSTRALIAN BELL-BIRD.

Toll—

Toll.' 'The bell-bird sounding far away,
Hid in a myall grove.' He raised his head,
The bush glowed scarlet in descending day,
A masterless wild country—and he said,
My father ('Toll.') 'Full oft by her to stray,
As if a spirit called, have I been led;
Oft seems she as an echo in my soul
(('Toll.') from my native towers by Avon ('Toll').

(('Toll.') Oft as in a dream I see full fain
The bell-tower beautiful that I love well,
A seemly cluster with her churches twain.
I hear adown the river faint and swell

And lift upon the air that sound again,
It is, it is—how sweet no tongue can tell,
For all the world-wide breadth of shining foam,
The bells of Evesham chiming "Home, sweet home."

The mind hath mastery thus—it can defy
The sense, and make all one as it DID HEAR—
Nay, I mean more; the wraiths of sound gone by
Rise; they are present 'neath this dome all clear.
ONE, sounds the bird—a pause—then doth supply
Some ghost of chimes the void expectant ear;
Do they ring bells in heaven? The learnedest soul
Shall not resolve me such a question. ('Toll.')

('Toll.')

Say I am a boy, and fishing stand
By Avon ('Toll.')

on line and rod intent,
How glitters deep in dew the meadow land—
What, dost thou flit, thy ministry all spent,
Not many days we hail such visits bland,
Why steal so soon the rare enravishment?
Ay gone! the soft deceptive echoes roll
Away, and faint into remoteness.' ('Toll.')

While thus he spoke the doom'd sun touched his bed
In scarlet, all the palpitating air
Still loyal waited on. He dipped his head,
Then all was over, and the dark was there;
And northward, lo! a star, one likewise red
But lurid, starts from out her day-long lair,
Her fellows trail behind; she bears her part,
The balefullest star that shines, the Scorpion's heart

Or thus of old men feigned, and then did fear,
Then straight crowd forth the great ones of the sky
In flashing flame at strife to reach more near.
The little children of Infinity,
They next look down as to report them 'Here,'
From deeps all thoughts despair and heights past high,
Speeding, not sped, no rest, no goal, no shore,
Still to rush on till time shall be no more.

'Loved vale of Evesham, 'tis a long farewell,
Not laden orchards nor their April snow
These eyes shall light upon again; the swell
And whisper of thy storied river know,
Nor climb the hill where great old Montfort fell
In a good cause hundreds of years ago;
So fall'n, elect to live till life's ally,
The river of recorded deeds, runs dry.

This land is very well, this air,' saith he,
'Is very well, but we want echoes here.
Man's past to feed the air and move the sea;
Ages of toil make English furrows dear,
Enriched by blood shed for his liberty,
Sacred by love's first sigh and life's last fear,
We come of a good nest, for it shall yearn
Poor birds of passage, but may not return,

Spread younger wings, and beat the winds afar.
There sing more poets in that one small isle
Than all isles else can show—of such you are;
Remote things come to you unsought erewhile,
Near things a long way round as by a star.
Wild dreams!' He laughed, 'A sage right infantile;
With sacred fear behold life's waste deplored,

Undaunted by the leisure of the Lord.

Ay go, the island dream with eyes make good,
Where Freedom rose, a lodestar to your race;
And Hope that leaning on her anchor stood
Did smile it to her feet: a right small place.
Call her a mother, high such motherhood,
Home in her name and duty in her face;
Call her a ship, her wide arms rake the clouds,
And every wind of God pipes in her shrouds.

Ay, all the more go you. But some have cried
"The ship is breaking up;" they watch amazed
While urged toward the rocks by some that guide;
Bad steering, reckless steering, she all dazed
Tempteth her doom; yet this have none denied
Ships men have wrecked and palaces have razed,
But never was it known beneath the sun,
They of such wreckage built a goodlier one.

God help old England an't be thus, nor less
God help the world.' Therewith my mother spake,
'Perhaps He will! by time, by faithlessness,
By the world's want long in the dark awake,
I think He must be almost due: the stress
Of the great tide of life, sharp misery's ache,
In a recluseness of the soul we rue
Far off, but yet—He must be almost due.

God manifest again, the coming King.'
Then said my father, 'I beheld erewhile,
Sitting up dog-like to the sunrising,
The giant doll in ruins by the Nile,
With hints of red that yet to it doth cling,
Fell, battered, and bewigged its cheeks were vile,
A body of evil with its angel fled,
Whom and his fellow fiends men worshipped.

The gods die not, long shrouded on their biers,
Somewhere they live, and live in memory yet;
Were not the Israelites for forty years
Hid from them in the desert to forget—
Did they forget? no more than their lost feres
Sons of to-day with faces southward set,
Who dig for buried lore long ages fled,
And sift for it the sand and search the dead.

Brown Egypt gave not one great poet birth,
But man was better than his gods, with lay
He soothed them restless, and they zoned the earth,
And crossed the sea; there drank immortal praise;
Then from his own best self with glory and worth
And beauty dowered he them for dateless days.
Ever "their sound goes forth" from shore to shore,
When was there known an hour that they lived more.

Because they are beloved and not believed,
Admired not feared, they draw men to their feet;
All once, rejected, nothing now, received
Where once found wanting, now the most complete;
Man knows to-day, though manhood stand achieved,
His cradle-rockers made a rustling sweet;
That king reigns longest which did lose his crown,
Stars that by poets shine are stars gone down.

Still drawn obedient to an unseen hand,
From purer heights comes down the yearning west,

Like to that eagle in the morning land,
That swooping on her predatory quest,
Did from the altar steal a smouldering brand,
The which she bearing home it burned her nest,
And her wide pinions of their plumes bereaven.
Spoiled for glad spiring up the steeps of heaven.

I say the gods live, and that reign abhor,
And will the nations it should dawn? Will they
Who ride upon the perilous edge of war?
Will such as delve for gold in this our day?
Neither the world will, nor the age will, nor
The soul—and what, it cometh now? Nay, nay,
The weighty sphere, unready for release,
Rolls far in front of that o'er-mastering peace.

Wait and desire it; life waits not, free there
To good, to evil, thy right perilous—
All shall be fair, and yet it is not fair.
I thank my God He takes th'advantage thus;
He doth not greatly hide, but still declare
Which side He is on and which He loves, to us,
While life impartial aid to both doth lend,
And heed not which the choice nor what the end.

Among the few upright, O to be found,
And ever search the nobler path, my son,
Nor say 'tis sweet to find me common ground
Too high, too good, shall leave the hours alone—
Nay, though but one stood on the height renowned,
Deny not hope or will, to be that one.
Is it the many fall'n shall lift the land,
The race, the age!—Nay, 't is the few that stand.'

While in the lamplight hearkening I sat mute,
Methought 'How soon this fire must needs burn out'
Among the passion flowers and passion fruit
That from the wide verandah hung, misdoubt
Was mine. 'And wherefore made I thus long suit
To leave this old white head? His words devout,
His blessing not to hear who loves me so—
He that is old, right old—I will not go.'

But ere the dawn their counsels wrought with me,
And I went forth; alas that I so went
Under the great gum-forest canopy,
The light on every silken filament
Of every flower, a quivering ecstasy
Of perfect paleness made it; sunbeams sent
Up to the leaves with sword-like flash endued
Each turn of that grey drooping multitude.

I sought to look as in the light of one
Returned. 'Will this be strange to me that day?
Flocks of green parrots clamorous in the sun
Tearing out milky maize—stiff cacti grey
As old men's beards—here stony ranges lone,
Their dust of mighty flocks upon their way
To water, cloudlike on the bush afar,
Like smoke that hangs where old-world cities are.

Is it not made man's last endowment here
To find a beauty in the wilderness;
Feel the lorn moor above his pastures dear,
Mountains that may not house and will not bless
To draw him even to death? He must insphere

His spirit in the open, so doth less
Desire his feres, and more that unvex'd wold
And fine afforested hills, his dower of old.

But shall we lose again that new-found sense
Which sees the earth less for our tillage fair?
Oh, let her speak with her best eloquence
To me, but not her first and her right rare
Can equal what I may not take from hence.
The gems are left: it is not elsewhere
The wild Nepèan cleaves her matchless way,
Nor Sydney harbour shall outdo the day.

Adding to day this—that she lighteth it.'
But I beheld again, and as must be
With a world-record by a spirit writ,
It was more beautiful than memory,
Than hope was more complete.

Tall brigs did sit
Each in her berth the pure flood placidly,
Their topsails drooping 'neath the vast blue dome
Listless, as waiting to be sheeted home.

And the great ships with pulse-like throbbing clear,
Majestical of mien did take their way
Like living creatures from some grander sphere,
That having boarded ours thought good to stay,
Albeit enslaved. They most divided here
From God's great art and all his works in clay,
In that their beauty lacks, though fair it shows
That divine waste of beauty only He bestows.

The day was young, scarce out the harbour lights
That morn I sailed: low sun-rays tremulous
On golden loops sped outward. Yachts in flights
Flutter'd the water air-like clear, while thus
It crept for shade among brown rocky bights
With cassia crowned and palms diaphanous,
And boughs ripe fruitage dropping fitfully,
That on the shining ebb went out to sea.

'Home,' saith the man self-banished, 'my son
Shall now go home.' Therewith he sendeth him
Abroad, and knows it not, but thence is won,
Rescued, the son's true home. His mind doth limn
Beautiful pictures of it, there is none
So dear, a new thought shines erewhile but dim,
'That was my home, a land past all compare,
Life, and the poetry of life, are there.'

But no such thought drew near to me that day;
All the new worlds flock forth to greet the old,
All the young souls bow down to own its sway,
Enamoured of strange richness manifold;
Not to be stored, albeit they seek for aye,
Besieging it for its own life to hold,
E'en as Al Mamoun fain for treasures hid,
Stormed with an host th' inviolate pyramid.

And went back foiled but wise to walled Bagdad.
So I, so all. The treasure sought not found,
But some divine tears found to superadd
Themselves to a long story. The great round
Of yesterdays, their pathos sweet as sad,
Found to be only as to-day, close bound
With us, we hope some good thing yet to know,

But God is not in haste, while the lambs grow

The Shepherd leadeth softly. It is great
The journey, and the flock forgets at last
(Earth ever working to obliterate
The landmarks) when it halted, where it passed;
And words confuse, and time doth ruinate,
And memory fail to hold a theme so vast;
There is request for light, but the flock feeds,
And slowly ever on the Shepherd leads.

'Home,' quoth my father, and a glassy sea
Made for the stars a mirror of its breast,
While southing, pennon-like, in bravery
Of long drawn gold they trembled to their rest.
Strange the first night and morn, when Destiny
Spread out to float on, all the mind oppressed;
Strange on their outer roof to speed forth thus,
And know th' uncouth sea-beasts stared up at us.

But yet more strange the nights of falling rain,
That splashed without—a sea-coal fire within;
Life's old things gone astern, the mind's disdain,
For murmurous London makes soft rhythmic din.
All courtier thoughts that wait on words would fain
Express that sound. The words are not to win
Till poet made, but mighty, yet so mild
Shall be as cooing of a cradle-child.

Sensation like a piercing arrow flies,
Daily out-going thought. This Adamhood,
This weltering river of mankind that hies
Adown the street; it cannot be withstood.
The richest mundane miles not otherwise
Than by a symbol keep possession good,
Mere symbol of division, and they hold
The clear pane sacred, the unminted gold

And wild outpouring of all wealth not less.
Why this? A million strong the multitude,
And safe, far safer than our wilderness
The walls; for them it daunts with right at feud,
Itself declares for law; yet sore the stress
On steeps of life: what power to ban and bless,
Saintly denial, waste inglorious,
Desperate want, and riches fabulous.

Of souls what beautiful embodiment
For some; for some what homely housing writ;
What keen-eyed men who beggared of content
Eat bread well earned as they had stolen it;
What flutterers after joy that forward went,
And left them in the rear unqueened, unfit
For joy, with light that faints in strugglings drear
Of all things good the most awanting here.

Some in the welter of this surging tide
Move like the mystic lamps, the Spirits Seven,
Their burning love runs kindling far and wide,
That fire they needed not to steal from heaven,
'Twas a free gift flung down with them to bide,
And be a comfort for the hearts bereaven,
A warmth, a glow, to make the failing store
And parsimony of emotion more.

What glorious dreams in that find harbourage,
The phantom of a crime stalks this beside,

And those might well have writ on some past page,
In such an hour, of such a year, we—died,
Put out our souls, took the mean way, false wage,
Course cowardly; and if we be denied
The life once loved, we cannot alway rue
The loss; let be: what vails so sore ado.

And faces pass of such as give consent
To live because 'tis not worth while to die;
This never knew the awful trembling
When some great fear sprang forward suddenly,
Its other name being hope—and there forthwent
As both confronted him a rueful cry
From the heart's core, one urging him to dare,
'Now! now! Leap now.' The other, 'Stand, forbear.'

A nation reared in brick. How shall this be?
Nor by excess of life death overtake.
To die in brick of brick her destiny,
And as the hamadryad eats the snake
His wife, and then the snake his son, so she
Air not enough, 'though everyone doth take
A little,' water scant, a plague of gold,
Light out of date—a multitude born old.

And then a three-day siege might be the end;
E'en now the rays get muddied struggling down
Through heaven's vasty lofts, and still extend
The miles of brick and none forbid, and none
Forbode; a great world-wonder that doth send
High fame abroad, and fear no setting sun,
But helpless she through wealth that flouts the day
And through her little children, even as they.

But forth of London, and all visions dear
To eastern poets of a watered land
Are made the commonplace of nature here,
Sweet rivers always full, and always bland.
Beautiful, beautiful! What runlets clear
Twinkle among the grass. On every hand
Fall in the common talk from lips around
The old names of old towns and famous ground.

It is not likeness only charms the sense,
Not difference only sets the mind aglow,
It is the likeness in the difference,
Familiar language spoken on the snow,
To have the Perfect in the Present tense,
To hear the ploughboy whistling, and to know,
It smacks of the wild bush, that tune—'Tis ours,
And look! the bank is pale with primrose flowers,

What veils of tender mist make soft the lea,
What bloom of air the height; no veils confer
On warring thought or softness or degree
Or rest. Still falling, conquering, strife and stir.
For this religion pays indemnity.
She pays her enemies for conquering her.
And then her friends; while ever, and in vain
Lots for a seamless coat are cast again.

Whose it shall be; unless it shall endow
Thousands of thousands it can fall to none,
But faith and hope are not so simple now,
As in the year of our redemption—One.
The pencil of pure light must disallow

Its name and scattering, many hues put on,
And faith and hope low in the valley feel,
There it is well with them, 'tis very well.

The land is full of vision, voices call.
Can spirits cast a shadow? Ay, I trow
Past is not done, and over is not all,
Opinion dies to live and wanes to grow,
The gossamer of thought doth filmlike fall,
On fallows after dawn make shimmering show,
And with old arrow-heads, her earliest prize,
Mix learning's latest guess and last surmise.

There heard I pipes of fame, saw wrens 'about
That time when kings go forth to battle' dart,
Full valorous atoms pierced with song, and stout
To dare, and down yclad; I shared the smart
Of grievèd cushats, bloom of love, devout
Beyond man's thought of it. Old song my heart
Rejoiced, but O mine own forelders' ways
To look on, and their fashions of past days.

The ponderous craft of arms I craved to see,
Knights, burghers, filtering through those gates ajar,
Their age of serfdom with my spirit free;
We cannot all have wisdom; some there are
Believe a star doth rule their destiny,
And yet they think to overreach the star,
For thought can weld together things apart,
And contraries find meeting in the heart.

In the deep dust at Suez without sound
I saw the Arab children walk at eve,
Their dark untroubled eyes upon the ground,
A part of Time's grave quiet. I receive
Since then a sense, as nature might have found
Love kin to man's that with the past doth grieve;
And lets on waste and dust of ages fall
Her tender silences that mean it all.

We have it of her, with her; it were ill
For men, if thought were widowed of the world,
Or the world beggared of her sons, for still
A crownèd sphere with many gems impearled
She rolls because of them. We lend her will
And she yields love. The past shall not be hurled
In the abhorred limbo while the twain,
Mother and son, hold partnership and reign.

She hangs out omens, and doth burdens dree.
Is she in league with heaven? That knows but One.
For man is not, and yet his work we see
Full of unconscious omen darkly done.
I saw the ring-stone wrought at Avebury
To frame the face of the midwinter sun,
Good luck that hour they thought from him forth smiled
At midwinter the Sun did rise—the Child.

Still would the world divine though man forbore,
And what is beauty but an omen?—what
But life's deep divination cast before,
Omen of coming love? Hard were man's lot,
With love and toil together at his door,
But all-convincing eyes hath beauty got;
His love is beautiful, and he shall sue.
Toil for her sake is sweet, the omen true.

Love, love, and come it must, then life is found
Beforehand that was whole and fronting care,
A torn and broken half in durance bound
That mourns and makes request for its right fair
Remainder, with forlorn eyes cast around
To search for what is lost, that unaware
With not an hour's forebodement makes the day
From henceforth less or more for ever and aye.

Her name—my love's—I knew it not; who says
Of vagrant doubt for such a cause that stirs
His fancy shall not pay arrearages
To all sweet names that might perhaps be hers?
The doubts of love are powers. His heart obeys,
The world is in them, still to love defers,
Will play with him for love, but when 't begins
The play is high, and the world always wins.

For 'tis the maiden's world, and his no more.
Now thus it was: with new found kin flew by
The temperate summer; every wheatfield wore
Its gold, from house to house in ardency
Of heart for what they showed I westward bore—
My mother's land, her native hills drew nigh;
I was—how green, how good old earth can be—
Beholden to that land for teaching me.

And parted from my fellows, and went on
To feel the spiritual sadness spread
Adown long pastoral hollows. And anon
Did words recur in far remoteness said:
'See the deep vale ere dews are dried and gone,
Where my so happy life in peace I led,
And the great shadow of the Beacon lies—
See little Ledbury trending up the rise.

With peakèd houses and high market hall—
An oak each pillar—reared in the old days.
And here was little Ledbury, quaint withal,
The forest felled, her lair and sheltering place
She long time left in age pathological.
'Great oaks' methought, as I drew near to gaze,
'Were but of small account when these came down,
Drawn rough-hewn in to serve the tree-girt town.

And thus and thus of it will question be
The other side the world.' I paused awhile
To mark. 'The old hall standeth utterly
Without or floor or side, a comely pile,
A house on pillars, and by destiny
Drawn under its deep roof I saw a file
Of children slowly through their way make good,
And lifted up mine eyes—and there—SHE STOOD.

She was so stately that her youthful grace
Drew out, it seemed, my soul unto the air,
Astonished out of breathing by her face
So fain to nest itself in nut-brown hair
Lying loose about her throat. But that old place
Proved sacred, she just fully grown too fair
For such a thought. The dimples that she had!
She was so truly sweet that it was sad.

I was all hers. That moment gave her power—
And whom, nay what she was, I scarce might know,
But felt I had been born for that good hour.

The perfect creature did not move, but so
As if ordained to claim all grace for dower.
She leaned against the pillar, and below
Three almost babes, her care, she watched the while
With downcast lashes and a musing smile.

I had been 'ware without a rustic treat,
Waggons bedecked with greenery stood anigh,
A swarm of children in the cheerful street
With girls to marshal them; but all went by
And none I noted save this only sweet:
Too young her charge more venturous sport to try,
With whirling baubles still they play content,
And softly rose their lispings babblement.

'O what a pause! to be so near, to mark
The locket rise and sink upon her breast;
The shadow of the lashes lieth dark
Upon her cheek. O fleeting time, O rest!
A slant ray finds the gold, and with a spark
And flash it answers, now shall be the best.
Her eyes she raises, sets their light on mine,
They do not flash nor sparkle—no—but shine.'

As I for very hopelessness made bold
Did off my hat ere time there was for thought,
She with a gracious sweetness, calm, not cold,
Acknowledged me, but brought my chance to nought
'This vale of imperfection doth not hold
A lovelier bud among its loveliest wrought!
She turns,' methought 'O do not quite forget
To me remains for ever—that we met.'

And straightway I went forth, I could no less,
Another light unwot of fall'n on me,
And rare elation and high happiness
Some mighty power set hands of mastery
Among my heartstrings, and they did confess
With wild throbs inly sweet, that minstrelsy
A nightingale might dream so rich a strain,
And pine to change her song for sleep again.

The harp thrilled ever: O with what a round
And series of rich pangs fled forth each note
Oracular, that I had found, had found
(Head waters of old Nile held less remote)
Golden Dorado, dearest, most renowned;
But when as 't were a sigh did overflow,
Shaping 'how long, not long shall this endure,
Au jour le jour' methought, '*Aujourd le jour*'.

The minutes of that hour my heart knew well
Were like the fabled pint of golden grain,
Each to be counted, paid for, till one fell,
Grew, shot up to another world amain,
And he who dropped might climb it, there to dwell.
I too, I clomb another world full fain,
But was she there? O what would be the end,
Might she nor there appear, nor I descend?

All graceful as a palm the maiden stood;
Men say the palm of palms in tropic Isles
Doth languish in her deep primeval wood,
And want the voice of man, his home, his smiles,
Nor flourish but in his dear neighborhood;
She too shall want a voice that reconciles,

A smile that charms—how sweet would heaven so please—
To plant her at my door over far seas.

I paced without, nor ever liege in truth
His sovran lady watched with more grave eyes
Of reverence, and she nothing ware forsooth,
Did standing charm the soul with new surprise.
Moving flow on a dimpled dream of youth.
Look! look! a sunbeam on her. Ay, but lies
The shade more sweetly now she passeth through
To join her fellow maids returned anew.

I saw (myself to bide unmarked intent)
Their youthful ease and pretty airs sedate,
They are so good, they are so innocent,
Those Islanders, they learn their part so late,
Of life's demand right careless, dwell content
Till the first love's first kiss shall consecrate
Their future to a world that can but be
By their sweet martyrdom and ministry.

Most happy of God's creatures. Afterward
More than all women married thou wilt be,
E'en to the soul. One glance desired afford,
More than knight's service might'st thou ask of me.
Not any chance is mine, not the best word,
No, nor the salt of life withouten thee.
Must this all end, is my day so soon o'er?
Untroubled violet eyes, look once,—once more.

No, not a glance: the low sun lay and burned,
Now din of drum and cry of fife withal,
Blithe teachers mustering frolic swarms returned,
And new-world ways in that old market hall,
Sweet girls, fair women, how my whole heart yearned
Her to draw near who made my festival.
With others closing round, time speeding on,
How soon she would be gone, she would be gone!

Ay, but I thought to track the rustic wains,
Their goal desired to note, but not anigh,
They creaking down long hop ycrested lanes
'Neath the abiding flush of that north sky.
I ran, my horse I fetched, but fate ordains
Love shall breed laughter when th' unloving spy.
As I drew rein to watch the gathered crowd,
With sudden mirth an old wife laughed aloud.

Her cheeks like winter apples red of hue,
Her glance aside. To whom her speech—to me?
'I know the thing you go about to do—
The lady—' 'What! the lady—' 'Sir,' saith she,
(I thank you kindly, sir), I tell you true
She's gone,' and 'here's a coil' methought 'will be.'
'Gone—where?' 'Tis past my wit forsooth to say
If they went Malvern way or Hereford way.

A carriage took her up—where three roads meet
They needs must pass; you may o'ertake it yet.'
And 'Oyez, Oyez' peals adown the street,
'Lost, lost, a golden heart with pearls beset.'
'I know her, sir?—not I. To help this treat,
Many strange ladies from the country met.'
'O heart beset with pearls! my hope was crost.
Farewell, good dame. Lost! oh my lady lost.'

And 'Oyez, Oyez' following after me

On my great errand to the sundown went.
Lost, lost, and lost, whenas the cross road flee
Up tumbled hills, on each for eyes attent
A carriage creepeth.

'Though in neither she,
I ne'er shall know life's worst impoverishment,
An empty heart. No time, I stake my all,
To right! and chase the rose-red evenfall.

Fly up, good steed, fly on. Take the sharp rise
As't were a plain. A lady sits; but one.
So fast the pace she turns in startled wise,
She sets her gaze on mine and all is done.
"Persian Roxana" might have raised such eyes
When Alexander sought her. Now the sun
Dips, and my day is over; turn and fleet
The world fast flies, again do three roads meet.'

I took the left, and for some cause unknown
Full fraught of hope and joy the way pursued,
Yet chose strong reasons speeding up alone
To fortify me 'gainst a shock more rude.
E'en so the diver carrieth down a stone
In hand, lest he float up before he would,
And end his walk upon the rich sea-floor,
Those pearls he failed to grasp never to look on more.

Then as the low moon heaveth, waxen white,
The carriage, and it turns into a gate.
Within sit three in pale pathetic light.
O surely one of these my love, my fate.
But ere I pass they wind away from sight.
Then cottage casements glimmer. All elate
I cross a green, there yawns with opened latch
A village hostel capped in comely thatch.

'The same world made for all is made for each.
To match a heart's magnificence of hope.
How shall good reason best high action teach
To win of custom, and with home to cope
How warrantably may he hope to win
A star, that wants it? Shall he lie and grope,
No, truly.—I will see her; tell my tale,
See her this once,—and if I fail—I fail.'

Thus with myself I spoke. A rough brick floor
Made the place homely; I would rest me there.
But how to sleep? Forth of the unlocked door
I passed at midnight, lustreless white air
Made strange the hour, that ecstasy not o'er
I moved among the shadows, all my care—
Counted a shadow—her drawn near to bless,
Impassioned out of fear, rapt, motionless.

Now a long pool and water-hens at rest
(As doughty seafolk dusk, at Malabar)
A few pale stars lie trembling on its breast.
Hath the Most High of all His host afar
One most supremely beautiful, one best,
Dearest of all the flock, one favourite star?
His Image given, in part the children know
They love one first and best. It may be so.

Now a long hedge; here dream the woolly folk;
A majesty of silence is about.
Transparent mist rolls off the pool like smoke,

And Time is in his trance and night devout.
Now the still house. O an I knew she woke
I could not look, the sacred moon sheds out
So many blessings on her rooftree low,
Each more pathetic that she nought doth know.

I would not love a little, nor my start
Make with the multitude that love and cease.
He gives too much that giveth half a heart,
Too much for liberty, too much for peace.
Let me the first and best and highest impart,
The whole of it, and heaven the whole increase!
For *that* were not too much.

(In the moon's wake
How the grass glitters, for her sweetest sake.)

I would toward her walk the silver floors.
Love loathes an average—all extreme things deal
To love—sea-deep and dazzling height for stores.
There are on Fortune's errant foot can steal,
Can guide her blindfold in at their own doors,
Or dance elate upon her slippery wheel.
Courage! there are 'gainst hope can still advance,
Dowered with a sane, a wise extravagance.

A song
To one a dreaming: when the dew
Falls, 'tis a time for rest; and when the bird
Calls, 'tis a time to wake, to wake for you.
A long-waking, aye, waking till a word
Come from her coral mouth to be the true
Sum of all good heart wanted, ear hath heard.

Yet if alas! might love thy dolour be,
Dream, dear heart dear, and do not dream of me.

I sing
To one awakened, when the heart
Cries 'tis a day for thought, and when the soul
Sighs choose thy part, O choose thy part, thy part.
I bring to one beloved, bring my whole
Store, make in loving, make O make mine art
More. Yet I ask no, ask no wished goal

But this—if loving might thy dolour be,
Wake, O my lady loved, and love not me.

'That which the many win, love's niggard sum,
I will not, if love's all be left behind.
That which I am I cannot unbecome,
My past not unpossess, nor future blind.
Let me all risk, and leave the deep heart dumb
For ever, if that maiden sits enshrined
The saint of one more happy. She is she.
There is none other. Give her then to me.

Or else to be the better for her face
Beholding it no more.' Then all night through
The shadow moves with infinite dark grace.
The light is on her windows, and the dew
Comforts the world and me, till in my place
At moonsetting, when stars flash out to view,
Comes 'neath the cedar boughs a great repose,
The peace of one renouncing, and then a doze.

There was no dream, yet waxed a sense in me

Asleep that patience was the better way,
Appeasement for a want that needs must be,
Grew as the dominant mind forbore its sway,
Till whistling sweet stirred in the cedar tree—
I started—woke—it was the dawn of day.
That was the end. 'Slow solemn growth of light,
Come what come will, remains to me this night.'

It was the end, with dew ordained to melt,
How easily was learned, how all too soon
Not there, not thereabout such maiden dwelt.
What was it promised me so fair a boon?
Heart-hope is not less vain because heart-felt,
Gone forth once more in search of her at noon
Through the sweet country side on hill, on plain,
I sought and sought many long days in vain.

To Malvern next, with feathery woodland hung,
Whereto old Piers the Plowman came to teach,
On her green vasty hills the lay was sung,
He too, it may be, lispig in his speech,
'To make the English sweet upon his tongue.'
How many maidens beautiful, and each
Might him delight, that loved no other fair;
But Malvern blessed not me,—she was not there.

Then to that town, but still my fate the same.
Crowned with old works that her right well beseem,
To gaze upon her field of ancient fame
And muse on the sad thrall's most piteous dream,
By whom a 'shadow like an angel came,'
Crying out on Clarence, its wild eyes a gleam,
Accusing echoes here still falter and flee,
'That stabbed me on the field by Tewkesbury.'

It nothing 'vailed that yet I sought and sought,
Part of my very self was left behind,
Till risen in wrath against th' o'ermastering thought,
'Let me be thankful,' quoth the better mind,
Thankful for her, though utterly to nought
She brings my heart's cry, and I live to find
A new self of the old self exigent
In the light of my divining discontent.

The picture of a maiden bidding 'Arise,
I am the Art of God. He shows by me
His great idea, so well as sin-stained eyes
Love aidant can behold it.'

Is this she?

Or is it mine own love for her supplies
The meaning and the power? Howe'er this be,
She is the interpreter by whom most near
Man's soul is drawn to beauty and pureness here.

The sweet idea, invisible hitherto,
Is in her face, unconscious delegate;
That thing she wots not of ordained to do:
But also it shall be her votary's fate,
Through her his early days of ease to eschew,
Struggle with life and prove its weary weight.
All the great storms that rising rend the soul,
Are life in little, imaging the whole.

Ay, so as life is, love is, in their ken
Stars, infant yet, both thought to grasp, to keep,
Then came the morn of passionate splendour, when

So sweet the light, none but for bliss could weep,
And then the strife, the toil; but we are men,
Strong, brave to battle with the stormy deep;
Then fear—and then renunciation—then
Appeals unto the Infinite Pity—and sleep.

But after life the sleep is long. Not so
With love. Love buried lieth not straight, not still,
Love starts, and after lull awakes to know
All the deep things again. And next his will,
That dearest pang is, never to forego.
He would all service, hardship, fret fulfill.
Unhappy love! and I of that great host
Unhappy love who cry, unhappy most.

Because renunciation was so short,
The starved heart so easily awaked;
A dream could do it, a bud, a bird, a thought,
But I betook me with that want which ached
To neighbour lands where strangeness with me wrought.
The old work was so hale, its fitness slaked
Soul-thirst for truth. 'I knew not doubt nor fear,'
Its language, 'war or worship, sure sincere.'

Then where by Art the high did best translate
Life's infinite pathos to the soul, set down
Beauty and mystery, that imperious hate
On its best braveness doth and sainthood frown,
Nay more the MASTER'S manifest pity—'wait,
Behold the palmgrove and the promised crown.
He suffers with thee, for thee.—Lo the Child!
Comfort thy heart; he certainly so smiled.'

Thus love and I wore through the winter time.
Then saw her demon blush Vesuvius try,
Then evil ghosts white from the awful prime,
Thrust up sharp peaks to tear the tender sky.
'No more to do but hear that English chime'
I to a kinsman wrote. He made reply,
'As home I bring my girl and boy full soon,
I pass through Evesham,—meet me there at noon.

'The bells your father loved you needs must hear,
Seek Oxford next with me,' and told the day.
'Upon the bridge I'll meet you. What! how dear
Soever was a dream, shall it bear sway
To mar the waking?'

I set forth, drew near,
Beheld a goodly tower, twin churches grey,
Evesham. The bridge, and noon. I nothing knew
What to my heart that fateful chime would do.

For suddenly the sweet bells overcame
A world unsouled; did all with man endow;
His yearning almost tell that passeth name
And said they were full old, and they were now
And should be; and their sighing upon the same
For our poor sake that pass they did avow,
While on clear Avon flowed like man's short day
The shining river of life lapsing away.

The stroke of noon. The bell-bird! yes and no.
Winds of remembrance swept as over the foam
Of anti-natal shores. At home is it so,
My country folk? Ay, 'neath this pale blue dome,
Many of you in the moss lie low—lie low.

Ah! since I have not HER, give me too, home.
A footstep near! I turned; past likelihood,
Past hope, before me on the bridge—SHE STOOD.

A rosy urchin had her hand; this cried,
'We think you are our cousin—yes, you are;
I said so to Estelle.' The violet-eyed,
'If this be Geoffrey?' asked; and as from far
A doubt came floating up; but she denied
Her thought, yet blushed. O beautiful! my Star!
Then, with the lifting of my hat, each wore
That look which owned to each, 'We have met before.'

Then was the strangest bliss in life made mine;
I saw the almost worshipped—all remote;
The Star so high above that used to shine,
Translated from the void where it did float,
And brought into relation with the fine
Charities earth hath grown. A great joy smote
Me silent, and the child atween us tway,
We watched the lucent river stealing away.

While her deep eyes down on the ripple fell,
Quoth the small imp, "How fast you go and go,
You Avon. Does it wish to stop, Estelle,
And hear the clock, and see the orchards blow?
It does not care! Not when the old big bell
Makes a great buzzing noise?—Who told you so?"
And then to me, "I like to hear it hum.
Why do you think that father could not come?"

Estelle forgot her violin. And he,
O then he said: "How careless, child, of you;
I must send on for it. 'T would pity be
If that were lost.

I want to learn it too;
And when I'm nine I shall."

Then turning, she
Let her sweet eyes unveil them to my view;
Her stately grace outmatched my dream of old,
But ah! the smile dull memory had not told.

My kinsman next, with care-worn kindly brow.
'Well, father,' quoth the imp, 'we've done our part.
We found him.'

And she, wholly girlish now,
Laid her young hand on his with lovely art
And sweet excuses. O! I made my vow
I would all dare, such life did warm my heart;
We journeyed, all the air with scents of price
Was laden, and the goal was Paradise.

When that the Moors betook them to their sand,
Their domination over in fair Spain,
Each locked, men say, his door in that loved land,
And took the key in hope to come again.
On Moorish walls yet hung, long dust each hand,
The keys, but not the might to use, remain;
Is there such house in some blest land for me?
I can, I will, I do reach down the key.

A country conquered oft, and long before,
Of generations aye ordained to win;
If mine the power, I will unlock the door.
Enter, O light, I bear a sunbeam in.
What, did the crescent wane! Yet man is more,

And love achieves because to heaven akin.
O life! to hear again that wandering bell,
And hear it at thy feet, Estelle, Estelle.

Full oft I want the sacred throated bird,
Over our limitless waste of light which spoke
The spirit of the call my fathers heard,
Saying 'Let us pray,' and old world echoes woke
Ethereal minster bells that still averr'd,
And with their phantom notes th' all silence broke.
'The fanes are far, but whom they shrined is near.
Thy God, the Island God, is here, is here.'

To serve; to serve a thought, and serve apart
To meet; a few short days, a maiden won.
'Ah, sweet, sweet home, I must divide my heart,
Betaking me to countries of the sun.'
'What straight-hung leaves, what rays that twinkle and dart,
Make me to like them.'

'Love, it shall be done,'
'What weird dawn-fire across the wide hill flies.'
'It is the flame-tree's challenge to yon scarlet skies.'

'Hark, hark, O hark! the spirit of a bell!
What would it? ('Toll.') An air-hung sacred call,
Athwart the forest shade it strangely fell'—
'Toll'—'Toll.'

The longed-for voice, but ah, withal
I felt, I knew, it was my father's knell
That touched and could the over-sense enthrall.
Perfect his peace, a whispering pure and deep
As theirs who 'neath his native towers by Avon sleep.

If love and death are ever reconciled,
'T is when the old lie down for the great rest.
We rode across the bush, a sylvan wild
That was an almost world, whose calm oppressed
With audible silence; and great hills inisled
Rose out as from a sea. Consoling, blest
And blessing spoke she, and the reedflower spread,
And tall rock lilies towered above her head.

* * * * *

Sweet is the light aneath our matchless blue,
The shade below yon passion plant that lies,
And very sweet is love, and sweet are you,
My little children dear, with violet eyes,
And sweet about the dawn to hear anew
The sacred monotone of peace arise.
Love, 't is thy welcome from the air-hung bell,
Congratulant and clear, Estelle, Estelle.

LOSS AND WASTE.

Up to far Osteroe and Suderoe
The deep sea-floor lies strewn with Spanish wrecks,
O'er minted gold the fair-haired fishers go,
O'er sunken bravery of high carved decks.

In earlier days great Carthage suffered bale

(All her waste works choke under sandy shoals);
And reckless hands tore down the temple veil;
And Omar burned the Alexandrian rolls.
The Old World arts men suffered not to last,
Flung down they trampled lie and sunk from view,
He lets wild forest for these ages past
Grow over the lost cities of the New.

O for a life that shall not be refused
To see the lost things found, and waste things used.

ON A PICTURE.

As a forlorn soul waiting by the Styx
Dimly expectant of lands yet more dim,
Might peer afraid where shadows change and mix
Till the dark ferryman shall come for him.

And past all hope a long ray in his sight,
Fall'n trickling down the steep crag Hades-black
Reveals an upward path to life and light,
Nor any let but he should mount that track.

As with the sudden shock of joy amazed,
He might a motionless sweet moment stand,
So doth that mortal lover, silent, dazed,
For hope had died and loss was near at hand.

'Wilt thou?' his quest. Unready but for 'Nay,'
He stands at fault for joy, she whispering 'Ay.'

THE SLEEP OF SIGISMUND.

The doom'd king pacing all night through the windy fallow.
'Let me alone, mine enemy, let me alone,'
Never a Christian bell that dire thick gloom to hallow,
Or guide him, shelterless, succourless, thrust from his own.

Foul spirits riding the wind do flout at him friendless,
The rain and the storm on his head beat ever at will;
His weird is on him to grope in the dark with endless
Weariful feet for a goal that shifteth still.

A sleuth-hound baying! The sleuth-hound bayeth behind him,
His head, he flying and stumbling turns back to the sound,
Whom doth the sleuth-hound follow? What if it find him;
Up! for the scent lieth thick, up from the level ground.

Up, on, he must on, to follow his weird essaying,
Lo you, a flood from the crag cometh raging past,
He falls, he fights in the water, no stop, no staying,
Soon the king's head goes under, the weird is dreed at last.

I.

'Wake, O king, the best star worn

In the crown of night, forlorn
Blinks a fine white point—'t is morn.'
Soft! The queen's voice, fair is she,
'Wake!' He waketh, living, free,
In the chamber of arras lieth he.
Delicate dim shadows yield
Silken curtains over head
All abloom with work of neeld,
Martagon and milleflower spread.
On the wall his golden shield,
Dinted deep in battle field,
When the host o' the Khalif fled.
Gold to gold. Long sunbeams flit
Upward, tremble and break on it.
'Ay, 't is over, all things writ
Of my sleep shall end awake,
Now is joy, and all its bane
The dark shadow of after pain.'
Then the queen saith, 'Nay, but break
Unto me for dear love's sake
This thy matter. Thou hast been
In great bitterness I ween
All the night-time.' But 'My queen,
Life, love, lady, rest content,
Ill dreams fly, the night is spent,
Good day draweth on. Lament
'Vaileth not,—yea peace,' quoth he;
'Sith this thing no better may be,
Best were held 'twixt thee and me.'
Then the fair queen, 'Even so
As thou wilt, O king, but know
Mickle nights have wrought thee woe,
Yet the last was troubled sore
Above all that went before.'
Quoth the king, 'No more, no more.'
Then he riseth, pale of blee,
As one spent, and utterly
Master'd of dark destiny.

II.

Comes a day for glory famed
Tidings brought the enemy shamed,
Fallen; now is peace proclaimed.
And a swarm of bells on high
Make their sweet din scale the sky,
'Hail! hail! hail!' the people cry
To the king his queen beside,
And the knights in armour ride
After until eventide.

III.

All things great may life afford,
Praise, power, love, high pomp, fair gaud,
Till the banquet be toward
Hath this king. Then day takes flight,
Sinketh sun and fadeth light,
Late he coucheth—Night; 't is night.

The proud king heading the host on his red roan charger.

Dust. On a thicket of spears glares the Syrian sun,
The Saracens swarm to the onset, larger aye larger
Loom their fierce cohorts, they shout as the day were won.

Brown faces fronting the steel-bright armour, and ever
The crash o' the combat runs on with a mighty cry,
Fell tumult; trampling and carnage—then fails endeavour,
O shame upon shame—the Christians falter and fly.

The foe upon them, the foe afore and behind them,
The king borne back in the mêlée; all, all is vain;
They fly with death at their heels, fierce sun-rays blind them,
Riderless steeds affrighted, tread down their ranks amain.

Disgrace, dishonour, no rally, ah no retrieving,
The scorn of scorns shall his name and his nation brand,
'T is a sword that smites from the rear, his helmet cleaving,
That hurls him to earth, to his death on the desert sand.

Ever they fly, the cravens, and ever reviling
Flies after. Athirst, ashamed, he yieldeth his breath,
While one looks down from his charger; and calm slow smiling,
Curlth his lip. 'T is the Khalif. And this is death.

IV.

'Wake, yon purple peaks arise,
Jagged, bare, through saffron skies;
Now is heard a twittering sweet,
For the mother-martins meet,
Where wet ivies, dew-besprent,
Glisten on the battlement.
Now the lark at heaven's gold gate
Aiming, sweetly chides on fate
That his brown wings wearied were
When he, sure, was almost there.
Now the valley mist doth break,
Shifting sparkles edge the lake,
Love, Lord, Master, wake, O wake!'

V.

Ay, he wakes,—and dull of cheer,
Though this queen be very dear,
Though a respite come with day
From th' abhorrèd flight and fray,
E'en though life be not the cost,
Nay, nor crown nor honour lost;
For in his soul abideth fear
Worse than of the Khalif's spear,
Smiting when perforce in flight
He was borne,—for that was night,
That his weird. But now 't is day,
'And good sooth I know not—nay,
Know not how this thing could be.
Never, more it seemeth me
Than when left the weird to dree,
I am I. And it was I
Felt or ever they turned to fly,
How, like wind, a tremor ran,
The right hand of every man
Shaking. Ay, all banners shook,
And the red all cheeks forsook,
Mine as theirs. Since this was I,
Who my soul shall certify
When again I face the foe
Manful courage shall not go.
Ay, it is not thrust o' a spear,

Scorn of infidel eyes austere,
But mine own fear—is to fear.'

VI.

After sleep thus sore bestead,
Beaten about and buffeted,
Featly fares the morning spent
In high sport and tournament.

VII.

Served within his sumptuous tent,
Looks the king in quiet wise,
Till this fair queen yield the prize
To the bravest; but when day
Falleth to the west away,
Unto her i' the silent hour,
While she sits in her rose-bower.
Come, 'O love, full oft,' quoth she,
'I at dawn have prayèd thee
Thou would'st tell o' the weird to me,
Sith I might some counsel find
Of my wit or in my mind
Thee to better.' 'Ay, e'en so,
But the telling shall let thee know,'
Quoth the king, 'is neither scope
For sweet counsel nor fair hope,
Nor is found for respite room,
Till the uttermost crack of doom.

VIII.

Then the queen saith, 'Woman's wit
No man asketh aid of it,
Not wild hyssop on a wall
Is of less account; or small
Glossy gnats that flit i' the sun
Less worth weighing—light so light!
Yet when all's said—ay, all done,
Love, I love thee! By love's might
I will counsel thee aright,
Or would share the weird to-night.'
Then he answer'd 'Have thy way.
Know 't is two years gone and a day
Since I, walking lone and late,
Pondered sore mine ill estate;
Open murmurers, foes concealed,
Famines dire i' the marches round,
Neighbour kings unfriendly found,
Ay, and treacherous plots revealed
Where I trusted. I bid stay
All my knights at the high crossway,
And did down the forest fare
To bethink me, and despair.
'Ah! thou gilded toy a throne,
If one mounts to thee alone,
Quoth I, mourning while I went,
Haply he may drop content
As a lark wing-weary down
To the level, and his crown
Leave for another man to don;
Throne, thy gold steps raised upon.

But for me—O as for me
What is named I would not dree,
Earn, or conquer, or forego
For the barring of overthrow.'

IX.

'Aloud I spake, but verily
Never an answer looked should be.
But it came to pass from shade
Pacing to an open glade,
Which the oaks a mighty wall
Fence about, methought a call
Sounded, then a pale thin mist
Rose, a pillar, and fronted me,
Rose and took a form I wist,
And it wore a hood on 'ts head,
And a long white garment spread,
And I saw the eyes thereof.

X.

Then my plumèd cap I doff,
Stooping. 'T is the white-witch. 'Hail,'
Quoth the witch, 'thou shalt prevail
An thou wilt; I swear to thee
All thy days shall glorious shine,
Great and rich, ay, fair and fine,
So what followeth rest my fee,
So thou'lt give thy sleep to me.'

XI.

While she spake my heart did leap.
Waking is man's life, and sleep—
What is sleep?—a little death
Coming after, and methought
Life is mine and death is nought
Till it come,—so day is mine
I will risk the sleep to shine
In the waking.

And she saith,
In a soft voice clear and low,
'Give thy plumèd cap also
For a token.'

'Didst thou give?'
Quoth the queen; and 'As I live
He makes answer 'none can tell.
I did will my sleep to sell,
And in token held to her
That she askèd. And it fell
To the grass. I saw no stir
In her hand or in her face,
And no going; but the place
Only for an evening mist
Was made empty. There it lay,
That same plumèd cap, always
On the grasses—but I wist
Well, it must be let to lie,
And I left it. Now the tale
Ends, th' events do testify
Of her truth. The days go by
Better and better; nought doth ail

In the land, right happy and hale
Dwell the seely folk; but sleep
Brings a reckoning; then forth creep
Dreaded creatures, worms of might.
Crested with my plumèd cap
Loll about my neck all night,
Bite me in the side, and lap
My heart's blood. Then oft the weird
Drives me, where amazed, afeard,
I do safe on a river strand
Mark one sinking hard at hand
While fierce sleuth-hounds that me track
Fly upon me, bear me back,
Fling me away, and he for lack
Of man's aid in piteous wise
Goeth under, drowns and dies.

XII.

'O sweet wife, I suffer sore—
O methinks aye more and more
Dull my day, my courage numb,
Shadows from the night to come.
But no counsel, hope, nor aid
Is to give; a crown being made
Power and rule, yea all good things
Yet to hang on this same weird
I must dree it, ever that brings
Chastening from the white-witch feared.
O that dreams mote me forsake,
Would that man could always wake.'

XIII.

Now good sooth doth counsel fail,
Ah this queen is pale, so pale.
'Love,' she sigheth, 'thou didst not well
Listening to the white-witch fell,
Leaving her doth thee advance
Thy plumèd cap of maintenance.'

XIV.

'She is white, as white snow flake,'
Quoth the king; 'a man shall make
Bargains with her and not sin.'
'Ay,' she saith, 'but an he win,
Let him look the right be done
Else the rue shall be his own.'

XV.

No more words. The stars are bright,
For the feast high halls be dight
Late he coucheth. Night—'t is night.

The dead king lying in state in the Minster holy.

Fifty candles burn at his head and burn at his feet,
A crown and royal apparel upon him lorn and lowly,
And the cold hands stiff as horn by their cold palms meet.

Two days dead. Is he dead? Nay, nay—but is he living?
The weary monks have ended their chantings manifold,
The great door swings behind them, night winds entrance giving,

The candles flare and drip on him, warm and he so cold.

Neither to move nor to moan, though sunk and though swallow'd
In earth he shall soon be trodden hard and no more seen.
Soft you the door again! Was it a footstep followed,
Falter'd, and yet drew near him?—Malva, Malva the queen!

One hand o' the dead king liveth (e'en so him seemeth)
On the purple robe, on the ermine that folds his breast
Cold, very cold. Yet e'en at that pass esteemeth
The king, it were sweet if she kissed the place of its rest.

Laid her warm face on his bosom, a fair wife grievèd
For the lord and love of her youth, and bewailed him sore;
Laid her warm face on the bosom of her bereavèd
Soon to go under, never to look on her more.

His candles guide her with pomp funereal flaring,
Out of the gulfy dark to the bier whereon he lies.
Cometh this queen i' the night for grief or for daring,
Out o' the dark to the light with large affrighted eyes?

The pale queen speaks in the Presence with fear upon her,
'Where is the ring I gave to thee, where is my ring?
I vowed—'t was an evil vow—by love, and by honour,
Come life or come death to be thine, thou poor dead king.'

The pale queen's honour! A low laugh scathing and sereing—
A mumbling as made by the dead in the tombs ye wot.
Braveth the dead this queen? 'Hear it, whoso hath hearing,
I vowed by my love, cold king, but I loved thee not.'

Honour! An echo in aisles and the solemn portals,
Low sinketh this queen by the bier with its freight forlorn;
Yet kneeling, 'Hear me!' she crieth, 'you just immortals,
You saints bear witness I vowed and am not forsworn.

I vowed in my youth, fool-king, when the golden fether
Thy love that bound me and bann'd me full weary I wore,
But all poor men of thy menai I held them better,
All stalwart knights of thy train unto me were more.

Twenty years I have lived on earth and two beside thee,
Thirty years thou didst live on earth, and two on the throne:
Let it suffice there be none of thy rights denied thee,
Though I dare thy presence—I—come for my ring alone.'

She risen shuddereth, peering, afraid to linger
Behold her ring, it shineth! 'Now yield to me, thou dead,
For this do I dare the touch of thy stark stiff finger.'
The queen hath drawn her ring from his hand, the queen hath fled.

'O woman fearing sore, to whom my man's heart cleavèd,
The faith enwrought with love and life hath mocks for its meed'—
The dead king lying in state, of his past bereavèd,
Twice dead. Ay, this is death. Now dieth the king indeed.

XVI.

'Wake, the seely gnomes do fly,
Drenched across yon rainy sky,
With the vex'd moon-mother'd elves,
And the clouds do weep themselves
Into morning.

All night long
Hath thy weird thee sore opprest;

Wake, I have found within my breast
Counsel.' Ah, the weird was strong,
But the time is told. Release
Openeth on him when his eyes
Lift them in dull desolate wise,
And behold he is at peace.

Ay, but silent. Of all done
And all suffer'd in the night,
Of all ills that do him spite
She shall never know that one.
Then he heareth accents bland,
Seeth the queen's ring on his hand,
And he riseth calmed withal.

XVII.

Rain and wind on the palace wall
Beat and bluster, sob and moan,
When at noon he musing lone,
Comes the queen anigh his seat,
And she kneeleth at his feet.

XVIII.

Quoth the queen, 'My love, my lord,
Take thy wife and take thy sword,
We must forth in the stormy weather,
Thou and I to the witch together.
Thus I rede thee counsel deep,
Thou didst ill to sell thy sleep,
Turning so man's wholesome life
From its meaning. Thine intent
None shall hold for innocent.
Thou dost take thy good things first,
Then thou art cast into the worst;
First the glory, then the strife.
Nay, but first thy trouble dree,
So thy peace shall sweeter be.
First to work and then to rest,
Is the way for our humanity,
Ay, she sayeth that loves thee best,
We must forth and from this strife
Buy the best part of man's life;
Best and worst thou holdest still
Subject to a witch's will.
Thus I rede thee counsel deep,
Thou didst ill to sell thy sleep;
Take the crown from off thy head,
Give it the white-witch instead,
If in that she say thee nay,
Get the night,—and give the day.'

XIX.

Then the king (amazèd, mild,
As one reasoning with a child
All his speech): 'My wife! my fair!
And his hand on her brown hair
Trembles; 'Lady, dost indeed
Weigh the meaning of thy rede?
Would'st thou dare the dropping away
Of allegiance, should our sway
And sweet splendour and renown

All be risked? (methinks a crown
Doth become thee marvellous well).
We ourself are, truth to tell,
Kingly both of wont and kind,
Suits not such the craven mind.'
'Yet this weird thou can'st not dree.'
Quoth the queen, 'And live;' then he,
'I must die and leave the fair
Unborn, long-desired heir
To his rightful heritage.'

XX.

But this queen arisen doth high
Her two hands uplifting, sigh
'God forbid.' And he to assuage
Her keen sorrow, for his part
Searcheth, nor can find in his heart
Words. And weeping she will rest
Her sweet cheek upon his breast,
Whispering, 'Dost thou verily
Know thou art to blame? Ah me,
Come,' and yet beseecheth she,
'Ah me, come.'

For good for ill,
Whom man loveth hath her will.
Court and castle left behind,
Stolen forth in the rain and wind,
Soon they are deep in the forest, fain
The white-witch to raise again;
Down and deep where flat o'erhead
Layer on layer do cedars spread,
Down where lordly maples strain,
Wrestling with the storm amain.

XXI.

Wide-wing'd eagles struck on high
Headlong fall'n break through, and lie
With their prey in piteous wise,
And no film on their dead eyes.
Matted branches grind and crash,
Into darkness dives the flash,
Stabs, a dread gold dirk of fire,
Loads the lift with splinters dire.
Then a pause i' the deadly feud—
And a sick cowed quietude.

XXII.

Soh! A pillar misty and grey,
'T is the white-witch in the way.
Shall man deal with her and gain?
I trow not. Albeit the twain
Costly gear and gems and gold
Freely offer, she will hold
Sleep and token for the pay
She did get for greatening day.

XXIII.

'Or the night shall rest my fee

Or the day shall nought of me,'
Quoth the witch. 'An't thee beseem,
Sell thy kingdom for a dream.'

XXIV.

'Now what will be let it be!'
Quoth the queen; 'but choose the right.'
And the white-witch scorns at her,
Stately standing in their sight.
Then without or sound or stir
She is not. For offering meet
Lieth the token at their feet,
Which they, weary and sore bestead
In the storm, lift up, full fain
Ere the waning light hath fled
Those high towers they left to gain.

XXV.

Deep among tree roots astray
Here a torrent tears its way,
There a cedar split aloft
Lies head downward. Now the oft
Muttering thunder, now the wind
Wakens. How the path to find?
How the turning? Deep ay deep,
Far ay far. She needs must weep,
This fair woman, lost, astray
In the forest; nought to say.
Yet the sick thoughts come and go,
'I, 't was I would have it so.'

XXVI.

Shelter at the last, a roof
Wrought of ling (in their behoof,
Foresters, that drive the deer).
What, and must they couch them here?
Ay, and ere the twilight fall
Gather forest berries small
And nuts down beaten for a meal.

XXVII.

Now the shy wood-wonners steal
Nearer, bright-eyed furry things,
Winking owls on silent wings
Glance, and float away. The light
In the wake o' the storm takes flight,
Day departeth: night—'t is night.

The crown'd king musing at morn by a clear sweet river.
Palms on the slope o' the valley, and no winds blow;
Birds blameless, dove-eyed, mystical talk deliver,
Oracles haply. The language he doth not know.

Bare, blue, are yon peaked hills for a rampart lying,
As dusty gold is the light in the palms o'erhead,
'What is the name o' the land? and this calm sweet sighing,
If it be echo, where first was it caught and spread?

I might—I might be at rest in some field Elysian,
If this be asphodel set in the herbage fair,

I know not how I should wonder, so sweet the vision,
So clear and silent the water, the field, the air.

Love, are you by me! Malva, what think you this meaneth?
Love, do you see the fine folk as they move over there?
Are they immortals? Look you a wingèd one leaneth
Down from yon pine to the river of us unaware.

All unaware; and the country is full of voices,
Mild strangers passing: they reck not of me nor of thee.
List! about and around us wondrous sweet noises,
Laughter of little children and maids that dreaming be.

Love, I can see their dreams.' A dim smile flitteth
Over her lips, and they move as in peace supreme,
And a small thing, silky haired, beside her sitteth,
'O this is thy dream atween us—this is thy dream.'

Was it then truly his dream with her dream that blended?
'Speak, dear child dear,' quoth the queen, 'and mine own little son.'
'Father,' the small thing murmurs; then all is ended,
He starts from that passion of peace—ay, the dream is done.

XXVIII.

'I have been in a good land,'
Quoth the king: 'O sweet sleep bland,
Blessed! I am grown to more,
Now the doing of right hath moved
Me to love of right, and proved
If one doth it, he shall be
Twice the man he was before.
Verily and verily,
Thou fair woman, thou didst well;
I look back and scarce may tell
Those false days of tinsel sheen,
Flattery, feasting, that have been.
Shows of life that were but shows,
How they held me; being I ween
Like sand-pictures thin, that rose
Quivering, when our thirsty bands
Marched i' the hot Egyptian lands;
Shade of palms on a thick green plot,
Pools of water that was not,
Mocking us and melting away.

XXIX.

I have been a witch's prey,
Art mine enemy now by day,
Thou fell Fear? There comes an end
To the day; thou canst not wend
After me where I shall fare,
My foredoomèd peace to share.
And awake with a better heart,
I shall meet thee and take my part
O' the dull world's dull spite; with thine
Hard will I strive for me and mine.'

XXX.

A page and a palfrey pacing nigh,
Malva the queen awakes. A sigh—
One amazèd moment—'Ay,

We remember yesterday,
Let us to the palace straight:
What! do all my ladies wait—
Is no zeal to find me? What!
No knights forth to meet the king;
Due observance, is it forgot?'

XXXI.

'Lady,' quoth the page, 'I bring
Evil news. Sir king, I say,
My good lord of yesterday,
Evil news,' This king saith low,
'Yesterday, and yesterday,
The queen's yesterday we know,
Tell us thine.' 'Sir king,' saith he,
Hear. Thy castle in the night
Was surprised, and men thy flight
Learned but then; thine enemy
Of old days, our new king, reigns;
And sith thou wert not at pains
To forbid it, hear also,
Marvelling whereto this should grow
How thy knights at break of morn
Have a new allegiance sworn,
And the men-at-arms rejoice,
And the people give their voice
For the conqueror. I, Sir king,
Rest thine only friend. I bring
Means of flight; now therefore fly,
A great price is on thy head.
Cast her jewel'd mantle by,
Mount thy queen i' the selle and hie
(Sith disguise ye need, and bread)
Down yon pleachèd track, down, down,
Till a tower shall on thee frown;
Him that holds it show this ring:
So farewell, my lord the king.'

XXXII.

Had one marked that palfrey led
To the tower, he sooth had said,
These are royal folk and rare—
Jewels in her plaited hair
Shine not clearer than her eyes,
And her lord in goodly wise
With his plumèd cap in 's hand
Moves in the measure of command.

XXXIII.

Had one marked where stole forth two
From the friendly tower anew,
'Common folk' he sooth had said,
Making for the mountain track.
Common, common, man and maid,
Clad in russet, and of kind
Meet for russet. On his back
A wallet bears the stalwart hind;
She, all shy, in rustic grace
Steps beside her man apace,
And wild roses match her face.

XXXIV.

Whither speed they? Where are toss'd
Like sea foam the dwarfed pines
At the jagged sharp inclines;
To the country of the frost
Up the mountains to be lost,
Lost. No better now may be,
Lost where mighty hollows thrust
'Twixt the fierce teeth of the world,
Fill themselves with crimson dust
When the tumbling sun down hurl'd
Stares among them drearily,
As a' wondering at the lone
Gulfs that weird gaunt company
Fenceth in. Lost there unknown,
Lineage, nation, name, and throne.

XXXV.

Lo, in a crevice choked with ling
And fir, this man, not now the king,
This Sigismund, hath made a fire,
And by his wife in the dark night
He leans at watch, her guard and squire.
His wide eyes stare out for the light
Weary. He needs must chide on fate,
And she is asleep. 'Poor brooding mate,
What! wilt thou on the mountain crest
Slippery and cold scoop thy first nest?
Or must I clear some uncouth cave
That laired the mother wolf, and save—
Spearing her cubs—the grey pelt fine
To be a bed for thee and thine?
It is my doing. Ay,' quoth he,
'Mine; but who dares to pity thee
Shall pity, not for loss of all,
But that thou wert my wife perdie,
E'en wife unto a witch's thrall,—
A man beholden to the cold
Cloud for a covering, he being sold
And hunted for reward of gold.

XXXVI.

But who shall chronicle the ways
Of common folk—the nights and days
Spent with rough goatherds on their snows,
Of travellers come whence no man knows,
Then gone aloft on some sharp height
In the dumb peace and the great light
Amid brown eagles and wild roes?

XXXVII.

'Tis the whole world whereon they lie,
The rocky pastures hung on high
Shelve off upon an empty sky.
But they creep near the edge, look down—
Great heaven! another world afloat,
Moored as in seas of air; remote
As their own childhood; swooning away
Into a tenderer sweeter day,

Innocent, sunny. 'O for wings!
There lie the lands of other kings—
I Sigismund, my sometime crown
Forfeit; forgotten of renown
My wars, my rule; I fain would go
Down to yon peace obscure.'

Even so;

Down to the country of the thyme,
Where young kids dance, and a soft chime
Of sheepbells tinkles; then at last
Down to a country of hollows, cast
Up at the mountains full of trees,
Down to fruit orchards and wide leas.

XXXVIII.

With name unsaid and fame unsunned
He walks that was King Sigismund.
With palmers holy and pilgrims brown,
New from the East, with friar and clown,
He mingles in a wallèd town,
And in the mart where men him scan
He passes for a merchant man.
For from his vest, where by good hap
He thrust it, he his plumèd cap
Hath drawn and plucked the gems away,
And up and down he makes essay
To sell them; they are all his wares
And wealth. He is a man of cares,
A man of toil; no roof hath he
To shelter her full soon to be
The mother of his dispossessed
Desirèd heir.

XXXIX.

Few words are best.

He, once King Sigismund, saith few,
But makes good diligence and true.
Soon with the gold he gather'd so,
A little homestead lone and low
He buyeth: a field, a copse, with these
A melon patch and mulberry trees.
And is the man content? Nay, morn
Is toilsome, oft is noon forlorn,
Though right be done and life be won,
Yet hot is weeding in the sun,
Yea scythe to wield and axe to swing,
Are hard on sinews of a king.

XL.

And Malva, must she toil? E'en so.
Full patiently she takes her part,
All, all so new. But her deep heart
Forebodes more change than shall be shown
Betwixt a settle and a throne.
And lost in musing she will go
About the winding of her silk,
About the skimming her goat's milk,
About the kneading of her bread,
And water drawn from her well-head.

XXI.

Then come the long nights dark and still,
Then come the leaves and cover the sill,
Then come the swift flocks of the stare,
Then comes the snow—then comes the heir.

XXII.

If he be glad, if he be sad,
How should one question when the hand
Is full, the heart. That life he had,
While leisure was aside may stand,
Till he shall overtake the task
Of every day, then let him ask
(If he remember—if he will),
'When I could sit me down and muse,
And match my good against mine ill,
And weigh advantage dulled by use
At nothing, was it better with me?'
But Sigismund! It cannot be
But that he toil, nor pause, nor sigh,
A dreamer on a day gone by
The king is come.

XXIII.

His vassals two
Serve with all homage deep and due.
He is contented, he doth find
Belike the kingdom much to his mind.
And when the long months of his long
Reign are two years, and like a song
From some far sweeter world, a call
From the king's mouth for fealty,
Buds soon to blossom in language fall,
They listen and find not any plea
Left, for fine chiding at destiny.

XXIV.

Sigismund hath ricked the hay,
He sitteth at close o' a sultry day
Under his mulberry boughs at ease.
'Hey for the world, and the world is wide,
The world is mine, and the world is—these
Beautiful Malva leans at his side,
And the small babbler talks at his knees.

XXV.

Riseth a waft as of summer air,
Floating upon it what moveth there?
Faint as the light of stars and wan
As snow at night when the moon is gone,
It is the white-witch risen once more.

XXVI.

The white-witch that tempted of yore
So utterly doth substance lack,
You may breathe her nearer and breathe her back.
Soft her eyes, her speech full clear:

'Hail, thou Sigismund my fere,
Bargain with me yea or nay.
NAY, I go to my true place,
And no more thou seest my face.
YEA, the good be all thine own,
For now will I advance thy day,
And yet will leave the night alone.

XLVII.

Sigismund makes answer 'NAY.
Though the Highest heaped on me
Trouble, yet the same should be
Welcomer than weal from thee.
Nay;—for ever and ever Nay.'
O, the white-witch floats away.
Look you, look! A still pure smile
Blossoms on her mouth the while,
White wings peakèd high behind,
Bear her;—no, the wafting wind,
For they move not,—floats her back,
Floats her up. They scarce may track
Her swift rising, shot on high
Like a ray from the western sky,
Or a lark from some grey wold
Utterly whelm'd in sunset gold.

XLVIII.

Then these two long silence hold,
And the lisping babe doth say
'White white bird, it flew away.'
And they marvel at these things,
For her ghostly visitings
Turn to them another face.
Haply she was sent, a friend
Trying them, and to good end
For their better weal and grace;
One more wonder let to be
In the might and mystery
Of the world, where verily
And good sooth a man may wend
All his life, and no more view
Than the one right next to do.

XLIX.

So, the welcome dusk is here,
Sweet is even, rest is dear;
Mountain heads have lost the light,
Soon they couch them. Night—'t is night.

Sigismund dreaming delightsomely after his haying.

('Sleep of the labouring man,' quoth King David, 'is sweet.')

'Sigismund, Sigismund'—'Who is this calling and saying
"Sigismund, Sigismund," O blessed night do not fleet.

Is it not dark—ay, methinks it is dark, I would slumber,

O I would rest till the swallow shall chirp 'neath mine eaves.'

'Sigismund, Sigismund,' multitudes now without number
Calling, the noise is as dropping of rain upon leaves.

'Ay,' quoth he dreaming, 'say on, for I, Sigismund, hear ye.'

'Sigismund, Sigismund, all the knights weary full sore.

Come back, King Sigismund, come, they shall love thee and fear thee,
The people cry out O come back to us, reign evermore.

The new king is dead, and we will not his son, no nor brother,
Come with thy queen, is she busy yet, kneading of cakes?
Sigismund, show us the boy, is he safe, and his mother,
Sigismund?'—dreaming he falls into laughter and wakes.

L.

And men say this dream came true,
For he walking in the dew
Turned aside while yet was red
On the highest mountain head,
Looking how the wheat he set
Flourished. And the knights him met
And him prayed 'Come again,
Sigismund our king, and reign.'
But at first—at first they tell
How it liked not Malva well;
She must leave her belted bees
And the kids that she did rear.
When she thought on it full dear
Seemed her home. It did not please
Sigismund that he must go
From the wheat that he did sow;
When he thought on it his mind
Was not that should any bind
Into sheaves that wheat but he,
Only he; and yet they went,
And it may be were content.
And they won a nation's heart;
Very well they played their part.
They ruled with sceptre and diadem,
And their children after them.

THE MAID-MARTYR.

Only you'd have me speak.
Whether to speak
Or whether to be silent is all one;
Whether to sleep and in my dreaming front
Her small scared face forlorn; whether to wake
And muse upon her small soft feet that paced
The hated, hard, inhospitable stone—
I say all's one. But you would have me speak,
And change one sorrow for the other. Ay,
Right reverend father, comfortable father,
Old, long in thrall, and wearied of the cell,
So will I here—here staring through the grate,
Whence, sheer beneath us lying the little town,
Her street appears a riband up the rise;
Where 't is right steep for carts, behold two ruts
Worn in the flat, smooth, stone.

That side I stood;
My head was down. At first I did but see
Her coming feet; they gleamed through my hot tears
As she walked barefoot up yon short steep hill.
Then I dared all, gazed on her face, the maid

Martyr and utterly, utterly broke my heart.

Her face, O! it was wonderful to me,
There was not in it what I look'd for—no,
I never saw a maid go to her death,
How should I dream that face and the dumb soul?

Her arms and head were bare, seemly she walked
All in her smock so modest as she might;
Upon her shoulders hung a painted cape
For horrible adornment, flames of fire
Portrayed upon it, and mocking demon heads.

Her eyes—she did not see me—opened wide,
Blue-black, gazed right before her, yet they marked
Nothing; and her two hands uplift as praying,
She yet prayed not, wept not, sighed not. O father,
She was past that, soft, tender, hunted thing;
But, as it seemed, confused from time to time,
She would half-turn her or to left or right
To follow other streets, doubting her way.

Then their base pikes they basely thrust at her,
And, like one dazed, obedient to her guides
She came; I knew not if 't was present to her
That death was her near goal; she was so lost,
And set apart from any power to think.
But her mouth pouted as one brooding, father,
Over a lifetime of forlorn fear. No,
Scarce was it fear; so looks a timid child
(Not more affrighted; ah! but not so pale)
That has been scolded or has lost its way.

Mother and father—father and mother kind,
She was alone, where were you hidden? Alone,
And I that loved her more, or feared death less,
Rushed to her side, but quickly was flung back,
And cast behind o' the pikemen following her
Into a yelling and a cursing crowd.
That bristled thick with monks and hooded friars;
Moreover, women with their cheeks ablaze,
Who swarmèd after up the narrowing street.

Pitiful heaven! I knew she did not hear
In that last hour the cursing, nor the foul
Words; she had never heard like words, sweet soul,
In her life blameless; even at that pass,
That dreadful pass, I felt it had been worse,
Though nought I longed for as for death, to know
She did. She saw not 'neath their hoods those eyes
Soft, glittering, with a lust for cruelty;
Secret delight, that so great cruelty,
All in the sacred name of Holy Church,
Their meed to look on it should be anon.
Speak! O, I tell you this thing passeth word!
From roofs and oriels high, women looked down;
Men, maidens, children, and a fierce white sun
Smote blinding splinters from all spears aslant.

Lo! next a stand, so please you, certain priests
(May God forgive men sinning at their ease),
Whose duty 't was to look upon this thing,
Being mindful of thick pungent smoke to come,
Had caused a stand to rise hard by the stake,
Upon its windward side.

My life! my love!

She utter'd one sharp cry of mortal dread
While they did chain her. This thing passeth words,
Albeit told out for ever in my soul.
As the torch touched, thick volumes of black reek
Rolled out and raised the wind, and instantly
Long films of flaxen hair floated aloft,
Settled alow, in drifts upon the crowd.
The vile were merciful; heaped high, my dear,
Thou didst not suffer long. O! it was soon,
Soon over, and I knew not any more,
Till grovelling on the ground, beating my head,
I heard myself, and scarcely knew 't was I,
At Holy Church railing with fierce mad words,
Crying and craving for a stake, for me.
While fast the folk, as ever, such a work
Being over, fled, and shrieked 'A heretic!
More heretics; yon ashes smoking still.'

And up and almost over me came on
A robed—ecclesiastic—with his train
(I choose the words lest that they do some wrong)
Call him a robed ecclesiastic proud.
And I lying helpless, with my bruised face
Beat on his garnished shoon. But he stepped back,
Spurned me full roughly with them, called the pikes,
Delivering orders, 'Take the bruised wretch.
He raves. Fool! thou'lt hear more of this anon.
Bestow him there.' He pointed to a door.
With that some threw a cloth upon my face
Because it bled. I knew they carried me
Within his home, and I was satisfied;
Willing my death. Was it an abbey door?
Was 't entrance to a palace? or a house
Of priests? I say not, nor if abbot he,
Bishop or other dignity; enough
That he so spake. 'Take in the bruised wretch.'
And I was borne far up a turret stair
Into a peakèd chamber taking form
O' the roof, and on a pallet bed they left
Me miserable. Yet I knew forsooth,
Left in my pain, that evil things were said
Of that same tower; men thence had disappeared,
Suspect of heresy had disappeared,
Deliver'd up, 't was whisper'd, tried and burned.
So be it methought, I would not live, not I.
But none did question me. A beldame old,
Kind, heedless of my sayings, tended me.
I raved at Holy Church and she was deaf,
And at whose tower detained me, she was dumb.
So had I food and water, rest and calm.
Then on the third day I rose up and sat
On the side of my low bed right melancholy,
All that high force of passion overpast,
I sick with dolourous thought and weak through tears
Spite of myself came to myself again
(For I had slept), and since I could not die
Looked through the window three parts overgrown
With leafage on the loftiest ivy ropes,
And saw at foot o' the rise another tower
In roof whereof a grating, dreary bare.
Lifetimes gone by, long, slow, dim, desolate,
I knew even there had been my lost love's cell.

So musing on the man that with his foot
Spurned me, the robed ecclesiastic stern,

'Would he had haled me straight to prison' methought,
'So made an end at once.'

My sufferings rose

Like billows closing over, beating down;
Made heavier far because of a stray, strange,
Sweet hope that mocked me at the last.

'T was thus,

I came from Oxford secretly, the news
Terrible of her danger smiting me,—
She was so young, and ever had been bred
With whom 't was made a peril now to name.
There had been worship in the night; some stole
To a mean chapel deep in woods, and heard
Preaching, and prayed. She, my betrothed, was there.
Father and mother, mother and father kind,
So young, so innocent, had ye no ruth,
No fear, that ye did bring her to her doom?
I know the chiefest Evil One himself
Sanded that floor. Their footsteps marking it
Betrayed them. How all came to pass let be.
Parted, in hiding some, other in thrall,
Father and mother, mother and father kind,
It may be yet ye know not this—not all.

I in the daytime lying perdue looked up
At the castle keep impregnable,—no foot
How rash so e'er might hope to scale it. Night
Descending, come I near, perplexedness,
Contempt of danger, to the door o' the keep
Drawing me. There a short stone bench I found,
And bitterly weeping sat and leaned my head
Against the hopeless hated massiveness
Of that detested hold. A lifting moon
Had made encroachment on the dark, but deep
Was shadow where I leaned. Within a while
I was aware, but saw no shape, of one
Who stood beside me, a dark shadow tall.
I cared not, disavowal mattered nought
Of grief to one so out of love with life.
But after pause I felt a hand let down
That rested kindly, firmly, a man's hand,
Upon my shoulder; there was cheer in it.
And presently a voice clear, whispering, low,
With pitifulness that faltered, spoke to me.
Was I, it asked, true son of Mother Church?
Coldly I answer'd 'Ay;' then blessed words
That danced into mine ears more excellent
Music than wedding bells had been were said,
With certitude that I might see my maid,
My dear one. He would give a paper, he
The man beside me. 'Do thy best endeavour,
Dear youth. Thy maiden being a right sweet child
Surely will hearken to thee; an she do,
And will recant, fair faultless heretic,
Whose knowledge is but scant of matters high
Which hard men spake on with her, hard men forced
From her mouth innocent, then shall she come
Before me; have good cheer, all may be well.
But an she will not she must burn, no power—
Not Solomon the Great on 's ivory throne
With all his wisdom could find out a way,
Nor I nor any to save her, she must burn.
Now hast thou till day dawn. The Mother of God
Speed thee.' A twisted scroll he gave; himself

Knocked at the door behind, and he was gone,
A darker pillar of darkness in the dark.
Straightway one opened and I gave the scroll.
He read, then thrust it in his lanthorn flame
Till it was ashes; 'Follow' and no more
Whisper'd, went up the giddy spiring way,
I after, till we reached the topmost door.
Then took a key, opened, and crying 'Delia,
Delia my sweetheart, I am come, I am come,'
I darted forward and he locked us in.
Two figures; one rose up and ran to me
Along the ladder of moonlight on the floor,
Fell on my neck. Long time we kissed and wept.

But for that other, while she stood appeased
For cruel parting past, locked in mine arms,
I had been glad, expecting a good end.
The cramped pale fellow prisoner; 'Courage' cried.
Then Delia lifting her fair face, the moon
Did show me its incomparable calms.
Her effluent thought needed no word of mine,
It whelmed my soul as in a sea of tears.
The warm enchantment leaning on my breast
Breathed as in air remote, and I was left
To infinite detachment, even with hers
To take cold kisses from the lips of doom,
Look in those eyes and disinherit hope
From that high place late won.

Then murmuring low
That other spake of Him on the cross, and soft
As broken-hearted mourning of the dove,
She 'One deep calleth to another' sighed.
'The heart of Christ mourns to my heart, "Endure.
There was a day when to the wilderness
My great forerunner from his thrall sent forth
Sad messengers, demanding *Art thou He?*
Think'st thou I knew no pang in that strange hour?
How could I hold the power, and want the will
Or want the love? That pang was his—and mine.
He said not, Save me an thou be the Son,
But only *Art thou He?* In my great way
It was not writ,—legions of Angels mine,
There was one Angel, one ordain'd to unlock
At my behest the doomed deadly door.
I could not tell him, tell not thee, why." Lord,
We know not why, but would not have Thee grieve,
Think not so deeply on 't; make us endure
For thy blest sake, hearing thy sweet voice mourn
"I will go forth, thy desolations meet,
And with my desolations solace them.
I will not break thy bonds but I am bound,
With thee."

I feared. That speech deep furrows cut
In my afflicted soul. I whisper'd low,
'Thou wilt not heed her words, my golden girl.'
But Delia said not ought; only her hand
Laid on my cheek and on the other leaned
Her own. O there was comfort, father,
In love and nearness, e'en at the crack of doom.

Then spake I, and that other said no more,
For I appealed to God and to his Christ.
Unto the strait-barred window led my dear;
No table, bed, nor plenishing; no place

They had for rest: maugre two narrow chairs
By day, by night they sat thereon upright.
One drew I to the opening; on it set
My Delia, kneeled; upon its arm laid mine,
And prayed to God and prayed of her.

Father,

If you should ask e'en now, 'And art thou glad
Of what befell?' I could not say it, father,
I should be glad; therefore God make me glad,
Since we shall die to-morrow!

Think not sin,

O holy, harmless reverend man, to fear.
'T will be soon over. Now I know thou fear'st
Also for me, lest I be lost; but aye
Strong comfortable hope doth wrap me round,
A token of acceptance. I am cast
From Holy Church, and not received of thine;
But the great Advocate who knoweth all,
He whispers with me.

O my Delia wept

When I did plead; 'I have much feared to die,'
Answering. (The moonlight on her blue-black eyes
Fell; shining tears upon their lashes hung;
Fair showed the dimple that I loved; so young,
So very young.) 'But they did question me
Straitly, and make me many times to swear,
To swear of all alas, that I believed.
Truly, unless my soul I would have bound
With false oaths—difficult, innumerable, strong,
Way was not left me to get free.

But now,'

Said she, I am happy; I have seen the place
Where I am going.

I will tell it you,

Love, Hubert. Do not weep; they said to me
That you would come, and it would not be long.
Thus was it, being sad and full of fear,
I was crying in the night; and prayed to God
And said, "I have not learned high things;" and said
To the Saviour, "Do not be displeased with me,
I am not crying to get back and dwell
With my good mother and my father fond,
Nor even with my love, Hubert—my love,
Hubert; but I am crying because I fear
Mine answers were not rightly given—so hard
Those questions. If I did not understand,
Wilt thou forgive me?" And the moon went down
While I did pray, and looking on the floor,
Behold a little diamond lying there,
So small it might have dropped from out a ring.
I could but look! The diamond waxed—it grew—
It was a diamond yet, and shot out rays,
And in the midst of it a rose-red point;
It waxed till I might see the rose-red point
Was a little Angel 'mid those oval rays,
With a face sweet as the first kiss, O love,
You gave me, and it meant that self-same thing.

Now was it tall as I, among the rays
Standing; I touched not. Through the window drawn,
This barred and narrow window,—but I know
Nothing of how, we passed, and seemed to walk
Upon the air, till on the roof we sat.

It spoke. The sweet mouth did not move, but all
The Angel spoke in strange words full and old,
It was my Angel sent to comfort me
With a message, and the message, "I might come,
And myself see if He forgave me." Then
Deliver'd he admonition, "Afterwards
I must return and die." But I being dazed,
Confused with love and joy that He so far
Did condescend, "Ay, Eminence," replied,
"Is the way great?" I knew not what I said.
The Angel then, "I know not far nor near,
But all the stars of God this side it shine."
And I forgetful wholly for this thing
My soul did pant in—a rapture and a pain,
So great as they would melt it quite away
To a vanishing like mist when sultry rays
Shot from the daystar reckon with it—I
Said in my simpleness, "But is there time?
For in three days I am to burn, and O
I would fain see that he forgiveth first.
Pray you make haste." "I know not haste," he said;
"I was not fashioned to be thrall of time.
What is it?" And I marvelled, saw outlying,
Shaped like a shield and of dimensions like
An oval in the sky beyond all stars,
And trembled with foreknowledge. We were bound
To that same golden holy hollow. I
Misdoubted how to go, but we were gone.
I set off wingless, walking empty air
Beside him. In a moment we were caught
Among thick swarms of lost ones, evil, fell
Of might, only a little less than gods,
And strong enough to tear the earth to shreds,
Set shoulders to the sun and rend it out
O' its place. Their wings did brush across my face,
Yet felt I nought; the place was vaster far
Than all this wholesome pastoral windy world.
Through it we spinning, pierced to its far brink,
Saw menacing frowns and we were forth again.
Time has no instant for the reckoning ought
So sudden; 't was as if a lightning flash
Threw us within it, and a swifter flash,
We riding harmless down its swordlike edge,
Shot us fast forth to empty nothingness.

All my soul trembled, and my body it seemed
Pleaded than such a sight rather to faint
To the last silence, and the eery grave
Inhabit, and the slow solemnities
Of dying faced, content me with my shroud.

And yet was lying athwart the morning star
That shone in front, that holy hollow; yet
It loomed, as hung atilt towards the world,
That in her time of sleep appeared to look
Up to it, into it.

We, though I wept,
Fearing and longing, knowing not how to go,
My heart gone first, both mine eyes dedicate
To its all-hallowed sweet desired gold,
We on the empty limitless abyss
Walked slowly. It was far;

And I feared much,
For lo! when I looked down deep under me
The little earth was such a little thing,

How in the vasty dark find her again?
The crescent moon a moorèd boat hard by,
Did wait on her and touch her ragged rims
With a small gift of silver.

Love! my life!

Hubert, while I yet wept, O we were there.
A menai of Angels first, a swarm of stars
Took us among them (all alive with stars
Shining and shouting each to each that place),
The feathered multitude did lie so thick
We walked upon them, walked on outspread wings,
And the great gates were standing open.

Love!

The country is not what you think; but oh!
When you have seen it nothing else contents.
The voice, the vision was not what you think—
But oh! it was all. It was the meaning of life,
Excellent consummation of desires
For ever, let into the heart with pain
Most sweet. That smile did take the feeding soul
Deeper and deeper into heaven. The sward
(For I had bowed my face on it) I found
Grew in my spirit's longed for native land—
At last I was at home.'

And here she paused:

I must needs weep. I have not been in heaven,
Therefore she could not tell me what she heard,
Therefore she might not tell me what she saw,
Only I understood that One drew near
Who said to her she should e'en come, 'Because,'
Said He, 'My Father loves Me. I will ask
He send, a guiding Angel for My sake,
Since the dark way is long, and rough, and hard,
So that I shall not lose whom I love—thee.'

Other words wonderful of things not known,
When she had uttered, I gave hope away,
Cried out, and took her in despairing arms,
Asking no more. Then while the comfortless
Dawn till night fainted grew, alas! a key
That with abhorred jarring probed the door.
We kissed, we looked, unlocked our arms. She sighed
'Remember,' 'Ay, I will remember. What?'
'To come to me.' Then I, thrust roughly forth—
I, bereft, dumb, forlorn, unremedied
My hurt for ever, stumbled blindly down,
And the great door was shut behind and chained.

The weird pathetic scarlet of day dawning,
More kin to death of night than birth of morn,
Peered o'er yon hill bristling with spires of pine.
I heard the crying of the men condemned,
Men racked, that should be martyr'd presently,
And my great grief met theirs with might; I held
All our poor earth's despairs in my poor breast,
The choking reek, the faggots were all mine.
Ay, and the partings they were all mine—mine.
Father, it will be very good methinks
To die so, to die soon. It doth appease
The soul in misery for its fellows, when
There is no help, to suffer even as they.

Father, when I had lost her, when I sat
After my sickness on the pallet bed,
My forehead dropp'd into my hand, behold

Some one beside me. A man's hand let down
With that same action kind, compassionate,
Upon my shoulder. And I took the hand
Between mine own, laying my face thereon.
I knew this man for him who spoke with me,
Letting me see my Delia. I looked up.
Lo! lo! the robed ecclesiastic proud,
He and this other one. Tell you his name?
Am I a fiend? No, he was good to me,
Almost he placed his life in my hand.

Father,

He with good pitying words long talked to me,
'Did I not strive to save her?' 'Ay,' quoth I.
'But sith it would not be, I also claim
Death, burning; let me therefore die—let me.
I am wicked, would be heretic, but, faith,
I know not how, and Holy Church I hate.
She is no mother of mine, she slew my love.'
What answer? 'Peace, peace, thou art hard on me.
Favour I forfeit with the Mother of God,
Lose rank among the saints, foresee my soul
Drenched in the unmitigated flame, and take
My payment in the lives snatched at all risk
From battling in it here. O, an thou turn
And tear from me, lost to that other world
My heart's reward in this, I am twice lost;
Now have I doubly failed.'

Father, I know

The Church would rail, hound forth, disgrace, try, burn,
Make his proud name, discover'd, infamy,
Tread underfoot his ashes, curse his soul.
But God is greater than the Church. I hope
He shall not, for that he loved men, lose God.
I hope to hear it said 'Thy sins are all
Forgiven; come in, thou hast done well.'

For me

My chronicle comes down to its last page.
'Is not life sweet?' quoth he, and comforted
My sick heart with good words, 'duty' and 'home.'
Then took me at moonsetting down the stair
To the dark deserted midway of the street,
Gave me a purse of money, and his hand
Laid on my shoulder, holding me with words
A father might have said, bid me God speed,
So pushed me from him, turned, and he was gone.

There was a Pleiad lost; where is she now?
None knoweth,—O she reigns, it is my creed,
Otherwhere dedicate to making day.
The God of Gods, He doubtless looked to that
Who wasteth never ought He fashionèd.
I have no vision, but where vision fails
Faith cheers, and truly, truly there is need,
The god of this world being so unkind.
O love! My girl for ever to the world
Wanting. Lost, not that any one should find,
But wasted for the sake of waste, and lost
For love of man's undoing, of man's tears,
By envy of the evil one; I mourn
For thee, my golden girl, I mourn, I mourn.

He set me free. And it befell anon
That I must imitate him. Then 't befell
That on the holy Book I read, and all,
The mediating Mother and her Babe,

God and the Church, and man and life and death,
And the dark gulfs of bitter purging flame,
Did take on alteration. Like a ship
Cast from her moorings, drifting from her port,
Not bound to any land, not sure of land,
My dull'd soul lost her reckoning on that sea
She sailed, and yet the voyage was nigh done.

This God was not the God I had known; this Christ
Was other. O, a gentler God, a Christ—
By a mother and a Father infinite—
In distance each from each made kin to me.
Blest Sufferer on the rood; but yet, I say
Other. Far gentler, and I cannot tell,
Father, if you, or she, my golden girl,
Or I, or any aright those mysteries read.

I cannot fathom them. There is not time,
So quickly men condemned me to this cell.
I quarrell'd not so much with Holy Church
For that she taught, as that my love she burned.
I die because I hid her enemies,
And read the Book.

But O, forgiving God,
I do elect to trust thee. I have thought,
What! are there set between us and the sun
Millions of miles, and did He like a tent
Rear up yon vasty sky? Is heaven less wide?
And dwells He there, but for His wingèd host,
Almost alone? Truly I think not so;
He has had trouble enough with this poor world
To make Him as an earthly father would,
Love it and value it more.

He did not give
So much to have us with Him, and yet fail.
And now He knows I would believe e'en so
As pleaseth Him, an there was time to learn
Or certitude of heart; but time fails, time.
He knoweth also 't were a piteous thing
Not to be sure of my love's welfare—not
To see her happy and good in that new home.
Most piteous. I could all forego but this.
O let me see her, Lord.

What, also I!
White ashes and a waft of vapour—I
To flutter on before the winds. No, no.
And yet for ever ay—my flesh shall hiss
And I shall hear 't. Dreadful, unbearable!
Is it to-morrow?

Ay, indeed, indeed,
To-morrow. But my moods are as great waves
That rise and break and thunder down on me,
And then fall'n back sink low.

I have waked long
And cannot hold my thoughts upon th' event;
They slip, they wander forth.

How the dusk grows.
This is the last moonrising we shall see.
Methought till morn to pray, and cannot pray.
Where is mine Advocate? let Him say all
And more was in my mind to say this night,
Because to-morrow—Ah! no more of that,
The tale is told. Father, I fain would sleep.

Truly my soul is silent unto God.

A VINE-ARBOUR IN THE FAR WEST.

I.

Laura, my Laura! 'Yes, mother!' 'I want you, Laura; come down.'
'What is it, mother—what, dearest? O your loved face how it pales!
You tremble, alas and alas—you heard bad news from the town?'
'Only one short half hour to tell it. My poor courage fails—'

II.

Laura. 'Where's Ronald?—O anything else but Ronald!' 'No, no,
Not Ronald, if all beside, my Laura, disaster and tears;
But you, it is yours to send them away, for you they will go,
One short half hour, and must it decide, it must for the years.'

III.

Laura, you think of your father sometimes?' 'Sometimes!' 'Ah, but how?'
'I think—that we need not think, sweet mother—the time is not yet,
He is as the wraith of a wraith, and a far off shadow now—
—But if you have heard he is dead?' 'Not that?' 'Then let me forget.'

IV.

'The sun is off the south window, draw back the curtain, my child.'
'But tell it, mother.' 'Answer you first what it is that you see.'
'The lambs on the mountain slope, and the crevice with blue ice piled.'
'Nearer.'—'But, mother!' 'Nearer!' 'My heifer she's lowing to me.'

V.

'Nearer.' 'Nothing, sweet mother, O yes, for one sits in the bower.
Black the clusters hang out from the vine about his snow-white head,
And the scarlet leaves, where my Ronald leaned.' 'Only one half hour—
Laura'—'O mother, my mother dear, all known though nothing said.'

VI.

O it breaks my heart, the face dejected that looks not on us,
A beautiful face—I remember now, though long I forgot.'
'Ay and I loved it. I love him to-day, and to see him thus!
Saying "I go if she bids it, for work her woe—I will not."

VII.

There! weep not, wring not your hands, but think, think with your heart
and soul.'
'Was he innocent, mother? If he was, I, sure had been told,
'He said so.' 'Ah, but they do.' 'And I hope—and long was his dole,
And all for the signing a name (if indeed he signed) for gold.'

VIII.

'To find us again, in the far far West, where hid, we were free—
But if he was innocent—O my heart, it is riven in two,
If he goes how hard upon him—or stays—how harder on me,
For O my Ronald, my Ronald, my dear,—my best what of you!'

IX.

'Peace; think, my Laura—I say he will go there, weep not so sore.
And the time is come, Ronald knows nothing, your father will go,
As the shadow fades from its place will he, and be seen no more.'
'There 'll be time to think to-morrow, and after, but to-day, no.

X.

I'm going down the garden, mother.' 'Laura!' 'I've dried my tears.'
'O how will this end!' 'I know not the end, I can but begin.'
'But what will you say?' 'Not "welcome, father," though long were those
years,
But I'll say to him, "O my poor father, we wait you, come in."

LOVERS AT THE LAKE SIDE.

I.

'And you brought him home.' 'I did, ay Ronald, it rested with me.'
'Love!' 'Yes.' 'I would fain you were not so calm.' 'I cannot weep. No.'
'What is he like, your poor father?' 'He is—like—this fallen tree
Prone at our feet, by the still lake taking on rose from the glow,

II.

Now scarlet, O look! overcoming the blue both lake and sky,
While the waterfalls waver like smoke, then leap in and are not.
And shining snow-points of high sierras cast down, there they lie.'
'O Laura—I cannot bear it. Laura! as if I forgot.'

III.

'No, you remember, and I remember that evening—like this
When we come forth from the gloomy Canyon, lo, a sinking sun.
And, Ronald, you gave to me your troth ring, I gave my troth kiss.'
'Give me another, I say that this makes no difference, none.

IV.

It hurts me keenly. It hurts to the soul that you thought it could.'
'I never thought so, my Ronald, my love, never thought you base.'
No, but I look for a nobler nobleness, loss understood,
Accepted, and not that common truth which can hold through disgrace.

V.

O! we remember, and how ere that noon through deeps of the lake
We floating looked down and the boat's shadow followed on rocks below,
So clear the water. O all pathetic as if for love's sake
Our life that is but a fleeting shadow 't would under us show.

VI.

O we remember forget-me-not pale, and white columbine
You wreathed for my hair; because we remember this cannot be.
Ah! here is your ring—see, I draw it off—it must not be mine,
Put it on, love, if but for the moment and listen to me.

VII.

I look for the best, I look for the most, I look for the all
From you, it consoles this misery of mine, there is you to trust.
O if you can weep, let us weep together, tears may well fall
For that lost sunsetting and what it promised,—they may, they must.

VIII.

Do you say nothing, mine own beloved, you know what I mean,
And whom.—To her pride and her love from YOU shall such blow be dealt...
...Silence uprisen, is like a presence, it comes us between...
As once there was darkness, now is there silence that may be felt.

IX.

Ronald, your mother, so gentle, so pure, and you are her best,
'T is she whom I think of, her quiet sweetness, her gracious way.
'How could she bear it?'—'Laura!' 'Yes, Ronald.' 'Let that matter rest.
You might give your name to my father's child?' 'My father's name. Ay,

X.

Who died before it was soiled.' 'You mutter.' 'Why, love, are you here?'
'Because my mother fled forth to the West, her trouble to hide,
And I was so small, the lone pine forest, and tier upon tier,
Far off Mexican snowy sierras pushed England aside.'

XI.

'And why am I here?' 'But what did you mutter?' 'O pardon, sweet.
Why came I here and—my mother?' In truth then I cannot tell.'
'Yet you drew my ring from your finger—see—I kneel at your feet.'
'Put it on. 'T was for no fault of mine.' 'Love! I knew that full well.'

XII.

'And yet there be faults that long repented, are aye to deplore,
Wear my ring, Laura, at least till I choose some words I can say,
If indeed any word need be said.' 'No! wait, Ronald, no more;
What! is there respite? Give me a moment to think "nay" or "ay."

XIII.

I know not, but feel there is. O pardon me, pardon me,—peace.
For nought is to say, and the dawn of hope is a solemn thing,
Let us have silence. Take me back, Ronald, full sweet is release.'
'Laura! but give me my troth kiss again.' 'And give me my ring.'

THE WHITE MOON WASTETH.

The white moon wasteth,
And cold morn hasteth
Athwart the snow,
The red east burneth
And the tide turneth,
And thou must go.

Think not, sad rover,
Their story all over
Who come from far—
Once, in the ages
Won goodly wages
Led by a star.

Once, for all duly
Guidance doth truly
Shine as of old,
Opens for me and thee
Once, opportunity
Her gates of gold.

Enter, thy star is out,
Traverse nor faint nor doubt
Earth's antres wild,
Thou shalt find good and rest
As found the Magi blest
That divine Child.

AN ARROW-SLIT.

I clomb full high the belfry tower
Up to yon arrow-slit, up and away,
I said 'let me look on my heart's fair flower
In the wallèd garden where she doth play.'

My care she knoweth not, no nor the cause,
White rose, red rose about her hung,
And I aloft with the doves and the daws.
They coo and call to their callow young.

Sing, 'O an she were a white rosebud fair
Dropt, and in danger from passing feet,
'T is I would render her service tender,
Upraised on my bosom with reverence meet.'

Playing at the ball, my dearest of all,
When she grows older how will it be,
I dwell far away from her thoughts to-day
That heed not, need not, or mine or me.

Sing, 'O an my love were a fledgeling dove
That flutters forlorn o' her shallow nest,
'T is I would render her service tender,
And carry her, carry her on my breast.'

WENDOVER.

Uplifted and lone, set apart with our love
On the crest of a soft swelling down
Cloud shadows that meet on the grass at our feet
Sail on above Wendover town.

Wendover town takes the smile of the sun
As if yearning and strife were no more,

From her red roofs float high neither plaint neither sigh,
All the weight of the world is our own.

Would that life were more kind and that souls might have peace
As the wide mead from storm and from bale,
We bring up our own care, but how sweet over there
And how strange is their calm in the vale.

As if trouble at noon had achieved a deep sleep,
Lapped and lulled from the weariful fret,
Or shot down out of day, had a hint dropt away
As if grief might attain to forget.

Not if we two indeed had gone over the bourne
And were safe on the hills of the blest,
Not more strange they might show to us drawn from below,
Come up from long dolour to rest.

But the peace of that vale would be thine love and mine,
And sweeter the air than of yore,
And this life we have led as a dream that is fled
Might appear to our thought evermore.

'Was it life, was it life?' we might say 'twas scarce life,'
'Was it love? 'twas scarce love,' looking down,
'Yet we mind a sweet ray of the red sun one day
Low lying on Wendover town.

THE LOVER PLEADS.

I.

When I had guineas many a one
Nought else I lackèd 'neath the sun,
I had two eyes the bluest seen,
A perfect shape, a gracious mien,
I had a voice might charm the bale
From a two days widowed nightingale,
And if you ask how this I know
I had a love who told me so.
The lover pleads, the maid hearkeneth,
Her foot turns, his day darkeneth.
Love unkind, O can it be
'T was your foot false did turn from me.

II.

The gear is gone, the red gold spent,
Favour and beauty with them went,
Eyes take the veil, their shining done,
Not fair to him is fair to none,
Sweet as a bee's bag 'twas to taste
His praise. O honey run to waste,
He loved not! spoiled is all my way
In the spoiling of that yesterday.

The shadows wax, the low light alters,
Gold west fades, and false heart falters.
The pity of it!—Love's a rover,
The last word said, and all over.

SONG IN THREE PARTS.

I.

The white broom flatt'ring her flowers in calm June weather,
'O most sweet wear;
Forty-eight weeks of my life do none desire me,
Four am I fair,'

Quoth the brown bee
'In thy white wear
Four thou art fair.
A mystery
Of honeyed snow
In scented air
The bee lines flow
Straight unto thee.
Great boon and bliss
All pure I wis,
And sweet to grow
Ay, so to give
That many live.
Now as for me,
I, ' quoth the bee,
'Have not to give,
Through long hours sunny
Gathering I live:
Aye debonair
Sailing sweet air
After my fare,
Bee-bread and honey.
In thy deep coombe,
O thou white broom,
Where no leaves shake,
Brake,
Bent nor clover,
I a glad rover,
Thy calms partake,
While winds of might
From height to height
Go bodily over.
Till slanteth light,
And up the rise
Thy shadow lies,
A shadow of white,
A beauty-lender
Pathetic, tender.

Short is thy day?
Answer with 'Nay,'
Longer the hours
That wear thy flowers
Than all dull, cold
Years manifold
That gift withhold.
A long liver,
O honey-giver,
Thou by all showing
Art made, bestowing,
I envy not
Thy greater lot,
Nor thy white wear.
But, as for me,

I, ' quoth the bee,
'Never am fair.'

II.

The nightingale lorn of his note in darkness brooding
Deeply and long,
'Two sweet months spake the heart to the heart. Alas! all's over,
O lost my song.'

One in the tree,
'Hush now! Let be:
The song at ending
Left my long tending
Over alsò.
Let be, let us go
Across the wan sea.

The little ones care not,
And I fare not
Amiss with thee.

Thou hast sung all,
This hast thou had.
Love, be not sad;
It shall befall
Assuredly,
When the bush buddeth
And the bank studdeth—
Where grass is sweet
And damps do fleet,
Her delicate beds
With daisy heads
That the Stars Seven
Leaned down from heaven
Shall sparkling mark
In the warm dark
Thy most dear strain
Which ringeth aye true—
Piercing vale, croft
Lifted aloft
Dropt even as dew
With a sweet quest
To her on the nest
When damps we love
Fall from above.

"Art thou asleep?
Answer me, answer me,
Night is so deep
Thy right fair form
I cannot see;
Answer me, answer me,
Are the eggs warm?
Is't well with thee?"

Ay, this shall be
Assuredly.
Ay, thou full fain
In the soft rain
Shalt sing again.'

III.

A fair wife making her moan, despised, forsaken,
Her good days o'er;

'Seven sweet years of my life did I live belovèd,
Seven—no more.'

Then Echo woke—and spoke
'No more—no more,'
And a wave broke
On the sad shore
When Echo said
'No more,'

Nought else made reply,
Nor land, nor loch, nor sky
Did any comfort try,
But the wave spread
Echo's faint tone
Alone,
All down the desolate shore,
'No more—no more.'

'IF I FORGET THEE, O JERUSALEM.'

Out of the melancholy that is made
Of ebbing sorrow that too slowly ebbs,
Comes back a sighing whisper of the reed,
A note in new love-pipings on the bough,
Grieving with grief till all the full-fed air
And shaken milky corn doth wot of it,
The pity of it trembling in the talk
Of the beforetime merrymaking brook—
Out of that melancholy will the soul,
In proof that life is not forsaken quite
Of the old trick and glamour which made glad;
Be cheated some good day and not perceive
How sorrow ebbing out is gone from view,
How tired trouble fall'n for once on sleep,
How keen self-mockery that youth's eager dream
Interpreted to mean so much is found
To mean and give so little—frets no more,
Floating apart as on a cloud—O then
Not e'en so much as murmuring 'Let this end,'
She will, no longer weighted, find escape,
Lift up herself as if on wings and flit
Back to the morning time.

'O once with me

It was all one, such joy I had at heart,
As I heard sing the morning star, or God
Did hold me with an Everlasting Hand,
And dip me in the day.

O once with me,'

Reflecting 'twas enough to live, to look
Wonder and love. Now let that come again.
Rise!' And ariseth first a tanglement
Of flowering bushes, peonies pale that drop
Upon a mossy lawn, rich iris spikes,
Bee-borage, mealy-stemmed auricula,
Brown wallflower, and the sweetbriar ever sweet,
Her pink buds pouting from their green.

To these

Add thick espaliers where the bullfinch came
To strew much budding wealth, and was not chid.

Then add wide pear trees on the warmèd wall,
The old red wall one cannot see beyond.
That is the garden.

 In the wall a door
Green, blistered with the sun. You open it,
And lo! a sunny waste of tumbled hills
And a glad silence, and an open calm.
Infinite leisure, and a slope where rills
Dance down delightedly, in every crease,
And lambs stoop drinking and the finches dip,
Then shining waves upon a lonely beach.
That is the world.

 An all-sufficient world,
And as it seems an undiscovered world,
So very few the folk that come to look.
Yet one has heard of towns; but they are far
The world is undiscovered, and the child
Is undiscovered that with stealthy joy
Goes gathering like a bee who in dark cells
Hideth sweet food to live on in the cold.
What matters to the child, it matters not
More than it mattered to the moons of Mars,
That they for ages undiscovered went
Marked not of man, attendant on their king.

 A shallow line of sand curved to the cliff,
There dwelt the fisherfolk, and there inland
Some scattered cottagers in thrift and calm,
Their talk full oft was of old days,—for here
Was once a fosse, and by this rock-hewn path
Our wild fore-elders as 't is said would come
To gather jetsam from some Viking wreck,
Like a sea-beast wide breasted (her snake head
Reared up as staring while she rocked ashore)
That split, and all her ribs were on their fires
The red whereof at their wives' throats made bright
Gold gauds which from the weed they picked ere yet
The tide had turned.

 'Many,' methought, 'and rich
They must have been, so long their chronicle.
Perhaps the world was fuller then of folk,
For ships at sea are few that near us now.'

 Yet sometimes when the clouds were torn to rags,
Flying black before a gale, we saw one rock
In the offing, and the mariner folk would cry,
'Look how she labours; those aboard may hear
Her timbers creak e'en as she'd break her heart.'

 'Twas then the grey gulls blown ashore would light
In flocks, and pace the lawn with flat cold feet.

 And so the world was sweet, and it was strange,
Sweet as a bee-kiss to the crocus flower,
Surprising, fresh, direct, but ever one.
The laughter of glad music did not yet
In its echo yearn, as hinting ought beyond,
Nor pathos tremble at the edge of bliss
Like a moon halo in a watery sky,
Nor the sweet pain alike of love and fear
In a world not comprehended touch the heart—
The poetry of life was not yet born.
'T was a thing hidden yet that there be days
When some are known to feel 'God is about,'

As if that morn more than another morn
Virtue flowed forth from Him, the rolling world
Swam in a soothèd calm made resonant
And vital, swam as in the lap of God
Come down; until she slept and had a dream
(Because it was too much to bear awake),
That all the air shook with the might of Him
And whispered how she was the favourite world
That day, and bade her drink His essence in.

'Tis on such days that seers prophesy
And poets sing, and many who are wise
Find out for man's wellbeing hidden things
Whereof the hint came in that Presence known
Yet unknown. But a seer—what is he?
A poet is a name of long ago.

Men love the largeness of the field—the wild
Quiet that soothes the moor. In other days
They loved the shadow of the city wall,
In its stone ramparts read their poetry,
Safety and state, gold, and the arts of peace,
Law-giving, leisure, knowledge, all were there
This to excuse a child's allegiance and
A spirit's recurrence to the older way.
Orphan'd, with aged guardians kind and true,
Things came to pass not told before to me.

Thus, we did journey once when eve was near.
Through carriage windows I beheld the moors,
Then, churches, hamlets cresting of low hills.
The way was long, at last I, fall'n asleep,
Awoke to hear a rattling 'neath the wheels
And see the lamps alight. This was the town.

Then a wide inn received us, and full soon
Came supper, kisses, bed.

The lamp without

Shone in; the door was shut, and I alone.
An ecstasy of exultation took
My soul, for there were voices heard and steps,
I was among so many,—none of them
Knew I was come!

I rose, with small bare feet,
Across the carpet stole, a white-robed child,
And through the window peered. Behold the town.

There had been rain, the pavement glistened yet
In a soft lamplight down the narrow street;
The church was nigh at hand, a clear-toned clock
Chimed slowly, open shops across the way
Showed store of fruit, and store of bread,—and one
Many caged birds. About were customers,
I saw them bargain, and a rich high voice
Was heard,—a woman sang, her little babe
Slept 'neath her shawl, and by her side a boy
Added wild notes and sweet to hers.

Some passed

Who gave her money. It was far from me
To pity her, she was a part of that
Admirèd town. E'en so within the shop
A rosy girl, it may be ten years old,
Quaint, grave. She helped her mother, deftly weighed
The purple plums, black mulberries rich and ripe
For boyish customers, and counted pence
And dropped them in an apron that she wore.

Methought a queen had ne'er so grand a lot,
She knew it, she looked up at me, and smiled.

But yet the song went on, and in a while
The meaning came; the town was not enough
To satisfy that singer, for a sigh
With her wild music came. What wanted she?
Whate'er she wanted wanted all. O how
'T was poignant, her rich voice; not like a bird's.
Could she not dwell content and let them be,
That they might take their pleasure in the town,
For—no, she was not poor, witness the pence.
I saw her boy and that small saleswoman;
He wary, she with grave persuasive air,
Till he came forth with filberts in his cap,
And joined his mother, happy, triumphing.

This was the town; and if you ask what else,
I say good sooth that it was poetry
Because it was the all, and something more,—
It was the life of man, it was the world
That made addition to the watching heart,
First conscious its own beating, first aware
How, beating it kept time with all the race;
Nay, 't was a consciousness far down and dim
Of a Great Father watching too.

But lo! the rich lamenting voice again;
She sang not for herself; it was a song
For me, for I had seen the town and knew,
Yearning I knew the town was not enough.

What more? To-day looks back on yesterday,
Life's yesterday, the waiting time, the dawn,
And reads a meaning into it, unknown
When it was with us.

It is always so.

But when as ofttimes I remember me
Of the warm wind that moved the beggar's hair,
Of the wet pavement, and the lamps alit,
I know it was not pity that made yearn
My heart for her, and that same dimpled boy
How grand methought to be abroad so late.
And barefoot dabble in the shining wet;
How fine to peer as other urchins did
At those pent huddled doves they let not rest;
No, it was almost envy. Ay, how sweet
The clash of bells; they rang to boast that far
That cheerful street was from the cold sea-fog,
From dark ploughed field and narrow lonesome lane.
How sweet to hear the hum of voices kind,
To see the coach come up with din of horn.
Quick tramp of horses, mark the passers-by
Greet one another, and go on.

But now

They closed the shops, the wild clear voice was still,
The beggars moved away—where was their home.
The coach which came from out dull darksome fells
Into the light; passed to the dark again
Like some old comet which knows well her way,
Whirled to the sun that as her fateful loop
She turns, forebodes the destined silences.
Yes, it was gone; the clattering coach was gone,
And those it bore I pitied even to tears,
Because they must go forth, nor see the lights,

Nor hear the chiming bells.

In after days,

Remembering of the childish envy and
The childish pity, it has cheered my heart
To think e'en now pity and envy both
It may be are misplaced, or needed not.
Heaven may look down in pity on some soul
Half envied, or some wholly pitied smile,
For that it hath to wait as it were an hour
To see the lights that go not out by night,
To walk the golden street and hear a song;
Other-world poetry that is the all
And something more.

NATURE, FOR NATURE'S SAKE.

White as white butterflies that each one dons
Her face their wide white wings to shade withal,
Many moon-daisies throng the water-spring.
While couched in rising barley titlarks call,
And bees alit upon their martagons
Do hang a-murmuring, a-murmuring.

They chide, it may be, alien tribes that flew
And rifled their best blossom, counted on
And dreamed on in the hive ere dangerous dew
That clogs bee-wings had dried; but when outshone
Long shafts of gold (made all for them) of power
To charm it away, those thieves had sucked the flower.

Now must they go; a-murmuring they go,
And little thrushes twitter in the nest;
The world is made for them, and even so
The clouds are; they have seen no stars, the breast
Of their soft mother hid them all the night,
Till her mate came to her in red dawn-light.

Eggs scribbled over with strange writing, signs,
Prophecies, and their meaning (for you see
The yolk within) is life, 'neath yonder bines
Lie among sedges; on a hawthorn tree
The slender-lord and master perched hard by,
Scolds at all comers if they step too nigh.

And our small river makes encompassment
Of half the mead and holm: yon lime-trees grow
All heeling over to it, diligent
To cast green doubles of themselves below,
But shafts of sunshine reach its shallow floor
And warm the yellow sand it ripples o'er.

Ripples and ripples to a pool it made
Turning. The cows are there, one creamy white—
She should be painted with no touch of shade
If any list to limn her—she the light
Above, about her, treads out circles wide,
And sparkling water flashes from her side.

The clouds have all retired to so great height
As earth could have no dealing with them more,
As they were lost, for all her drawing and might,

And must be left behind; but down the shore
Lie lovelier clouds in ranks of lace-work frail,
Wild parsley with a myriad florets pale,

Another milky-way, more intricate
And multitudinous, with every star
Perfect. Long changeful sunbeams undulate
Amid the stems where sparklike creatures are
That hover and hum for gladness, then the last
Tree rears her graceful head, the shade is passed.

And idle fish in warm wellbeing lie
Each with his shadow under, while at ease
As clouds that keep their shape the darting fry
Turn and are gone in company; o'er these
Strangers to them, strangers to us, from holes
Scooped in the bank peer out shy water-voles.

Here, take for life and fly with innocent feet
The brown-eyed fawns, from moving shadows clear;
There, down the lane with multitudinous bleat
Plaining on shepherd lads a flock draws near;
A mild lamenting fills the morning air,
'Why to yon upland fold must we needs fare?'

These might be fabulous creatures every one,
And this their world might be some other sphere
We had but heard of, for all said or done
To know of them,—of what this many a year
They may have thought of man, or of his sway,
Or even if they have a God and pray,

The sweetest river bank can never more
Home to its source tempt back the lapsed stream,
Nor memory reach the ante-natal shore,
Nor one awake behold a sleeper's dream,
Not easier 't were that unbridged chasm to walk,
And share the strange lore of their wordless talk.

Like to a poet voice, remote from ken,
That unregarded sings and undesired,
Like to a star unnamed by lips of men,
That faints at dawn in saffron light retired,
Like to an echo in some desert deep
From age to age unwakened from its sleep—

So falls unmarked that other world's great song,
And lapsing wastes without interpreter.
Slave world! not man's to raise, yet man's to wrong,
He cannot to a loftier place prefer,
But he can,—all its earlier rights forgot,
Reign reckless if its nations rue their lot.

If they can sin or feel life's wear and fret,
An men had loved them better, it may be
We had discovered. But who e'er did yet,
After the sage saints in their clemency,
Ponder in hope they had a heaven to win,
Or make a prayer with a dove's name therein.

As grave Augustine pleading in his day,
'Have pity, Lord, upon the unfledged bird,
Lest such as pass do trample it in the way,
Not marking, or not minding; give the word,
O bid an angel in the nest again
To place it, lest the mother's love be vain.

And let it live, Lord God, till it can fly.'
This man dwelt yearning, fain to guess, to spell
The parable; all work of God Most High
Took to his man's heart. Surely this was well;
To love is more than to be loved, by leave
Of Heaven, to give is more than to receive.

He made it so that said it. As for us
Strange is their case toward us, for they give
And we receive. Made martyrs ever thus
In deed but not in will, for us they live,
For us they die, we quench their little day,
Remaining blameless, and they pass away.

The world is better served than it is ruled,
And not alone of them, for ever
Ruleth the man, the woman serveth fooled
Full oft of love, not knowing his yoke is sore.
Life's greatest Son nought from life's measure swerved,
He was among us 'as a man that served.'

Have they another life, and was it won
In the sore travail of another death,
Which loosed the manacles from our race undone
And plucked the pang from dying? If this breath
Be not their all, reproach no more debarred,
'O unkind lords, you made our bondage hard'

May be their plaint when we shall meet again
And make our peace with them; the sea of life
Find flowing, full, nor ought or lost or vain.
Shall the vague hint whereof all thought is rife,
The sweet pathetic guess indeed come true,
And things restored reach that great residue?

Shall we behold fair flights of phantom doves,
Shall furred creatures couch in moly flowers,
Swan souls the rivers oar with their world-loves,
In difference welcome as these souls of ours?
Yet soul of man from soul of man far more
May differ, even as thought did heretofore

That ranged and varied on th' undying gleam:
From a pure breath of God aspiring, high,
Serving and reigning, to the tender dream,
The winged Psyche and her butterfly—
From thrones and powers, to—fresh from death alarms
Child spirits entering in an angel's arms.

Why must we think, begun in paradise,
That their long line, cut off with severance fell,
Shall end in nothingness—the sacrifice
Of their long service in a passing knell?
Could man be wholly blest if not to say
'Forgive'—nor make amends for ever and aye?

Waste, waste on earth, and waste of God afar.
Celestial flotsam, blazing spars on high,
Drifts in the meteor month from some wrecked star,
Strew oft th' unwrinkled ocean of the sky,
And pass no more accounted of than be
Long dulses limp that stripe a mundane sea.

The sun his kingdom fills with light, but all
Save where it strikes some planet and her moons
Across cold chartless gulfs ordained to fall,
Void antres, reckoneth no man's nights or noons,

But feeling forth as for some outmost shore,
Faints in the blank of doom, and is no more.

God scattereth His abundance as forgot,
And what then doth he gather? If we know,
'Tis that One told us it was life. 'For not
A sparrow,' quoth he, uttering long ago
The strangest words that e'er took earthly sound,
'Without your Father falleth to the ground.'

PERDITA.

I go beyond the commandment. So be it. Then mine be the blame,
The loss, the lack, the yearning, till life's last sand be run,—
I go beyond the commandment, yet honour stands fast with her claim,
And what I have rued I shall rue; for what I have done—I have done.

Hush, hush! for what of the future; you cannot the base exalt,
There is no bridging a chasm over, that yawns with so sheer incline;
I will not any sweet daughter's cheek should pale for this mother's fault,
Nor son take leave to lower his life a-thinking on mine.

' *Will I tell you all?* So! this, e'en this, will I do for your great
love's sake;
Think what it costs. *'Then let there be silence—silence you'll count
consent.'*
No, and no, and for ever no: rather to cross and to break,
And to lower your passion I speak—that other it was I meant.

That other I meant (but I know not how) to speak of, nor April days,
Nor a man's sweet voice that pleaded—O (but I promised this)—
He never talked of marriage, never; I grant him that praise;
And he bent his stately head, and I lost, and he won with a kiss.

He led me away—O, how poignant sweet the nightingale's note that noon—
I beheld, and each crisped spire of grass to him for my sake was fair,
And warm winds flattered my soul blowing straight from the soul of June,
And a lovely lie was spread on the fields, but the blue was bare.

When I looked up, he said: 'Love, fair love! O rather look in these eyes
With thine far sweeter than eyes of Eve when she stepped the valley
unshod'—
For ONE might be looking through it, he thought, and he would not in any
wise
I should mark it open, limitless, empty, bare 'neath the gaze of God.

Ah me! I was happy—yes, I was; 't is fit you should know it all,
While love was warm and tender and yearning, the rough winds troubled
me not;
I heard them moan without in the forest; heard the chill rains fall—
But I thought my place was sheltered with him—I forgot, I forgot.

After came news of a wife; I think he was glad I should know.
To stay my pleading, 'take me to church and give me my ring';
'You should have spoken before,' he had sighed, when I prayed him so,
For his heart was sick for himself and me, and this bitter thing.

But my dream was over me still,—I was half beguiled,
And he in his kindness left me seldom, O seldom, alone,
And yet love waxed cold, and I saw the face of my little child,
And then at the last I knew what I was, and what I had done.

'YOU will give me the name of wife. YOU will give me a ring.'—O
peace!

You are not let to ruin your life because I ruined mine;
You will go to your people at home. There will be rest and release;
The bitter now will be sweet full soon—ay, and denial divine.

But spare me the ending. I did not wait to be quite cast away;
I left him asleep, and the bare sun rising shone red on my gown.
There was dust in the lane, I remember; prints of feet in it lay,
And honeysuckle trailed in the path that led on to the down.

I was going nowhere—I wandered up, then turned and dared to look back,
Where low in the valley he careless and quiet—quiet and careless slept.
'Did I love him yet?' I loved him. Ay, my heart on the upland track
Cried to him, sighed to him out by the wheat, as I walked, and I wept.

I knew of another alas, one that had been in my place,
Her little ones, she forsaken, were almost in need;
I went to her, and carried my babe, then all in my satins and lace
I sank at the step of her desolate door, a mourner indeed.

I cried, 'T is the way of the world, would I had never been born!'
'Ay, 't is the way of the world, but have you no sense to see
For all the way of the world,' she answers and laughs me to scorn,
'The world is made the world that it is by fools like you, like me.'

Right hard upon me, hard on herself, and cold as the cold stone,
But she took me in; and while I lay sick I knew I was lost,
Lost with the man I loved, or lost without him, making my moan
Blighted and rent of the bitter frost, wrecked, tempest tossed, lost,
lost!

How am I fallen:—we that might make of the world what we would,
Some of us sink in deep waters. Ah! '*you would raise me again?*'
No true heart,—you cannot, you cannot, and all in my soul that is good
Cries out against such a wrong. Let be, your quest is for ever in vain.

For I feel with another heart, I think with another mind,
I have worsened life, I have wronged the world, I have lowered the light;
But as for him, his words and his ways were after his kind,
He did but spoil where he could, and waste where he might.

For he was let to do it; I let him and left his soul
To walk mid the ruins he made of home in remembrance of love's despairs,
Despairs that harden the hearts of men and shadow their heads with dole,
And woman's fault, though never on earth, may be healed,—but what of
theirs.

'T was fit you should hear it all—What, tears? they comfort me; now you will go, Nor wrong your life
for the nought you call 'a pair of beautiful eyes,' '*I will not say I love you.*' Truly I will not, no. '*Will, I
pity you?*' Ay, but the pang will be short, you shall wake and be wise.

'*Shall we meet?*' We shall meet on the other side, but not before.
I shall be pure and fair, I shall hear the sound of THE NAME,
And see the form of His face. You too will walk on that shore,
In the garden of the Lord God, where neither is sorrow nor shame.

Farewell, I shall bide alone, for God took my one white lamb,
I work for such as she was, and I will the while I last,
But there's no beginning again, ever I am what I am,
And nothing, nothing, nothing, can do away with the past.

SERIOUS POEMS,

AND

SONGS AND POEMS

OF

LOVE AND CHILDHOOD.

LETTERS ON LIFE AND THE MORNING.

(First of a Series.)

A PARSON'S LETTER TO A YOUNG POET.

They said "Too late, too late, the work is done;
Great Homer sang of glory and strong men
And that fair Greek whose fault all these long
years
Wins no forgetfulness nor ever can;
For yet cold eyes upon her frailty bend,
For yet the world waits in the victor's tent
Daily, and sees an old man honourable,
His white head bowed, surprise to passionate tears
Awestruck Achilles; sighing, 'I have endured,
The like whereof no soul hath yet endured,
To kiss the hand of him that slew my son."

They said: "We, rich by him, are rich by more;
One Aeschylus found watchfires on a hill
That lit Old Night's three daughters to their work;
When the forlorn Fate leaned to their red light
And sat a-spinning, to her feet he came
And marked her till she span off all her thread.

"O, it is late, good sooth, to cry for more:
The work once done, well done," they said, "forbear!
A Tuscan afterward discovered steps
Over the line of life in its mid-way;
He climbed the wall of Heaven, beheld his love
Safe at her singing, and he left his foes
In a vale of shadow weltering, unassoiled
Immortal sufferers henceforth in both worlds.

"Who may inherit next or who shall match
The Swan of Avon and go float with him
Down the long river of life aneath a sun
Not veiled, and high at noon?—the river of life
That as it ran reflected all its lapse
And rippling on the plumage of his breast?

"Thou hast them, heed them, for thy poets now,
Albeit of tongue full sweet and majesty
Like even to theirs, are fallen on evil days,
Are wronged by thee of life, wronged of the world.
Look back they must and show thee thy fair past,
Or, choosing thy to-day, they may but chant
As they behold.

"The mother-glowworm broods
Upon her young, fast-folded in the egg
And long before they come to life they shine—
The mother-age broods on her shining thought

That liveth, but whose life is hid. He comes
Her poet son, and lo you, he can see
The shining, and he takes it to his breast
And fashions for it wings that it may fly
And show its sweet light in the dusky world.

"Mother, O Mother of our dusk to-day,
What hast thou lived for bards to sing of thee?
Lapsed water cannot flow above its source;
'*The kid must browse,*'" they said, "'*where she is tied.*'"

Son of to-day, rise up, and answer them.
What! wilt thou let thy mother sit ashamed
And crownless?—Set the crown on her fair head:
She waited for thy birth, she cries to thee
"Thou art the man." He that hath ears to hear,
To him the mother cries "Thou art the man."

She murmurs, for thy mother's voice is low—
"Methought the men of war were even as gods
The old men of the ages. Now mine eyes
Retrieve the truth from ruined city walls
That buried it; from carved and curious homes
Full of rich garments and all goodly spoil,
Where having burned, battered, and wasted them,
They flung it. Give us, give us better gods
Than these that drink with blood upon their hands,
For I repent me that I worshipped them.
O that there might be yet a going up!
O to forget—and to begin again!"

Is not thy mother's rede at one with theirs
Who cry "The work is done"? What though to thee,
Thee only, should the utterance shape itself
"O to forget, and to begin again,"
Only of thee be heard as that keen cry
Rending its way from some distracted heart
That yields it and so breaks? Yet list the cry
Begin for her again, and learn to sing;
But first, in all thy learning learn to be.
Is life a field? then plough it up—re-sow
With worthier seed—Is life a ship? O heed
The southing of thy stars—Is life a breath?
Breathe deeper, draw life up from hour to hour,
Aye, from the deepest deep in thy deep soul.

It may be God's first work is but to breathe
And fill the abysm with drifts of shining air
That slowly, slowly curdle into worlds.
A little space is measured out to us
Of His long leisure; breathe and grow therein,
For life, alas! is short, and "*When we die*
It is not for a little while."

They said,
"The work is done," and is it therefore done?
Speak rather to thy mother thus: "All-fair,
Lady of ages, beautiful To-day
And sorrowful To-day, thy children set
The crown of sorrow on their heads, their loss
Is like to be the loss of all: we hear
Lamenting, as of some that mourn in vain
Loss of high leadership, but where is he
That shall be great enough to lead thee now?
Where is thy Poet? thou hast wanted him.
Where? Thou hast wakened as a child in the night

And found thyself alone. The stars have set,
There is great darkness, and the dark is void
Of music. Who shall set thy life afresh
And sing thee thy new songs? Whom wilt thou love
And lean on to break silence worthily—
Discern the beauty in thy goings—feel
The glory of thy yearning,—thy self-scorn
Matter to dim oblivion with a smile—
Own thy great want, that knew not its great name?
O who shall make to thee mighty amends
For thy lost childhood, joining two in one,
Thyself and Him? Behold Him, He is near:
God is thy Poet now.

"A King sang once
Long years ago 'My soul is athirst for God,
Yea for the living God'—thy thirst and his
Are one. It is thy Poet whom thy hands
Grove for, not knowing. Life is not enough,
Nor love, nor learning,—Death is not enough
Even to them, happy, who forecast new life;
But give us now and satisfy us now,
Give us now, now, to live in the life of God,
Give us now, now, to be at one with Him."

Would I had words—I have not words for her,
Only for thee; and thus I tell them out:
For every man the world is made afresh;
To God both it and he are young. There are
Who call upon Him night, and morn, and night
"Where is the kingdom? Give it us to-day.
We would be here with God, not there with God.
Make Thine abode with us, great Wayfarer,
And let our souls sink deeper into Thee"—
There are who send but yearnings forth, in quest
They know not why, of good they know not what.

The unknown life, and strange its stirring is.
The babe knows nought of life, yet clothed in it
And yearning only for its mother's breast
Feeds thus the unheeded thing—and as for thee,
That life thou hast is hidden from thine eyes,
And when it yearns, thou, knowing not for what,
Wouldst fain appease it with one grand, deep joy,
One draught of passionate peace—but wilt thou know
The other name of joy, the better name
Of peace? It is thy Father's name. Thy life
Yearns to its Source. The spirit thirsts for God,
Even the living God.

But "No," thou sayest,
"My heart is all in ruins with pain, my feet
Tread a dry desert where there is no way
Nor water. I look back, and deep through time
The old words come but faintly up the track
Trodden by the sons of men. The man He sent,
The Prince of life, methinks I could have loved
If I had looked once in His deep man's eyes.
But long ago He died, and long ago
Is gone."

He is not dead, He cannot go.
Men's faith at first was like a mastering stream,
Like Jordan "the descender" leaping down
Pure from his snow; and warmed of tropic heat
Hiding himself in verdure: then at last

In a Dead Sea absorbed, as faith of doubt.
But yet the snow lies thick on Hermon's breast
And daily at his source the stream is born.
Go up—go mark the whiteness of the snow—Thy
faith is not thy Saviour, not thy God,
Though faith waste fruitless down a desert old.
The living God is new, and He is near.

What need to look behind thee and to sigh?
When God left speaking He went on before
To draw men after, following up and on;
And thy heart fails because thy feet are slow;
Thou think'st of Him as one that will not wait,
A Father and not wait!—He waited long
For us, and yet perchance He thinks not long
And will not count the time. There are no dates
In His fine leisure.

Speak then as a son:
"Father, I come to satisfy Thy love
With mine, for I had held Thee as remote,
The background of the stars—Time's yesterday—
Illimitable Absence. Now my heart
Communes, methinks, with somewhat teaching me
Thou art the Great To-day. God, is it so?
Then for all love that WAS, I thank Thee, God,
It is and yet shall hide. And I have part
In all, for in Thine image I was made,
To Thee my spirit yearns, as Thou to mine.
If aught be stamped of Thy Divine on me,
And man be God-like, God is like to man.

"Dear and dread Lord, I have not found it hard
To fear Thee, though Thy love in visible form
Bled 'neath a thorny crown—but since indeed,
For kindred's sake and likeness, Thou dost thirst
To draw men nigh, and make them one with Thee,
My soul shall answer "Thou art what I want:
I am athirst for God, the living God."

Then straightway flashes up athwart the words:
"And if I be a son I am very far
From my great Father's house; I am not clean.
I have not always willed it should be so,
And the gold of life is rusted with my tears."

It is enough. He never said to men,
"Seek ye My face in vain." And have they sought—
Beautiful children, well-beloved sons,
Opening wide eyes to ache among the moons
All night, and sighing because star multitudes
Fainted away as to a glittering haze,
And sparkled here and there like silver wings,
Confounding them with nameless, numberless,
Unbearable, fine flocks? It is not well
For them, for thee. Hast thou gone forth so far
To the unimaginable steeps on high
Trembling and seeking God? Yet now come home,
Cry, cry to Him: "I cannot search Thee out,
But Thou and I must meet. O come, come down,
Come." And that cry shall have the mastery.
Ay, He shall come in truth to visit thee,
And thou shalt mourn to Him, "Unclean, unclean,"
But never more "I will to have it so."
From henceforth thou shalt learn that there is love
To long for, pureness to desire, a mount

Of consecration it were good to scale.

Look you, it is to-day as at the first.
When Adam first was 'ware his new-made eyes
And opened them, behold the light! And breath
Of God was misting yet about his mouth,
Whereof they had made his soul. Then he looked forth
And was a part of light; also he saw
Beautiful life, and it could move. But Eve—Eve
was the child of midnight and of sleep.
Lo, in the dark God led her to his side;
It may be in the dark she heard him breathe
Before God woke him. And she knew not light,
Nor life but as a voice that left his lips,
A warmth that clasped her; but the stars were out,
And she with wide child-eyes gazed up at them.

Haply she thought that always it was night;
Haply he, whispering to her in that reach
Of beauteous darkness, gave her unworn heart
A rumour of the dawn, and wakened it
To a trembling, and a wonder, and a want
Kin to his own; and as he longed to gaze
On his new fate, the gracious mystery
His wife, she may have longed, and felt not why,
After the light that never she had known.

So doth each age walk in the light beheld,
Nor think on light, if it be light or no;
Then comes the night to it, and in the night
Eve.

The God-given, the most beautiful
Eve. And she is not seen for darkness' sake;
Yet, when she makes her gracious presence felt,
The age perceives how dark it is, and fain,
Fain would have daylight, fain would see her well,
A beauty half revealed, a helpmeet sent
To draw the soul away from valley clods;
Made from itself, yet now a better self—
Soul in the soulless, arrow tipped with fire
Let down into a careless breast; a pang
Sweeter than healing that cries out with it
For light all light, and is beheld at length—
The morning dawns.

Were not we born to light?
Ay, and we saw the men and women as saints
Walk in a garden. All our thoughts were fair;
Our simple hearts, as dovescotes full of doves,
Made home and nest for them. They fluttered forth.
And flocks of them flew white about the world.
And dreams were like to ships that floated us
Far out on silent floods, apart from earth,
From life—so far that we could see their lights
In heaven—and hear the everlasting tide,
All dappled with that fair reflected gold,
Wash up against the city wall, and sob
At the dark bows of vessels that drew on
Heavily freighted with departed souls
To whom did spirits sing; but on that song
Might none, albeit the meaning was right plain,
Impose the harsh captivity of words.

Afterward waking, sweet was early air,
Full excellent was morning: whether deep

The snow lay keenly white, and shrouds of hail
Blurred the grey breaker on a long foreshore,
And swarming plover ran, and wild white mews
And sea-pies printed with a thousand feet
The fallen whiteness, making shrill the storm;
Or whether, soothed of sunshine, throbbled and hummed
The mill atween its bowering maple trees,
And churned the leaping beck that reared, and urged
A diamond-dripping wheel.

The happy find
Equality of beauty everywhere
To feed on. All of shade and sheen is theirs,
All the strange fashions and the fair wise ways
Of lives beneath man's own. He breathes delight
Whose soul is fresh, whose feet are wet with dew
And the melted mist of morning, when at watch
Sunk deep in fern he marks the stealthy roe,
Silent as sleep or shadow, cross the glade,
Or dart athwart his view as August stars
Shoot and are out—while gracefully pace on
The wild-eyed harts to their traditional tree
To clear the velvet from their budded horns.
There is no want, both God and life are kind;
It is enough to hear, it is enough
To see; the pale wide barley-field they love,
And its weird beauty, and the pale wide moon
That lowering seems to lurk between the sheaves.
So in the rustic hamlet at high noon
The white owl sailing drowsed and deaf with sleep
To hide her head in turrets browned of moss
That is the rust of time. Ay so the pinks
And mountain grass marked on a sharp sea-cliff
While far below the northern diver feeds;
She having ended settling while she sits,
As vessels water-logged that sink at sea
And quietly into the deep go down.

It is enough to wake, it is enough
To sleep:—With God and time he leaves the rest.
But on a day death on the doorstep sits
Waiting, or like a veiled woman walks
Dogging his footsteps, or athwart his path
The splendid passion-flower love unfolds
Buds full of sorrow, not ordained to know
Appeasement through the answer of a sigh,
The kiss of pity with denial given,
The crown and blossom of accomplishment.
Or haply comes the snake with subtlety,
And tempts him with an apple to know all.

So,—Shut the gate; the story tells itself
Over and over; Eden must be lost
If after it be won. He stands at fault,
Not knowing at all how this should be—he feels
The great bare barrenness o' the outside world.
He thinks on Time and what it has to say;
He thinks on God, but God has changed His hand,
Sitting afar. And as the moon draws on
To cover the day-king in his eclipse,
And thin the last fine sickle of light, till all
Be gone, so fares it with his darkened soul.

The dark, but not Orion sparkling there
With his best stars; the dark, but not yet Eve.

And now the wellsprings of sweet natural joy
Lie, as the Genie sealed of Solomon,
Fast prisoned in his heart; he hath not learned
The spell whereby to loose and set them forth,
And all the glad delights that boyhood loved
Smell at Oblivion's poppy, and lie still.

Ah! they must sleep—"The mill can grind no more
With water that hath passed." Let it run on.
For he hath caught a whisper in the night;
This old inheritance in darkness given,
The world, is widened, warmed, it is alive,
Comes to his beating heart and bids it wake,
Opens the door to youth, and bids it forth,
Exultant for expansion and release,
And bent to satisfy the mighty wish,
Comfort and satisfy the mighty wish,
Life of his life, the soul's immortal child
That is to him as Eve.

He cannot win,
Nor earn, nor see, nor hear, nor comprehend,
With all the watch, tender, impetuous,
That wastes him, this, whereof no less he feels
Infinite things; but yet the night is full
Of air-beats and of heart-beats for her sake.
Eve the aspirer, give her what she wants,
Or wherefore was he born?

O he was born
To wish—then turn away:—to wish again
And half forget his wish for earthlier joy;
He draws the net to land that brings red gold;
His dreams among the meshes tangled lie,
And learning hath him at her feet;—and love,
The sea-born creature fresh from her sea foam,
Touches the ruddiest veins in his young heart,
Makes it to sob in him and sigh in him,
Restless, repelled, dying, alive and keen,
Fainting away for the remorseless ALL
Gone by, gone up, or sweetly gone before,
But never in his arms. Then pity comes,
Knocks at his breast, it may be, and comes in,
Makes a wide wound that haply will not heal,
But bleeds for poverty, and crime, and pain,
Till for the dear kin's sake he grandly dares
Or wastes him, with a wise improvidence;
But who can stir the weighty world; or who
Can drink a sea of tears?

O love, and life,
O world, and can it be that this is all?
Leave him to tread expectance underfoot;
Let him alone to tame down his great hope
Before it breaks his heart: "Give me my share
That I foresaw, my place, my draught of life.
This that I bear, what is it?—me no less
It binds, I cannot disenslave my soul."

There is but halting for the wearied foot.
The better way is hidden; faith hath failed—
One stronger far than reason mastered her.
It is not reason makes faith hard, but life.
The husks of his dead creed, downtrod and dry,
Are powerless now as some dishonoured spell,
Some aged Pythia in her priestly clothes,

Some widow'd witch divining by the dead.
Or if he keep one shrine undesecrate
And go to it from time to time with tears,
What lies there? A dead Christ enswathed and cold,
A Christ that did not rise. The linen cloth
Is wrapped about His head, He lies embalmed
With myrrh and spices in His sepulchre,
The love of God that daily dies;—to them
That trust it the One Life, the all that lives.

O mother Eve, who wert beguiled of old,
Thy blood is in thy children, thou art yet
Their fate and copy; with thy milk they drew
The immortal want of morning; but thy day
Dawned and was over, and thy children know
Contentment never, nor continuance long.
For even thus it is with them: the day
Waxeth, to wane anon, and a long night
Leaves the dark heart unsatisfied with stars.

A soul in want and restless and bereft
To whom all life hath lied, shall it too lie?
Saying, "I yield Thee thanks, most mighty God,
Thou hast been pleased to make me thus and thus.
I do submit me to Thy sovereign will
That I full oft should hunger and not have,
And vainly yearn after the perfect good,
Gladness and peace"?

No, rather dare think thus:
"Ere chaos first had being, earth, or time,
My Likeness was apparent in high heaven,
Divine and manlike, and his dwelling place
Was the bosom of the Father. By His hands
Were the worlds made and filled with diverse growths
And ordered lives. Then afterward they said,
Taking strange counsel, as if he who worked
Hitherto should not henceforth work alone,
'Let us make man;' and God did look upon
That Divine Word which was the form of God,
And it became a thought before the event.
There they foresaw my face, foreheard my speech,
God-like, God-loved, God-loving, God-derived.

"And I was in a garden, and I fell
Through envy of God's evil son, but Love
Would not be robbed of me for ever—Love
For my sake passed into humanity,
And there for my first Father won me home.
How should I rest then? I have NOT gone home;
I feed on husks, and they given grudgingly,
While my great Father—Father—O my God,
What shall I do?"

Ay, I will dare think thus:
"I cannot rest because He doth not rest
In whom I have my being. THIS is GOD—
My soul is conscious of His wondrous wish,
And my heart's hunger doth but answer His
Whose thought has met with mine.

"I have not all;
He moves me thus to take of Him what lacks.
My want is God's desire to give,—He yearns
To add Himself to life and so for aye
Make it enough."

A thought by night, a wish
After the morning, and behold it dawns
Pathetic in a still solemnity,
And mighty words are said for him once more,
"Let there be light." Great heaven and earth have heard,
And God comes down to him, and Christ doth rise.

THE MONITIONS OF THE UNSEEN.

There are who give themselves to work for men,—
To raise the lost, to gather orphaned babes
And teach them, pitying of their mean estate,
To feel for misery, and to look on crime
With ruth, till they forget that they themselves
Are of the race, themselves among the crowd
Under the sentence and outside the gate,
And of the family and in the doom.
Cold is the world; they feel how cold it is,
And wish that they could warm it. Hard is life
For some. They would that they could soften it;
And, in the doing of their work, they sigh
As if it was their choice and not their lot;
And, in the raising of their prayer to God,
They crave his kindness for the world he made,
Till they, at last, forget that he, not they,
Is the true lover of man.

* * * * *

Now, in an ancient town, that had sunk low,—
Trade having drifted from it, while there stayed
Too many, that it erst had fed, behind,—
There walked a curate once, at early day.

It was the summer-time; but summer air
Came never, in its sweetness, down that dark
And crowded alley,—never reached the door
Whereat he stopped,—the sordid, shattered door.

He paused, and, looking right and left, beheld
Dirt and decay, the lowering tenements
That leaned toward each other; broken panes
Bulging with rags, and grim with old neglect;
And reeking hills of formless refuse, heaped
To fade and fester in a stagnant air.
But he thought nothing of it: he had learned
To take all wretchedness for granted,—he,
Reared in a stainless home, and radiant yet
With the clear hues of healthful English youth,
Had learned to kneel by beds forlorn, and stoop
Under foul lintels. He could touch, with hand
Unshrinking, fevered fingers; he could hear
The language of the lost, in haunt and den,—
So dismal, that the coldest passer-by
Must needs be sorry for them, and, albeit
They cursed, would dare to speak no harder words
Than these,—"God help them!"

Ay! a learned man
The curate in all woes that plague mankind,—
Too learned, for he was but young. His heart

Had yearned till it was overstrained, and now
He—plunged into a narrow slough unblest,
Had struggled with its deadly waters, till
His own head had gone under, and he took
Small joy in work he could not look to aid
Its cleansing.

Yet, by one right tender tie,
Hope held him yet. The fathers coarse and dull,
Vile mothers hard, and boys and girls profane,
His soul drew back from. He had worked for them,—
Work without joy: but, in his heart of hearts,
He loved the little children; and whene'er
He heard their prattle innocent, and heard
Their tender voices lisping sacred words
That he had taught them,—in the cleanly calm
Of decent school, by decent matron held,—
Then would he say, "I shall have pleasure yet,
In these."

But now, when he pushed back that door
And mounted up a flight of ruined stairs,
He said not that. He said, "Oh! once I thought
The little children would make bright for me
The crown they wear who have won many souls
For righteousness; but oh, this evil place!
Hard lines it gives them, cold and dirt abhorred,—
Hunger and nakedness, in lieu of love,
And blows instead of care.

"And so they die,
The little children that I love,—they die,—They
turn their wistful faces to the wall,
And slip away to God."

With that, his hand
He laid upon a latch and lifted it,
Looked in full quietly, and entered straight.

What saw he there? He saw a three-years child,
That lay a-dying on a wisp of straw
Swept up into a corner. O'er its brow
The damps of death were gathering: all alone,
Uncared for, save that by its side was set
A cup, it waited. And the eyes had ceased
To look on things at hand. He thought they gazed
In wistful wonder, or some faint surmise
Of coming change,—as though they saw the gate
Of that fair land that seems to most of us
Very far off.

When he beheld the look,
He said, "I knew, I knew how this would be!
Another! Ay, and but for drunken blows
And dull forgetfulness of infant need,
This little one had lived." And thereupon
The misery of it wrought upon him so,
That, unaware, he wept. Oh! then it was
That, in the bending of his manly head,
It came between the child and that whereon
He gazed, and, when the curate glanced again,
Those dying eyes, drawn back to earth once more,
Looked up into his own, and smiled.

He drew
More near, and kneeled beside the small frail thing,
Because the lips were moving; and it raised
Its baby hand, and stroked away his tears,

And whispered, "Master! master!" and so died.

Now, in that town there was an ancient church,
A minster of old days which these had turned
To parish uses: there the curate served.
It stood within a quiet swarded Close,
Sunny and still, and, though it was not far
From those dark courts where poor humanity
Struggled and swarmed, it seemed to wear its own
Still atmosphere about it, and to hold
That old-world calm within its precincts pure
And that grave rest which modern life foregoes.

When the sad curate, rising from his knees,
Looked from the dead to heaven,—as, unaware,
Men do when they would track departed life,—He
heard the deep tone of the minster-bell
Sounding for service, and he turned away
So heavy at heart, that, when he left behind
That dismal habitation, and came out
In the clear sunshine of the minster-yard,
He never marked it. Up the aisle he moved,
With his own gloom about him; then came forth,
And read before the folk grand words and calm,—Words
full of hope; but into his dull heart
Hope came not. As one talketh in a dream,
And doth not mark the sense of his own words,
He read; and, as one walketh in a dream,
He after walked toward the vestment-room,
And never marked the way he went by,—no,
Nor the gray verger that before him stood,
The great church-keys depending from his hand,
Ready to follow him out and lock the door.

At length, aroused to present things, but not
Content to break the sequence of his thought,
Nor ready for the working day that held
Its busy course without, he said, "Good friend,
Leave me the keys: I would remain a while."
And, when the verger gave, he moved with him
Toward the door distraught, then shut him out,
And locked himself within the church alone.
The minster-church was like a great brown cave,
Fluted and fine with pillars, and all dim
With glorious gloom; but, as the curate turned,
Suddenly shone the sun,—and roof and walls,
Also the clustering shafts from end to end,
Were thickly sown all over, as it were,
With seedling rainbows. And it went and came
And went, that sunny beam, and drifted up
Ethereal bloom to flush the open wings
And carven cheeks of dimpled cherubim,
And dropped upon the curate as he passed,
And covered his white raiment and his hair.

Then did look down upon him from their place,
High in the upper lights, grave mitred priests,
And grand old monarchs in their flowered gowns
And capes of miniver; and therewithal
(A veiling cloud gone by) the naked sun
Smote with his burning splendor all the pile,
And in there rushed, through half-translucent panes,
A sombre glory as of rusted gold,
Deep ruby stains, and tender blue and green,
That made the floor a beauty and delight,

Strewed as with phantom blossoms, sweet enough
To have been wafted there the day they dropt
On the flower-beds in heaven.

The curate passed
Adown the long south aisle, and did not think
Upon this beauty, nor that he himself—
Excellent in the strength of youth, and fair
With all the majesty that noble work
And stainless manners give—did add his part
To make it fairer.

In among the knights
That lay with hands uplifted, by the lute
And palm of many a saint,—'neath capitals
Whereon our fathers had been bold to carve
With earthly tools their ancient childlike dream
Concerning heavenly fruit and living bowers,
And glad full-throated birds that sing up there
Among the branches of the tree of life—
Through all the ordered forest of the shafts,
Shooting on high to enter into light,
That swam aloft,—he took his silent way,
And in the southern transept sat him down,
Covered his face, and thought.

He said, "No pain,
No passion, and no aching, heart o' mine,
Doth stir within thee. Oh! I would there did:
Thou art so dull, so tired. I have lost
I know not what. I see the heavens as lead:
They tend no whither. Ah! the world is bared
Of her enchantment now: she is but earth
And water. And, though much hath passed away,
There may be more to go. I may forget
The joy and fear that have been: there may live
No more for me the fervency of hope
Nor the arrest of wonder.

"Once I said,
'Content will wait on work, though work appear
Unfruitful.' Now I say, 'Where is the good?
What is the good? A lamp when it is lit
Must needs give light; but I am like a man
Holding his lamp in some deserted place
Where no foot passeth. Must I trim my lamp,
And ever painfully toil to keep it bright,
When use for it is none? I must; I will.
Though God withhold my wages, I must work,
And watch the bringing of my work to nought,—
Weed in the vineyard through the heat o' the day,
And, overtasked, behold the weedy place
Grow ranker yet in spite of me.

"Oh! yet
My meditated words are trodden down
Like a little wayside grass. Castaway shells,
Lifted and tossed aside by a plunging wave,
Have no more force against it than have I
Against the sweeping, weltering wave of life,
That, lifting and dislodging me, drives on,
And notes not mine endeavor."

Afterward,
He added more words like to these; to wit,
That it was hard to see the world so sad:
He would that it were happier. It was hard
To see the blameless overborne; and hard

To know that God, who loves the world, should yet
Let it lie down in sorrow, when a smile
From him would make it laugh and sing,—a word
From him transform it to a heaven. He said,
Moreover, "When will this be done? My life
Hath not yet reached the noon, and I am tired;
And oh! it may be that, un comforted
By foolish hope of doing good and vain
Conceit of being useful, I may live,
And it may be my duty to go on
Working for years and years, for years and years."

But, while the words were uttered, in his heart
There dawned a vague alarm. He was aware
That somewhat touched him, and he lifted up
His face. "I am alone," the curate said,—
"I think I am alone. What is it, then?
I am ashamed! My raiment is not clean.
My lips,—I am afraid they are not clean.
My heart is darkened and unclean. Ah me,
To be a man, and yet to tremble so!
Strange, strange!"

And there was sitting at his feet—
He could not see it plainly—at his feet
A very little child. And, while the blood
Drave to his heart, he set his eye on it,
Gazing, and, lo! the loveliness from heaven
Took clearer form and color. He beheld
The strange, wise sweetness of a dimpled mouth,—
The deep serene of eyes at home with bliss,
And perfect in possession. So it spoke,
"My master!" but he answered not a word;
And it went on: "I had a name, a name.
He knew my name; but here they can forget."
The curate answered: "Nay, I know thee well.
I love thee. Wherefore art thou come?" It said,
"They sent me;" and he faltered, "Fold thy hand,
O most dear little one! for on it gleams
A gem that is so bright I cannot look
Thereon." It said, "When I did leave this world,
That was a tear. But that was long ago;
For I have lived among the happy folk,
You wot of, ages, ages." Then said he,
"Do they forget us, while beneath the palms
They take their infinite leisure?" And, with eyes
That seemed to muse upon him, looking up
In peace the little child made answer, "Nay;"
And murmured, in the language that he loved,
"How is it that his hair is not yet white;
For I and all the others have been long
Waiting for him to come."

"And was it long?"

The curate answered, pondering. "Time being done,
Shall life indeed expand, and give the sense,
In our to-come, of infinite extension?"
Then said the child, "In heaven we children talk
Of the great matters, and our lips are wise;
But here I can but talk with thee in words
That here I knew." And therewithal, arisen,
It said, "I pray you take me in your arms."
Then, being afraid but willing, so he did;
And partly drew about the radiant child,
For better covering its dread purity,
The foldings of his gown. And he beheld
Its beauty, and the tremulous woven light

That hung upon its hair; withal, the robe,
"Whiter than fuller of this world can white,"
That clothed its immortality. And so
The trembling came again, and he was dumb,
Repenting his uncleanness: and he lift
His eyes, and all the holy place was full
Of living things; and some were faint and dim,
As if they bore an intermittent life,
Waxing and waning; and they had no form,
But drifted on like slowly trailèd clouds,
Or moving spots of darkness, with an eye
Apiece. And some, in guise of evil birds,
Came by in troops, and stretched their naked necks,
And some were men-like, but their heads hung down;
And he said, "O my God! let me find grace
Not to behold their faces, for I know
They must be wicked and right terrible."
But while he prayed, lo! whispers; and there moved
Two shadows on the wall. He could not see
The forms of them that cast them: he could see
Only the shadows as of two that sat
Upon the floor, where, clad in women's weeds,
They lisped together. And he shuddered much:
There was a rustling near him, and he feared
Lest they should touch him, and he feel their touch.

"It is not great," quoth one, "the work achieved.
We do, and we delight to do, our best:
But that is little; for, my dear," quoth she,
"This tower and town have been infested long
With angels."—"Ay," the other made reply,
"I had a little evil-one, of late,
That I picked up as it was crawling out
O' the pit, and took and cherished in my breast.
It would divine for me, and oft would moan,
'Pray thee, no churches,' and it spake of this.
But I was harried once,—thou know'st by whom,—
And fled in here; and, when he followed me,
I crouching by this pillar, he let down
His hand,—being all too proud to send his eyes
In its wake,—and, plucking forth my tender imp,
Flung it behind him. It went yelping forth;
And, as for me, I never saw it more.
Much is against us,—very much: the times
Are hard." She paused: her fellow took the word,
Plaining on such as preach and them that plead.
"Even such as haunt the yawning mouths of hell,"
Quoth she, "and pluck them back that run thereto."
Then, like a sudden blow, there fell on him
The utterance of his name. "There is no soul
That I loathe more, and oftener curse. Woe's me,
That cursing should be vain! Ay, he will go
Gather the sucking children, that are yet
Too young for us, and watch and shelter them.
Till the strong Angels—pitiless and stern,
But to them loving ever—sweep them in,
By armsful, to the unapproachable fold.

"We strew his path with gold: it will not lie.
'Deal softly with him,' was the master's word.
We brought him all delights: his angel came
And stood between them and his eyes. They spend
Much pains upon him,—keep him poor and low
And unbeloved; and thus he gives his mind
To fill the fateful, the impregnable

Child-fold, and sow on earth the seed of stars.

"Oh! hard is serving against love,—the love
Of the Unspeakable; for if we soil
The souls He openeth out a washing-place;
And if we grudge, and snatch away the bread,
Then will He save by poverty, and gain
By early giving up of blameless life;
And if we shed out gold, He even will save
In spite of gold,—of twice-refinèd gold."

With that the curate set his daunted eyes
To look upon the shadows of the fiends.
He was made sure they could not see the child
That nestled in his arms; he also knew
They were unconscious that his mortal ears
Had new intelligence, which gave their speech
Possible entrance through his garb of clay.

He was afraid, yet awful gladness reached
His soul: the testimony of the lost
Upbraided him; but while he trembled yet,
The heavenly child had lifted up its head
And left his arms, and on the marble floor
Stood beckoning.

And, its touch withdrawn, the place
Was silent, empty; all that swarming tribe
Of evil ones concealed behind the veil,
And shut into their separate world, were closed
From his observance. He arose, and paced
After the little child,—as half in fear
That it would leave him,—till they reached a door;
And then said he,—but much distraught he spoke,
Laying his hand across the lock,—"This door
Shuts in the stairs whereby men mount the tower.
Wouldst thou go up, and so withdraw to heaven?"
It answered, "I will mount them." Then said he,
"And I will follow."—"So thou shalt do well,"
The radiant thing replied, and it went up,
And he, amazed, went after; for the stairs,
Otherwhile dark, were lightened by the rays
Shed out of raiment woven in high heaven,
And hair whereon had smiled the light of God.

With that, they, pacing on, came out at last
Into a dim, weird place,—a chamber formed
Betwixt the roofs: for you shall know that all
The vaulting of the nave, fretted and fine,
Was covered with the dust of ages, laid
Thick with those chips of stone which they had left
Who wrought it; but a high-pitched roof was reared
Above it, and the western gable pierced
With three long narrow lights. Great tie-beams loomed
Across, and many daws frequented there,
The starling and the sparrow littered it
With straw, and peeped from many a shady nook;
And there was lifting up of wings, and there
Was hasty exit when the curate came.
But sitting on a beam and moving not
For him, he saw two fair gray turtle-doves
Bowing their heads, and cooing; and the child
Put forth a hand to touch his own, but straight
He, startled, drew it back, because, forsooth,
A stirring fancy smote him, and he thought
That language trembled on their innocent tongues,

And floated forth in speech that man could hear.
Then said the child, "Yet touch, my master dear."
And he let down his hand, and touched again;
And so it was. "But if they had their way,"
One turtle cooed, "how should this world go on?"

Then he looked well upon them, as he stood
Upright before them. They were feathered doves,
And sitting close together; and their eyes
Were rounded with the rim that marks their kind.
Their tender crimson feet did pat the beam,—
No phantoms they; and soon the fellow-dove
Made answer, "Nay they count themselves so wise,
There is no task they shall be set to do
But they will ask God why. What mean they so?
The glory is not in the task, but in
The doing it for Him. What should he think,
Brother, this man that must, forsooth, be set
Such noble work, and suffered to behold
Its fruit, if he knew more of us and ours?"
With that the other leaned, as if attent:
"I am not perfect, brother, in his thought."
The mystic bird replied. "Brother, he saith,
'But it is nought: the work is overhard.'
Whose fault is that? God sets not overwork.
He saith the world is sorrowful, and he
Is therefore sorrowful. He cannot set
The crooked straight;—but who demands of him,
O brother, that he should? What! thinks he, then,
His work is God's advantage, and his will
More bent to aid the world than its dread Lord's?
Nay, yet there live amongst us legions fair,
Millions on millions, who could do right well
What he must fail in; and 'twas whispered me,
That chiefly for himself the task is given,—
His little daily task." With that he paused.

Then said the other, preening its fair wing,
"Men have discovered all God's islands now,
And given them names; whereof they are as proud,
And deem themselves as great, as if their hands
Had made them. Strange is man, and strange his pride.
Now, as for us, it matters not to learn
What and from whence we be: How should we tell?
Our world is undiscovered in these skies,
Our names not whispered. Yet, for us and ours,
What joy it is,—permission to come down,
Not souls, as he, to the bosom of their God,
To guide, but to their goal the winged fowls,
His lovely lower-fashioned lives to help
To take their forms by legions, fly, and draw
With us the sweet, obedient, flocking things
That ever hear our message reverently,
And follow us far. How should they know their way,
Forsooth, alone? Men say they fly alone;
Yet some have set on record, and averred,
That they, among the flocks, had duly marked
A leader."

Then his fellow made reply:
"They might divine the Maker's heart. Come forth,
Fair dove, to find the flocks, and guide their wings,
For Him that loveth them."

With that, the child
Withdrew his hand, and all their speech was done.
He moved toward them, but they fluttered forth

And fled into the sunshine.

"I would fain,"

Said he, "have heard some more. And wilt thou go?"

He added to the child, for this had turned.

"Ay," quoth he, gently, "to the beggar's place;

For I would see the beggar in the porch."

So they went down together to the door,
Which, when the curate opened, lo! without
The beggar sat; and he saluted him:
"Good morrow, master." "Wherefore art thou here?"
The curate asked: "it is not service time,
And none will enter now to give thee alms."
Then said the beggar, "I have hope at heart
That I shall go to my poor house no more."
"Art thou so sick that thou dost think to die?"
The curate said. With that the beggar laughed,
And under his dim eyelids gathered tears,
And he was all a-tremble with a strange
And moving exaltation. "Ay," quoth he,
And set his face toward high heaven: "I think
The blessing that I wait on must be near."
Then said the curate, "God be good to thee."
And, straight, the little child put forth his hand,
And touched him. "Master, master, hush!
You should not, master, speak so carelessly
In this great presence."

But the touch so wrought,
That, lo! the dazzled curate staggered back,
For dread effulgence from the beggar's eyes
Smote him, and from the crippled limbs shot forth
Terrible lights, as pure long blades of fire.
"Withdraw thy touch! withdraw thy touch!" he cried,
"Or else shall I be blinded." Then the child
Stood back from him; and he sat down apart,
Recovering of his manhood: and he heard
The beggar and the child discourse of things
Dreadful for glory, till his spirits came
Anew; and, when the beggar looked on him,
He said, "If I offend not, pray you tell
Who and what are you—I behold a face
Marred with old age, sickness, and poverty,—
A cripple with a staff, who long hath sat
Begging, and oftentimes moaning, in the porch,
For pain and for the wind's inclemency.
What are you?" Then the beggar made reply,
"I was a delegate, a living power;
My work was bliss, for seeds were in my hand
To plant a new-made world. O happy work!
It grew and blossomed; but my dwelling-place
Was far remote from heaven. I have not seen;
I knew no wish to enter there. But lo!
There went forth rumors, running out like rays,
How some, that were of power like even to mine,
Had made request to come and find a place
Within its walls. And these were satisfied
With promises, and sent to this far world
To take the weeds of your mortality,
And minister, and suffer grief and pain,
And die like men. Then were they gathered in.
They saw a face, and were accounted kin
To Whom thou knowest, for he is kin to men.

"Then I did wait; and oft, at work, I sang,
'To minister! oh, joy, to minister!'

And, it being known, a message came to me:
'Whether is best, thou forest-planter wise,
To minister to others, or that they
Should minister to thee?' Then, on my face
Low lying, I made answer: 'It is best,
Most High, to minister;' and thus came back
The answer,—'Choose not for thyself the best:
Go down, and, lo! my poor shall minister,
Out of their poverty, to thee; shall learn
Compassion by thy frailty; and shall oft
Turn back, when speeding home from work, to help
Thee, weak and crippled, home. My little ones,
Thou shalt importune for their slender mite,
And pray, and move them that they give it up
For love of Me.'"

The curate answered him,
"Art thou content, O great one from afar!
If I may ask, and not offend?" He said,
"I am. Behold! I stand not all alone,
That I should think to do a perfect work.
I may not wish to give; for I have heard
'Tis best for me that I receive. For me,
God is the only giver, and His gift
Is one." With that, the little child sighed out,
"O master! master! I am out of heaven
Since noonday, and I hear them calling me.
If you be ready, great one, let us go:—
Hark! hark! they call."

Then did the beggar lift
His face to heaven, and utter forth a cry
As of the pangs of death, and every tree
Moved as if shaken by a sudden wind.
He cried again, and there came forth a hand
From some invisible form, which, being laid
A little moment on the curate's eyes,
It dazzled him with light that brake from it,
So that he saw no more.

"What shall I do?"

The curate murmured, when he came again
To himself and looked about him. "This is strange!
My thoughts are all astray; and yet, methinks,
A weight is taken from my heart. Lo! lo!
There lieth at my feet, frail, white, and dead,
The sometime beggar. He is happy now.
There was a child; but he is gone, and he
Is also happy. I am glad to think
I am not bound to make the wrong go right;
But only to discover, and to do
With cheerful heart, the work that God appoints."

With that, he did compose, with reverent care,
The dead; continuing, "I will trust in Him,
THAT HE CAN HOLD HIS OWN; and I will take
His will, above the work He sendeth me,
To be my chiefest good."

Then went he forth,
"I shall die early," thinking: "I am warned,
By this fair vision, that I have not long
To live." Yet he lived on to good old age;—
Ay, he lives yet, and he is working still.

* * * * *

It may be there are many in like case:
They give themselves, and are in misery

Because the gift is small, and doth not make
The world by so much better as they fain
Would have it. 'Tis a fault; but, as for us,
Let us not blame them. Maybe, 'tis a fault
More kindly looked on by The Majesty
Than our best virtues are. Why, what are we?
What have we given, and what have we desired
To give, the world?

There must be something wrong
Look to it: let us mend our ways. Farewell.

THE SHEPHERD LADY.

I.

Who pipes upon the long green hill,
Where meadow grass is deep?
The white lamb bleats but followeth on—
Follow the clean white sheep.
The dear white lady in yon high tower,
She hearkeneth in her sleep.

All in long grass the piper stands,
Goodly and grave is he;
Outside the tower, at dawn of day,
The notes of his pipe ring free.
A thought from his heart doth reach to hers:
"Come down, O lady! to me."

She lifts her head, she dons her gown:
Ah! the lady is fair;
She ties the girdle on her waist,
And binds her flaxen hair,
And down she stealeth, down and down,
Down the turret stair.

Behold him! With the flock he wons
Along yon grassy lea.
"My shepherd lord, my shepherd love,
What wilt thou, then, with me?
My heart is gone out of my breast,
And followeth on to thee."

II.

"The white lambs feed in tender grass:
With them and thee to bide,
How good it were," she saith at noon;
"Albeit the meads are wide.
Oh! well is me," she saith when day
Draws on to eventide.

Hark! hark! the shepherd's voice. Oh, sweet!
Her tears drop down like rain.
"Take now this crook, my chosen, my fere,
And tend the flock full fain;
Feed them, O lady, and lose not one,
Till I shall come again."

Right soft her speech: "My will is thine,
And my reward thy grace!"

Gone are his footsteps over the hill,
Withdrawn his goodly face;
The mournful dusk begins to gather,
The daylight wanes apace.

III.

On sunny slopes, ah! long the lady
Feedeth her flock at noon;
She leads it down to drink at eve
Where the small rivulets croon.
All night her locks are wet with dew,
Her eyes outwatch the moon.

Beyond the hills her voice is heard,
She sings when light doth wane:
"My longing heart is full of love,
Nor shall my watch be vain.
My shepherd lord. I see him not,
But he will come again."

POEMS

WRITTEN ON THE DEATHS OF THREE LOVELY CHILDREN WHO WERE TAKEN FROM THEIR PARENTS WITHIN A MONTH OF ONE ANOTHER.

HENRY,

AGED EIGHT YEARS.

Yellow leaves, how fast they flutter—woodland hollows thickly strewing,
Where the wan October sunbeams scanty in the mid-day win,
While the dim gray clouds are drifting, and in saddened hues imbuing
All without and all within!

All within! but winds of autumn, little Henry, round their dwelling
Did not load your father's spirit with those deep and burdened sighs;—
Only echoed thoughts of sadness, in your mother's bosom swelling,
Fast as tears that dim her eyes.

Life is fraught with many changes, checked with sorrow and mutation,
But no grief it ever lightened such a truth before to know:—
I behold them—father, mother—as they seem to contemplation,
Only three short weeks ago!

Saddened for the morrow's parting—up the stairs at midnight stealing—
As with cautious foot we glided past the children's open door,—
"Come in here," they said, the lamplight dimpled forms at last revealing,
"Kiss them in their sleep once more."

You were sleeping, little Henry, with your eyelids scarcely closing,
Two sweet faces near together, with their rounded arms entwined:—
And the rose-bud lips were moving, as if stirred in their reposing
By the movements of the mind!

And your mother smoothed the pillow, and her sleeping treasures numbered,
Whispering fondly—"He is dreaming"—as you turned upon your bed—
And your father stooped to kiss you, happy dreamer, as you slumbered,
With his hand upon your head!

Did he know the true deep meaning of his blessing? No! he never

Heard afar the summons uttered—"Come up hither"—Never knew
How the awful Angel faces kept his sleeping boy for ever,
And for ever in their view.

Awful Faces, unimpassioned, silent Presences were by us,
Shrouding wings—majestic beings—hidden by this earthly veil—
Such as we have called on, saying, "Praise the Lord, O Ananias,
Azarias and Misael!"

But we saw not, and who knoweth, what the missioned Spirits taught him,
To that one small bed drawn nearer, when we left him to their will?
While he slumbered, who can answer for what dreams they may have brought
him,
When at midnight all was still?

Father! Mother! must you leave him on his bed, but not to slumber?
Are the small hands meekly folded on his breast, but not to pray?
When you count your children over, must you tell a different number,
Since that happier yesterday?

Father! Mother! weep if need be, since this is a "time" for weeping,
Comfort comes not for the calling, grief is never argued down—
Coldly sounds the admonition, "Why lament? in better keeping
Rests the child than in your own."

"Truth indeed! but, oh! compassion! Have you sought to scan my sorrow?"
(Mother, you shall meekly ponder, list'ning to that common tale)
"Does your heart repeat its echo, or by fellow-feeling borrow
Even a tone that might avail?"

"Might avail to steal it from me, by its deep heart-warm affection?
Might perceive by strength of loving how the fond words to combine?
Surely no! I will be silent, in your soul is no reflection
Of the care that burdens mine!"

When the winter twilight gathers, Father, and your thoughts shall wander,
Sitting lonely you shall blend him with your listless reveries,
Half forgetful what division holds the form whereon you ponder
From its place upon your knees—

With a start of recollection, with a half-reproachful wonder,
Of itself the heart shall question, "Art Thou then no longer here?
Is it so, my little Henry? Are we set so far asunder
Who were wont to be so near?"

While the fire-light dimly flickers, and the lengthened shades are meeting,
To itself the heart shall answer, "He shall come to me no more:
I shall never hear his footsteps nor the child's sweet voice entreating
For admission at my door."

But upon *your* fair, fair forehead, no regrets nor griefs are dwelling,
Neither sorrow nor disquiet do the peaceful features know;
Nor that look, whose wistful beauty seemed their sad hearts to be telling,
"Daylight breaketh, let me go!"

Daylight breaketh, little Henry; in its beams your soul awaketh—
What though night should close around us, dim and dreary to the view—
Though *our* souls should walk in darkness, far away that morning breaketh
Into endless day for you!

SAMUEL,

AGED NINE YEARS.

They have left you, little Henry, but they have not left you lonely—
Brothers' hearts so knit together could not, might not separate dwell.
Fain to seek you in the mansions far away—One lingered only

To bid those behind farewell!

Gentle Boy!—His childlike nature in most guileless form was moulded,
And it may be that his spirit woke in glory unaware,
Since so calmly he resigned it, with his hands still meekly folded,
Having said his evening prayer.

Or—if conscious of that summons—"Speak, O Lord, Thy servant heareth"—
As one said, whose name they gave him, might his willing answer be,
"Here am I"—like him replying—"At Thy gates my soul appeareth,
For behold Thou calledst me!"

A deep silence—utter silence, on his earthly home descendeth:—
Reading, playing, sleeping, waking—he is gone, and few remain!
"O the loss!"—they utter, weeping—every voice its echo lendeth—
"O the loss!"—But, O the gain!

On that tranquil shore his spirit was vouchsafed an early landing,
Lest the toils of crime should stain it, or the thrall of guilt control—
Lest that "wickedness should alter the yet simple understanding,
Or deceit beguile his soul!"

"Lay not up on earth thy treasure"—they have read that sentence duly,
Moth and rust shall fret thy riches—earthly good hath swift decay—
"Even so," each heart replieth—"As for me, my riches truly
Make them wings and flee away!"

"O my riches!—O my children!—dearest part of life and being,
Treasures looked to for the solace of this life's declining years,—
Were our voices cold to hearing—or our faces cold to seeing,
That ye left us to our tears?"

"We inherit conscious silence, ceasing of some merry laughter,
And the hush of two sweet voices—(healing sounds for spirits bruised!)
Of the tread of joyous footsteps in the pathway following after,
Of two names no longer used!"

Question for them, little Sister, in your sweet and childish fashion—
Search and seek them, Baby Brother, with your calm and asking eyes—
Dimpled lips that fail to utter fond appeal or sad compassion,
Mild regret or dim surprise!

There are two tall trees above you, by the high east window growing,
Underneath them, slumber sweetly, lapt in silence deep, serene;
Save, when pealing in the distance, organ notes towards you flowing
Echo—with a pause between!

And that pause?—a voice shall fill it—tones that blessed you daily,
nightly,
Well beloved, but not sufficing, Sleepers, to awake you now,
Though so near he stand, that shadows from your trees may tremble lightly
On his book and on his brow!

Sleep then ever! Neither singing of sweet birds shall break your slumber,
Neither fall of dew, nor sunshine, dance of leaves, nor drift of snow,
Charm those dropt lids more to open, nor the tranquil bosoms cumber
With one care for things below!

It is something, the assurance, that *you* ne'er shall feel like sorrow,
Weep no past and dread no future—know not sighing, feel not pain—
Nor a day that looketh forward to a mournfuller to-morrow—
"Clouds returning after rain!"

No, far off, the daylight breaketh, in its beams each soul awaketh:
"What though clouds," they sigh, "be gathered dark and stormy to the
view,
Though the light our eyes forsaketh, fresh and sweet behold it breaketh
Into endless day for you!"

KATIE, AGED FIVE YEARS.

(ASLEEP IN THE DAYTIME.)

All rough winds are hushed and silent, golden light the meadow steepeth,
And the last October roses daily wax more pale and fair;
They have laid a gathered blossom on the breast of one who sleepeth
With a sunbeam on her hair.

Calm, and draped in snowy raiment she lies still, as one that dreameth,
And a grave sweet smile hath parted dimpled lips that may not speak;
Slanting down that narrow sunbeam like a ray of glory gleameth
On the sainted brow and cheek.

There is silence! They who watch her, speak no word of grief or wailing,
In a strange unwonted calmness they gaze on and cannot cease,
Though the pulse of life beat faintly, thought shrink back, and hope be
failing,
They, like Aaron, "hold their peace."

While they gaze on her, the deep bell with its long slow pauses soundeth;
Long they hearken—father—mother—love has nothing more to say:
Beating time to feet of Angels leading her where love aboundeth
Tolls the heavy bell this day.

Still in silence to its tolling they count over all her meetness
To lie near their hearts and soothe them in all sorrows and all fears;
Her short life lies spread before them, but they cannot tell her
sweetness,
Easily as tell her years.

Only daughter—Ah! how fondly Thought around that lost name lingers,
Oft when lone your mother sitteth, she shall weep and droop her head,
She shall mourn her baby-sempstress, with those imitative fingers,
Drawing out her aimless thread.

In your father's Future cometh many a sad uncheered to-morrow,
But in sleep shall three fair faces heavenly-calm towards him lean—
Like a threefold cord shall draw him through the weariness of sorrow,
Nearer to the things unseen.

With the closing of your eyelids close the dreams of expectation,
And so ends the fairest chapter in the records of their way:
Therefore—O thou God most holy—God of rest and consolation,
Be Thou near to them this day!

Be Thou near, when they shall nightly, by the bed of infant brothers,
Hear their soft and gentle breathing, and shall bless them on their
knees;
And shall think how coldly falleth the white moonlight on the others,
In their bed beneath the trees.

Be Thou near, when they, they *only*, bear those faces in remembrance,
And the number of their children strangers ask them with a smile;
And when other childlike faces touch them by the strong resemblance
To those turned to them erewhile.

Be Thou near, each chastened Spirit for its course and conflict nerving,
Let Thy voice say, "Father—mother—lo! thy treasures live above!
Now be strong, be strong, no longer cumbered over much with serving
At the shrine of human love."

Let them sleep! In course of ages e'en the Holy House shall crumble,
And the broad and stately steeple one day bend to its decline,
And high arches, ancient arches bowed and decked in clothing humble,
Creeping moss shall round them twine.

Ancient arches, old and hoary, sunny beams shall glimmer through them,

And invest them with a beauty we would fain they should not share,
And the moonlight slanting down them, the white moonlight shall imbue them
With a sadness dim and fair.

Then the soft green moss shall wrap you, and the world shall all forget
you,
Life, and stir, and toil, and tumult unawares shall pass you by;
Generations come and vanish: but it shall not grieve nor fret you,
That they sin, or that they sigh.

And the world, grown old in sinning, shall deny her first beginning,
And think scorn of words which whisper how that all must pass away;
Time's arrest and intermission shall account a vain tradition,
And a dream, the reckoning day!

Till His blast, a blast of terror, shall awake in shame and sadness
Faithless millions to a vision of the failing earth and skies,
And more sweet than song of Angels, in their shout of joy and gladness,
Call the dead in Christ to rise!

Then, by One Man's intercession, standing clear from their transgression,
Father—mother—you shall meet them fairer than they were before,
And have joy with the Redeemèd, joy ear hath not heard heart dreamèd,
Ay for ever—evermore!

THE SNOWDROP MONUMENT (IN LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL).

Marvels of sleep, grown cold!
Who hath not longed to fold
With pitying ruth, forgetful of their bliss,
Those cherub forms that lie,
With none to watch them nigh,
Or touch the silent lips with one warm human kiss?

What! they are left alone
All night with graven stone,
Pillars and arches that above them meet;
While through those windows high
The journeying stars can spy,
And dim blue moonbeams drop on their uncovered feet?

O cold! yet look again,
There is a wandering vein
Traced in the hand where those white snowdrops lie.
Let her rapt dreamy smile
The wondering heart beguile,
That almost thinks to hear a calm contented sigh.

What silence dwells between
Those severed lips serene!
The rapture of sweet waiting breathes and grows.
What trance-like peace is shed
On her reclining head,
And e'en on listless feet what languor of repose!

Angels of joy and love
Lean softly from above
And whisper to her sweet and marvellous things;
Tell of the golden gate
That opened wide doth wait,
And shadow her dim sleep with their celestial wings.

Hearing of that blest shore
She thinks on earth no more,
Contented to forego this wintry land.
She has nor thought nor care
But to rest calmly there,
And hold the snowdrops pale that blossom in her hand.

But on the other face
Broodeth a mournful grace,
This had foreboding thoughts beyond her years,
While sinking thus to sleep
She saw her mother weep,
And could not lift her hand to dry those heart-sick tears.

Could not—but failing lay,
Sighed her young life away.
And let her arm drop down in listless rest,
Too weary on that bed
To turn her dying head,
Or fold the little sister nearer to her breast.

Yet this is faintly told
On features fair and cold,
A look of calm surprise, of mild regret,
As if with life oppressed
She turned her to her rest,
But felt her mother's love and looked not to forget.

How wistfully they close,
Sweet eyes, to their repose!
How quietly declines the placid brow!
The young lips seem to say,
"I have wept much to-day,
And felt some bitter pains, but they are over now."

Sleep! there are left below
Many who pine to go,
Many who lay it to their chastened souls,
That gloomy days draw nigh,
And they are blest who die,
For this green world grows worse the longer that she rolls.

And as for me I know
A little of her woe,
Her yearning want doth in my soul abide,
And sighs of them that weep,
"O put us soon to sleep,
For when we wake—with Thee—we shall be satisfied."

HYMNS.

THE MEASURELESS GULFS OF AIR ARE FULL OF THEE.

"In Him we live, and move, and have our being."

The measureless gulfs of air are full of Thee:
Thou Art, and therefore hang the stars; they wait,
And swim, and shine in God who bade them be,
And hold their sundering voids inviolate.

A God concern'd (veil'd in pure light) to bless,
With sweet revealing of His love, the soul;

Toward things piteous, full of piteousness;
The Cause, the Life, and the continuing Whole.

He is more present to all things He made
Than anything unto itself can be;
Full-foliaged boughs of Eden could not shade
Afford, since God was also 'neath the tree.

Thou knowest me altogether; I knew not
Thy likeness till Thou mad'st it manifest.
There is no world but is Thy heaven; no spot
Remote; Creation leans upon Thy breast.

Thou art beyond all stars, yet in my heart
Wonderful whisperings hold Thy creature dumb;
I need no search afar; to me Thou art
Father, Redeemer, and Renewer—come.

THOU WERT FAR OFF AND IN THE SIGHT OF HEAVEN.

"And fell on his neck, and kissed him."

Thou wert far off, and in the sight of heaven
Dead. And thy Father would not this should be;
And now thou livest, it is all forgiven;
Think on it, O my soul, He kissèd thee!

What now are gold and gear? thou canst afford
To cast them from thee at His sacred call,
As Mary, when she met her living Lord,
The burial spice she had prepared let fall.

O! what is death to life? One dead could well
Afford to waste his shroud, if he might wake;
Thou canst afford to waste the world, and sell
Thy footing in it, for the new world's sake.

What is the world? it is a waiting place,
Where men put on their robes for that above.
What is the new world? 'tis a Father's face
Beholden of His sons—the face of love.

THICK ORCHARDS ALL IN WHITE.

"The time of the singing of birds is come."

Thick orchards, all in white,
Stand 'neath blue voids of light,
And birds among the branches blithely sing,
For they have all they know;
There is no more, but so,
All perfectness of living, fair delight of spring.

Only the cushat dove
Makes answer as for love
To the deep yearning of man's yearning breast;
And mourneth, to his thought,
As in her notes were wrought
Fulfill'd in her sweet having, sense of his unrest.

Not with possession, not
With fairest earthly lot,
Cometh the peace assured, his spirit's quest;
With much it looks before,
With most it yearns for more;
And 'this is not our rest,' and 'this is not our rest.'

Give Thou us more. We look
For more. The heart that took
All spring-time for itself were empty still;
Its yearning is not spent
Nor silenced in content,
Till He that all things filleth doth it sweetly fill.

Give us Thyself. The May
Dureth so short a day;
Youth and the spring are over all too soon;
Content us while they last,
Console us for them past,
Thou with whom bides for ever life, and love, and noon.

SWEET ARE HIS WAYS WHO RULES ABOVE.

"Though I take the wings of the morning."

Sweet are His ways who rules above,
He gives from wrath a sheltering place;
But covert none is found from grace,
Man shall not hide himself from love.

What though I take to me the wide
Wings of the morning and forth fly,
Faster He goes, whoso care on high
Shepherds the stars and doth them guide.

What though the tents foregone, I roam
Till day wax dim lamenting me;
He wills that I shall sleep to see
The great gold stairs to His sweet home.

What though the press I pass before,
And climb the branch, He lifts his face;
I am not secret from His grace
Lost in the leafy sycamore.

What though denied with murmuring deep
I shame my Lord,—it shall not be;
For He will turn and look on me,
Then must I think thereon and weep.

The nether depth, the heights above,
Nor alleys pleach'd of Paradise,
Nor Herod's judgment-halls suffice:
Man shall not hide himself from love.

O NIGHT OF NIGHTS!

"Let us now go even unto Bethlehem."

O Night of nights! O night
Desired of man so long!
The ancient heavens fled forth in light
To sing thee thy new song;
And shooting down the steep,
To shepherd folk of old,
An angel, while they watch'd their sheep,
Set foot beside the fold.

Lo! while as like to die
Of that keen light he shed,
They look'd on his pure majesty,
Amazed, and sore bestead;
Lo! while with words of cheer

He bade their trembling cease,
The flocks of God swept sweetly near,
And sang to them of peace.

All on the hillside grass
That fulgent radiance fell,
So close those innocents did pass,
Their words were heard right well;
Among the sheep, their wings
Some folding, walk'd the sod
An order'd throng of shining things,
White, with the smile of God.

The waits of heaven to hear,
Oh! what it must have been!
Think, Christian people, think, and fear
For cold hearts, for unclean;
Think how the times go by,
How love and longing fail,
Think how we live and how we die,
As this were but a tale.

O tender tale of old,
Live in thy dear renown;
God's smile was in the dark, behold
That way His hosts came down;
Light up, great God, Thy Word,
Make the blest meaning strong,
As if our ears, indeed, had heard
The glory of their song.

It was so far away,
But Thou could'st make it near,
And all its living might display
And cry to it, "Be here,"
Here, in th' unresting town,
As once remote to them,
Who heard it when the heavens came down,
On pastoral Bethlehem.

It was so long ago,
But God can make it *now*,
And as with that sweet overflow,
Our empty hearts endow;
Take, Lord, those words outworn,
O! make them new for aye,
Speak—"Unto you a child is born,"
To-day—to-day—to-day.

DEAR IS THE LOST WIFE TO A LONE MAN'S HEART.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

Dear is the lost wife to a lone man's heart,
When in a dream he meets her at his door,
And, waked for joy, doth know she dwells apart,
All unresponsive on a silent shore;
Dearer, yea, more desired art thou—for thee
My divine heart yearns by the jasper sea.

More than the mother's for her sucking child;
She wants, with emptied arms and love untold,
Her most dear little one that on her smiled
And went; but more, I want Mine own. Behold,
I long for My redeem'd, where safe with Me
Twelve manner of fruits grow on th' immortal tree;

The tree of life that I won back for men,
And planted in the city of My God.
Lift up thy head, I love thee; wherefore, then,
Liest thou so long on thy memorial sod
Sleeping for sorrow? Rise, for dawn doth break—
I love thee, and I cry to thee "Awake."

Serve,—woman whom I love, ere noon be high,
Ere the long shadow lengthen at thy feet.
Work,—I have many poor, O man, that cry,
My little ones do languish in the street.
Love,—'tis a time for love, since I love thee.
Live,—'tis a time to live. Man, live in Me.

WEEPING AND WAILING NEEDS MUST BE.

"Blessed are ye that weep now."

Weeping and wailing needs must be
When Love His name shall disavow,
When christen'd men His wrath shall dree,
Who mercy scorn'd in this their day;
But what? He turns not yet away,
Not yet—not now.

Let me not, waken'd after sleep,
Behold a Judge with lowering brow,
The world must weep, and I must weep
Those sins that nail'd Thee on the tree,
Lord Jesu, of Thy clemency.
Let it be NOW.

Let us have weeping NOW for sin,
And not us only; let Thy tears
Avail the tears of many to win;
Weep with us, Jesu, kind art Thou;
We that have sinn'd many long years,
Let us weep NOW;

And then, waked up, behold Thy face,
Who did forgive us. See Thy brow—
Beautiful—learn Thy love and grace.
Then wilt Thou wipe away our tears,
And comfort in th' all-hallow'd spheres,
Them that weep now.

JESUS, THE LAMB OF GOD.

"Art Thou He that should come?"

Jesus, the Lamb of God, gone forth to heal and bless.
Calm lie the desert pools in a fair wilderness;
Wind-shaken moves the reed, so moves His voice the soul,
Sick folk surprised of joy, wax when they hear it, whole.

Calm all His mastering might, calm smiles the desert waste;
Peace, peace, He shall not cry, nay, He shall not make haste;
Heaven gazes, hell beneath moved for Him, moans and stirs—
Lo, John lies fast in prison, sick for his messengers.

John, the forerunner, John, the desert's tameless son,
Cast into loathèd thrall, his use and mission done;
John from his darkness sends a cry, but not a plea;
Not, "Hast Thou felt my need?" but only, "Art Thou He?"

Unspoken pines his hope, grown weak in lingering dole;

None know what pang that hour might pierce the Healer's soul;
Silence that faints to Him—but must e'en so be vain;
A word—the fetters fall—He will that word restrain.

Jesus, the Father's son, bound in a mighty plan,
Retired full oft in God, show'd not His mind to man;
Nor their great matters high His human lips confess;
He will His wonders work, and not make plain, but bless.

The bournes of His wide way kept secret from all thought,
Enring'd the outmost waste that evil power had wrought;
His measure none can take, His strife we are not shown,
Nor if He gathered then more sheaves than earth hath grown.

"John, from the Christ of God, an answer for all time,"
The proof of Sonship given in characters sublime;
Sad hope will He make firm, and fainting faith restore,
But yet with mortal eyes will see His face no more.

He bow'd His sacred head to exigence austere,
Unknown to us and dark, first piercings of the spear:
And to each martyr since 'tis even as if He said,
"Verily I am He—I live, and I was dead.

"The All-wise found a way—a dark way—dread, unknown;
I chose it, will'd it Mine, seal'd for My feet alone;
Thou canst not therein walk, yet thou hast part in Me,
I will not break thy bonds, but I am bound with thee.

"With thee and for thee bound, with thee and for thee given,
A mystery seal'd from hell, and wonder'd at in heaven;
I send thee rest at heart to love, and still believe;
But not for thee—nor Me—is found from death reprieve."

THOU HAST BEEN ALWAYS GOOD TO ME.

"He doeth all things well."

Thou hast been always good to me and mine
Since our first father by transgression fell.
Through all Thy sorest judgments love doth shine—
Lord, of a truth, Thou doest all things well.

Thou didst the food of immortality
Compass with flame, lest he thereto should win.
But what? his doom, yet eating of that tree,
Had been immortal life of shame and sin!

I would not last immortal in such wise;
Desirèd death, not life, is now my song.
Through death shall I go back to Paradise,
And sin no more—Sweet death, tarry not long!

One did prevail that closèd gate to unseal,
Where yet th' immortalizing tree doth grow;
He shall there meet us, and once more reveal
The fruit of life, where crime is not, nor woe.

THOU THAT SLEEPEST NOT AFRAID.

"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

Thou that sleepest not afraid,
Men and angels thee upbraid;
Rise, cry, cry to God aloud,
Ere the swift hours weave thy shroud:
O, for Jesus' sake,

Wake!

Thee full ill doth it beseem
Through the dark to drowse and dream;
In the dead-time of the night
Here is One can give thee light:
O, for Jesus' sake,
Wake!

The year passeth—it and all
God shall take and shall let fall
Soon, into the whelming sea
Of His wide eternity:
O, for Jesus' sake,
Wake!

Noiseless as the flakes of snow
The last moments falter and go;
The time-angel sent this way
Sweeps them like a drift away:
O, for Jesus' sake,
Wake!

Loved and watch'd of heaven, for whom
The crowned Saviour there makes room,
Sleeper, hark! He calls thee, rise,
Lift thy head, and raise thine eyes!
Now, for Jesus' sake,
Wake!

NOW WINTER PAST, THE WHITE-THORN BOWER.

"Thy gentleness hath made me great."

Now winter past, the white-thorn bower
Breaks forth and buds down all the glen;
Now spreads the leaf and grows the flower:
So grows the life of God, in men.

Oh, my child-God, most gentle King,
To me Thy waxing glory show;
Wake in my heart as wakes the spring,
Grow as the leaf and lily grow.

I was a child, when Thou a child
Didst make Thyself again to me;
And holy, harmless, undefiled,
Play'd at Thy mother Mary's knee.

Thou gav'st Thy pure example so,
The copy in my childish breast
Was a child's copy. I did know
God, made in childhood manifest.

Now I am grown, and Thou art grown
The God-man, strong to love, to will,
Who was alone, yet not alone,
Held in His Father's presence still.

Now do I know Thee for my cure,
My peace, the Absolver for me set;
Thy goings pass through deeps obscure,
But Thou with me art gentle yet.

Long-suffering Lord, to man reveal'd
As One that e'en the child doth wait,
Thy full salvation is my shield,

Thy gentleness hath made me great.

SUCH AS HAVE NOT GOLD TO BRING THEE.

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house."

Such as have not gold to bring Thee,
They bring thanks—Thy grateful sons;
Such as have no song to sing Thee,
Live Thee praise—Thy silent ones.

Such as have their unknown dwelling,
Secret from Thy children here,
Known of Thee, will Thee be telling
How Thy ways with them are dear.

None the place ordained refuseth,
They are one, and they are all
Living stones, the Builder chooseth
For the courses of His wall.

Now Thy work by us fulfilling,
Build us in Thy house divine;
Each one cries, "I, Lord, am willing,
Whatsoever place be mine."

Some, of every eye beholden,
Hewn to fitness for the height,
By Thy hand to beauty moulden,
Show Thy workmanship in light.

Other, Thou dost bless with station
Dark, and of the foot downtrod,
Sink them deep in the foundation—
Buried, hid with Christ in God.

A MORN OF GUILT, AN HOUR OF DOOM.

"There was darkness."

A Morn of guilt, an hour of doom—
Shocks and tremblings dread;
All the city sunk in gloom—
Thick darkness overhead.
An awful Sufferer straight and stark;
Mocking voices fell;
Tremblings—tremblings in the dark,
In heaven, and earth, and hell.

Groping, stumbling up the way,
They pass, whom Christ forgave;
They know not what they do—they say,
"Himself He cannot save.
On His head behold the crown
That alien hands did weave;
Let Him come down, let Him come down,
And we will believe!"

Fearsome dreams, a rending veil,
Cloven rocks down hurl'd;
God's love itself doth seem to fail
The Saviour of the world.
Dying thieves do curse and wail,
Either side is scorn;
Lo! He hangs while some cry "Hail!"
Of heaven and earth forlorn.

Still o'er His passion darkness lowers,
He nears the deathly goal;
But He shall see in His last hours
Of the travail of His soul;
Lo, a cry!—the firstfruits given
On the accursèd tree—
"Dying Love of God in heaven,
Lord, remember me!"

By His sacrifice, foreknown
Long ages ere that day,
And by God's sparing of His own
Our debt of death to pay;
By the Comforter's consent,
With ardent flames bestow'd,
In this dear race when Jesus went
To make His mean abode—

By the pangs God look'd not on,
And the world dared not see;
By all redeeming wonders won
Through that dread mystery;—
Lord, receive once more the sigh
From the accursèd tree—
"Sacred Love of God most high,
O remember me!"

MARY OF MAGDALA.

"While it was yet dark."

Mary of Magdala, when the moon had set,
Forth to the garden that was with night dews wet,
Fared in the dark—woe-wan and bent was she,
'Neath many pounds' weight of fragrant spicery.

Mary of Magdala, in her misery,
"Who shall roll the stone up from yon door?" quoth she;
And trembling down the steep she went, and wept sore,
Because her dearest Lord was, alas! no more.

Her burden she let fall, lo! the stone was gone;
Light was there within, out to the dark it shone;
With an angel's face the dread tomb was bright,
The which she beholding fell for sore affright.

Mary of Magdala, in her misery,
Heard the white vision speak, and did straightway flee;
And an idle tale seem'd the wild words she said,
And nought her heart received—nought was comforted.

"Nay," quoth the men He loved, when they came to see,
"Our eyes beheld His death, the Saint of Galilee;
Who have borne Him hence truly we cannot say;"
Secretly in fear, they turn'd and went their way.

Mary of Magdala, in her misery,
Follow'd to the tomb, and wept full bitterly,
Linger'd in the dark, where first the Lord was laid;
The white one spake again, she was no more afraid.

In a moment—dawn! solemn, and sweet, and clear,
Kneeling, yet she weeps, and some one stands anear;
Asketh of her grief—she, all her thoughts are dim,
"If thou hast borne Him hence, tell me," doth answer Him.

"Mary," He saith, no more, shades of night have fled

Under dewy leaves, behold Him!—death is dead;
"Mary," and "O my Master," sorrow speeds away,
Sunbeams touch His feet this earliest Easter day.

After the pains of death, in a place unknown,
Trembling, of visions haunted, and all alone,
I too shall want Thee, Jesus, my hope, my trust,
Fall'n low, and all unclothed, even of my poor dust.

I, too, shall hear Thee speak, Jesus, my life divine;
And call me by my name, Lord, for I am Thine;
Thou wilt stand and wait, I shall so look and SEE,
In the garden of God, I SHALL look up—on THEE.

WOULD I, TO SAVE MY DEAR CHILD?

"Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."

Would I, to save my dear child dutiful,
Dare the white breakers on a storm-rent shore?
Ay, truly, Thou all good, all beautiful,
Truly I would,—then truly Thou would'st more.

Would I for my poor son, who desolate
After long sinning, sued without my door
For pardon, open it? Ay, fortunate
To hear such prayer, I would,—Lord, Thou would'st more.

Would I for e'en the stranger's weariness
And want divide, albeit 'twere scant, my store?
Ay, and mine enemy, sick, shelterless,
Dying, I would attend,—O, Lord, Thou more.

In dust and ashes my long infamy
Of unbelief I rue. My love before
Thy love I set: my heart's discovery,
Is sweet,—whate'er I would, Thou wouldest more.

I was Thy shelterless, sick enemy,
And Thou didst die for me, yet heretofore
I have fear'd; now learn I love's supremacy,—
Whate'er is known of love, Thou lovest more.

AT ONE AGAIN.

I. NOONDAY.

Two angry men—in heat they sever,
And one goes home by a harvest field:—
"Hope's nought," quoth he, "and vain endeavor;
I said and say it, I will not yield!

"As for this wrong, no art can mend it,
The bond is shiver'd that held us twain;
Old friends we be, but law must end it,
Whether for loss or whether for gain.

"Yon stream is small—full slow its wending;
But winning is sweet, but right is fine;
And shoal of trout, or willowy bending—
Though Law be costly—I'll prove them mine.

"His strawberry cow slipped loose her tether,
And trod the best of my barley down;
His little lasses at play together
Pluck'd the poppies my boys had grown.

"What then?—Why naught! *She* lack'd of reason;
And *they*—my little ones match them well:—
But *this*—Nay all things have their season,
And 'tis my season to curb and quell."

II. SUNSET.

So saith he, when noontide fervors flout him,
So thinks, when the West is amber and red,
When he smells the hop-vines sweet about him,
And the clouds are rosy overhead.

While slender and tall the hop-poles going
Straight to the West in their leafy lines,
Portion it out into chambers, glowing,
And bask in red day as the sun declines.

Between the leaves in his latticed arbor
He sees the sky, as they flutter and turn,
While moor'd like boats in a golden harbor
The fleets of feathery cloudlets burn.

Withdrawn in shadow, he thinketh over
Harsh thoughts, the fruit-laden trees among,
Till pheasants call their young to cover,
And cushats coo them a nursery song.

And flocks of ducks forsake their sedges,
Wending home to the wide barn-door,
And loaded wains between the hedges
Slowly creep to his threshing floor—

Slowly creep. And his tired senses,
Float him over the magic stream,
To a world where Fancy recompenses
Vengeful thoughts, with a troubled dream!

III. THE DREAM.

What's this? a wood—What's that? one calleth,
Calleth and cryeth in mortal dread—
He hears men strive—then somewhat falleth!—
"Help me, neighbor—I'm hard bestead."

The dream is strong—the voice he knoweth—
But when he would run, his feet are fast,
And death lies beyond, and no man goeth
To help, and he says the time is past.

His feet are held, and he shakes all over,—
Nay—they are free—he has found the place—
Green boughs are gather'd—what is't they cover?—
"I pray you, look on the dead man's face;

"You that stand by," he saith, and cowers—
"Man, or Angel, to guard the dead
With shadowy spear, and a brow that lowers,
And wing-points reared in the gloom o'erhead.—

"I dare not look. He wronged me never.
Men say we differ'd; they speak amiss:

This man and I were neighbors ever—
I would have ventured my life for his.

"But fast my feet were—fast with tangles—
Ay! words—but they were not sharp, I trow,
Though parish feuds and vestry wrangles—
O pitiful sight—I see thee now!—

"If we fell out, 'twas but foul weather,
After long shining! O bitter cup,—
What—dead?—why, man, we play'd together—
Art dead—ere a friend can make it up?"

IV. THE WAKING.

Over his head the chafer hummeth,
Under his feet shut daisies bend:
Waken, man! the enemy cometh,
Thy neighbor, counted so long a friend.

He cannot waken—and firm, and steady,
The enemy comes with lowering brow;
He looks for war, his heart is ready,
His thoughts are bitter—he will not bow.

He fronts the seat,—the dream is flinging
A spell that his footsteps may not break,—
But one in the garden of hops is singing—
The dreamer hears it, and starts awake.

V. A SONG.

Walking apart, she thinks none listen;
And now she carols, and now she stops;
And the evening star begins to glisten
Atween the lines of blossoming hops.

Sweetest Mercy, your mother taught you
All uses and cares that to maids belong;
Apt scholar to read and to sew she thought you—
She did not teach you that tender song—

"The lady sang in her charmèd bower,
Sheltered and safe under roses blown—
' Storm cannot touch me, hail, nor shower,
Where all alone I sit, all alone.

"My bower! The fair Fay twined it round me,
Care nor trouble can pierce it through;
But once a sigh from the warm world found me
Between two leaves that were bent with dew.

"And day to night, and night to morrow,
Though soft as slumber the long hours wore,
I looked for my dower of love, of sorrow—
Is there no more—no more—no more? _'

"Give her the sun-sweet light, and duly
To walk in shadow, nor chide her part;
Give her the rose, and truly, truly—
To wear its thorn with a patient heart—

"Misty as dreams the moonbeam lyeth
Chequered and faint on her charmèd floor;
The lady singeth, the lady sigheth—
' *Is there no more*—no more—no more! _'"

VI. LOVERS.

A crash of boughs!—one through them breaking!

Mercy is startled, and fain would fly,
But e'en as she turns, her steps o'ertaking,
He pleads with her—"Mercy, it is but I!"

"Mercy!" he touches her hand unbidden—
"The air is balmy, I pray you stay—
Mercy?" Her downcast eyes are hidden,
And never a word she has to say.

Till closer drawn, her prison'd fingers
He takes to his lips with a yearning strong;
And she murmurs low, that late she lingers,
Her mother will want her, and think her long.

"Good mother is she, then honor duly
The lightest wish in her heart that stirs;
But there is a bond yet dearer truly,
And there is a love that passeth hers.

"Mercy, Mercy!" Her heart attendeth—
Love's birthday blush on her brow lies sweet;
She turns her face when his own he bendeth,
And the lips of the youth and the maiden meet.

VII. FATHERS.

Move through the bowing hops, O lovers,—
Wander down to the golden West,—
But two stand mute in the shade that covers
Your love and youth from their souls opprest.

A little shame on their spirits stealing,—
A little pride that is loth to sue,—
A little struggle with soften'd feeling,—
And a world of fatherly care for you.

One says: "To this same running water,
May be, Neighbor, your claim is best."
And one—"Your son has kissed my daughter:
Let the matters between us—rest."

SONNETS.

FANCY.

O fancy, if thou flyest, come back anon,
Thy fluttering wings are soft as love's first word,
And fragrant as the feathers of that bird,
Which feeds upon the budded cinnamon.
I ask thee not to work, or sigh—play on,
From nought that was not, was, or is, deterred;
The flax that Old Fate spun thy flights have stirred,
And waved memorial grass of Marathon.
Play, but be gentle, not as on that day
I saw thee running down the rims of doom
With stars thou hadst been stealing—while they lay
Smothered in light and blue—clasped to thy breast;
Bring rather to me in the firelit room

A netted halcyon bird to sing of rest.

COMPENSATION.

One launched a ship, but she was wrecked at sea;
He built a bridge, but floods have borne it down;
He meant much good, none came: strange destiny,
His corn lies sunk, his bridge bears none to town,
Yet good he had not meant became his crown;
For once at work, when even as nature free,
From thought of good he was, or of renown,
God took the work for good and let good be.
So wakened with a trembling after sleep,
Dread Mona Roa yields her fateful store;
All gleaming hot the scarlet rivers creep,
And fanned of great-leaved palms slip to the shore,
Then stolen to unplumbed wastes of that far deep,
Lay the foundations for one island more.

LOOKING DOWN.

Mountains of sorrow, I have heard your moans,
And the moving of your pines; but we sit high
On your green shoulders, nearer stoops the sky,
And pure airs visit us from all the zones.
Sweet world beneath, too happy far to sigh,
Dost thou look thus beheld from heavenly thrones?
No; not for all the love that counts thy stones,
While sleepy with great light the valleys lie.
Strange, rapturous peace! its sunshine doth enfold
My heart; I have escaped to the days divine,
It seemeth as bygone ages back had rolled,
And all the eldest past was now, was mine;
Nay, even as if Melchizedec of old
Might here come forth to us with bread and wine.

WORK.

Like coral insects multitudinous
The minutes are whereof our life is made.
They build it up as in the deep's blue shade
It grows, it comes to light, and then, and thus
For both there is an end. The populous
Sea-blossoms close, our minutes that have paid
Life's debt of work are spent; the work is laid
Before our feet that shall come after us.
We may not stay to watch if it will speed,
The bard if on some luter's string his song
Live sweetly yet; the hero if his star
Doth shine. Work is its own best earthly meed,
Else have we none more than the sea-born throng
Who wrought those marvellous isles that bloom afar.

WISHING.

When I reflect how little I have done,
And add to that how little I have seen,
Then furthermore how little I have won
Of joy, or good, how little known, or been:
I long for other life more full, more keen,
And yearn to change with such as well have run—
Yet reason mocks me—nay, the soul, I ween,
Granted her choice would dare to change with none;

No,—not to feel, as Blondel when his lay
Pierced the strong tower, and Richard answered it—
No,—not to do, as Eustace on the day
He left fair Calais to her weeping lit—
No,—not to be, Columbus, waked from sleep
When his new world rose from the charmed deep.

TO —.

Strange was the doom of Heracles, whose shade
Had dwelling in dim Hades the unblest,
While yet his form and presence sat a guest
With the old immortals when the feast was made.
Thine like, thus differs; form and presence laid
In this dim chamber of enforced rest,
It is the unseen "shade" which, risen, hath pressed
Above all heights where feet Olympian strayed.
My soul admires to hear thee speak; thy thought
Falls from a high place like an August star,
Or some great eagle from his air-hung rings—
When swooping past a snow-cold mountain scar—
Down he steep slope of a long sunbeam brought,
He stirs the wheat with the steerage of his wings.

ON THE BORDERS OF CANNOCK CHASE.

A cottager leaned whispering by her hives,
Telling the bees some news, as they lit down,
And entered one by one their waxen town.
Larks passioning hung o'er their brooding wives,
And all the sunny hills where heather thrives
Lay satisfied with peace. A stately crown
Of trees enringed the upper headland brown,
And reedy pools, wherein the moor-hen dives,
Glittered and gleamed.
A resting-place for light,
They that were bred here love it; but they say,
"We shall not have it long; in three years' time
A hundred pits will cast out fires by night,
Down yon still glen their smoke shall trail its way,
And the white ash lie thick in lieu of rime."

AN ANCIENT CHESS KING.

Haply some Rajah first in the ages gone
Amid his languid ladies fingered thee,
While a black nightingale, sun-swart as he,
Sang his one wife, love's passionate oraison;
Haply thou may'st have pleased Old Prester John
Among his pastures, when full royally
He sat in tent, grave shepherds at his knee,
While lamps of balsam winked and glimmered on.
What doest thou here? Thy masters are all dead;
My heart is full of ruth and yearning pain
At sight of thee; O king that hast a crown
Outlasting theirs, and tell'st of greatness fled
Through cloud-hung nights of unabated rain
And murmurs of the dark majestic town.

COMFORT IN THE NIGHT.

She thought by heaven's high wall that she did stray
Till she beheld the everlasting gate:

And she climbed up to it to long, and wait,
Feel with her hands (for it was night), and lay
Her lips to it with kisses; thus to pray
That it might open to her desolate.

And lo! it trembled, lo! her passionate
Crying prevailed. A little little way
It opened: there fell out a thread of light,
And she saw wingèd wonders move within;
Also she heard sweet talking as they meant
To comfort her. They said, "Who comes to-night
Shall one day certainly an entrance win;"
Then the gate closed and she awoke content.

THOUGH ALL GREAT DEEDS.

Though all great deeds were proved but fables fine,
Though earth's old story could be told anew,
Though the sweet fashions loved of them that sue
Were empty as the ruined Delphian shrine—
Though God did never man, in words benign,
With sense of His great Fatherhood endue,
Though life immortal were a dream untrue,
And He that promised it were not divine—
Though soul, though spirit were not, and all hope
Reaching beyond the bourne, melted away;
Though virtue had no goal and good no scope,
But both were doomed to end with this our clay—
Though all these were not,—to the ungraced heir
Would this remain,—to live, as though they were.

A SNOW MOUNTAIN.

Can I make white enough my thought for thee,
Or wash my words in light? Thou hast no mate
To sit aloft in the silence silently
And twin those matchless heights undesecrate.
Reverend as Lear, when, lorn of shelter, he
Stood, with his old white head, surprised at fate;
Alone as Galileo, when, set free,
Before the stars he mused disconsolate.

Ay, and remote, as the dead lords of song,
Great masters who have made us what we are,
For thou and they have taught us how to long
And feel a sacred want of the fair and far:
Reign, and keep life in this our deep desire—
Our only greatness is that we aspire.

SLEEP.

(A WOMAN SPEAKS.)

O sleep, we are beholden to thee, sleep,
Thou bearest angels to us in the night,
Saints out of heaven with palms. Seen by thy light
Sorrow is some old tale that goeth not deep;
Love is a pouting child. Once I did sweep
Through space with thee, and lo, a dazzling sight—
Stars! They came on, I felt their drawing and might;
And some had dark companions. Once (I weep
When I remember that) we sailed the tide,
And found fair isles, where no isles used to bide,
And met there my lost love, who said to me,
That 'twas a long mistake: he had not died.

Sleep, in the world to come how strange 'twill be
Never to want, never to wish for thee!

PROMISING.

(A MAN SPEAKS.)

Once, a new world, the sunswart marinere,
Columbus, promised, and was sore withstood,
Ungraced, unhelped, unheard for many a year;
But let at last to make his promise good.
Promised and promising I go, most dear,
To better my dull heart with love's sweet feud,
My life with its most reverent hope and fear,
And my religion, with fair gratitude.
O we must part; the stars for me contend,
And all the winds that blow on all the seas.
Through wonderful waste places I must wend,
And with a promise my sad soul appease.
Promise then, promise much of far-off bliss;
But—ah, for present joy, give me one kiss.

LOVE.

Who veileth love should first have vanquished fate.
She folded up the dream in her deep heart,
Her fair full lips were silent on that smart,
Thick fringed eyes did on the grasses wait.
What good? one eloquent blush, but one, and straight
The meaning of a life was known; for art
Is often foiled in playing nature's part,
And time holds nothing long inviolate.
Earth's buried seed springs up—slowly, or fast:
The ring came home, that one in ages past
Flung to the keeping of unfathomed seas:
And golden apples on the mystic trees
Were sought and found, and borne away at last,
Though watched of the divine Hesperides.

FAILURE.

We are much bound to them that do succeed;
But, in a more pathetic sense, are bound
To such as fail. They all our loss expound;
They comfort us for work that will not speed,
And life—itsself a failure.
Ay, his deed,
Sweetest in story, who the dusk profound
Of Hades flooded with entrancing sound,
Music's own tears, was failure. Doth it read
Therefore the worse? Ah, no! so much, to dare,
He fronts the regnant Darkness on its throne.—
So much to do; impetuous even there,
He pours out love's disconsolate sweet moan—
He wins; but few for that his deed recall:
Its power is in the look which costs him all.

A BIRTHDAY WALK.

(WRITTEN FOR A FRIEND'S BIRTHDAY.)

"The days of our life are threescore years and ten."

A birthday:—and a day that rose
With much of hope, with meaning rife—
A thoughtful day from dawn to close:
The middle day of human life.

In sloping fields on narrow plains,
The sheep were feeding on their knees
As we went through the winding lanes,
Strewed with red buds of alder-trees.

So warm the day—its influence lent
To flagging thought a stronger wing;
So utterly was winter spent,
So sudden was the birth of spring.

Wild crocus flowers in copse and hedge—
In sunlight, clustering thick below,
Sighed for the firwood's shaded ledge,
Where sparkled yet a line of snow.

And crowded snowdrops faintly hung
Their fair heads lower for the heat,
While in still air all branches flung
Their shadowy doubles at our feet.

And through the hedge the sunbeams crept,
Dropped through the maple and the birch;
And lost in airy distance slept
On the broad tower of Tamworth Church.

Then, lingering on the downward way,
A little space we resting stood,
To watch the golden haze that lay
Adown that river by the wood.

A distance vague, the bloom of sleep
The constant sun had lent the scene,
A veiling charm on dingles deep
Lay soft those pastoral hills between.

There are some days that die not out,
Nor alter by reflection's power,
Whose converse calm, whose words devout,
For ever rest, the spirit's dower.

And they are days when drops a veil—
A mist upon the distance past;
And while we say to peace—"All hail!"
We hope that always it shall last.

Times when the troubles of the heart
Are hushed—as winds were hushed that day—
And budding hopes begin to start,
Like those green hedgerows on our way:

When all within and all around
Like hues on that sweet landscape blend,
And Nature's hand has made to sound
The heartstrings that her touch attend:

When there are rays within, like those
That streamed through maple and through birch,
And rested in such calm repose

On the broad tower of Tamworth Church.

NOT IN VAIN I WAITED.

She was but a child, a child,
And I a man grown;
Sweet she was, and fresh, and wild,
And, I thought, my own.
What could I do? The long grass groweth,
The long wave floweth with a murmur on:
The why and the wherefore of it all who knoweth?
Ere I thought to lose her she was grown—and gone.
This day or that day in warm spring weather.
The lamb that was tame will yearn to break its tether.
"But if the world wound thee," I said, "come back to me,
Down in the dell wishing—wishing, wishing for thee."

The dews hang on the white may,
Like a ghost it stands,
All in the dusk before day
That folds the dim lands:

Dark fell the skies when once belated,
Sad, and sorrow-fated, I missed the sun;
But wake, heart, and sing, for not in vain I waited.
O clear, O solemn dawning, lo, the maid is won!
Sweet dews, dry early on the grass and clover,
Lest the bride wet her feet while she walks over;
Shine to-day, sunbeams, and make all fair to see:
Down the dell she's coming—coming, coming with me.

A GLEANING SONG.

"Whither away, thou little eyeless rover?
(Kind Roger's true)
Whither away across yon bents and clover,
Wet, wet with dew?"
"Roger here, Roger there—
Roger—O, he sighed,
Yet let me glean among the wheat,
Nor sit kind Roger's bride."

"What wilt thou do when all the gleaning's ended,
What wilt thou do?
The cold will come, and fog and frost-work blended
(Kind Roger's true)."
"Sleet and rain, cloud and storm,
When they cease to frown
I'll bind me primrose bunches sweet,
And cry them up the town."

"What if at last thy careless heart awaking
This day thou rue?"
"I'll cry my flowers, and think for all its breaking,
Kind Roger's true;
Roger here, Roger there,

O, my true love sighed,
Sigh once, once more, I'll stay my feet
And rest kind Roger's bride."

WITH A DIAMOND.

While Time a grim old lion gnawing lay,
And mumbled with his teeth yon regal tomb,
Like some immortal tear undimmed for aye,
This gem was dropped among the dust of doom.

Dropped, haply, by a sad, forgotten queen,
A tear to outlast name, and fame, and tongue:
Her other tears, and ours, all tears terrene,
For great new griefs to be hereafter sung.

Take it,—a goddess might have wept such tears,
Or Dame Electra changed into a star,
That waxed so dim because her children's years
In leaguered Troy were bitter through long war.

Not till the end to end grow dull or waste,—
Ah, what a little while the light we share!
Hand after hand shall yet with this be graced,
Signing the Will that leaves it to an heir.

MARRIED LOVERS.

Come away, the clouds are high,
Put the flashing needles by.
Many days are not to spare,
Or to waste, my fairest fair!
All is ready. Come to-day,
For the nightingale her lay,
When she findeth that the whole
Of her love, and all her soul,
Cannot forth of her sweet throat,
Sobs the while she draws her breath,
And the bravery of her note
In a few days altereth.

Come, ere she despond, and see
In a silent ecstasy
Chestnuts heave for hours and hours
All the glory of their flowers
To the melting blue above,
That broods over them like love.
Leave the garden walls, where blow
Apple-blossoms pink, and low
Ordered beds of tulips fine.
Seek the blossoms made divine
With a scent that is their soul.
These are soulless. Bring the white
Of thy gown to bathe in light
Walls for narrow hearts. The whole
Earth is found, and air and sea,

Not too wide for thee and me.

Not too wide, and yet thy face
Gives the meaning of all space;
And thine eyes, with starbeams fraught,
Hold the measure of all thought;
For of them my soul besought,
And was shown a glimpse of thine—
A veiled vestal, with divine
Solace, in sweet love's despair,
For that life is brief as fair.
Who hath most, he yearneth most,
Sure, as seldom heretofore,
Somewhere of the gracious more.
Deepest joy the least shall boast,
Asking with new-opened eyes
The remainder; that which lies
O, so fair! but not all conned—
O, so near! and yet beyond.

Come, and in the woodland sit,
Seem a wanted part of it.
Then, while moves the delicate air,
And the glories of thy hair
Little flickering sun-rays strike,
Let me see what thou art like;
For great love enthralles me so,
That, in sooth, I scarcely know.
Show me, in a house all green,
Save for long gold wedges' sheen,
Where the flies, white sparks of fire,
Dart and hover and aspire,
And the leaves, air-stirred on high,
Feel such joy they needs must sigh,
And the untracked grass makes sweet
All fair flowers to touch thy feet,
And the bees about them hum.
All the world is waiting. Come!

A WINTER SONG.

Came the dread Archer up yonder lawn—
Night is the time for the old to die—
But woe for an arrow that smote the fawn,
When the hind that was sick unscathed went by.

Father lay moaning, "Her fault was sore
(Night is the time when the old must die),
Yet, ah to bless her, my child, once more,
For heart is failing: the end is nigh."

"Daughter, my daughter, my girl," I cried
(Night is the time for the old to die),
"Woe for the wish if till morn ye bide"—
Dark was the welkin and wild the sky.

Heavily plunged from the roof the snow—
(Night is the time when the old will die),
She answered, "My mother, 'tis well, I go."
Sparkled the north star, the wrack flew high.

First at his head, and last at his feet
(Night is the time when the old should die),
Kneeling I watched till his soul did fleet,
None else that loved him, none else were nigh.

I wept in the night as the desolate weep
(Night is the time for the old to die),
Cometh my daughter? the drifts are deep,
Across the cold hollows how white they lie.

I sought her afar through the spectral trees
(Night is the time when the old must die),
The fells were all muffled, the floods did freeze,
And a wrathful moon hung red in the sky.

By night I found her where pent waves steal
(Night is the time when the old should die),
But she lay stiff by the locked mill-wheel,
And the old stars lived in their homes on high.

BINDING SHEAVES.

Hark! a lover binding sheaves
To his maiden sings,
Flutter, flutter go the leaves,
Larks drop their wings.
Little brooks for all their mirth
Are not blythe as he.
"Give me what the love is worth
That I give thee.

"Speech that cannot be forborne
Tells the story through:
I sowed my love in with the corn,
And they both grew.
Count the world full wide of girth,
And hived honey sweet,
But count the love of more worth
Laid at thy feet.

"Money's worth is house and land,
Velvet coat and vest.
Work's worth is bread in hand,
Ay, and sweet rest.
Wilt thou learn what love is worth?
Ah! she sits above,
Sighing, 'Weigh me not with earth,
Love's worth is love.'"

THE MARINER'S CAVE.

Once on a time there walked a mariner,
That had been shipwrecked;—on a lonely shore,
And the green water made a restless stir,
And a great flock of mews sped on before.
He had nor food nor shelter, for the tide

Rose on the one, and cliffs on the other side.

Brown cliffs they were; they seemed to pierce the sky,
That was an awful deep of empty blue,
Save that the wind was in it, and on high
A wavering skein of wild-fowl tracked it through.
He marked them not, but went with movement slow,
Because his thoughts were sad, his courage low.

His heart was numb, he neither wept nor sighed,
But wearifully lingered by the wave;
Until at length it chanced that he espied,
Far up, an opening in the cliff, a cave,
A shelter where to sleep in his distress,
And lose his sorrow in forgetfulness.

With that he clambered up the rugged face
Of that steep cliff that all in shadow lay,
And, lo, there was a dry and homelike place,
Comforting refuge for the castaway;
And he laid down his weary, weary head,
And took his fill of sleep till dawn waxed red.

When he awoke, warm stirring from the south
Of delicate summer air did sough and flow;
He rose, and, wending to the cavern's mouth,
He cast his eyes a little way below
Where on the narrow ledges, sharp and rude,
Preening their wings the blue rock-pigeons cooed.

Then he looked lower and saw the lavender
And sea-thrift blooming in long crevices,
And the brown wallflower—April's messenger,
The wallflower marshalled in her companies.
Then lower yet he looked adown the steep,
And sheer beneath him lapped the lovely deep.

The laughing deep;—and it was pacified
As if it had not raged that other day.
And it went murmuring in the morningtide
Innumerable flatteries on its way,
Kissing the cliffs and whispering at their feet
With exquisite advancement, and retreat.

This when the mariner beheld he sighed,
And thought on his companions lying low.
But while he gazed with eyes unsatisfied
On the fair reaches of their overthrow,
Thinking it strange he only lived of all,
But not returning thanks, he heard a call!

A soft sweet call, a voice of tender ruth,
He thought it came from out the cave. And, lo,
It whispered, "Man, look up!" But he, forsooth,
Answered, "I cannot, for the long waves flow
Across my gallant ship where sunk she lies
With all my riches and my merchandise.

"Moreover, I am heavy for the fate
Of these my mariners drowned in the deep;
I must lament me for their sad estate
Now they are gathered in their last long sleep.
O! the unpitying heavens upon me frown,
Then how should I look up?—I must look down."

And he stood yet watching the fair green sea
Till hunger reached him; then he made a fire,

A driftwood fire, and wandered listlessly
And gathered many eggs at his desire,
And dressed them for his meal, and then he lay
And slept, and woke upon the second day.

Whenas he said, "The cave shall be my home;
None will molest me, for the brown cliffs rise
Like castles of defence behind,—the foam
Of the remorseless sea beneath me lies;
'Tis easy from the cliff my food to win—
The nations of the rock-dove breed therein.

"For fuel, at the ebb yon fair expanse
Is strewn with driftwood by the breaking wave,
And in the sea is fish for sustenance.
I will build up the entrance of the cave,
And leave therein a window and a door,
And here will dwell and leave it nevermore."

Then even so he did: and when his task,
Many long days being over, was complete,
When he had eaten, as he sat to bask
In the red firelight glowing at his feet,
He was right glad of shelter, and he said,
"Now for my comrades am I comforted."

Then did the voice awake and speak again;
It murmured, "Man, look up!" But he replied,
"I cannot. O, mine eyes, mine eyes are fain
Down on the red wood-ashes to abide
Because they warm me." Then the voice was still,
And left the lonely mariner to his will.

And soon it came to pass that he got gain.
He had great flocks of pigeons which he fed,
And drew great store of fish from out the main,
And down from eiderducks; and then he said,
"It is not good that I should lead my life
In silence, I will take to me a wife."

He took a wife, and brought her home to him;
And he was good to her and cherished her
So that she loved him; then when light waxed dim
Gloom came no more; and she would minister
To all his wants; while he, being well content,
Counted her company right excellent.

But once as on the lintel of the door
She leaned to watch him while he put to sea,
This happy wife, down-gazing at the shore,
Said sweetly, "It is better now with me
Than it was lately when I used to spin
In my old father's house beside the lin."

And then the soft voice of the cave awoke—
The soft voice which had haunted it erewhile—
And gently to the wife it also spoke,
"Woman, look up!" But she, with tender guile,
Gave it denial, answering, "Nay, not so,
For all that I should look on lieth below.

"The great sky overhead is not so good
For my two eyes as yonder stainless sea,
The source and yielder of our livelihood,
Where rocks his little boat that loveth me."
This when the wife had said she moved away,
And looked no higher than the wave all day.

Now when the year ran out a child she bore,
And there was such rejoicing in the cave
As surely never had there been before
Since God first made it. Then full, sweet, and grave,
The voice, "God's utmost blessing brims thy cup,
O, father of this child, look up, look up!"

"Speak to my wife," the mariner replied.
"I have much work—right welcome work 'tis true—
Another mouth to feed." And then it sighed,
"Woman, look up!" She said, "Make no ado,
For I must needs look down, on anywise,
My heaven is in the blue of these dear eyes."

The seasons of the year did swiftly whirl,
They measured time by one small life alone;
On such a day the pretty pushing pearl,
That mouth they loved to kiss had sweetly shown,
That smiling mouth, and it had made essay
To give them names on such another day.

And afterward his infant history,
Whether he played with baubles on the floor,
Or crept to pat the rock-doves pecking nigh,
And feeding on the threshold of the door,
They loved to mark, and all his marvellings dim,
The mysteries that beguiled and baffled him.

He was so sweet, that oft his mother said,
"O, child, how was it that I dwelt content
Before thou camest? Blessings on thy head,
Thy pretty talk it is so innocent,
That oft for all my joy, though it be deep,
When thou art prattling, I am like to weep."

Summer and winter spent themselves again,
The rock-doves in their season bred, the cliff
Grew sweet, for every cleft would entertain
Its tuft of blossom, and the mariner's skiff,
Early and late, would linger in the bay,
Because the sea was calm and winds away.

The little child about that rocky height,
Led by her loving hand who gave him birth,
Might wander in the clear unclouded light,
And take his pastime in the beauteous earth;
Smell the fair flowers in stony cradles swung,
And see God's happy creatures feed their young.

And once it came to pass, at eventide,
His mother set him in the cavern door,
And filled his lap with grain, and stood aside
To watch the circling rock-doves soar, and soar,
Then dip, alight, and run in circling bands,
To take the barley from his open hands.

And even while she stood and gazed at him,
And his grave father's eyes upon him dwelt,
They heard the tender voice, and it was dim,
And seemed full softly in the air to melt;
"Father," it murmured, "Mother," dying away,
"Look up, while yet the hours are called to-day."

"I will," the father answered, "but not now;"
The mother said, "Sweet voice, O speak to me
At a convenient season." And the brow
Of the cliff began to quake right fearfully,

There was a rending crash, and there did leap
A riven rock and plunge into the deep.

They said, "A storm is coming;" but they slept
That night in peace, and thought the storm had passed,
For there was not a cloud to intercept
The sacred moonlight on the cradle cast;
And to his rocking boat at dawn of day,
With joy of heart the mariner took his way.

But when he mounted up the path at night,
Foreboding not of trouble or mischance,
His wife came out into the fading light,
And met him with a serious countenance;
And she broke out in tears and sobbings thick,
"The child is sick, my little child is sick."

They knelt beside him in the sultry dark,
And when the moon looked in his face was pale,
And when the red sun, like a burning barque,
Rose in a fog at sea, his tender wail
Sank deep into their hearts, and piteously
They fell to chiding of their destiny.

The doves unheeded cooed that livelong day,
Their pretty playmate cared for them no more;
The sea-thrift nodded, wet with glistening spray,
None gathered it; the long wave washed the shore;
He did not know, nor lift his eyes to trace,
The new fallen shadow in his dwelling-place.

The sultry sun beat on the cliffs all day,
And hot calm airs slept on the polished sea,
The mournful mother wore her time away,
Bemoaning of her helpless misery,
Pleading and plaining, till the day was done,
"O look on me, my love, my little one.

"What aileth thee, that thou dost lie and moan?
Ah would that I might bear it in thy stead!"
The father made not his forebodings known,
But gazed, and in his secret soul he said,
"I may have sinned, on sin waits punishment,
But as for him, sweet blameless innocent,

"What has he done that he is stricken down?
O it is hard to see him sink and fade,
When I, that counted him my dear life's crown,
So willingly have worked while he has played;
That he might sleep, have risen, come storm, come heat,
And thankfully would fast that he might eat."

My God, how short our happy days appear!
How long the sorrowful! They thought it long,
The sultry morn that brought such evil cheer,
And sat, and wished, and sighed for evensong;
It came, and cooling wafts about him stirred,
Yet when they spoke he answered not a word.

"Take heart," they cried, but their sad hearts sank low
When he would moan and turn his restless head,
And wearily the lagging morns would go,
And nights, while they sat watching by his bed,
Until a storm came up with wind and rain,
And lightning ran along the troubled main.

Over their heads the mighty thunders brake,

Leaping and tumbling down from rock to rock,
Then burst anew and made the cliffs to quake
As they were living things and felt the shock;
The waiting sea to sob as if in pain,
And all the midnight vault to ring again.

A lamp was burning in the mariner's cave,
But the blue lightning flashes made it dim;
And when the mother heard those thunders rave,
She took her little child to cherish him;
She took him in her arms, and on her breast
Full wearily she courted him to rest,

And soothed him long until the storm was spent,
And the last thunder peal had died away,
And stars were out in all the firmament.
Then did he cease to moan, and slumbering lay,
While in the welcome silence, pure and deep,
The care-worn parents sweetly fell asleep.

And in a dream, enwrought with fancies thick,
The mother thought she heard the rock-doves coo
(She had forgotten that her child was sick),
And she went forth their morning meal to strew;
Then over all the cliff with earnest care
She sought her child, and lo, he was not there!

But she was not afraid, though long she sought
And climbed the cliff, and set her feet in grass,
Then reached a river, broad and full, she thought,
And at its brink he sat. Alas! alas!
For one stood near him, fair and undefiled,
An innocent, a marvellous man-child.

In garments white as wool, and O, most fair,
A rainbow covered him with mystic light;
Upon the warmèd grass his feet were bare,
And as he breathed, the rainbow in her sight
In passions of clear crimson trembling lay,
With gold and violet mist made fair the day.

Her little life! she thought, his little hands
Were full of flowers that he did play withal;
But when he saw the boy o' the golden lands,
And looked him in the face, he let them fall,
Held through a rapturous pause in wistful wise
To the sweet strangeness of those keen child-eyes.

"Ah, dear and awful God, who chastenest me,
How shall my soul to this be reconciled!
It is the Saviour of the world," quoth she,
"And to my child He cometh as a child."
Then on her knees she fell by that vast stream—
Oh, it was sorrowful, this woman's dream!

For lo, that Elder Child drew nearer now,
Fair as the light, and purer than the sun.
The calms of heaven were brooding on his brow,
And in his arms He took her little one,
Her child, that knew her, but with sweet demur
Drew back, nor held his hands to come to her.

With that in mother misery sore she wept—
"O Lamb of God, I love my child so MUCH!
He stole away to Thee while we two slept,
But give him back, for Thou hast many such;
And as for me I have but one. O deign,

Dear Pity of God, to give him me again."

His feet were on the river. Oh, his feet
Had touched the river now, and it was great;
And yet He hearkened when she did entreat,
And turned in quietness as He would wait—
Wait till she looked upon Him, and behold,
There lay a long way off a city of gold.

Like to a jasper and a sardine stone,
Whelmed in the rainbow stood that fair man-child,
Mighty and innocent, that held her own,
And as might be his manner at home he smiled,
Then while she looked and looked, the vision brake,
And all amazed she started up awake.

And lo, her little child was gone indeed!
The sleep that knows no waking he had slept,
Folded to heaven's own heart; in rainbow brede
Clothed and made glad, while they two mourned and wept,
But in the drinking of their bitter cup
The sweet voice spoke once more, and sighed, "Look up!"

They heard, and straightway answered, "Even so:
For what abides that we should look on here?
The heavens are better than this earth below,
They are of more account and far more dear.
We will look up, for all most sweet and fair,
Most pure, most excellent, is garnered there."

A REVERIE.

When I do sit apart
And commune with my heart,
She brings me forth the treasures once my own;
Shows me a happy place
Where leaf-buds swelled apace,
And wasting rims of snow in sunlight shone.

Rock, in a mossy glade,
The larch-trees lend thee shade,
That just begin to feather with their leaves;
From out thy crevice deep
White tufts of snowdrops peep,
And melted rime drips softly from thine eaves.

Ah, rock, I know, I know
That yet thy snowdrops grow,
And yet doth sunshine fleck them through the tree,
Whose sheltering branches hide
The cottage at its side,
That nevermore will shade or shelter me.

I know the stockdoves' note
Athwart the glen doth float:
With sweet foreknowledge of her twins oppressed,
And longings onward sent,
She broods before the event,
While leisurely she mends her shallow nest.

Once to that cottage door,
In happy days of yore,

My little love made footprints in the snow.
She was so glad of spring,
She helped the birds to sing,
I know she dwells there yet—the rest I do not know.

They sang, and would not stop,
While drop, and drop, and drop,
I heard the melted rime in sunshine fall;
And narrow wandering rills,
Where leaned the daffodils,
Murmured and murmured on, and that was all.

I think, but cannot tell,
I think she loved me well,
And some dear fancy with my future twined.
But I shall never know,
Hope faints, and lets it go,
That passionate want forbid to speak its mind.

DEFTON WOOD.

I held my way through Defton Wood,
And on to Wandor Hall;
The dancing leaf let down the light,
In hovering spots to fall.
"O young, young leaves, you match me well,"
My heart was merry, and sung—
"Now wish me joy of my sweet youth;
My love—she, too, is young!
O so many, many, many
Little homes above my head!
O so many, many, many
Dancing blossoms round me spread!
O so many, many, many
Maidens sighing yet for none!
Speed, ye wooers, speed with any—
Speed with all but one."

I took my leave of Wandor Hall,
And trod the woodland ways.
"What shall I do so long to bear
The burden of my days?"
I sighed my heart into the boughs
Whereby the culvers cooed;
For only I between them went
Unwooing and unwooed.
"O so many, many, many
Lilies bending stately heads!
O so many, many, many
Strawberries ripened on their beds!
O so many, many, many
Maids, and yet my heart undone!
What to me are all, are any—
I have lost my—one."

THE LONG WHITE SEAM.

As I came round the harbor buoy,
The lights began to gleam,
No wave the land-locked water stirred,
The crags were white as cream;
And I marked my love by candle-light
Sewing her long white seam.
It's aye sewing ashore, my dear,
Watch and steer at sea,
It's reef and furl, and haul the line,
Set sail and think of thee.

I climbed to reach her cottage door;
O sweetly my love sings!
Like a shaft of light her voice breaks forth,
My soul to meet it springs
As the shining water leaped of old,
When stirred by angel wings.
Aye longing to list anew,
Awake and in my dream,
But never a song she sang like this,
Sewing her long white seam.

Fair fall the lights, the harbor lights,
That brought me in to thee,
And peace drop down on that low roof
For the sight that I did see,
And the voice, my dear, that rang so clear
All for the love of me.
For O, for O, with brows bent low
By the candle's flickering gleam,
Her wedding gown it was she wrought,
Sewing the long white seam.

AN OLD WIFE'S SONG.

And what will ye hear, my daughters dear?—
Oh, what will ye hear this night?
Shall I sing you a song of the yuletide cheer,
Or of lovers and ladies bright?

"Thou shalt sing," they say (for we dwell far away
From the land where fain would we be),
"Thou shalt sing us again some old-world strain
That is sung in our own countrie.

"Thou shalt mind us so of the times long ago,
When we walked on the upland lea,
While the old harbor light waxed faint in the white,
Long rays shooting out from the sea;

"While lambs were yet asleep, and the dew lay deep
On the grass, and their fleeces clean and fair.
Never grass was seen so thick nor so green
As the grass that grew up there!

"In the town was no smoke, for none there awoke—
At our feet it lay still as still could be;
And we saw far below the long river flow,
And the schooners a-warping out to sea.

"Sing us now a strain shall make us feel again

As we felt in that sacred peace of morn,
When we had the first view of the wet sparkling dew,
In the shyness of a day just born."

So I sang an old song—it was plain and not long—
I had sung it very oft when they were small;
And long ere it was done they wept every one:
Yet this was all the song—this was all:—

The snow lies white, and the moon gives light,
I'll out to the freezing mere,
And ease my heart with one little song,
For none will be nigh to hear.
And it's O my love, my love!
And it's O my dear, my dear!
It's of her that I'll sing till the wild woods ring,
When nobody's nigh to hear.

My love is young, she is young, is young;
When she laughs the dimple dips.
We walked in the wind, and her long locks blew
Till sweetly they touched my lips.
And I'll out to the freezing mere,
Where the stiff reeds whistle so low.
And I'll tell my mind to the friendly wind,
Because I have loved her so.

Ay, and she's true, my lady is true!
And that's the best of it all;
And when she blushes my heart so yearns
That tears are ready to fall.
And it's O my love, my love!
And it's O my dear, my dear!
It's of her that I'll sing till the wild woods ring,
When nobody's nigh to hear.

COLD AND QUIET.

Cold, my dear,—cold and quiet.
In their cups on yonder lea,
Cowslips fold the brown bee's diet;
So the moss enfoldeth thee.
"Plant me, plant me, O love, a lily flower—
Plant at my head, I pray you, a green tree;
And when our children sleep," she sighed, "at the dusk hour,
And when the lily blossoms, O come out to me!"

Lost, my dear? Lost! nay deepest
Love is that which loseth least;
Through the night-time while thou sleepest,
Still I watch the shrouded east.
Near thee, near thee, my wife that aye liveth,
"Lost" is no word for such a love as mine;
Love from her past to me a present giveth,
And love itself doth comfort, making pain divine.
Rest, my dear, rest. Fair showeth
That which was, and not in vain
Sacred have I kept, God knoweth,
Love's last words atween us twain.
"Hold by our past, my only love, my lover;
Fall not, but rise, O love, by loss of me!"

Boughs from our garden, white with bloom hang over.
Love, now the children slumber, I come out to thee.

SLEDGE BELLS.

The logs burn red; she lifts her head,
For sledge-bells tinkle and tinkle, O lightly swung.
"Youth was a pleasant morning, but ah! to think 'tis fled,
Sae lang, lang syne," quo' her mother, "I, too, was young."

No guides there are but the North star,
And the moaning forest tossing wild arms before,
The maiden murmurs, "O sweet were yon bells afar,
And hark! hark! hark! for he cometh, he nears the door."

Swift north-lights show, and scatter and go.
How can I meet him, and smile not, on this cold shore?
Nay, I will call him, "Come in from the night and the snow,
And love, love, love in the wild wood, wander no more."

MIDSUMMER NIGHT, NOT DARK, NOT LIGHT.

Midsummer night, not dark, not light,
Dusk all the scented air,
I'll e'en go forth to one I love,
And learn how he doth fare.
O the ring, the ring, my dear, for me,
The ring was a world too fine,
I wish it had sunk in a forty-fathom sea,
Or ever thou mad'st it mine.

Soft falls the dew, stars tremble through,
Where lone he sits apart,
Would I might steal his grief away
To hide in mine own heart.
Would, would 'twere shut in yon blossom fair,
The sorrow that bows thy head,
Then—I would gather it, to thee unaware,
And break my heart in thy stead.

That charmèd flower, far from thy bower,
I'd bear the long hours through,
Thou should'st forget, and my sad breast
The sorrows twain should rue.
O sad flower, O sad, sad ring to me.
The ring was a world too fine;
And would it had sunk in a forty-fathom sea,
Ere the morn that made it mine.

THE BRIDEGROOM TO HIS BRIDE.

Fairest fair, best of good,
Too high for hope that stood;
White star of womanhood shining apart
O my liege lady,
And O my one lady,
And O my loved lady, come down to my heart.

Reach me life's wine and gold,
What is man's best all told,
If thou thyself withhold, sweet, from thy throne?
O my liege lady,
And O my loved lady,
And O my heart's lady, come, reign there alone.

THE FAIRY WOMAN'S SONG.

The fairy woman maketh moan,
"Well-a-day, and well-a-day,
Forsooth I brought thee one rose, one,
And thou didst cast my rose away."
Hark! Oh hark, she mourneth yet,
"One good ship—the good ship sailed,
One bright star, at last it set,
One, one chance, forsooth it failed."

Clear thy dusk hair from thy veiled eyes,
Show thy face as thee beseems,
For yet is starlight in the skies,
Weird woman piteous through my dreams.
"Nay," she mourns, "forsooth not now,
Veiled I sit for evermore,
Rose is shed, and charmèd prow
Shall not touch the charmèd shore."

There thy sons that were to be,
Thy small gamesome children play;
There all loves that men foresee
Straight as wands enrich the way.
Dove-eyed, fair, with me they worm
Where enthroned I reign a queen,
In the lovely realms foregone,
In the lives that might have been.

ABOVE THE CLOUDS.[1]

And can this be my own world?
'Tis all gold and snow,
Save where scarlet waves are hurled
Down yon gulf below.
'Tis thy world, 'tis my world,
City, mead, and shore,
For he that hath his own world
Hath many worlds more.

[Footnote 1: "Above the Clouds," and thirteen poems following, are from
"Mopsa the Fairy."]

SLEEP AND TIME.

"Wake, baillie, wake! the crafts are out;
Wake!" said the knight, "be quick!
For high street, bye street, over the town
They fight with poker and stick."
Said the squire, "A fight so fell was ne'er
In all my bailliewick."
What said the old clock in the tower?
"Tick, tick, tick!"

"Wake, daughter, wake! the hour draws on;
Wake!" quoth the dame, "be quick!
The meats are set, the guests are coming,
The fiddler waxing his stick."
She said, "The bridegroom waiting and waiting
To see thy face is sick."
What said the new clock in her bower?
"Tick, tick, tick!"

BEEES AND OTHER FELLOW-CREATURES.

The dove laid some little sticks,
Then began to coo;
The gnat took his trumpet up
To play the day through;
The pie chattered soft and long—
But that she always does;
The bee did all he had to do,
And only said, "Buzz."

THE GYPSY'S SELLING SONG.

My good man—he's an old, old man—
And my good man got a fall,
To buy me a bargain so fast he ran
When he heard the gypsies call:
"Buy, buy brushes,
Baskets wrought o' rushes.
Buy them, buy them, take them, try them,
Buy, dames all."

My old man, he has money and land,
And a young, young wife am I.
Let him put the penny in my white hand
When he hears the gypsies cry:
"Buy, buy laces,
Veils to screen your faces.
Buy them, buy them, take and try them.
Buy, maids, buy."

A WOONG SONG.

My fair lady's a dear, dear lady—
I walked by her side to woo.
In a garden alley, so sweet and shady,
She answered, "I love not you,
John, John Brady,"
Quoth my dear lady,
"Pray now, pray now, go your way now,
Do, John, do!"

Yet my fair lady's my own, own lady,
For I passed another day;
While making her moan, she sat all alone,
And thus, and thus did she say:
"John, John Brady,"
Quoth my dear lady,
"Do now, do now, once more woo now.
Pray, John, pray!"

A COURTING SONG.

"Master," quoth the auld hound
"Where will ye go?"
"Over moss, over muir,
To court my new jo."
"Master, though the night be merk,
I'se follow through the snow.

"Court her, master, court her,
So shall ye do weel;
But and ben she'll guide the house,
I'se get milk and meal.
Ye'se get lilting while she sits
With her rock and reel."

"For, oh! she has a sweet tongue,
And een that look down,
A gold girdle for her waist,
And a purple gown.
She has a good word forbye
Fra a' folk in the town."

LOVE'S THREAD OF GOLD.

In the night she told a story,
In the night and all night through,
While the moon was in her glory,
And the branches dropped with dew.

'Twas my life she told, and round it
Rose the years as from a deep;
In the world's great heart she found it,
Cradled like a child asleep.

In the night I saw her weaving
By the misty moonbeam cold,
All the weft her shuttle cleaving
With a sacred thread of gold.

Ah! she wept me tears of sorrow,
Lulling tears so mystic sweet;
Then she wove my last to-morrow,
And her web lay at my feet.

Of my life she made the story:
I must weep—so soon 'twas told!
But your name did lend it glory,
And your love its thread of gold!

THE LEAVES OF LIGN ALOES.

Drop, drop from the leaves of lign aloes,
O honey-dew! drop from the tree.
Float up through your clear river shallows,
White lilies, beloved of the bee.

Let the people, O Queen! say, and bless thee,
Her bounty drops soft as the dew,
And spotless in honor confess thee,
As lilies are spotless in hue.

On the roof stands yon white stork awaking,
His feathers flush rosy the while,
For, lo! from the blushing east breaking,
The sun sheds the bloom of his smile.

Let them boast of thy word, "It is certain;
We doubt it no more," let them say,
"Than to-morrow that night's dusky curtain
Shall roll back its folds for the day."

THE DAYS WITHOUT ALLOY.

When I sit on market-days amid the comers and the goers,
Oh! full oft I have a vision of the days without alloy,
And a ship comes up the river with a jolly gang of towers,
And a "pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!"

There is busy talk around me, all about mine ears it hummeth,
But the wooden wharves I look on, and a dancing, heaving buoy,
For 'tis tidetime in the river, and she cometh—oh, she cometh!
With a "pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!"

Then I hear the water washing, never golden waves were brighter,
And I hear the capstan creaking—'tis a sound that cannot cloy.
Bring her to, to ship her lading, brig or schooner, sloop or lighter,
With a "pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!"

"Will ye step aboard, my dearest? for the high seas lie before us."
So I sailed adown the river in those days without alloy.
We are launched! But when, I wonder, shall a sweeter sound float o'er us

Than yon "pull'e haul'e, pull'e haul'e, yoy! heave, hoy!"

FEATHERS AND MOSS.

The marten flew to the finch's nest,
Feathers, and moss, and a wisp of hay:
"The arrow it sped to thy brown mate's breast;
Low in the broom is thy mate to-day."

"Liest thou low, love? low in the broom?
Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay,
Warm the white eggs till I learn his doom."
She beateth her wings, and away, away.

"Ah, my sweet singer, thy days are told
(Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay)!
Thine eyes are dim, and the eggs grow cold.
O mournful morrow! O dark to-day!"

The finch flew back to her cold, cold nest,
Feathers and moss, and a wisp of hay,
Mine is the trouble that rent her breast,
And home is silent, and love is clay.

ON THE ROCKS BY ABERDEEN.

On the rocks by Aberdeen,
Where the whislin' wave had been,
As I wandered and at e'en
Was eerie;

There I saw thee sailing west,
And I ran with joy opprest—
Ay, and took out all my best,
My dearie.

Then I busked mysel' wi' speed,
And the neighbors cried "What need?
'Tis a lass in any weed
Aye bonny!"

Now my heart, my heart is sair.
What's the good, though I be fair,
For thou'lt never see me mair,
Man Johnnie!

LIKE A LAVEROCK IN THE LIFT.

It's we two, it's we two, it's we two for aye,
All the world and we two, and Heaven be our stay.
Like a laverock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride!

All the world was Adam once, with Eve by his side.

What's the world, my lass, my love!—what can it do?
I am thine, and thou art mine; life is sweet and new.
If the world have missed the mark, let it stand by,
For we two have gotten leave, and once more we'll try.

Like a laverock in the lift, sing, O bonny bride!
It's we two, it's we two, happy side by side.
Take a kiss from me thy man; now the song begins:
"All is made afresh for us, and the brave heart wins."

When the darker days come, and no sun will shine,
Thou shalt dry my tears, lass, and I'll dry thine.
It's we two, it's we two, while the world's away,
Sitting by the golden sheaves on our wedding-day.

SONG FOR A BABE.

Little babe, while burns the west,
Warm thee, warm thee in my breast;
While the moon doth shine her best,
And the dews distil not.

All the land so sad, so fair—
Sweet its toils are, blest its care.
Child, we may not enter there!
Some there are that will not.

Fain would I thy margins know,
Land of work, and land of snow;
Land of life, whose rivers flow
On, and on, and stay not.

Fain would I thy small limbs fold,
While the weary hours are told,
Little babe in cradle cold.
Some there are that may not.

GIVE US LOVE AND GIVE US PEACE.

One morning, oh! so early, my beloved, my beloved,
All the birds were singing blithely, as if never they would cease;
'Twas a thrush sang in my garden, "Hear the story, hear the story!"
And the lark sang, "Give us glory!"
And the dove said, "Give us peace!"

Then I listened, oh! so early, my beloved, my beloved,
To that murmur from the woodland of the dove, my dear, the dove;
When the nightingale came after, "Give us fame to sweeten duty!"
When the wren sang, "Give us beauty!"
She made answer, "Give us love!"

Sweet is spring, and sweet the morning, my beloved, my beloved;
Now for us doth spring, doth morning, wait upon the year's increase,
And my prayer goes up, "Oh, give us, crowned in youth with marriage glory,
Give for all our life's dear story,

THE TWO MARGARETS.

I.

MARGARET BY THE MERE SIDE.

Lying imbedded in the green champaign
That gives no shadow to thy silvery face,
Open to all the heavens, and all their train,
The marshalled clouds that cross with stately pace,
No steadfast hills on thee reflected rest,
Nor waver with the dimpling of thy breast.

O, silent Mere! about whose marges spring
Thick bulrushes to hide the reed-bird's nest;
Where the shy ousel dips her glossy wing,
And balanced in the water takes her rest:
While under bending leaves, all gem-arrayed,
Blue dragon-flies sit panting in the shade:

Warm, stilly place, the sundew loves thee well,
And the green sward comes creeping to thy brink,
And golden saxifrage and pimpernel
Lean down to thee their perfumed heads to drink;
And heavy with the weight of bees doth bend
White clover, and beneath thy wave descend:

While the sweet scent of bean-fields, floated wide
On a long eddy of the lightsome air
Over the level mead to thy lone side,
Doth lose itself among thy zephyrs rare,
With wafts from hawthorn bowers and new-cut hay,
And blooming orchards lying far away.

Thou hast thy Sabbaths, when a deeper calm
Descends upon thee, quiet Mere, and then
There is a sound of bells, a far off psalm
From gray church towers, that swims across the fen;
And the light sigh where grass and waters meet,
Is thy meek welcome to the visit sweet.

Thou hast thy lovers. Though the angler's rod
Dimple thy surface seldom; though the oar
Fill not with silvery globes thy fringing sod,
Nor send long ripples to thy lonely shore;
Though few, as in a glass, have cared to trace
The smile of nature moving on thy face;

Thou hast thy lovers truly. 'Mid the cold
Of northern tarns the wild-fowl dream of thee,
And, keeping thee in mind, their wings unfold,
And shape their course, high soaring, till they see
Down in the world, like molten silver, rest
Their goal, and screaming plunge them in thy breast.

Fair Margaret, who sittest all day long
On the gray stone beneath the sycamore,
The bowering tree with branches lithe and strong,
The only one to grace the level shore,
Why dost thou wait? for whom with patient cheer

Gaze yet so wistfully adown the Mere?

Thou canst not tell, thou dost not know, alas!
Long watchings leave behind them little trace;
And yet how sweetly must the mornings pass,
That bring that dreamy calmness to thy face!
How quickly must the evenings come that find
Thee still regret to leave the Mere behind!

Thy cheek is resting on thy hand; thine eyes
Are like twin violets but half unclosed,
And quiet as the deeps in yonder skies.
Never more peacefully in love reposed
A mother's gaze upon her offspring dear,
Than thine upon the long far-stretching Mere.

Sweet innocent! Thy yellow hair floats low
In rippling undulations on thy breast,
Then stealing down the parted love-locks flow,
Bathed in a sunbeam on thy knees to rest,
And touch those idle hands that folded lie,
Having from sport and toil a like immunity.

Through thy life's dream with what a touching grace
Childhood attends thee, nearly woman grown;
Her dimples linger yet upon thy face,
Like dews upon a lily this day blown;
Thy sighs are born of peace, unruffled, deep;
So the babe sighs on mother's breast asleep.

It sighs, and wakes,—but thou! thy dream is all,
And thou wert born for it, and it for thee;
Morn doth not take thy heart, nor evenfall
Charm out its sorrowful fidelity,
Nor noon beguile thee from the pastoral shore,
And thy long watch beneath the sycamore.

No, down the Mere as far as eye can see,
Where its long reaches fade into the sky,
Thy constant gaze, fair child, rests lovingly;
But neither thou nor any can descry
Aught but the grassy banks, the rustling sedge,
And flocks of wild-fowl splashing at their edge.

And yet 'tis not with expectation hushed
That thy mute rosy mouth doth pouting close;
No fluttering hope to thy young heart e'er rushed,
Nor disappointment troubled its repose;
All satisfied with gazing evermore
Along the sunny Mere and reedy shore.

The brooding wren flies pertly near thy seat,
Thou wilt not move to mark her glancing wing;
The timid sheep browse close before thy feet,
And heedless at thy side do thrushes sing.
So long amongst them thou hast spent thy days,
They know that harmless hand thou wilt not raise.

Thou wilt not lift it up—not e'en to take
The foxglove bells that nourish in the shade,
And put them in thy bosom; not to make
A posy of wild hyacinth inlaid
Like bright mosaic in the mossy grass,
With freckled orchis and pale sassafra.

Gaze on;—take in the voices of the Mere.
The break of shallow water at thy feet,

Its splash among long weeds and grasses sere,
And its weird sobbing,—hollow music meet
For ears like thine; listen and take thy till,
And dream on it by night when all is still.

Full sixteen years have slowly passed away,
Young Margaret, since thy fond mother here
Came down, a six month's wife, one April day,
To see her husband's boat go down the Mere,
And track its course, till, lost in distance blue,
In mellow light it faded from her view.

It faded, and she never saw it more;—
Nor any human eye;—oh, grief! oh, woe!
It faded,—and returned not to the shore;
But far above it still the waters flow—
And none beheld it sink, and none could tell
Where coldly slept the form she loved so well!

But that sad day, unknowing of her fate,
She homeward turn'd her still reluctant feet;
And at her wheel she spun, till dark and late
The evening fell—the time when they should meet;
Till the stars paled that at deep midnight burned—
And morning dawned, and he was not returned.

And the bright sun came up—she thought too soon—
And shed his ruddy light along the Mere;
And day wore on too quickly, and at noon
She came and wept beside the waters clear.
"How could he be so late?"—and then hope fled;
And disappointment darkened into dread.

He NEVER came, and she with weepings sore
Peered in the water-nags unceasingly;
Through all the undulations of the shore,
Looking for that which most she feared to see.
And then she took home sorrow to her heart,
And brooded over its cold cruel smart.

And after, desolate she sat alone
And mourned, refusing to be comforted,
On the gray stone, the moss-embroidered stone,
With the great sycamore above her head;
Till after many days a broken oar
Hard by her seat was drifted to the shore.

It came,—a token of his fate,—the whole,
The sum of her misfortune to reveal;
As if sent up in pity to her soul,
The tidings of her widowhood to seal;
And put away the pining hope forlorn,
That made her grief more bitter to be borne.

And she was patient; through the weary day
She toiled; though none was there her work to bless;
And did not wear the sullen months away,
Nor call on death to end her wretchedness,
But lest the grief should overflow her breast,
She toiled as heretofore, and would not rest.

But, her work done, what time the evening star
Rose over the cool water, then she came
To the gray stone, and saw its light from far
Drop down the misty Mere white lengths of flame,
And wondered whether there might be the place
Where the soft ripple wandered o'er HIS face.

Unfortunate! In solitude forlorn
She dwelt, and thought upon her husband's grave,
Till when the days grew short a child was born
To the dead father underneath the wave;
And it brought back a remnant of delight,
A little sunshine to its mother's sight;

A little wonder to her heart grown numb,
And a sweet yearning pitiful and keen:
She took it as from that poor father come,
Her and the misery to stand between;
Her little maiden babe, who day by day
Sucked at her breast and charmed her woes away.

But years flew on; the child was still the same,
Nor human language she had learned to speak:
Her lips were mute, and seasons went and came,
And brought fresh beauty to her tender cheek;
And all the day upon the sunny shore
She sat and mused beneath the sycamore.

Strange sympathy! she watched and wearied not,
Haply unconscious what it was she sought;
Her mother's tale she easily forgot,
And if she listened no warm tears it brought;
Though surely in the yearnings of her heart
The unknown voyager must have had his part.

Unknown to her; like all she saw unknown,
All sights were fresh as when they first began,
All sounds were new; each murmur and each tone
And cause and consequence she could not scan,
Forgot that night brought darkness in its train,
Nor reasoned that the day would come again.

There is a happiness in past regret;
And echoes of the harshest sound are sweet.
The mother's soul was struck with grief, and yet,
Repeated in her child, 'twas not unmeet
That echo-like the grief a tone should take
Painless, but ever pensive for her sake.

For her dear sake, whose patient soul was linked
By ties so many to the babe unborn;
Whose hope, by slow degrees become extinct,
For evermore had left her child forlorn,
Yet left no consciousness of want or woe,
Nor wonder vague that these things should be so.

Truly her joys were limited and few,
But they sufficed a life to satisfy,
That neither fret nor dim foreboding knew,
But breathed the air in a great harmony
With its own place and part, and was at one
With all it knew of earth and moon and sun.

For all of them were worked into the dream,—
The husky sighs of wheat-fields in it wrought;
All the land-miles belonged to it; the stream
That fed the Mere ran through it like a thought.
It was a passion of peace, and loved to wait
'Neath boughs with fair green light illuminate.

To wait with her alone; always alone:
For any that drew near she heeded not,
Wanting them little as the lily grown
Apart from others in a shady plot,

Wants fellow-lilies of like fair degree,
In her still glen to bear her company.

Always alone: and yet, there was a child
Who loved this child, and, from his turret towers,
Across the lea would roam to where, in-ised
And fenced in rapturous silence, went her hours,
And, with slow footsteps drawn anear the place
Where mute she sat, would ponder on her face,

And wonder at her with a childish awe,
And come again to look, and yet again,
Till the sweet rippling of the Mere would draw
His longing to itself; while in her train
The water-hen, come forth, would bring her brood
From slumbering in the rushy solitude;

Or to their young would curlews call and clang
Their homeless young that down the furrows creep;
Or the wind-hover in the blue would hang,
Still as a rock set in the watery deep.
Then from her presence he would break away,
Unmarked, ungreeted yet, from day to day.

But older grown, the Mere he haunted yet,
And a strange joy from its sweet wildness caught;
Whilst careless sat alone maid Margaret,
And "shut the gates" of silence on her thought,
All through spring mornings gemmed with melted rime,
All through hay-harvest and through gleaning time.

O pleasure for itself that boyhood makes,
O happiness to roam the sighing shore,
Plough up with elfin craft the water-flakes,
And track the nested rail with cautious oar;
Then floating lie and look with wonder new
Straight up in the great dome of light and blue.

O pleasure! yet they took him from the wold,
The reedy Mere, and all his pastime there,
The place where he was born, and would grow old
If God his life so many years should spare;
From the loved haunts of childhood and the plain
And pasture-lands of his own broad domain.

And he came down when wheat was in the sheaf,
And with her fruit the apple-branch bent low,
While yet in August glory hung the leaf,
And flowerless aftermath began to grow;
He came from his gray turrets to the shore,
And sought the maid beneath the sycamore.

He sought her, not because her tender eyes
Would brighten at his coming, for he knew
Full seldom any thought of him would rise
In her fair breast when he had passed from view;
But for his own love's sake, that unbeguiled
Drew him in spirit to the silent child.

For boyhood in its better hour is prone
To reverence what it hath not understood;
And he had thought some heavenly meaning shone
From her clear eyes, that made their watchings good:
While a great peacefulness of shade was shed
Like oil of consecration on her head.

A fishing wallet from his shoulder slung,

With bounding foot he reached the mossy place,
A little moment gently o'er her hung,
Put back her hair and looked upon her face,
Then fain from that deep dream to wake her yet,
He "Margaret!" low murmured, "Margaret!

"Look at me once before I leave the land,
For I am going,—going, Margaret."
And then she sighed, and, lifting up her hand,
Laid it along his young fresh cheek, and set
Upon his face those blue twin-deeps, her eyes,
And moved it back from her in troubled wise,

Because he came between her and her fate,
The Mere. She sighed again as one oppressed;
The waters, shining clear, with delicate
Reflections wavered on her blameless breast;
And through the branches dropt, like flickerings fair,
And played upon her hands and on her hair.

And he, withdrawn a little space to see,
Murmured in tender ruth that was not pain,
"Farewell, I go; but sometimes think of me,
Maid Margaret;" and there came by again
A whispering in the reed-beds and the sway
Of waters: then he turned and went his way.

And wilt thou think on him now he is gone?
No; thou wilt gaze: though thy young eyes grow dim,
And thy soft cheek become all pale and wan,
Still thou wilt gaze, and spend no thought on him;
There is no sweetness in his laugh for thee—No
beauty in his fresh heart's gayety.

But wherefore linger in deserted haunts?
Why of the past, as if yet present, sing?
The yellow iris on the margin flaunts,
With hyacinth the banks are blue in spring,
And under dappled clouds the lark afloat
Pours all the April-tide from her sweet throat.

But Margaret—ah! thou art there no more,
And thick dank moss creeps over thy gray stone
Thy path is lost that skirted the low shore,
With willow-grass and speedwell overgrown;
Thine eye has closed for ever, and thine ear
Drinks in no more the music of the Mere.

The boy shall come—shall come again in spring,
Well pleased that pastoral solitude to share,
And some kind offering in his hand will bring
To cast into thy lap, O maid most fair—
Some clasping gem about thy neck to rest,
Or heave and glimmer on thy guileless breast.

And he shall wonder why thou art not here
The solitude with "smiles to entertain,"
And gaze along the reaches of the Mere;
But he shall never see thy face again—
Shall never see upon the reedy shore
Maid Margaret beneath her sycamore.

II.

MARGARET IN THE XEBEC.

["Concerning this man (Robert Delacour), little further is known than that he served in the king's army, and was wounded in the battle of Marston Moor, being then about twenty-seven years of age. After the battle of Nazeby, finding himself a marked man, he quitted the country, taking with him the child whom he had adopted; and he made many voyages between the different ports of the Mediterranean and Levant."]

Resting within his tent at turn of day,
A wailing voice his scanty sleep beset:
He started up—it did not flee away—
'Twas no part of his dream, but still did fret
And pine into his heart, "Ah me! ah me!"
Broken with heaving sobs right mournfully.

Then he arose, and, troubled at this thing,
All wearily toward the voice he went
Over the down-trod bracken and the ling,
Until it brought him to a soldier's tent,
Where, with the tears upon her face, he found
A little maiden weeping on the ground;

And backward in the tent an aged crone
Upbraided her full harshly more and more,
But sunk her chiding to an undertone
When she beheld him standing at the door,
And calmed her voice, and dropped her lifted hand,
And answered him with accent soft and bland.

No, the young child was none of hers, she said,
But she had found her where the ash lay white
About a smouldering tent; her infant head
All shelterless, she through the dewy night
Had slumbered on the field,—ungentle fate
For a lone child so soft and delicate.

"And I," quoth she, "have tended her with care,
And thought to be rewarded of her kin,
For by her rich attire and features fair
I know her birth is gentle: yet within
The tent unclaimed she doth but pine and weep,
A burden I would fain no longer keep."

Still while she spoke the little creature wept,
Till painful pity touched him for the flow
Of all those tears, and to his heart there crept
A yearning as of fatherhood, and lo!
Reaching his arms to her, "My sweet," quoth he,
"Dear little madam, wilt thou come with me?"

Then she left off her crying, and a look
Of wistful wonder stole into her eyes.
The sullen frown her dimpled face forsook,
She let him take her, and forgot her sighs,
Contented in his alien arms to rest,
And lay her baby head upon his breast.

Ah, sure a stranger trust was never sought
By any soldier on a battle-plain.
He brought her to his tent, and soothed his voice,
Rough with command; and asked, but all in vain,
Her story, while her prattling tongue rang sweet,
She playing, as one at home, about his feet.

Of race, of country, or of parentage,
Her lisping accents nothing could unfold;—
No questioning could win to read the page
Of her short life;—she left her tale untold,
And home and kin thus early to forget,

She only knew,—her name was—Margaret.

Then in the dusk upon his arm it chanced
That night that suddenly she fell asleep;
And he looked down on her like one entranced,
And listened to her breathing still and deep,
As if a little child, when daylight closed,
With half-shut lids had ne'er before reposed.

Softly he laid her down from off his arm,
With earnest care and new-born tenderness:
Her infancy, a wonder-working charm,
Laid hold upon his love; he stayed to bless
The small sweet head, then went he forth that night
And sought a nurse to tend this new delight.

And day by day his heart she wrought upon,
And won her way into its inmost fold—
A heart which, but for lack of that whereon
To fix itself, would never have been cold;
And, opening wide, now let her come to dwell
Within its strong unguarded citadel.

She, like a dream, unlocked the hidden springs
Of his past thoughts, and set their current free
To talk with him of half-forgotten things—
The pureness and the peace of infancy,
"Thou also, thou," to sigh, "wert undefiled
(O God, the change!) once, as this little child."

The baby-mistress of a soldier's heart,
She had but friendlessness to stand her friend,
And her own orphanhood to plead her part,
When he, a wayfarer, did pause, and bend,
And bear with him the starry blossom sweet
Out of its jeopardy from trampling feet.

A gleam of light upon a rainy day,
A new-tied knot that must be sever'd soon,
At sunrise once before his tent at play,
And hurried from the battle-field at noon,
While face to face in hostile ranks they stood,
Who should have dwelt in peace and brotherhood.

But ere the fight, when higher rose the sun,
And yet were distant far the rebel bands,
She heard at intervals a booming gun,
And she was pleased, and laughing clapped her hands;
Till he came in with troubled look and tone,
Who chose her desolate to be his own.

And he said, "Little madam, now farewell,
For there will be a battle fought ere night.
God be thy shield, for He alone can tell
Which way may fall the fortune of the fight.
To fitter hands the care of thee pertain,
My dear, if we two never meet again."

Then he gave money shortly to her nurse,
And charged her straitly to depart in haste,
And leave the plain, whereon the deadly curse
Of war should light with ruin, death, and waste,
And all the ills that must its presence blight,
E'en if proud victory should bless the right.

"But if the rebel cause should prosper, then
It were not good among the hills to wend;

But journey through to Boston in the fen,
And wait for peace, if peace our God shall send;
And if my life is spared, I will essay,"
Quoth he, "to join you there as best I may."

So then he kissed the child, and went his way;
But many troubles rolled above his head;
The sun arose on many an evil day,
And cruel deeds were done, and tears were shed;
And hope was lost, and loyal hearts were fain
In dust to hide,—ere they two met again.

So passed the little child from thought, from view—
(The snowdrop blossoms, and then is not there,
Forgotten till men welcome it anew),
He found her in his heavy days of care,
And with her dimples was again beguiled,
As on her nurse's knee she sat and smiled.

And he became a voyager by sea,
And took the child to share his wandering state;
Since from his native land compelled to flee,
And hopeless to avert her monarch's fate;
For all was lost that might have made him pause,
And, past a soldier's help, the royal cause.

And thus rolled on long days, long months and years,
And Margaret within the Xebec sailed;
The lulling wind made music in her ears,
And nothing to her life's completeness failed.
Her pastime 'twas to see the dolphins spring,
And wonderful live rainbows glimmering.

The gay sea-plants familiar were to her,
As daisies to the children of the land;
Red wavy dulse the sunburnt mariner
Raised from its bed to glisten in her hand;
The vessel and the sea were her life's stage—
Her house, her garden, and her hermitage.

Also she had a cabin of her own,
For beauty like an elfin palace bright,
With Venice glass adorned, and crystal stone
That trembled with a many-colored light;
And there with two caged ringdoves she did play,
And feed them carefully from day to day.

Her bed with silken curtains was enclosed,
White as the snowy rose of Guelderland;
On Turkish pillows her young head reposed,
And love had gathered with a careful hand
Fair playthings to the little maiden's side,
From distant ports, and cities parted wide.

She had two myrtle-plants that she did tend,
And think all trees were like to them that grew;
For things on land she did confuse and blend,
And chiefly from the deck the land she knew,
And in her heart she pitied more and more
The steadfast dwellers on the changeless shore.

Green fields and inland meadows faded out
Of mind, or with sea-images were linked;
And yet she had her childish thoughts about
The country she had left—though indistinct
And faint as mist the mountain-head that shrouds,
Or dim through distance as Magellan's clouds.

And when to frame a forest scene she tried,
The ever-present sea would yet intrude,
And all her towns were by the water's side,
It murmured in all moorland solitude,
Where rocks and the ribbed sand would intervene,
And waves would edge her fancied village green;

Because her heart was like an ocean shell,
That holds (men say) a message from the deep,
And yet the land was strong, she knew its spell,
And harbor lights could draw her in her sleep;
And minster chimes from piercèd towers that swim,
Were the land-angels making God a hymn.

So she grew on, the idol of one heart,
And the delight of many—and her face,
Thus dwelling chiefly from her sex apart,
Was touched with a most deep and tender grace—
A look that never aught but nature gave,
Artless, yet thoughtful; innocent, yet grave.

Strange her adornings were, and strangely blent:
A golden net confined her nut-brown hair;
Quaint were the robes that divers lands had lent,
And quaint her aged nurse's skill and care;
Yet did they well on the sea-maiden meet,
Circle her neck, and grace her dimpled feet.

The sailor folk were glad because of her,
And deemed good fortune followed in her wake;
She was their guardian saint, they did aver—
Prosperous winds were sent them for her sake;
And strange rough vows, strange prayers, they nightly made,
While, storm or calm, she slept, in nought afraid.

Clear were her eyes, that daughter of the sea,
Sweet, when uplifted to her aged nurse,
She sat, and communed what the world could be;
And rambling stories caused her to rehearse
How Yule was kept, how maidens tossed the hay,
And how bells rang upon a wedding day.

But they grew brighter when the evening star
First trembled over the still glowing wave,
That bathed in ruddy light, mast, sail, and spar;
For then, reclined in rest that twilight gave,
With him who served for father, friend, and guide,
She sat upon the deck at eventide.

Then turned towards the west, that on her hair
And her young cheek shed down its tender glow,
He taught her many things with earnest care
That he thought fitting a young maid should know,
Told of the good deeds of the worthy dead,
And prayers devout, by faithful martyrs said.

And many psalms he caused her to repeat
And sing them, at his knees reclined the while,
And spoke with her of all things good and meet,
And told the story of her native isle,
Till at the end he made her tears to flow,
Rehearsing of his royal master's woe.

And of the stars he taught her, and their names,
And how the chartless mariner they guide;
Of quivering light that in the zenith flames,
Of monsters in the deep sea caves that hide;

Then changed the theme to fairy records wild,
Enchanted moor, elf dame, or changeling child.

To her the Eastern lands their strangeness spread,
The dark-faced Arab in his long blue gown,
The camel thrusting down a snake-like head
To browse on thorns outside a walled white town.
Where palmy clusters rank by rank upright
Float as in quivering lakes of ribbed light.

And when the ship sat like a broad-winged bird
Becalmed, lo, lions answered in the night
Their fellows, all the hollow dark was stirred
To echo on that tremulous thunder's flight,
Dying in weird faint moans;—till look: the sun
And night, and all the things of night, were done.

And they, toward the waste as morning brake,
Turned, where, in-isled in his green watered land,
The Lybian Zeus lay couched of old, and spake,
Hemmed in with leagues of furrow-faced sand—
Then saw the moon (like Joseph's golden cup
Come back) behind some ruined roof swim up.

But blooming childhood will not always last,
And storms will rise e'en on the tideless sea;
His guardian love took fright, she grew so fast,
And he began to think how sad 'twould be
If he should die, and pirate hordes should get
By sword or shipwreck his fair Margaret.

It was a sudden thought; but he gave way,
For it assailed him with unwonted force;
And, with no more than one short week's delay,
For English shores he shaped the vessel's course;
And ten years absent saw her landed now,
With thirteen summers on her maiden brow.

And so he journeyed with her, far inland,
Down quiet lanes, by hedges gemmed with dew,
Where wonders met her eye on every hand,
And all was beautiful and strange and new—
All, from the forest trees in stately ranks,
To yellow cowslips trembling on the banks.

All new—the long-drawn slope of evening shades,
The sweet solemnities of waxing light,
The white-haired boys, the blushing rustic maids,
The ruddy gleam through cottage casements bright,
The green of pastures, bloom of garden nooks,
And endless bubbling of the water-brooks.

So far he took them on through this green land,
The maiden and her nurse, till journeying
They saw at last a peaceful city stand
On a steep mount, and heard its clear bells ring.
High were the towers and rich with ancient state,
In its old wall enclosed and massive gate.

There dwelt a worthy matron whom he knew,
To whom in time of war he gave good aid,
Shielding her household from the plundering crew
When neither law could bind nor worth persuade,
And to her house he brought his care and pride,
Awearied with the way and sleepy-eyed.

And he, the man whom she was fain to serve,

Delayed not shortly his request to make,
Which was, if aught of her he did deserve,
To take the maid, and rear her for his sake,
To guard her youth, and let her breeding be
In womanly reserve and modesty.

And that same night into the house he brought
The costly fruits of all his voyages—
Rich Indian gems of wandering craftsmen wrought,
Long ropes of pearls from Persian palaces,
With ingots pure and coins of Venice mould,
And silver bars and bags of Spanish gold;

And costly merchandise of far-off lands,
And golden stuffs and shawls of Eastern dye,
He gave them over to the matron's hands,
With jewelled gauds, and toys of ivory,
To be her dower on whom his love was set,—
His dearest child, fair Madam Margaret.

Then he entreated, that if he should die,
She would not cease her guardian mission mild.
Awhile, as undecided, lingered nigh,
Beside the pillow of the sleeping child,
Severed one wandering lock of wavy hair,
Took horse that night, and left her unaware.

And it was long before he came again—
So long that Margaret was woman grown;
And oft she wished for his return in vain,
Calling him softly in an undertone;
Repeating words that he had said the while,
And striving to recall his look and smile.

If she had known—oh, if she could have known—
The toils, the hardships of those absent years—
How bitter thralldom forced the unwilling groan—
How slavery wrung out subduing tears,
Not calmly had she passed her hours away,
Chiding half pettishly the long delay.

But she was spared. She knew no sense of harm,
While the red flames ascended from the deck;
Saw not the pirate band the crew disarm,
Mourned not the floating spars, the smoking wreck.
She did not dream, and there was none to tell,
That fetters bound the hands she loved so well.

Sweet Margaret—withdrawn from human view,
She spent long hours beneath the cedar shade,
The stately trees that in the garden grew,
And, overtwined, a towering shelter made;
She mused among the flowers, and birds, and bees,
In winding walks, and bowering canopies;

Or wandered slowly through the ancient rooms,
Where oriel windows shed their rainbow gleams;
And tapestried hangings, wrought in Flemish looms,
Displayed the story of King Pharaoh's dreams;
And, come at noon because the well was deep,
Beautiful Rachel leading down her sheep.

At last she reached the bloom of womanhood,
After five summers spent in growing fair;
Her face betokened all things dear and good,
The light of somewhat yet to come was there
Asleep, and waiting for the opening day,

When childish thoughts, like flowers, would drift away.

O! we are far too happy while they last;
We have our good things first, and they cost naught;
Then the new splendor comes unfathomed, vast,
A costly trouble, ay, a sumptuous thought,
And will not wait, and cannot be possessed,
Though infinite yearnings fold it to the breast.

And time, that seemed so long, is fleeting by,
And life is more than life; love more than love;
We have not found the whole—and we must die—
And still the unclasped glory floats above.
The inmost and the utmost faint from sight,
For ever secret in their veil of light.

Be not too hasty in your flow, you rhymes,
For Margaret is in her garden bower;
Delay to ring, you soft cathedral chimes,
And tell not out too soon the noontide hour:
For one draws nearer to your ancient town,
On the green mount down settled like a crown.

He journeyed on, and, as he neared the gate,
He met with one to whom he named the maid,
Inquiring of her welfare and her state.
And of the matron in whose house she stayed.
"The maiden dwelt there yet," the townsman said;
"But, for the ancient lady,—she was dead."

He further said, she was but little known,
Although reputed to be very fair,
And little seen (so much she dwelt alone)
But with her nurse at stated morning prayer;
So seldom passed her sheltering garden wall,
Or left the gate at quiet evening fall.

Flow softly, rhymes—his hand is on the door;
Ring out, ye noontide bells, his welcoming—
"He went out rich, but he returneth poor;"
And strong—now something bowed with suffering.
And on his brow are traced long furrowed lines,
Earned in the fight with pirate Algerines.

Her aged nurse comes hobbling at his call;
Lifts up her withered hand in dull surprise,
And, tottering, leads him through the pillared hall;
"What! come at last to bless my lady's eyes!
Dear heart, sweet heart, she's grown a likesome maid—
Go, seek her where she sitteth in the shade."

The noontide chime had ceased—she did not know
Who watched her, while her ringdoves fluttered near:
While, under the green boughs, in accents low
She sang unto herself. She did not hear
His footstep till she turned, then rose to meet
Her guest with guileless blush and wonder sweet.

But soon she knew him, came with quickened pace,
And put her gentle hands about his neck;
And leaned her fair cheek to his sun-burned face,
As long ago upon the vessel's deck:
As long ago she did in twilight deep,
When heaving waters lulled her infant sleep.

So then he kissed her, as men kiss their own,
And, proudly parting her unbraided hair,

He said: "I did not think to see thee grown
So fair a woman,"—but a touch of care
The deep-toned voice through its caressing kept,
And, hearing it, she turned away and wept.

Wept,—for an impress on the face she viewed—
The stamp of feelings she remembered not;
His voice was calmer now, but more subdued,
Not like the voice long loved and unforget!
She felt strange sorrow and delightful pain—
Grief for the change, joy that he came again.

O pleasant days, that followed his return,
That made his captive years pass out of mind;
If life had yet new pains for him to learn,
Not in the maid's clear eyes he saw it shrined;
And three full weeks he stayed with her, content
To find her beautiful and innocent.

It was all one in his contented sight
As though she were a child, till suddenly,
Waked of the chimes in the dead time of the night,
He fell to thinking how the urgency
Of Fate had dealt with him, and could but sigh
For those best things wherein she passed him by.

Down the long river of life how, cast adrift,
She urged him on, still on, to sink or swim;
And all at once, as if a veil did lift,
In the dead time of the night, and bare to him
The want in his deep soul, he looked, was dumb,
And knew himself, and knew his time was come.

In the dead time of the night his soul did sound
The dark sea of a trouble unforeseen,
For that one sweet that to his life was bound
Had turned into a want—a misery keen:
Was born, was grown, and wounded sorely cried
All 'twixt the midnight and the morning tide.

He was a brave man, and he took this thing
And cast it from him with a man's strong hand;
And that next morn, with no sweet altering
Of mien, beside the maid he took his stand,
And copied his past self till ebbing day
Paled its deep western blush, and died away.

And then he told her that he must depart
Upon the morrow, with the earliest light;
And it displeased and pained her at the heart,
And she went out to hide her from his sight
Aneath the cedar trees, where dusk was deep,
And be apart from him awhile to weep

And to lament, till, suddenly aware
Of steps, she started up as fain to flee,
And met him in the moonlight pacing there,
Who questioned with her why her tears might be,
Till she did answer him, all red for shame,
"Kind sir, I weep—the wanting of a name."

"A name!" quoth he, and sighed. "I never knew
Thy father's name; but many a stalwart youth
Would give thee his, dear child, and his love too,
And count himself a happy man forsooth.
Is there none here who thy kind thought hath won?"
But she did falter, and made answer, "None."

Then, as in father-like and kindly mood,
He said, "Dear daughter, it would please me well
To see thee wed; for know it is not good
That a fair woman thus alone should dwell."
She said, "I am content it should be so,
If when you journey I may with you go."

This when he heard, he thought, right sick at heart,
Must I withstand myself, and also thee?
Thou, also thou! must nobly do thy part;
That honor leads thee on which holds back me.
No, thou sweet woman; by love's great increase,
I will reject thee for thy truer peace.

Then said he, "Lady!—look upon my face;
Consider well this scar upon my brow;
I have had all misfortune but disgrace;
I do not look for marriage blessings now.
Be not thy gratitude deceived. I know
Thou think'st it is thy duty—I will go!

"I read thy meaning, and I go from hence,
Skilled in the reason; though my heart be rude,
I will not wrong thy gentle innocence,
Nor take advantage of thy gratitude.
But think, while yet the light these eyes shall bless,
The more for thee—of woman's nobleness."

Faultless and fair, all in the moony light,
As one ashamed, she looked upon the ground,
And her white raiment glistened in his sight.
And, hark! the vesper chimes began to sound,
Then lower yet she drooped her young, pure cheek,
And still was she ashamed, and could not speak.

A swarm of bells from that old tower o'erhead,
They sent their message sifting through the boughs
Of cedars; when they ceased his lady said,
"Pray you forgive me," and her lovely brows
She lifted, standing in her moonlit place,
And one short moment looked him in the face.

Then straight he cried, "O sweetheart, think all one
As no word yet were said between us twain,
And know thou that in this I yield to none—
love thee, sweetheart, love thee!" So full fain,
While she did leave to silence all her part,
He took the gleaming whiteness to his heart—

The white-robed maiden with the warm white throat,
The sweet white brow, and locks of umber flow,
Whose murmuring voice was soft as rock-dove's note,
Entreating him, and saying, "Do not go!"
"I will not, sweetheart; nay, not now," quoth he,
"By faith and troth, I think thou art for me!"

And so she won a name that eventide,
Which he gave gladly, but would ne'er bespeak,
And she became the rough sea-captain's bride,
Matching her dimples to his sunburnt cheek;
And chasing from his voice the touch of care,
That made her weep when first she heard it there.

One year there was, fulfilled of happiness,
But O! it went so fast, too fast away.
Then came that trouble which full oft doth bless—
It was the evening of a sultry day,

There was no wind the thread-hung flowers to stir,
Or float abroad the filmy gossamer.

Toward the trees his steps the mariner bent,
Pacing the grassy walks with restless feet:
And he recalled, and pondered as he went,
All her most duteous love and converse sweet,
Till summer darkness settled deep and dim,
And dew from bending leaves dropt down on him.

The flowers sent forth their nightly odors faint—
Thick leaves shut out the starlight overhead;
While he told over, as by strong constraint
Drawn on, her childish life on shipboard led,
And beauteous youth, since first low kneeling there,
With folded hands she lisped her evening prayer.

Then he remembered how, beneath the shade,
She wooed him to her with her lovely words,
While flowers were closing, leaves in moonlight played,
And in dark nooks withdrew the silent birds.
So pondered he that night in twilight dim,
While dew from bending leaves dropt down on him.

The flowers sent forth their nightly odors faint—
When, in the darkness waiting, he saw one
To whom he said—"How fareth my sweet saint?"
Who answered—"She hath borne to you a son;"
Then, turning, left him,—and the father said,
"God rain down blessings on his welcome head!"

But Margaret!—*she* never saw the child,
Nor heard about her bed love's mournful wails;
But to the last, with ocean dreams beguiled,
Murmured of troubled seas and swelling sails—
Of weary voyages, and rocks unseen,
And distant hills in sight, all calm and green....

Woe and alas!—the times of sorrow come,
And make us doubt if we were ever glad!
So utterly that inner voice is dumb,
Whose music through our happy days we had!
So, at the touch of grief, without our will,
The sweet voice drops from us, and all is still.

Woe and alas! for the sea-captain's wife—
That Margaret who in the Xebec played—
She spent upon his knee her baby life;
Her slumbering head upon his breast she laid.
How shall he learn alone his years to pass?
How in the empty house?—woe and alas!

She died, and in the aisle, the minster aisle,
They made her grave; and there, with fond intent,
Her husband raised, his sorrow to beguile,
A very fair and stately monument:
Her tomb (the careless vergers show it yet),
The mariner's wife, his love, his Margaret.

A woman's figure, with the eyelids closed,
The quiet head declined in slumber sweet;
Upon an anchor one fair hand reposed,
And a long ensign folded at her feet,
And carved upon the bordering of her vest
The motto of her house—"He giveth rest."

There is an ancient window richly fraught

And fretted with all hues most rich, most bright,
And in its upper tracery enwrought
An olive-branch and dove wide-winged and white,
An emblem meet for her, the tender dove,
Her heavenly peace, her duteous earthly love.

Amid heraldic shields and banners set,
In twisted knots and wildly-tangled bands,
Crimson and green, and gold and violet,
Fall softly on the snowy sculptured hands;
And, when the sunshine comes, full sweetly rest
The dove and olive-branch upon her breast.

A STORY OF DOOM.

BOOK I.

Niloiya said to Noah, "What aileth thee,
My master, unto whom is my desire,
The father of my sons?" He answered her,
"Mother of many children, I have heard
The Voice again." "Ah, me!" she saith, "ah, me!
What spake it?" and with that Niloiya sighed.

This when the Master-builder heard, his heart
Was sad in him, the while he sat at home
And rested after toil. The steady rap
O' the shipwright's hammer sounding up the vale
Did seem to mock him; but her distaff down
Niloiya laid, and to the doorplace went,
Parted the purple covering seemly hung
Before it, and let in the crimson light
Of the descending sun. Then looked he forth,—
Looked, and beheld the hollow where the ark
Was a-preparing; where the dew distilled
All night from leaves of old lign aloe-trees,
Upon the gliding river; where the palm,
The almug, and the gophir shot their heads
Into the crimson brede that dyed the world:
And lo! he marked—unwieldy, dark, and huge—The
ship, his glory and his grief,—too vast
For that still river's floating,—building far
From mightier streams, amid the pastoral dells
Of shepherd kings.

Niloiya spake again:

"What said the Voice, thou well-beloved man?"
He, laboring with his thought that troubled him,
Spoke on behalf of God: "Behold," said he,
"A little handful of unlovely dust
He fashioned to a lordly grace, and when
He laughed upon its beauty, it waxed warm,
And with His breath awoke a living soul.

"Shall not the Fashioner command His work?
And who am I, that, if He whisper, 'Rise,
Go forth upon Mine errand,' should reply,
'Lord, God, I love the woman and her sons,—I
love not scorning: I beseech Thee, God,
Have me excused.'"

She answered him, "Tell on."
And he continuing, reasoned with his soul:
"What though I,—like some goodly lama sunk
In meadow grass, eating her way at ease,
Unseen of them that pass, and asking not
A wider prospect than of yellow-flowers
That nod above her head,—should lay me down,
And willingly forget this high behest,
There should be yet no tarrying. Furthermore,
Though I went forth to cry against the doom,
Earth crieth louder, and she draws it down:
It hangeth balanced over us; she crieth,
And it shall fall. O! as for me, my life
Is bitter, looking onward, for I know
That in the fulness of the time shall dawn
That day: my preaching shall not bring forth fruit,
Though for its sake I leave thee. I shall float
Upon the abhorréd sea, that mankind hate,
With thee and thine."

She answered: "God forbid!
For, sir, though men be evil, yet the deep
They dread, and at the last will surely turn
To Him, and He long-suffering will forgive.
And chide the waters back to their abyss,
To cover the pits where doleful creatures feed.
Sir, I am much afraid: I would not hear
Of riding on the waters: look you, sir,
Better it were to die with you by hand
Of them that hate us, than to live, ah me!
Rolling among the furrows of the unquiet,
Unconsecrate, unfriendly, dreadful sea."

He saith again: "I pray thee, woman, peace,
For thou wilt enter, when that day appears,
The fateful ship."

"My lord," quoth she, "I will.
But O, good sir, be sure of this, be sure
The Master calleth; for the time is long
That thou hast warned the world: thou art but here
Three days; the song of welcoming but now
Is ended. I behold thee, I am glad;
And wilt thou go again? Husband, I say,
Be sure who 't is that calleth; O, be sure,
Be sure. My mother's ghost came up last night,
Whilst I thy beard, held in my hands did kiss,
Leaning anear thee, wakeful through my love,
And watchful of thee till the moon went down.

"She never loved me since I went with thee
To sacrifice among the hills: she smelt
The holy smoke, and could no more divine
Till the new moon. I saw her ghost come up;
It had a snake with a red comb of fire
Twisted about its waist,—the doggish head
Lolled on its shoulder, and so leered at me.
'This woman might be wiser,' quoth the ghost;
'Shall there be husbands for her found below,
When she comes down to us? O, fool! O, fool!
She must not let her man go forth, to leave
Her desolate, and reap the whole world's scorn,
A harvest for himself.' With that they passed."

He said, "My crystal drop of perfectness,
I pity thee; it was an evil ghost:

Thou wilt not heed the counsel?" "I will not,"
Quoth she; "I am loyal to the Highest. Him
I hold by even as thou, and deem Him best.
Sir, am I fairer than when last we met?"

"God add," said he, "unto thy much yet more,
As I do think thou art." "And think you, sir,"
Niloiya saith, "that I have reached the prime?"
He answering, "Nay, not yet." "I would 't were so,"
She plaineth, "for the daughters mock at me:
Her locks forbear to grow, they say, so sore
She pineth for the master. Look you, sir,
They reach but to the knee. But thou art come,
And all goes merrier. Eat, my lord, of all
My supper that I set, and afterward
Tell me, I pray thee, somewhat of thy way;
Else shall I be despised as Adam was,
Who compassed not the learning of his sons,
But, grave and silent, oft would lower his head
And ponder, following of great Isha's feet,
When she would walk with her fair brow upraised,
Scorning the children that she bare to him."

"Ay," quoth the Master; "but they did amiss
When they despised their father: knowest thou that?"

"Sure he was foolisher," Niloiya saith,
"Than any that came after. Furthermore,
He had not heart nor courage for to rule:
He let the mastery fall from his slack hand.
Had not our glorious mother still borne up
His weakness, chid with him, and sat apart,
And listened, when the fit came over him
To talk on his lost garden, he had sunk
Into the slave of slaves."

"Nay, thou must think
How he had dwelt long, God's loved husbandman,
And looked in hope among the tribes for one
To be his fellow, ere great Isha, once
Waking, he found at his left side, and knew
The deep delight of speech." So Noah, and thus
Added, "And therefore was his loss the more;
For though the creatures he had singled out
His favorites, dared for him the fiery sword
And followed after him,—shall bleat of lamb
Console one for the foregone talk of God?
Or in the afternoon, his faithful dog,
Fawning upon him, make his heart forget
At such a time, and such a time, to have heard
What he shall hear no more?"

"O, as for him,
It was for this that he full oft would stop,
And, lost in thought, stand and revolve that deed,
Sad muttering, Woman! we reproach thee not;
Though thou didst eat mine immortality;
Earth, be not sorry; I was free to choose.
Wonder not, therefore, if he walked forlorn.
Was not the helpmeet given to raise him up
From his contentment with the lower things?
Was she not somewhat that he could not rule
Beyond the action, that he could not have
By the mere holding, and that still aspired
And drew him after her? So, when deceived
She fell by great desire to rise, he fell

By loss of upward drawing, when she took
An evil tongue to be her counsellor:
'Death is not as the death of lower things,
Rather a glorious change, begrudged of Heaven,
A change to being as gods,'—he from her hand,
Upon reflection, took of death that hour,
And ate it (not the death that she had dared);
He ate it knowing. Then divisions came.
She, like a spirit strayed who lost the way,
Too venturesome, among the farther stars,
And hardly cares, because it hardly hopes
To find the path to heaven; in bitter wise
Did bear to him degenerate seed, and he,
Once having felt her upward drawing, longed,
And yet aspired, and yearned to be restored,
Albeit she drew no more."

"Sir, ye speak well,"

Niloiya saith, "but yet the mother sits
Higher than Adam. He did understand
Discourse of birds and all four-footed things,
But she had knowledge of the many tribes
Of angels and their tongues; their playful ways
And greetings when they met. Was she not wise?
They say she knew much that she never told,
And had a voice that called to her as thou."

"Nay," quoth the Master-shipwright, "who am I
That I should answer? As for me, poor man,
Here is my trouble: 'if there be a Voice,'
At first I cried, 'let me behold the mouth
That uttereth it,' Thereon it held its peace.
But afterward, I, journeying up the hills,
Did hear it hollower than an echo fallen
Across some clear abyss; and I did stop,
And ask of all my company, 'What cheer?
If there be spirits abroad that call to us,
Sirs, hold your peace and hear,' So they gave heed,
And one man said, 'It is the small ground-doves
That peck upon the stony hillocks': one,
'It is the mammoth in yon cedar swamp
That cheweth in his dream': and one, 'My lord,
It is the ghost of him that yesternight
We slew, because he grudged to yield his wife
To thy great father, when he peaceably
Did send to take her,' Then I answered, 'Pass,'
And they went on; and I did lay mine ear
Close to the earth; but there came up therefrom
No sound, nor any speech; I waited long.
And in the saying, 'I will mount my beast
And on,' I was as one that in a trance
Beholdeth what is coming, and I saw
Great waters and a ship; and somewhat spake,
'Lo, this shall be; let him that heareth it,
And seeth it, go forth to warn his kind,
For I will drown the world,'"

Niloiya saith,

"Sir, was that all that ye went forth upon?"
The master, he replieth, "Ay, at first,
That same was all; but many days went by,
While I did reason with my heart and hope
For more, and struggle to remain, and think.
'Let me be certain'; and so think again,
'The counsel is but dark; would I had more!"

When I have more to guide me, I will go,'
And afterward, when reasoned on too much,
It seemed remoter, then I only said,
'O, would I had the same again'; and still
I had it not.

"Then at the last I cried,
'If the unseen be silent, I will speak
And certify my meaning to myself.
Say that He spoke, then He will make that good
Which He hath spoken. Therefore it were best
To go, and do His bidding. All the earth
Shall hear the judgment so, and none may cry
When the doom falls, "Thou God art hard on us;
We knew not Thou wert angry. O! we are lost,
Only for lack of being warned."

"But say
That He spoke not, and merely it befell
That I being weary had a dream. Why, so
He could not suffer damage; when the time
Was past, and that I threatened had not come,
Men would cry out on me, haply me kill,
For troubling their content. They would not swear,
"God, that did send this man, is proved untrue,"
But rather, "Let him die; he lied to us;
God never sent him." Only Thou, great King,
Knowest if Thou didst speak or no. I leave
The matter here. If Thou wilt speak again,
I go in gladness; if Thou wilt not speak,
Nay, if Thou never didst, I not the less
Shall go, because I have believed, what time
I seemed to hear Thee, and the going stands
With memory of believing,' Then I washed,
And did array me in the sacred gown,
And take a lamb."

"Ay, sir," Niloiya sighed,
"I following, and I knew not anything
Till, the young lamb asleep in thy two arms,
We, moving up among the silent hills,
Paused in a grove to rest; and many slaves
Came near to make obeisance, and to bring
Wood for the sacrifice, and turf and fire.
Then in their hearing thou didst say to me,
'Behold, I know thy good fidelity,
And theirs that are about us; they would guard
The mountain passes, if it were my will
Awhile to leave thee'; and the pygmies laughed
For joy, that thou wouldst trust inferior things;
And put their heads down, as their manner is,
To touch our feet. They laughed, but sore I wept;
Sir, I could weep now; ye did ill to go
If that was all your bidding; I had thought
God drave thee, and thou couldst not choose but go."

Then said the son of Lamech, "Afterward,
When I had left thee, He whom I had served
Met with me in the visions of the night,
To comfort me for that I had withdrawn
From thy dear company. He sware to me
That no man should molest thee, no, nor touch
The bordering of mine outmost field. I say,
When I obeyed, He made His matters plain.
With whom could I have left thee, but with them,

Born in thy mother's house, and bound thy slaves?"

She said, "I love not pygmies; they are naught."
And he, "Who made them pygmies?" Then she pushed
Her veiling hair back from her round, soft eyes,
And answered, wondering, "Sir, my mothers did,
Ye know it." And he drew her near to sit
Beside him on the settle, answering, "Ay."
And they went on to talk as writ below,
If any one shall read:

"Thy mother did,
And they that went before her. Thinkest thou
That they did well?"

"They had been overcome;
And when the angered conquerors drave them out,
Behoved them find some other way to rule,—
They did but use their wits. Hath not man aye
Been cunning in dominion, among beasts
To breed for size or swiftness, or for sake
Of the white wool he loveth, at his choice?
What harm if coveting a race of men
That could but serve, they sought among their thralls,
Such as were low of stature, men and maids;
Ay, and of feeble will and quiet mind?
Did they not spend much gear to gather out
Such as I tell of, and for matching them
One with another for a thousand years?
What harm, then, if there came of it a race,
Inferior in their wits, and in their size,
And well content to serve?"

"'What harm?' thou sayest.
My wife doth ask, 'What harm?'"

"Your pardon, sir.
I do remember that there came one day,
Two of the grave old angels that God made,
When first He invented life (right old they were,
And plain, and venerable); and they said,
Rebuking of my mother as with hers
She sat, 'Ye do not well, you wives of men,
To match your wit against the Maker's will,
And for your benefit to lower the stamp
Of His fair image, which He set at first
Upon man's goodly frame; ye do not well
To treat his likeness even as ye treat
The bird and beast that perish.'"

"Said they aught
To appease the ancients, or to speak them fair?"

"How know I? 'T was a slave that told it me.
My mother was full old when I was born,
And that was in her youth. What think you, sir?
Did not the giants likewise ill?"

"To that
I have no answer ready. If a man,
When each one is against his fellow, rule,
Or unmolested dwell, or unreproved,
Because, for size and strength, he standeth first,
He will thereof be glad; and if he say,
'I will to wife choose me a stately maid,
And leave a goodly offspring'; 'sooth, I think,
He sinneth not; for good to him and his

He would be strong and great. Thy people's fault
Was, that for ill to others, they did plot
To make them weak and small."

"But yet they steal
Or take in war the strongest maids, and such
As are of highest stature; ay, and oft
They fight among themselves for that same cause.
And they are proud against the King of heaven:
They hope in course of ages they shall come
To be as strong as He."

The Master said,
"I will not hear thee talk thereof; my heart
Is sick for all this wicked world. Fair wife,
I am right weary. Call thy slaves to thee,
And bid that they prepare the sleeping place.
O would that I might rest! I fain would rest,
And, no more wandering, tell a thankless world
My never-heeded tale!"

With that she called.
The moon was up, and some few stars were out,
While heavy at the heart he walked abroad
To meditate before his sleep. And yet
Niloiya pondered, "Shall my master go?
And will my master go? What 'vaileth it,
That he doth spend himself, over the waste
A wandering, till he reach outlandish folk,
That mock his warning? O, what 'vaileth it,
That he doth lavish wealth to build yon ark,
Whereat the daughters, when they eat with me,
Laugh? O my heart! I would the Voice were stilled.
Is not he happy? Who, of all the earth,
Obeyed like to me? Have not I learned
From his dear mouth to utter seemly words,
And lay the powers my mother gave me by?
Have I made offerings to the dragon? Nay,
And I am faithful, when he leaveth me
Lonely betwixt the peakéd mountain tops
In this long valley, where no stranger foot
Can come without my will. He shall not go.
Not yet, not yet! But three days—only three—
Beside me, and a muttering on the third,
'I have heard the Voice again.' Be dull, O dull,
Mind and remembrance! Mother, ye did ill;
'T is hard unlawful knowledge not to use.
Why, O dark mother! opened ye the way?"
Yet when he entered, and did lay aside
His costly robe of sacrifice, the robe
Wherein he had been offering, ere the sun
Went down; forgetful of her mother's craft,
She lovely and submissive did mourn to him:
"Thou wilt not go,—I pray thee, do not go,
Till thou hast seen thy children." And he said,
"I will not. I have cried, and have prevailed:
To-morrow it is given me by the Voice
Upon a four days' journey to proceed,
And follow down the river, till its waves
Are swallowed in the sand, where no flesh dwells.

"'There,' quoth the Unrevealed, 'we shall meet,
And I will counsel thee; and thou shalt turn
And rest thee with the mother, and with them
She bare.' Now, therefore, when the morn appears,
Thou fairest among women, call thy slaves,

And bid them yoke the steers, and spread thy car
With robes, the choicest work of cunning hands;
Array thee in thy rich apparel, deck
Thy locks with gold; and while the hollow vale
I thread beside yon river, go thou forth
Atween the mountains to my father's house,
And let thy slaves make all obeisance due,
And take and lay an offering at his feet.
Then light, and cry to him, 'Great king, the son
Of old Methuselah, thy son hath sent
To fetch the growing maids, his children, home.'"

"Sir," quoth the woman, "I will do this thing,
So thou keep faith with me, and yet return.
But will the Voice, think you, forbear to chide,
Nor that Unseen, who calleth, buffet thee,
And drive thee on?"

He saith, "It will keep faith.

Fear not. I have prevailed, for I besought,
And lovingly it answered. I shall rest,
And dwell with thee till after my three sons
Come from the chase." She said, "I let them forth
In fear, for they are young. Their slaves are few.
The giant elephants be cunning folk;
They lie in ambush, and will draw men on
To follow,—then will turn and tread them down."
"Thy father's house unwisely planned," said he,
"To drive them down upon the growing corn
Of them that were their foes; for now, behold,
They suffer while the unwieldy beasts delay
Retirement to their lands, and, meanwhile, pound
The damp, deep meadows, to a pulpy mash;
Or wallowing in the waters foul them; nay,
Tread down the banks, and let them forth to flood
Their cities; or, assailed and falling, shake
The walls, and taint the wind, ere thirty men,
Over the hairy terror piling stones
Or earth, prevail to cover it."

She said,

"Husband, I have been sorry, thinking oft
I would my sons were home; but now so well
Methinks it is with me, that I am fain
To wish they might delay, for thou wilt dwell
With me till after they return, and thou
Hast set thine eyes upon them. Then,—ah, me!
I must sit joyless in my place; bereft,
As trees that suddenly have dropped their leaves,
And dark as nights that have no moon."

She spake:

The hope o' the world did hearken, but reply
Made none. He left his hand on her fair locks
As she lay sobbing; and the quietness
Of night began to comfort her, the fall
Of far-off waters, and the wingéd wind
That went among the trees. The patient hand,
Moreover, that was steady, wrought with her,
Until she said, "What wilt thou? Nay, I know.
I therefore answer what thou utterest not.
*Thou lovest me well, and not for thine own will
Consentest to depart.* What more? Ay, this:
*I do avow that He which calleth thee,
Hath right to call; and I do swear, the Voice
Shall have no let of me, to do Its will.*"

BOOK II

Now ere the sunrise, while the morning star
Hung yet behind the pine bough, woke and prayed
The world's great shipwright, and his soul was glad
Because the Voice was favorable. Now
Began the tap o' the hammer, now ran forth
The slaves preparing food. They therefore ate
In peace together; then Niloiya forth
Behind the milk-white steers went on her way;
And the great Master-builder, down the course
Of the long river, on his errand sped,
And as he went, he thought:

[They do not well

Who, walking up a trodden path, all smooth
With footsteps of their fellows, and made straight
From town to town, will scorn at them that worm
Under the covert of God's eldest trees
(Such as He planted with His hand, and fed
With dew before rain fell, till they stood close
And awful; drank the light up as it dropt,
And kept the dusk of ages at their roots);
They do not well who mock at such, and cry,
"We peaceably, without or fault or fear,
Proceed, and miss not of our end; but these
Are slow and fearful: with uncertain pace,
And ever reasoning of the way, they oft,
After all reasoning, choose the worser course,
And plunged in swamp, or in the matted growth
Nigh smothered struggle, all to reach a goal
Not worth their pains." Nor do they well whose work
Is still to feed and shelter them and theirs,
Get gain, and gathered store it, to think scorn
Of those who work for a world (no wages paid
By a Master hid in light), and sent alone
To face a laughing multitude, whose eyes
Are full of damaging pity, that forbears
To tell the harmless laborer, "Thou art mad."]

And as he went, he thought: "They counsel me,
Ay, with a kind of reason in their talk,
'Consider; call thy soberer thought to aid;
Why to but one man should a message come?
And why, if but to one, to thee? Art thou
Above us, greater, wiser? Had He sent,
He had willed that we should heed. Then since He knoweth
That such as thou, a wise man cannot heed,
He did not send.' My answer, 'Great and wise,
If He had sent with thunder, and a voice
Leaping from heaven, ye must have heard; but so
Ye had been robbed of choice, and, like the beasts,
Yoked to obedience. God makes no men slaves.'
They tell me, 'God is great above thy thought:
He meddles not: and this small world is ours,
These many hundred years we govern it;
Old Adam, after Eden, saw Him not.'
Then I, 'It may be He is gone to knead
More clay. But look, my masters; one of you
Going to warfare, layeth up his gown,
His sickle, or his gold, and thinks no more
Upon it, till young trees have waxen great;
At last, when he returneth, he will seek
His own. And God, shall He not do the like?
And having set new worlds a-rolling, come
And say, "I will betake Me to the earth

That I did make": and having found it vile,
 Be sorry. Why should man be free, you wise,
 And not the Master?' Then they answer, 'Fool!
 A man shall cast a stone into the air
 For pastime, or for lack of heed,—but He!
 Will He come fingering of His ended work,
 Fright it with His approaching face, or snatch
 One day the rolling wonder from its ring,
 And hold it quivering, as a wanton child
 Might take a nestling from its downy bed,
 And having satisfied a careless wish,
 Go thrust it back into its place again?'
 To such I answer, and, that doubt once mine,
 I am assured that I do speak aright:
 'Sirs, the significance of this your doubt
 Lies in the reason of it; ye do grudge
 That these your lands should have another Lord;
 Ye are not loyal, therefore ye would fain
 Your King would bide afar. But if ye looked
 For countenance and favor when He came,
 Knowing yourselves right worthy, would ye care,
 With cautious reasoning, deep and hard, to prove
 That He would never come, and would your wrath
 Be hot against a prophet? Nay, I wot
 That as a flatterer you would look on him,—
 Full of sweet words thy mouth is: if He come,—
 We think not that He will,—but if He come,
 Would it might be to-morrow, or to-night,
 Because we look for praise.'"

Now, as he went,
 The noontide heats came on, and he grew faint;
 But while he sat below an almug-tree,
 A slave approached with greeting. "Master, hail!"
 He answered, "Hail! what wilt thou?" Then she said,
 "The palace of thy fathers standeth nigh."
 "I know it," quoth he; and she said again,
 "The Elder, learning thou wouldst pass, hath sent
 To fetch thee"; then he rose and followed her.
 So first they walked beneath a lofty roof
 Of living bough and tendril, woven on high
 To let no drop of sunshine through, and hung
 With gold and purple fruitage, and the white
 Thick cups of scented blossom. Underneath,
 Soft grew the sward and delicate, and flocks
 Of egrets, ay, and many cranes, stood up.
 Fanning their wings, to agitate and cool
 The noonday air, as men with heed and pains
 Had taught them, marshalling and taming them
 To bear the wind in, on their moving wings.
 So long time as a nimble slave would spend
 In milking of her cow, they walked at ease;
 Then reached the palace, all of forest trunks,
 Brought whole, and set together, made. Therein
 Had dwelt old Adam, when his mighty sons
 Had finished it, and up to Eden gate
 Had journeyed for to fetch him. "Here," they said
 "Mother and father, ye may dwell, and here
 Forget the garden wholly."

So he came
 Under the doorplace, and the women sat,
 Each with her finger on her lips; but he,
 Having been called, went on, until he reached
 The jewelled settle, wrought with cunning work
 Of gold and ivory, whereon they wont

To set the Elder. All with sleekest skins,
That striped and spotted creatures of the wood
Had worn, the seat was covered, but thereon
The Elder was not; by the steps thereof,
Upon the floor, whereto his silver beard
Did reach, he sat, and he was in his trance.
Upon the settle many doves were perched,
That set the air a going with their wings:
These opposite, the world's great shipwright stood
To wait the burden; and the Elder spake:
"Will He forget me? Would He might forget!
Old, old! The hope of old Methuselah
Is all in His forgetfulness." With that,
A slave-girl took a cup of wine, and crept
Anear him, saying, "Taste"; and when his lips
Had touched it, lo, he trembled, and he cried,
"Behold, I prophesy."

Then straight they fled
That were about him, and did stand apart
And stop their ears. For he, from time to time,
Was plagued with that same fate to prophesy,
And spake against himself, against his day
And time, in words that all men did abhor.
Therefore, he warning them what time the fit
Came on him, saved them, that they heard it not
So while they fled, he cried: "I saw the God
Reach out of heaven His wonderful right hand.
Lo, lo! He dipped it in the unquiet sea,
And in its curved palm behold the ark,
As in a vast calm lake, came floating on.
Ay, then, His other hand—the cursing hand—
He took and spread between us and the sun.
And all was black; the day was blotted out,
And horrible staggering took the frightened earth.
I heard the water hiss, and then methinks
The crack as of her splitting. Did she take
Their palaces that are my brothers dear,
And huddle them with all their ancients
Under into her breast? If it was black,
How could this old man see? There was a noise
I' the dark, and He drew back His hand again.
I looked,—It was a dream,—let no man say
It was aught else. There, so—the fit goes by.
Sir, and my daughters, is it eventide?—
Sooner than that, saith old Methuselah,
Let the vulture lay his beak to my green limbs.
What! art Thou envious?—are the sons of men
Too wise to please Thee, and to do Thy will?
Methuselah, he sitteth on the ground,
Clad in his gown of age, the pale white gown,
And goeth not forth to war; his wrinkled hands
He claspeth round his knees: old, very old.
Would he could steal from Thee one secret more—
The secret of Thy youth! O, envious God!
We die. The words of old Methuselah
And his prophecy are ended."

Then the wives,
Beholding how he trembled, and the maids
And children, came anear, saying, "Who art thou
That standest gazing on the Elder? Lo,
Thou dost not well: withdraw; for it was thou
Whose stranger presence troubled him, and brought
The fit of prophecy." And he did turn
To look upon them, and their majesty

And glorious beauty took away his words;
And being pure among the vile, he cast
In his thought a veil of snow-white purity
Over the beauteous throng. "Thou dost not well,"
They said. He answered: "Blossoms o' the world,
Fruitful as fair, never in watered glade,
Where in the youngest grass blue cups push forth,
And the white lily reareth up her head,
And purples cluster, and the saffron flower
Clear as a flame of sacrifice breaks out,
And every cedar bough, made delicate
With climbing roses, drops in white and red,—
Saw I (good angels keep you in their care)
So beautiful a crowd."

With that, they stamped,
Gnashed their white teeth, and turning, fled and spat
Upon the floor. The Elder spake to him,
Yet shaking with the burden, "Who art thou?"
He answered, "I, the man whom thou didst send
To fetch through this thy woodland, do forbear
To tell my name; thou lovest it not, great sire,—
No, nor mine errand. To thy house I spake,
Touching their beauty." "Wherefore didst thou spite,"
Quoth he, "the daughters?" and it seemed he lost
Count of that prophecy, for very age,
And from his thin lips dropt a trembling laugh.
"Wicked old man," quoth he, "this wise old man
I see as 't were not I. Thou bad old man,
What shall be done to thee? for thou didst burn
Their babes, and strew the ashes all about,
To rid the world of His white soldiers. Ay,
Scenting of human sacrifice, they fled.
Cowards! I heard them winnow their great wings:
They went to tell Him; but they came no more.
The women hate to hear of them, so sore
They grudged their little ones; and yet no way
There was but that. I took it; I did well."

With that he fell to weeping. "Son," said he,
"Long have I hid mine eyes from stalwart men,
For it is hard to lose the majesty
And pride and power of manhood: but to-day,
Stand forth into the light, that I may look
Upon thy strength, and think, **EVEN THUS DID I,
IN THE GLORY OF MY YOUTH, MORE LIKE TO GOD
THAN LIKE HIS SOLDIERS, FACE THE VASSAL WORLD.**"

Then Noah stood forward in his majesty,
Shouldering the golden billhook, wherewithal
He went to cut his way, when tangled in
The matted hayes. And down the opened roof
Fell slanting beams upon his stately head,
And streamed along his gown, and made to shine
The jewelled sandals on his feet.

And, lo,
The Elder cried aloud: "I prophesy.
Behold, my son is as a fruitful field
When all the lands are waste. The archers drew,—
They drew the bow against him; they were fain
To slay: but he shall live,—my son shall live,
And I shall live by him in the other days.
Behold the prophet of the Most High God:
Hear him. Behold the hope o' the world, what time

She lieth under. Hear him; he shall save
A seed alive, and sow the earth with man.
O, earth! earth! earth! a floating shell of wood
Shall hold the remnant of thy mighty lords
Will this old man be in it? Sir, and you
My daughters, hear him! Lo, this white old man
He sitteth on the ground. (Let be, let be:
Why dost Thou trouble us to make our tongue
Ring with abhorred words?) The prophecy
Of the Elder, and the vision that he saw,
They both are ended."

Then said Noah: "The life
Of this my lord is low for very age:
Why then, with bitter words upon thy tongue,
Father-of Lamech, dost thou anger Him?
Thou canst not strive against Him now." He said:
"Thy feet are toward the valley, where lie bones
Bleaching upon the desert. Did I love
The lithe strong lizards that I yoked and set
To draw my car? and were they not possessed?
Yea, all of them were liars. I loved them well.
What did the Enemy, but on a day
When I behind my talking team went forth,
They sweetly lying, so that all men praised
Their flattering tongues and mild persuasive eyes,—
What did the Enemy but send His slaves,
Angels, to cast down stones upon their heads
And break them? Nay, I could not stir abroad
But havoc came; they never crept or flew
Beyond the shelter that I builded here.
But straight the crowns I had set upon their heads
Were marks for myrmidons that in the clouds
Kept watch to crush them. Can a man forgive
That hath been warred on thus? I will not. Nay,
I swear it,—I, the man Methuselah."
The Master-shipwright, he replied, "'Tis true,
Great loss was that; but they that stood thy friends,
The wicked spirits, spoke upon their tongues,
And cursed the God of heaven. What marvel, sir,
If He was angered?" But the Elder cried,
"They all are dead,—the toward beasts I loved;
My goodly team, my joy, they all are dead;
Their bones lie bleaching in the wilderness:
And I will keep my wrath for evermore
Against the Enemy that slew them. Go,
Thou coward servant of a tyrant King,
Go down the desert of the bones, and ask,
'My King, what bones are these? Methuselah,
The white old man that sitteth on the ground,
Sendeth a message, "Bid them that they live,
And let my lizards run up every path
They wont to take when out of silver pipes,
The pipes that Tubal wrought into my roof,
I blew a sweeter cry than song-bird's throat
Hath ever formed; and while they laid their heads
Submiss upon my threshold, poured away
Music that welled by heartful out, and made
The throats of men that heard to swell, their breasts
To heave with the joy of grief; yea, caused the lips
To laugh of men asleep.

Return to me

The great wise lizards; ay, and them that flew
My pursuivants before me. Let me yoke
Again that multitude; and here I swear

That they shall draw my car and me thereon
Straight to the ship of doom. So men shall know
My loyalty, that I submit, and Thou
Shalt yet have honor. O mine Enemy,
By me. The speech of old Methuselah. ""
Then Noah made answer, "By the living God,
That is no enemy to men, great sire,
I will not take thy message; hear thou Him.
'Behold (He saith that suffereth thee), behold,
The earth that I made green cries out to Me,
Red with the costly blood of beauteous man.
I am robbed, I am robbed (He saith); they sacrifice
To evil demons of My blameless flocks,
That I did fashion with My hand. Behold,
How goodly was the world! I gave it thee
Fresh from its finishing. What hast thou done?
I will cry out to the waters, *Cover it,*
And hide it from its Father. Lo, Mine eyes
Turn from it shamed."

With that the old man laughed
Full softly. "Ay," quoth he, "a goodly world,
And we have done with it as we did list.
Why did He give it us? Nay, look you, son:
Five score they were that died in yonder waste;
And if He crieth, 'Repent, be reconciled,'
I answer, 'Nay, my lizards'; and again,
If He will trouble me in this mine age,
'Why hast Thou slain my lizards?' Now my speech
Is cut away from all my other words,
Standing alone. The Elder sweareth it,
The man of many days, Methuselah."
Then answered Noah, "My Master, hear it not;
But yet have patience"; and he turned himself,
And down betwixt the ordered trees went forth,
And in the light of evening made his way
Into the waste to meet the Voice of God.

BOOK III.

Above the head of great Methuselah
There lay two demons in the opened roof
Invisible, and gathered up his words;
For when the Elder prophesied, it came
About, that hidden things were shown to them,
And burdens that he spake against his time.

(But never heard them, such as dwelt with him;
Their ears they stopped, and willed to live at ease
In all delight; and perfect in their youth,
And strong, disport them in the perfect world.)

Now these were fettered that they could not fly,
For a certain disobedience they had wrought
Against the ruler of their host; but not
The less they loved their cause; and when the feet
O' the Master-builder were no longer heard,
They, slipping to the sward, right painfully
Did follow, for the one to the other said,
"Behoves our master know of this; and us,
Should he be favorable, he may loose
From these our bonds."

And thus it came to pass,
That while at dead of night the old dragon lay

Coiled in the cavern where he dwelt, the watch
Pacing before it saw in middle air
A boat, that gleamed like fire, and on it came,
And rocked as it drew near, and then it burst
And went to pieces, and there fell therefrom,
Close at the cavern's mouth, two glowing balls.

Now there was drawn a curtain nigh the mouth
Of that deep cave, to testify of wrath.
The dragon had been wroth with some that served,
And chased them from him; and his oracles,
That wont to drop from him, were stopped, and men
Might only pray to him through that fell web
That hung before him. Then did whisper low
Some of the little spirits that bat-like clung
And clustered round the opening. "Lo," they said,
While gazed the watch upon those glowing balls,
"These are like moons eclipsed; but let them lie
Red on the moss, and sear its dewy spires,
Until our lord give leave to draw the web,
And quicken reverence by his presence dread,
For he will know and call to them by name,
And they will change. At present he is sick,
And wills that none disturb him." So they lay,
And there was silence, for the forest tribes
Came never near that cave. Wiser than men,
They fled the serpent hiss that oft by night
Came forth of it, and feared the wan dusk forms
That stalked among the trees, and in the dark
Those whiffs of flame that wandered up the sky
And made the moonlight sickly.

Now, the cave

Was marvellous for beauty, wrought with tools
Into the living rock, for there had worked
All cunning men, to cut on it with signs
And shows, yea, all the manner of mankind.
The fateful apple-tree was there, a bough
Bent with the weight of him that us beguiled;
And lilies of the field did seem to blow
And bud in the storied stone. There Tubal sat,
Who from his harp delivered music, sweet
As any in the spheres. Yea, more;
Earth's latest wonder, on the walls appeared,
Unfinished, workmen clustering on its ribs;
And farther back, within the rock hewn out,
Angelic figures stood, that impious hands
Had fashioned; many golden lamps they held
By golden chains depending, and their eyes
All tended in a reverend quietude
Toward the couch whereon the dragon lay.
The floor was beaten gold; the curly lengths
Of his last coils lay on it, hid from sight
With a coverlet made stiff with crusting gems,
Fire opals shooting, rubies, fierce bright eyes
Of diamonds, or the pale green emerald,
That changed their lustre when he breathed.

His head

Feathered with crimson combs, and all his neck,
And half-shut fans of his admired wings,
That in their scaly splendor put to shame
Or gold or stone, lay on his ivory couch
And shivered; for the dragon suffered pain:
He suffered and he feared. It was his doom,

The tempter, that he never should depart
From the bright creature that in Paradise
He for his evil purpose erst possessed,
Until it died. Thus only, spirit of might
And chiefest spirit of ill, could he be free.

But with its nature wed, as souls of men
Are wedded to their clay, he took the dread
Of death and dying, and the coward heart
Of the beast, and craven terrors of the end
Sank him that habited within it to dread
Disunion. He, a dark dominion erst
Rebellious, lay and trembled, for the flesh
Daunted his immaterial. He was sick
And sorry. Great ones of the earth had sent
Their chief musicians for to comfort him,
Chanting his praise, the friend of man, the god
That gave them knowledge, at so great a price
And costly. Yea, the riches of the mine,
And glorious brodered work, and woven gold,
And all things wisely made, they at his feet
Laid daily; for they said, "This mighty one,
All the world wonders after him. He lieth
Sick in his dwelling; he hath long foregone
(To do us good) dominion, and a throne,
And his brave warfare with the Enemy,
So much he pitieth us that were denied
The gain and gladness of this knowledge. Now
Shall he be certified of gratitude,
And smell the sacrifice that most he loves."

The night was dark, but every lamp gave forth
A tender, lustrous beam. His beauteous wings
The dragon fluttered, cursed awhile, then turned
And moaned with lamentable voice, "I thirst,
Give me to drink." Thereon stepped out in haste,
From inner chambers, lovely ministrants,
Young boys, with radiant locks and peaceful eyes,
And poured out liquor from their cups, to cool
His parched tongue, and kneeling held it nigh
In jewelled basins sparkling; and he lapped,
And was appeased, and said, "I will not hide
Longer, my much desired face from men.
Draw back the web of separation." Then
With cries of gratulation ran they forth,
And flung it wide, and all the watch fell low,
Each on his face, as drunk with sudden joy.
Thus marked he, glowing on the branched moss,
Those red rare moons, and let his serpent eyes
Consider them full subtly, "What be these?"
Enquiring: and the little spirits said,
"As we for thy protection (having heard
That wrathful sons of darkness walk, to-night,
Such as do oft ill use us), clustered here,
We marked a boat a-fire that sailed the skies,
And furrowed up like spray a billowy cloud,
And, lo, it went to pieces, scattering down
A rain of sparks and these two angry moons."
Then said the dragon, "Let my guard, and you,
Attendant hosts, recede"; and they went back,
And formed about the cave a widening ring,
Then halting, stood afar; and from the cave
The snaky wonder spoke, with hissing tongue,
"If ye were Tartis and Deleisonon,
Be Tartis and Deleisonon once more."

Then egg-like cracked the glowing balls, and forth
Started black angels, trampling hard to free
Their fettered feet from out the smoking shell.

And he said, "Tartis and Deleisonon,
Your lord I am: draw nigh." "Thou art our lord,"
They answered, and with fettered limbs full low
They bent, and made obeisance. Furthermore,
"O fiery flying serpent, after whom
The nations go, let thy dominion last,"
They said, "forever." And the serpent said,
"It shall: unfold your errand." They replied,
One speaking for a space, and afterward
His fellow taking up the word with fear
And panting, "We were set to watch the mouth
Of great Methuselah. There came to him
The son of Lamech two days since. My lord,
They prophesied, the Elder prophesied,
Unwitting, of the flood of waters,—ay,
A vision was before him, and the lands
Lay under water drowned: he saw the ark,—
It floated in the Enemy's right hand."
Lord of the lost, the son of Lamech fled
Into the wilderness to meet His voice
That reigneth; and we, diligent to hear
Aught that might serve thee, followed, but, forbid
To enter, lay upon its boundary cliff,
And wished for morning.

"When the dawn was red,
We sought the man, we marked him; and he prayed,—
Kneeling, he prayed in the valley, and he said—"
"Nay," quoth the serpent, "spare me, what devout
He fawning grovelled to the All-powerful;
But if of what shall hap he aught let fall,
Speak that." They answered, "He did pray as one
That looketh to outlive mankind,—and more,
We are certified by all his scattered words,
That HE will take from men their length of days,
And cut them off like grass in its first flower:
From henceforth this shall be."

That when he heard,
The dragon made to the night his moan.

"And more,"
They said, "that He above would have men know
That He doth love them, whoso will repent,
To that man he is favorable, yea,
Will be his loving Lord."

The dragon cried,
"The last is worse than all. O, man, thy heart
Is stout against His wrath. But will He love?
I heard it rumored in the heavens of old,
(And doth He love?) Thou wilt not, canst not, stand
Against the love of God. Dominion fails;
I see it float from me, that long have worn
Fetters of flesh to win it. Love of God!
I cry against thee; thou art worse than all."
They answered, "Be not moved, admired chief
And trusted of mankind"; and they went on,
And fed him with the prophecies that fell
From the Master-shipwright in his prayer.

But prone

He lay, for he was sick: at every word
Prophetic cowering. As a bruising blow,
It fell upon his head and daunted him,
Until they ended, saying, "Prince, behold,
Thy servants have revealed the whole."

Thereon

He out of snaky lips did hiss forth thanks.
Then said he, "Tartis and Deleisonon,
Receive your wages." So their fetters fell;
And they retiring, lauded him, and cried,
"King, reign forever." Then he mourned, "Amen."

And he,—being left alone,—he said: "A light!
I see a light,—a star among the trees,—
An angel." And it drew toward the cave,
But with its sacred feet touched not the grass,
Nor lifted up the lids of its pure eyes,
But hung a span's length from that ground pollute,
At the opening of the cave.

And when he looked,
The dragon cried, "Thou newly-fashioned thing,
Of name unknown, thy scorn becomes thee not.
Doth not thy Master suffer what thine eyes
Thou countest all too clean to open on?"
But still it hovered, and the quietness
Of holy heaven was on the drooping lids;
And not as one that answereth, it let fall
The music from its mouth, but like to one
That doth not hear, or, hearing, doth not heed.

"A message: 'I have heard thee, while remote
I went My rounds among the unfinished stars.'
A message: 'I have left thee to thy ways,
And mastered all thy vileness, for thy hate
I have made to serve the ends of My great love.
Hereafter will I chain thee down. To-day
One thing thou art forbidden; now thou knowest
The name thereof: I told it thee in heaven,
When thou wert sitting at My feet. Forbear
To let that hidden thing be whispered forth:
For man, ungrateful (and thy hope it was,
That so ungrateful he might prove), would scorn,
And not believe it, adding so fresh weight
Of condemnation to the doomed world.
Concerning that, thou art forbid to speak;
Know thou didst count it, falling from My tongue,
A lovely song, whose meaning was unknown,
Unknowable, unbearable to thought,
But sweeter in the hearing than all harps
Toned in My holy hollow. Now thine ears
Are opened, know it, and discern and fear,
Forbearing speech of it for evermore.'"

So said, it turned, and with a cry of joy,
As one released, went up: and it was dawn,
And all boughs dropped with dew, and out of mist
Came the red sun and looked into the cave.

But the dragon, left a-tremble, called to him,
From the nether kingdom, certain of his friends,—
Three whom he trusted, councillors accursed.
A thunder-cloud stooped low and swathed the place
In its black swirls, and out of it they rushed,
And hid them in recesses of the cave,

Because they could not look upon the sun,
Sith light is pure. And Satan called to them,—
All in the dark, in his great rage he spake:
"Up," quoth the dragon; "it is time to work,
Or we are all undone." And he did hiss,
And there came shudderings over land and trees,
A dimness after dawn. The earth threw out
A blinding fog, that crept toward the cave,
And rolled up blank before it like a veil,—
curtain to conceal its habiters.
Then did those spirits move upon the floor,
Like pillars of darkness, and with eyes aglow.
One had a helm for covering of the scars
That seamed what rested of a goodly face;
He wore his vizor up, and all his words
Were hollower than an echo from the hills:
He was hight Make. And, lo, his fellow-fiend
Came after, holding down his dastard head,
Like one ashamed: now this for craft was great;
The dragon honored him. A third sat down
Among them, covering with his wasted hand
Somewhat that pained his breast.

And when the fit
Of thunder, and the sobbings of the wind,
Were lulled, the dragon spoke with wrath and rage,
And told them of his matters: "Look to this,
If ye be loyal"; adding, "Give your thoughts,
And let me have your counsel in this need."

One spirit rose and spake, and all the cave
Was full of sighs, "The words of Make the Prince,
Of him once delegate in Betelgeux:
Whereas of late the manner is to change,
We know not where 't will end; and now my words
Go thus: give way, be peaceable, lie still
And strive not, else the world that we have won
He may, to drive us out, reduce to naught.

"For while I stood in mine obedience yet,
Steering of Betelgeux my sun, behold,
A moon, that evil ones did fill, rolled up
Astray, and suddenly the Master came,
And while, a million strong, like rooks they rose,
He took and broke it, flung it here and there,
And called a blast to drive the powder forth;
And it was fine as dust, and blurred the skies
Farther than 'tis from hence to this young sun.
Spirits that passed upon their work that day,
Cried out, 'How dusty 'tis.' Behoves us, then,
That we depart, as leaving unto Him
This goodly world and goodly race of man.
Not all are doomed; hereafter it may be
That we find place on it again. But if,
Too zealous to preserve it, and the men
Our servants, we oppose Him, He may come
And choosing rather to undo His work
Than strive with it for aye, make so an end."

He sighing paused. Lo, then the serpent hissed
In impotent rage, "Depart! and how depart!
Can flesh be carried down where spirits wonn?
Or I, most miserable, hold my life
Over the airless, bottomless gulf, and bide
The buffetings of yonder shoreless sea?

O death, thou terrible doom: O death, thou dread
Of all that breathe."

A spirit rose and spake;

"Whereas in Heaven is power, is much to fear;
For this admired country we have marred.
Whereas in Heaven is love (and there are days
When yet I can recall what love was like),
Is naught to fear. A threatening makes the whole,
And clogged with strong conditions: 'O, repent,
Man, and I turn,' He, therefore, powerful now,
And more so, master, that ye bide in clay,
Threateneth that He may save. They shall not die."

The dragon said, "I tremble, I am sick."
He said with pain of heart, "How am I fallen!
For I keep silence; yea, I have withdrawn
From haunting of His gates, and shouting up
Defiance. Wherefore doth He hunt me out
From this small world, this little one, that I
Have been content to take unto myself,
I here being loved and worshipped? He knoweth
How much I have foregone; and must He stoop
To whelm the world, and heave the floors o' the deep,
Of purpose to pursue me from my place?
And since I gave men knowledge, must He take
Their length of days whereby they perfect it?
So shall He scatter all that I have stored,
And get them by degrading them. I know
That in the end it is appointed me
To fade. I will not fade before the time."

A spirit rose, the third, a spirit ashamed
And subtle, and his face he turned aside:
"Whereas," said he, "we strive against both power
And love, behoves us that we strive aright.
Now some of old my comrades, yesterday
I met, as they did journey to appear
In the Presence; and I said, 'My master lieth
Sick yonder, otherwise (for no decree
There stands against it) he would also come
And make obeisance with the sons of God.'
They answered, naught denying. Therefore, lord,
'Tis certain that ye have admittance yet;
And what doth hinder? Nothing but this breath.
Were it not well to make an end, and die,
And gain admittance to the King of kings?
What if thy slaves by thy consent should take
And bear thee on their wings above the earth,
And suddenly let fall,—how soon 't were o'er!
We should have fear and sinking at the heart;
But in a little moment we should see,
Rising majestic from a ruined heap,
The stately spirit that we served of yore."

The serpent turned his subtle deadly eyes
Upon the spirit, and hissed; and sick with shame,
It bowed itself together, and went back
With hidden face. "This counsel is not good,"
The other twain made answer; "look, my lord,
Whereas 'tis evil in thine eyes, in ours
'Tis evil also; speak, for we perceive
That on thy tongue the words of counsel sit,
Ready to fly to our right greedy ears,
That long for them." And Satan, flattered thus
(Forever may the serpent kind be charmed,

With soft sweet words, and music deftly played),
Replied, "Whereas I surely rule the world,
Behoves that ye prepare for me a path,
And that I, putting of my pains aside,
Go stir rebellion in the mighty hearts
O' the giants; for He loveth them, and looks
Full oft complacent on their glorious strength.
He willeth that they yield, that He may spare;
But, by the blackness of my loathed den,
I say they shall not, no, they shall not yield;
Go, therefore, take to you some harmless guise,
And spread a rumor that I come. I, sick,
Sorry, and aged, hasten. I have heard
Whispers that out of heaven dropped unaware.
I caught them up, and sith they bode men harm,
I am ready for to comfort them; yea, more,
To counsel, and I will that they drive forth
The women, the abhorréd of my soul;
Let not a woman breathe where I shall pass,
Lest the curse fall, and that she bruise my head.
Friends, if it be their mind to send for me
An army, and triumphant draw me on
In the golden car ye wot of, and with shouts,
I would not that ye hinder them. Ah, then
Will I make hard their hearts, and grieve Him sore,
That loves them, O, by much too well to wet
Their stately heads, and soil those locks of strength
Under the fateful brine. Then afterward,
While He doth reason vainly with them, I
Will offer Him a pact: 'Great King, a pact,
And men shall worship Thee, I say they shall,
For I will bid them do it, yea, and leave
To sacrifice their kind, so Thou my name
Wilt suffer to be worshipped after Thine.'"

"Yea, my lord Satan," quoth they, "do this thing,
And let us hear thy words, for they are sweet."

Then he made answer, "By a messenger
Have I this day been warned. There is a deed
I may not tell of, lest the people add
Scorn to a Coming Greatness to their faults.
Why this? Who careth when about to slay,
And slay indeed, how well they have deserved
Death, whom he slayeth? Therefore yet is hid
A meaning of some mercy that will rob
The nether world. Now look to it,—'Twere vain
Albeit this deluge He would send indeed,
That we expect the harvest; He would yet
Be the Master-reaper; for I heard it said,
Them that be young and know Him not, and them
That are bound and may not build, yea, more, their wives,
Whom, suffering not to hear the doom, they keep
Joyous behind the curtains, every one
With maidens nourished in the house, and babes
And children at her knees,—(then what remain!)
He claimeth and will gather for His own.
Now, therefore, it were good by guile to work,
Princes, and suffer not the doom to fall.
There is no evil like to love. I heard
Him whisper it. Have I put on this flesh
To ruin his two children beautiful,
And shall my deed confound me in the end,
Through awful imitation? Love of God,
I cry against thee; thou art worst of all."

BOOK IV.

Now while these evil ones took counsel strange,
The son of Lamech journeyed home; and, lo!
A company came down, and struck the track
As he did enter it. There rode in front
Two horsemen, young and noble, and behind
Were following slaves with tent gear; others led
Strong horses, others bare the instruments
O' the chase, and in the rear dull camels lagged,
Sighing, for they were burdened, and they loved
The desert sands above that grassy vale.

And as they met, those horsemen drew the rein,
And fixed on him their grave untroubled eyes;
He in his regal grandeur walked alone,
And had nor steed nor follower, and his mien
Was grave and like to theirs. He said to them,
"Fair sirs, whose are ye?" They made answer cold,
"The beautiful woman, sir, our mother dear,
Niloiya, bear us to great Lamech's son."
And he, replying, "I am he." They said,
"We know it, sir. We have remembered you
Through many seasons. Pray you let us not;
We fain would greet our mother." And they made
Obeisance and passed on; then all their train,
Which while they spoke had halted, moved apace,
And, while the silent father stood, went by,
He gazing after, as a man that dreams;
For he was sick with their cold, quiet scorn,
That seemed to say, "Father, we own you not.
We love you not, for you have left us long,—
So long, we care not that you come again."

And while the sullen camels moved, he spake
To him that led the last, "There are but two
Of these my sons; but where doth Japhet ride?
For I would see him." And the leader said,
"Sir, ye shall find him, if ye follow up
Along the track. Afore the noonday meal
The young men, even our masters, bathed; (there grows
A clump of cedars by the bend of yon
Clear river)—there did Japhet, after meat,
Being right weary, lay him down and sleep.
There, with a company of slaves and some
Few camels, ye shall find him."

And the man
The father of these three, did let him pass,
And struggle and give battle to his heart,
Standing as motionless as pillar set
To guide a wanderer in a pathless waste;
But all his strength went from him, and he strove
Vainly to trample out and trample down
The misery of his love unsatisfied,—
Unutterable love flung in his face.

Then he broke out in passionate words, that cried
Against his lot, "I have lost my own, and won
None other; no, not one! Alas, my sons!
That I have looked to for my solacing,
In the bitterness to come. My children dear!"
And when from his own lips he heard those words,
With passionate stirring of the heart, he wept.

And none came nigh to comfort him. His face

Was on the ground; but, having wept, he rose
Full hastily, and urged his way to find
The river; and in hollow of his hand
Raised up the water to his brow: "This son,
This other son of mine," he said, "shall see
No tears upon my face." And he looked on,
Beheld the camels, and a group of slaves
Sitting apart from some one fast asleep,
Where they had spread out webs of broidery work
Under a cedar-tree; and he came on,
And when they made obeisance he declared
His name, and said, "I will beside my son
Sit till he wakeneth." So Japhet lay
A-dreaming, and his father drew to him.
He said, "This cannot scorn me yet"; and paused,
Right angry with himself, because the youth,
Albeit of stately growth, so languidly
Lay with a listless smile upon his mouth,
That was full sweet and pure; and as he looked,
He half forgot his trouble in his pride.
"And is this mine?" said he, "my son! mine own!
(God, thou art good!) O, if this turn away,
That pang shall be past bearing. I must think
That all the sweetness of his goodly face
Is copied from his soul. How beautiful
Are children to their fathers! Son, my heart
Is greatly glad because of thee; my life
Shall lack of no completeness in the days
To come. If I forget the joy of youth,
In thee shall I be comforted; ay, see
My youth, a dearer than my own again."

And when he ceased, the youth, with sleep content,
Murmured a little, turned himself and woke.

He woke, and opened on his father's face
The darkness of his eyes; but not a word
The Master-shipwright said,—his lips were sealed;
He was not ready, for he feared to see
This mouth curl up with scorn. And Japhet spoke,
Full of the calm that cometh after sleep:
"Sir, I have dreamed of you. I pray you, sir,
What is your name?" and even with his words
His countenance changed. The son of Lamech said,
"Why art thou sad? What have I done to thee?"
And Japhet answered, "O, methought I fled
In the wilderness before a maddened beast,
And you came up and slew it; and I thought
You were my father; but I fear me, sir,
My thoughts were vain." With that his father said,
"Whatever of blessing Thou reserv'st for me,
God! if Thou wilt not give to both, give here:
Bless him with both Thy hands"; and laid his own
On Japhet's head.

Then Japhet looked on him,
Made quiet by content, and answered low,
With faltering laughter, glad and reverent: "Sir,
You are my father?" "Ay," quoth he, "I am!
Kiss me, my son; and let me hear my name,
My much desired name, from your dear lips."

Then after, rested, they betook them home:
And Japhet, walking by the Master, thought,
"I did not will to love this sire of mine;
But now I feel as if I had always known

And loved him well; truly, I see not why,
But I would rather serve him than go free
With my two brethren." And he said to him,
"Father!"—who answered, "I am here, my son."
And Japhet said, "I pray you, sir, attend
To this my answer: let me go with you,
For, now I think on it, I do not love
The chase, nor managing the steed, nor yet
The arrows and the bow; but rather you,
For all you do and say, and you yourself,
Are goodly and delightsome in mine eyes.
I pray you, sir, when you go forth again,
That I may also go." And he replied,
"I will tell thy speech unto the Highest; He
Shall answer it. But I would speak to thee
Now of the days to come. Know thou, most dear
To this thy father, that the drenched world,
When risen clean washed from water, shall receive
From thee her lordliest governors, from thee
Daughters of noblest soul."

So Japhet said,

"Sir, I am young, but of my mother straight
I will go ask a wife, that this may be.
I pray you, therefore, as the manner is
Of fathers, give me land that I may reap
Corn for sustaining of my wife, and bruise
The fruit of the vine to cheer her." But he said,
"Dost thou forget? or dost thou not believe,
My son?" He answered, "I did ne'er believe,
My father, ere to-day; but now, methinks,
Whatever thou believest I believe,
For thy beloved's sake. If this then be
As thou (I hear) hast said, and earth doth bear
The last of her wheat harvests, and make ripe
The latest of her grapes; yet hear me, sir,
None of the daughters shall be given to me
If I be landless." Then his father said,
"Lift up thine eyes toward the north, my son"
And so he did. "Behold thy heritage!"
Quoth the world's prince and master, "far away
Upon the side o' the north, where green the field
Lies every season through, and where the dews
Of heaven are wholesome, shall thy children reign;
I part it to them, for the earth is mine;
The Highest gave it me: I make it theirs.
Moreover, for thy marriage gift, behold
The cedars where thou sleepedst! There are vines;
And up the rise is growing wheat. I give
(For all, alas! is mine),—I give thee both
For dowry, and my blessing."

And he said,

"Sir, you are good, and therefore the Most High
Shall bless me also. Sir, I love you well."

BOOK V.

And when two days were over, Japhet said,
"Mother, so please you, get a wife for me."
The mother answered, "Dost thou mock me, son?
'Tis not the manner of our kin to wed
So young. Thou knowest it; art thou not ashamed?
Thou carest not for a wife." And the youth blushed,
And made for answer: "This, my father, saith
The doom is nigh; now therefore find a maid,

Or else shall I be wifeless all my days.
And as for me, I care not; but the lands
Are parted, and the goodliest share is mine.
And lo! my brethren are betrothed; their maids
Are with thee in the house. Then why not mine?
Didst thou not diligently search for these
Among the noblest born of all the earth,
And bring them up? My sisters, dwell they not
With women that bespake them for their sons?
Now, therefore, let a wife be found for me,
Fair as the day, and gentle to my will
As thou art to my father's." When she heard,
Niloiya sighed, and answered, "It is well."
And Japhet went out from her presence.

Then

Quoth the great Master: "Wherefore sought ye not,
Woman, these many days, nor tired at all,
Till ye had found, a maiden for my son?
In this ye have done ill." Niloiya said:
"Let not my lord be angry. All my soul
Is sad: my lord hath walked afar so long,
That some despise thee; yea, our servants fail
Lately to bring their stint of corn and wood.
And, sir, thy household slaves do steal away
To thy great father, and our lands lie waste,—
None till them: therefore think the women scorn
To give me,—whatsoever gems I send,
And goodly raiment,—(yea, I seek afar,
And sue with all desire and humbleness
Through every master's house, but no one gives)—
A daughter for my son." With that she ceased.

Then said the Master: "Some thou hast with thee,
Brought up among thy children, dutiful
And fair; thy father gave them for my slaves,—
Children of them whom he brought captive forth
From their own heritage." And she replied,
Right scornfully: "Shall Japhet wed a slave?"
Then said the Master: "He shall wed: look thou
To that. I say not he shall wed a slave;
But by the might of One that made him mine,
I will not quit thee for my doomed way
Until thou wilt betroth him. Therefore, haste,
Beautiful woman, loved of me and mine,
To bring a maiden, and to say, 'Behold
A wife for Japhet.'" Then she answered, "Sir,
It shall be done."

And forth Niloiya sped.

She gathered all her jewels,—all she held
Of costly or of rich,—and went and spake
With some few slaves that yet abode with her,
For daily they were fewer; and went forth,
With fair and flattering words, among her feres,
And fain had wrought with them: and she had hope
That made her sick, it was so faint; and then
She had fear, and after she had certainty,
For all did scorn her. "Nay," they cried. "O fool!
If this be so, and on a watery world
Ye think to rock, what matters if a wife
Be free or bond? There shall be none to rule,
If she have freedom: if she have it not,
None shall there be to serve."

And she alit,

The time being done, desponding at her door,
And went behind a screen, where should have wrought

The daughters of the captives; but there wrought
One only, and this rose from off the floor,
Where she the river rush full deftly wove,
And made obeisance. Then Niloiya said,
"Where are thy fellows?" And the maid replied,
"Let not Niloiya, this my lady loved,
Be angry; they are fled since yesternight."
Then said Niloiya, "Amarant, my slave,
When have I called thee by thy name before?"
She answered, "Lady, never"; and she took
And spread her brodered robe before her face.
Niloiya spoke thus: "I am come to woe,
And thou to honor." Saying this, she wept
Passionate tears; and all the damsel's soul
Was full of yearning wonder, and her robe
Slipped from her hand, and her right innocent face
Was seen betwixt her locks of tawny hair
That dropped about her knees, and her two eyes,
Blue as the much-loved flower that rims the beck,
Looked sweetly on Niloiya; but she knew
No meaning in her words; and she drew nigh,
And kneeled and said, "Will this my lady speak?
Her damsel is desirous of her words."
Then said Niloiya, "I, thy mistress, sought
A wife for Japhet, and no wife is found."
And yet again she wept with grief of heart,
Saying, "Ah me, miserable! I must give
A wife: the Master willeth it: a wife,
Ah me! unto the high-born. He will scorn
His mother and reproach me. I must give—
None else have I to give—a slave,—even thee."
This further spake Niloiya: "I was good,—
Had rue on thee, a tender sucking child,
When they did tear thee from thy mother's breast;
I fed thee, gave thee shelter, and I taught
Thy hands all cunning arts that women prize.
But out on me! my good is turned to ill.
O, Japhet, well-beloved!" And she rose up,
And did restrain herself, saying, "Dost thou heed?
Behold, this thing shall be." The damsel sighed,
"Lady, I do." Then went Niloiya forth.

And Amarant murmured in her deep amaze,
"Shall Japhet's little children kiss my mouth?
And will he sometimes take them from my arms,
And almost care for me for their sweet sake?
I have not dared to think I loved him,—now
I know it well: but O, the bitterness
For him!" And ending thus, the damsel rose,
For Japhet entered. And she bowed herself
Meekly and made obeisance, but her blood
Ran cold about her heart, for all his face
Was colored with his passion.

Japhet spoke:

He said, "My father's slave"; and she replied,
Low drooping her fair head, "My master's son."
And after that a silence fell on them,
With trembling at her heart, and rage at his.
And Japhet, mastered of his passion, sat
And could not speak. O! cruel seemed his fate,—
So cruel her that told it, so unkind.
His breast was full of wounded love and wrath
Wrestling together; and his eyes flashed out
Indignant lights, as all amazed he took
The insult home that she had offered him,

Who should have held his honor dear.

And, lo,

The misery choked him and he cried in pain,
"Go, get thee forth"; but she, all white and still,
Parted her lips to speak, and yet spake not,
Nor moved. And Japhet rose up passionate,
With lifted arm as one about to strike;
But she cried out and met him, and she held
With desperate might his hand, and prayed to him,
"Strike not, or else shall men from henceforth say,
'Japhet is like to us.'" And he shook off
The damsel, and he said, "I thank thee, slave;
For never have I stricken yet or child
Or woman. Not for thy sake am I glad,
Nay, but for mine. Get hence. Obey my words."
Then Japhet lifted up his voice, and wept.

And no more he restrained himself, but cried,
With heavings of the heart, "O hateful day!
O day that shuts the door upon delight.
A slave! to wed a slave! O loathéd wife,
Hated of Japhet's soul." And after, long,
With face between his hands, he sat, his thoughts
Sullen and sore; then scorned himself, and saying,
"I will not take her, I will die unwed,
It is but that"; lift up his eyes and saw
The slave, and she was sitting at his feet;
And he, so greatly wondering that she dared
The disobedience, looked her in the face
Less angry than afraid, for pale she was
As lily yet unsmiled on by the sun;
And he, his passion being spent, sighed out,
"Low am I fallen indeed. Hast thou no fear,
That thou dost flout me?" but she gave to him
The sighing echo of his sigh, and mourned,
"No."

And he wondered, and he looked again,
For in her heart there was a new-born pang,
That cried; but she, as mothers with their young,
Suffered, yet loved it; and there shone a strange
Grave sweetness in her blue unsullied eyes.
And Japhet, leaning from the settle, thought,
"What is it? I will call her by her name,
To comfort her, for also she is naught
To blame; and since I will not her to wife,
She falls back from the freedom she had hoped."
Then he said "Amarant"; and the damsel drew
Her eyes down slowly from the shaded sky
Of even, and she said, "My master's son,
Japhet"; and Japhet said, "I am not wroth
With thee, but wretched for my mother's deed,
Because she shamed me."

And the maiden said,

"Doth not thy father love thee well, sweet sir?"
"Ay," quoth he, "well." She answered, "Let the heart
Of Japhet, then, be merry. Go to him
And say, 'The damsel whom my mother chose,
Sits by her in the house; but as for me,
Sir, ere I take her, let me go with you
To that same outland country. Also, sir,
My damsel hath not worked as yet the robe
Of her betrothal'; now, then, sith he loves,
He will not say thee nay. Herein for awhile
Is respite, and thy mother far and near
Will seek again: it may be she will find

A fair, free maiden."

Japhet said, "O maid,
Sweet are thy words; but what if I return,
And all again be as it is to-day?"
Then Amarant answered, "Some have died in youth;
But yet, I think not, sir, that I shall die.
Though ye shall find it even as I had died,—
Silent, for any words I might have said;
Empty, for any space I might have filled.
Sir, I will steal away, and hide afar;
But if a wife be found, then will I bide
And serve." He answered, "O, thy speech is good;
Now therefore (since my mother gave me thee),
I will reward it; I will find for thee
A goodly husband, and will make him free
Thee also."

Then she started from his feet,
And, red with shame and anger, flashed on him
The passion of her eyes; and put her hands
With catching of the breath to her fair throat,
And stood in her defiance lost to fear,
Like some fair hind in desperate danger turned
And brought to bay, and wild in her despair.
But shortly, "I remember," quoth she, low,
With raining down of tears and broken sighs,
"That I am Japhet's slave; beseech you, sir,
As ye were ever gentle, ay, and sweet
Of language to me, be not harder now.
Sir, I was yours to take; I knew not, sir,
That also ye might give me. Pray you, sir,
Be pitiful,—be merciful to me,
A slave." He said, "I thought to do thee good,
For good hath been thy counsel"; but she cried,
"Good master, be you therefore pitiful
To me, a slave." And Japhet wondered much
At her, and at her beauty, for he thought,
"None of the daughters are so fair as this,
Nor stand with such a grace majestical;
She in her locks is like the travelling sun,
Setting, all clad in coifing clouds of gold.
And would she die unmatched?" He said to her,
"What! wilt thou sail alone in yonder ship,
And dwell alone hereafter?" "Ay," she said,
"And serve my mistress."

"It is well," quoth he,
And held his hand to her, as is the way
Of masters. Then she kissed it, and she said,
"Thanks for benevolence," and turned herself,
Adding, "I rest, sir, on your gracious words";
Then stepped into the twilight and was gone.

And Japhet, having found his father, said,
"Sir, let me also journey when ye go."
Who answered, "Hath thy mother done her part?"

He said, "Yea, truly, and my damsel sits
Before her in the house; and also, sir,
She said to me, 'I have not worked, as yet,
The garment of betrothal.'" And he said,
"'Tis not the manner of our kin to speak
Concerning matters that a woman rules;
But hath thy mother brought a damsel home,
And let her see thy face, then all is one
As ye were wed." He answered, "Even so,
It matters nothing; therefore hear me, sir:

The damsel being mine, I am content
To let her do according to her will;
And when we shall return, so surely, sir,
As I shall find her by my mother's side,
Then will I take her"; and he left to speak;
His father answering, "Son, thy words are good."

BOOK VI.

Night. Now a tent was pitched, and Japhet sat
In the door and watched, for on a litter lay
The father of his love. And he was sick
To death; but daily he would rouse him up,
And stare upon the light, and ever say,
"On, let us journey"; but it came to pass
That night, across their path a river ran,
And they who served the father and the son
Had pitched the tents beside it, and had made
A fire, to scare away the savagery
That roamed in that great forest, for their way
Had led among the trees of God.

The moon

Shone on the river, like a silver road
To lead them over; but when Japhet looked,
He said, "We shall not cross it. I shall lay
This well-belovéd head low in the leaves,—
Not on the farther side." From time to time,
The water-snakes would stir its glassy flow
With curling undulations, and would lay
Their heads along the bank, and, subtle-eyed,
Consider those long spiriting flames, that danced,
When some red log would break and crumble down;
And show his dark despondent eyes, that watched,
Wearily, even Japhet's. But he cared
Little; and in the dark, that was not dark,
But dimness of confused incertitude,
Would move a-near all silently, and gaze
And breathe, and shape itself, a manéd thing
With eyes; and still he cared not, and the form
Would falter, then recede, and melt again
Into the farther shade. And Japhet said:
"How long? The moon hath grown again in heaven,
After her caving twice, since we did leave
The threshold of our home; and now what 'vails
That far on tumbled mountain snow we toiled,
Hungry, and weary, all the day; by night
Waked with a dreadful trembling underneath,
To look, while every cone smoked, and there ran
Red brooks adown, that licked the forest up,
While in the pale white ashes wading on
We saw no stars?—what 'vails if afterward,
Astonished with great silence, we did move
Over the measureless, unknown desert mead;
While all the day, in rents and crevices,
Would lie the lizard and the serpent kind,
Drowsy; and in the night take fearsome shapes,
And oft-times woman-faced and woman-haired
Would trail their snaky length, and curse and mourn;
Or there would wander up, when we were tired,
Dark troops of evil ones, with eyes morose,
Withstanding us, and staring;—O! what 'vails
That in the dread deep forest we have fought
With following packs of wolves? These men of might,
Even the giants, shall not hear the doom

My father came to tell them of. Ah, me!
If God indeed had sent him, would he lie
(For he is stricken with a sore disease)
Helpless outside their city?"

Then he rose,
And put aside the curtains of the tent,
To look upon his father's face; and lo!
The tent being dark, he thought that somewhat sat
Beside the litter; and he set his eyes
To see it, and saw not; but only marked
Where, fallen away from manhood and from power,
His father lay. Then he came forth again,
Trembling, and crouched beside the dull red fire,
And murmured, "Now it is the second time:
An old man, as I think (but scarcely saw).
Dreadful of might. Its hair was white as wool:
I dared not look; perhaps I saw not aught,
But only knew that it was there: the same
Which walked beside us once when he did pray."
And Japhet hid his face between his hands
For fear, and grief of heart, and weariness
Of watching; and he slumbered not, but mourned
To himself, a little moment, as it seemed,
For sake of his loved father: then he lift
His eyes, and day had dawned. Right suddenly
The moon withheld her silver, and she hung
Frail as a cloud. The ruddy flame that played,
By night on dim, dusk trees, and on the flood,
Crept red amongst the logs, and all the world
And all the water blushed and bloomed. The stars
Were gone, and golden shafts came up, and touched
The feathered heads of palms, and green was born
Under the rosy cloud, and purples flew
Like veils across the mountains; and he saw,
Winding athwart them, bathed in blissful peace,
And the sacredness of morn, the battlements
And out-posts of the giants; and there ran
On the other side the river, as it were,
White mounds of marble, tabernacles fair,
And towers below a line of inland cliff:
These were their fastnesses, and here their homes.

In valleys and the forest, all that night,
There had been woe; in every hollow place,
And under walls, like drifted flowers, or snow,
Women lay mourning; for the serpent lodged
That night within the gates, and had decreed,
"I will (or ever I come) that ye drive out
The women, the abhorred of my soul."
Therefore, more beauteous than all climbing bloom,
Purple and scarlet, cumbering of the boughs,
Or flights of azure doves that lit to drink
The water of the river; or, new born,
The quivering butterflies in companies,
That slowly crept adown the sandy marge,
Like living crocus beds, and also drank,
And rose an orange cloud; their hollowed hands
They dipped between the lilies, or with robes
Full of ripe fruitage, sat and peeled and ate,
Weeping; or comforting their little ones,
And lulling them with sorrowful long hymns
Among the palms.

So went the earlier morn.
Then came a messenger, while Japhet sat
Mournfully, and he said, "The men of might

Are willing; let thy master, youth, appear."
And Japhet said, "So be it"; and he thought,
"Now will I trust in God"; and he went in
And stood before his father, and he said,
"My father"; but the Master answered not,
But gazed upon the curtains of his tent,
Nor knew that one had called him. He was clad
As ready for the journey, and his feet
Were sandalled, and his staff was at his side;
And Japhet took the gown of sacrifice
And spread it on him, and he laid his crown
Upon his knees, and he went forth, and lift
His hand to heaven, and cried, "My father's God!"
But neither whisper came nor echo fell
When he did listen. Therefore he went on:
"Behold, I have a thing to say to thee.
My father charged thy servant, 'Let not ruth
Prevail with thee, to turn and bear me hence,
For God appointed me my task, to preach
Before the mighty.' I must do my part
(O! let it not displease thee), for he said
But yesternight, 'When they shall send for me,
Take me before them.' And I sware to him.
I pray thee, therefore, count his life and mine
Precious; for I that sware, I will perform."

Then cried he to his people, "Let us hence:
Take up the litter." And they set their feet
Toward the raft whereby men crossed that flood.
And while they journeyed, lo, the giants sat
Within the fairest hall where all were fair,
Each on his carven throne, o'er-canopied
With work of women. And the dragon lay
In a place of honor; and with subtlety
He counselled them, for they did speak by turns;
And they being proud, might nothing master them,
But guile alone: and he did fawn on them;
And when the younger taunted him, submiss
He testified great humbleness, and cried,
"A cruel God, forsooth! but nay, O nay,
I will not think it of Him, that He meant
To threaten these. O, when I look on them,
How doth my soul admire."

And one stood forth,
The youngest; of his brethren, named "the Rock."
"Speak out," quoth he, "thou toothless slaving thing,
What is it? thinkest thou that such as we
Should be afraid? What is this goodly doom?"
And Satan laughed upon him. "Lo," said he,
"Thou art not fully grown, and every one
I look on, standeth higher by the head,
Yea, and the shoulders, than do other men;
Forsooth, thy servant thought not thou wouldst fear,
Thou and thy fellows." Then with one accord,
"Speak," cried they; and with mild persuasive eyes,
And flattering tongue, he spoke.

"Ye mighty ones,
It hath been known to you these many days
How that for piety I am much famed.
I am exceeding pious: if I lie,
As hath been whispered, it is but for sake
Of God, and that ye should not think Him hard,
For I am all for God. Now some have thought

that He hath also (and it, may be so
Or yet may not be so) on me been hard;
Be not ye therefore wroth, for my poor sake;
I am contented to have earned your weal,
Though I must therefore suffer.

"Now to-day

One cometh, yea, an harmless man, a fool,
Who boasts he hath a message from our God,
And lest that you, for bravery of heart
And stoutness, being angered with his prate,
Should lift a hand, and kill him, I am here."

Then spoke the Leader, "How now, snake? Thy words
Ring false. Why ever liest thou, snake, to us?
Thou coward! none of us will see thee harmed.
I say thou liest. The land is strewn with slain;
Myself have hewn down companies, and blood
Makes fertile all the field. Thou knowest it well;
And hast thou, driveller, panting sore for age,
Come with a force to bid us spare one fool?"

And Satan answered, "Nay you! be not wroth;
Yet true it is, and yet not all the truth.
Your servant would have told the rest, if now
(For fulness of your life being fretted sore
At mine infirmities, which God in vain
I supplicate to heal) ye had not caused
My speech to stop." And he they called "the Oak"
Made answer, "'Tis a good snake; let him be.
Why would ye fright the poor old craven beast?
Look how his lolling tongue doth foam for fear.
Ye should have mercy, brethren, on the weak.
Speak, dragon, thou hast leave; make stout thy heart.
What! hast thou lied to this great company?
It was, we know it was, for humbleness;
Thou wert not willing to offend with truth."

"Yea, majesties," quoth Satan, "thus it was,"
And lifted up appealing eyes, and groaned;
"O, can it be, compassionate as brave,
And housed in cunning works themselves have reared,
And served in gold, and warmed with minivere,
And ruling nobly,—that He, not content
Unless alone He reigneth, looks to bend
O break them in, like slaves to cry to Him,
'What is Thy will with us, O Master dear?'
Or else to eat of death?"

"For my part, lords,
I cannot think it: for my piety
And reason, which I also share with you,
Are my best lights, and ever counsel me,
'Believe not aught against thy God; believe,
Since thou canst never reach to do Him wrong,
That He will never stoop to do thee wrong.
Is He not just and equal, yea, and kind?'
Therefore, O majesties, it is my mind
Concerning him ye wot of, thus to think
The message is not like what I have learned
By reason and experience, of the God.
Therefore no message 'tis. The man is mad."
Thereat the great Leader laughed for scorn. "Hold, snake;
If God be just, there SHALL be reckoning days.
We rather would He were a partial God,
And being strong, He sided with the strong.

Turn now thy reason to the other side,
And speak for that; for as to justice, snake,
We would have none of it."

And Satan fawned:

"My lord is pleased to mock at my poor wit;
Yet in my pious fashion I must talk:
For say that God was wroth with man, and came
And slew him, that should make an empty world,
But not a better nation."

This replied,

"Truth, dragon, yet He is not bound to mean
A better nation; may be, He designs,
If none will turn again, a punishment
Upon an evil one."

And Satan cried,

"Alas! my heart being full of love for men,
I cannot choose but think of God as like
To me; and yet my piety concludes,
Since He will have your fear, that love alone
Sufficeth not, and I admire, and say,
'Give me, O friends, your love, and give to God
Your fear.'" But they cried out in wrath and rage,
"We are not strong that any we will fear,
Nor specially a foe that means us ill."

BOOK VII.

And while he spoke there was a noise without;
The curtains of the door were flung aside,
And some with heavy feet bare in, and set
A litter on the floor.

The Master lay

Upon it, but his eyes were dimmed and set;
And Japhet, in despairing weariness,
Leaned it beside. He marked the mighty ones,
Silent for pride of heart, and in his place
The jewelled dragon; and the dragon laughed,
And subtly peered at him, till Japhet shook
With rage and fear. The snaky wonder cried,
Hissing, "Thou brown-haired youth, come up to me;
I fain would have thee for my shrine afar,
To serve among an host as beautiful
As thou: draw near." It hissed, and Japhet felt
Horrible drawings, and cried out in fear,
"Father! O help, the serpent draweth me!"
And struggled and grew faint, as in the toils
A netted bird. But still his father lay
Unconscious, and the mighty did not speak,
But half in fear and half for wonderment
Beheld. And yet again the dragon laughed,
And leered at him and hissed; and Japhet strove
Vainly to take away his spell-set eyes,
And moved to go to him, till piercingly
Crying out, "God! forbid it, God in heaven!"
The dragon lowered his head, and shut his eyes
As feigning sleep; and, suddenly released,
He fell back staggering; and at noise of it,
And clash of Japhet's weapons on the floor,
And Japhet's voice crying out, "I loathe thee, snake!
I hate thee! O, I hate thee!" came again,
The senses of the shipwright; and he, moved,
And looking, as one 'mazed, distressfully
Upon the mighty, said, "One called on God:

Where is my God? If God have need of me,
Let Him come down and touch my lips with strength,
Or dying I shall die."

It came to pass,
While he was speaking, that the curtains swayed;
A rushing wind did move throughout the place,
And all the pillars shook, and on the head
Of Noah the hair was lifted, and there played
A somewhat, as it were a light, upon
His breast; then fell a darkness, and men heard
A whisper as of one that spake. With that,
The daunted mighty ones kept silent watch
Until the wind had ceased and darkness fled.
When it grew light, there curled a cloud of smoke
From many censers where the dragon lay.
It hid him. He had called his ministrants,
And bid them veil him thus, that none might look;
Also the folk who came with Noah had fled.

But Noah was seen, for he stood up erect,
And leaned on Japhet's hand. Then, after pause,
The Leader said, "My brethren, it were well
(For naught we fear) to let this sorcerer speak."
And they did reach toward the man their staves,
And cry with loud accord, "Hail, sorcerer, hail!"

And he made answer, "Hail! I am a man
That is a shipwright. I was born afar
To Lamech, him that reigns a king, to wit,
Over the land of Jalal. Majesties,
I bring a message,—lay you it to heart;
For there is wrath in heaven: my God is wroth.
'Prepare your houses, or I come,' saith He,
'A Judge.' Now, therefore, say not in your hearts,
'What have we done?' Your dogs may answer that,
To make whom fiercer for the chase, ye feed
With captives whom ye slew not in the war,
But saved alive, and living throw to them
Daily. Your wives may answer that, whose babes
Their firstborn ye do take and offer up
To this abhorred snake, while yet the milk
Is in their innocent mouths,—your maiden babes
Tender. Your slaves may answer that,—the gangs
Whose eyes ye did put out to make them work
By night unwitting (yea, by multitudes
They work upon the wheel in chains). Your friends
May answer that,—(their bleached bones cry out.)
For ye did, wickedly, to eat their lands,
Turn on their valleys, in a time of peace,
The rivers, and they, choking in the night,
Died unavenged. But rather (for I leave
To tell of more, the time would be so long
To do it, and your time, O mighty ones,
Is short),—but rather say, 'We sinners know
Why the Judge standeth at the door,' and turn
While yet there may be respite, and repent.

"'Or else,' saith He that formed you, 'I swear,
By all the silence of the times to come,
By the solemnities of death,—yea, more,.
By Mine own power and love which ye have scorned,
That I will come. I will command the clouds,
And raining they shall rain; yea, I will stir
With all my storms the ocean for your sake,

And break for you the boundary of the deep.

"Then shall the mighty mourn.

Should I forbear,

That have been patient? I will not forbear!
For yet,' saith He, 'the weak cry out; for yet
The little ones do languish; and the slave
Lifts up to Me his chain. I therefore, I
Will hear them. I by death will scatter you;
Yea, and by death will draw them to My breast,
And gather them to peace.

"But yet,' saith He,

'Repent, and turn you. Wherefore will ye die?'

"Turn then, O turn, while yet the enemy

Untamed of man fatefully moans afar;
For if ye will not turn, the doom is near.
Then shall the crested wave make sport, and beat
You mighty at your doors. Will ye be wroth?
Will ye forbid it? Monsters of the deep
Shall suckle in your palaces their young,
And swim atween your hangings, all of them
Costly with brodered work, and rare with gold
And white and scarlet (there did ye oppress,—
There did ye make you vile); but ye shall lie
Meekly, and storm and wind shall rage above,
And urge the weltering wave.

"Yet,' saith thy God,

'Son,' ay, to each of you He saith, 'O son,
Made in My image, beautiful and strong,
Why wilt thou die? Thy Father loves thee well.
Repent and turn thee from thine evil ways,
O son! and no more dare the wrath of love.
Live for thy Father's sake that formed thee.
Why wilt thou die?' Here will I make an end."

Now ever on his dais the dragon lay,

Feigning to sleep; and all the mighty ones
Were wroth, and chided, some against the woe,
And some at whom the sorcerer they had named,—
Some at their fellows, for the younger sort,—
As men the less acquaint with deeds of blood,
And given to learning and the arts of peace
(Their fathers having crushed rebellion out
Before their time)—lent favorable ears.
They said, "A man, or false or fanatic,
May claim good audience if he fill our ears
With what is strange: and we would hear again."

The Leader said, "An audience hath been given.

The man hath spoken, and his words are naught;
A feeble threatener, with a foolish threat,
And it is not our manner that we sit
Beyond the noonday"; then they grandly rose,
A stalwart crowd, and with their Leader moved
To the tones of harping, and the beat of shawms,
And the noise of pipes, away. But some were left
About the Master; and the feigning snake
Couched on his dais.

Then one to Japhet said,

One called "the Cedar-Tree," "Dost thou, too, think
To reign upon our lands when we lie drowned?"
And Japhet said, "I think not, nor desire,
Nor in my heart consent, but that ye swear
Allegiance to the God, and live." He cried,

To one surnamed "the Pine,"—"Brother, behooves
That deep we cut our names in yonder crag.
Else when this youth returns, his sons may ask
Our names, and he may answer, 'Matters not,
For my part I forget them.'"

Japhet said,

"They might do worse than that, they might deny
That such as you have ever been." With that
They answered, "No, thou dost not think it, no!"
And Japhet, being chafed, replied in heat,
"And wherefore? if ye say of what is sworn,
'He will not do it,' shall it be more hard
For future men, if any talk on it,
To say, 'He did not do it'?" They replied,
With laughter, "Lo you! he is stout with us.
And yet he cowered before the poor old snake.
Sirrah, when you are saved, we pray you now
To bear our might in mind,—do, sirrah, do;
And likewise tell your sons, "'The Cedar Tree"
Was a good giant, for he struck me not,
Though he was young and full of sport, and though
I taunted him."

With that they also passed.

But there remained who with the shipwright spoke:
"How wilt thou certify to us thy truth?"
And he related to them all his ways
From the beginning: of the Voice that called;
Moreover, how the ship of doom was built.

And one made answer, "Shall the mighty God
Talk with a man of wooden beams and bars?
No, thou mad preacher, no. If He, Eterne,
Be ordering of His far infinitudes,
And darkness cloud a world, it is but chance,
As if the shadow of His hand had fallen
On one that He forgot, and troubled it."
Then said the Master, "Yet,—who told thee so?"

And from his daïs the feigning serpent hissed:
"Preacher, the light within, it was that shined,
And told him so. The pious will have dread
Him to declare such as ye rashly told.
The course of God is one. It likes not us
To think of Him as being acquaint with change:
It were beneath Him. Nay, the finished earth
Is left to her great masters. They must rule;
They do; and I have set myself between,—
A visible thing for worship, sith His face
(For He is hard) He showeth not to men.
Yea, I have set myself 'twixt God and man,
To be interpreter, and teach mankind
A pious lesson by my piety,
He loveth not, nor hateth, nor desires,—
It were beneath Him."

And the Master said,

"Thou liest. Thou wouldst lie away the world,
If He, whom thou hast dared speak against,
Would suffer it." "I may not chide with thee,"
It answered, "NOW; but if there come such time
As thou hast prophesied, as I now reign
In all men's sight, shall my dominion then
Reach to be mighty in their souls. Thou too
Shalt feel it, prophet." And he lowered his head.

Then quoth the Leader of the young men: "Sir,

We scorn you not; speak further; yet our thought
First answer. Not but by a miracle
Can this thing be. The fashion of the world
We heretofore have never known to change;
And will God change it now?"

He then replied:

"What is thy thought? THERE is NO MIRACLE?
There is a great one, which thou hast not read.
And never shalt escape. Thyself, O man,
Thou art the miracle. Lo, if thou sayest,
'I am one, and fashioned like the gracious world,
Red clay is all my make, myself, my whole,
And not my habitation,' then thy sleep
Shall give thee wings to play among the rays
O' the morning. If thy thought be, 'I am one,—
A spirit among spirits,—and the world
A dream my spirit dreameth of, my dream
Being all,' the dominating mountains strong
Shall not for that forbear to take thy breath,
And rage with all their winds, and beat thee back,
And beat thee down when thou wouldst set thy feet
Upon their awful crests. Ay, thou thyself,
Being in the world and of the world, thyself
Hast breathed in breath from Him that made the world.
Thou dost inherit, as thy Maker's son,
That which He is, and that which He hath made:
Thou art thy Father's copy of Himself,—
THOU art thy FATHER'S MIRACLE.

Behold

He buildeth up the stars in companies;
He made for them a law. To man He said,
'Freely I give thee freedom.' What remains?
O, it remains, if thou, the image of God,
Wilt reason well, that thou shalt know His ways;
But first thou must be loyal,—love, O man,
Thy Father,—hearken when He pleads with thee,
For there is something left of Him e'en now,—
A witness for thy Father in thy soul,
Albeit thy better state thou hast foregone.

"Now, then, be still, and think not in thy soul,
'The rivers in their course forever run,
And turn not from it. He is like to them
Who made them,' Think the rather, 'With my foot
I have turned the rivers from their ancient way,
To water grasses that were fading. What!
Is God my Father as the river wave,
That yet descendeth, like the lesser thing
He made, and not like me, a living son,
That changed the watercourse to suit his will?'

"Man is the miracle in nature. God
Is the ONE MIRACLE to man. Behold,
'There is a God,' thou sayest. Thou sayest well:
In that thou sayest all. To Be is more
Of wonderful, than being, to have wrought,
Or reigned, or rested.
Hold then there, content;
Learn that to love is the one way to know,
Or God or man: it is not love received
That maketh man to know the inner life
Of them that love him; his own love bestowed
Shall do it. Love thy Father, and no more
His doings shall be strange. Thou shalt not fret
At any counsel, then, that He will send,—

No, nor rebel, albeit He have with thee
Great reservations. Know, to Be is more
Than to have acted; yea, or after rest
And patience, to have risen and been wroth,
Broken the sequence of an ordered earth,
And troubled nations."

Then the dragon sighed.
"Poor fanatic," quoth he, "thou speakest well.
Would I were like thee, for thy faith is strong,
Albeit thy senses wander. Yea, good sooth,
My masters, let us not despise, but learn
Fresh loyalty from this poor loyal soul.
Let us go forth—(myself will also go
To head you)—and do sacrifice; for that,
We know, is pleasing to the mighty God:
But as for building many arks of wood,
O majesties! when He shall counsel you
HIMSELF, then build. What say you, shall it be
An hundred oxen,—fat, well liking, white?
An hundred? why, a thousand were not much
To such as you." Then Noah lift up his arms
To heaven, and cried, "Thou aged shape of sin,
The Lord rebuke thee."

BOOK VIII.

Then one ran, crying, while Niloiya wrought,
"The Master cometh!" and she went within
To adorn herself for meeting him. And Shem
Went forth and talked with Japhet in the field,
And said, "Is it well, my brother?" He replied,
"Well! and, I pray you, is it well at home?"

But Shem made answer, "Can a house be well,
If he that should command it bides afar?
Yet well is thee, because a fair free maid
Is found to wed thee; and they bring her in
This day at sundown. Therefore is much haste
To cover thick with costly webs the floor,
And pluck and cover thick the same with leaves
Of all sweet herbs,—I warrant, ye shall hear
No footfall where she treadeth; and the seats
Are ready, spread with robes; the tables set
With golden baskets, red pomegranates shred
To fill them; and the rubied censers smoke,
Heaped up with ambergris and cinnamon,
And frankincense and cedar."

Japhet said,
"I will betroth her to me straight"; and went
(Yet labored he with sore disquietude)
To gather grapes, and reap and bind the sheaf
For his betrothal. And his brother spake,
"Where is our father? doth he preach to-day?"
And Japhet answered, "Yea. He said to me,
'Go forward; I will follow when the folk
By yonder mountain-hold I shall have warned.'"

And Shem replied, "How thinkest thou?—thine ears
Have heard him oft." He answered, "I do think
These be the last days of this old fair world."

Then he did tell him of the giant folk:
How they, than he, were taller by the head;
How one must stride that will ascend the steps
That lead to their wide halls; and how they drave,

With manful shouts, the mammoth to the north;
And how the talking dragon lied and fawned,
They seated proudly on their ivory thrones,
And scorning him: and of their peaked hoods,
And garments wrought upon, each with the tale
Of him that wore it,—all his manful deeds
(Yea, and about their skirts were effigies
Of kings that they had slain; and some, whose swords
Many had pierced, wore vestures all of red,
To signify much blood): and of their pride
He told, but of the vision in the tent
He told him not.

And when they reached the house,
Niloiya met them, and to Japhet cried,
"All hail, right fortunate! Lo, I have found
A maid. And now thou hast done well to reap
The late ripe corn." So he went in with her,
And she did talk with him right motherly:
"It hath been fully told me how ye loathed
To wed thy father's slave; yea, she herself,
Did she not all declare to me?"

He said,

"Yet is thy damsel fair, and wise of heart."
"Yea," quoth his mother; "she made clear to me
How ye did weep, my son, and ye did vow,
'I will not take her!' Now it was not I
That wrought to have it so." And he replied,
"I know it." Quoth the mother, "It is well;
For that same cause is laughter in my heart."
"But she is sweet of language," Japhet said.
"Ay," quoth Niloiya, "and thy wife no less
Whom thou shalt wed anon,—forsooth, anon,—
It is a lucky hour. Thou wilt?" He said,
"I will." And Japhet laid the slender sheaf
From off his shoulder, and he said, "Behold,
My father!" Then Niloiya turned herself,
And lo! the shipwright stood. "All hail!" quoth she.
And bowed herself, and kissed him on the mouth;
But while she spake with him, sorely he sighed;
And she did hang about his neck the robe
Of feasting, and she poured upon his hands
Clear water, and anointed him, and set
Before him bread.

And Japhet said to him,

"My father, my beloved, wilt thou yet
Be sad because of scorning? Eat this day;
For as an angel in their eyes thou art
Who stand before thee." But he answered, "Peace!
Thy words are wide."

And when Niloiya heard,

She said, "Is this a time for mirth of heart
And wine? Behold, I thought to wed my son,
Even this Japhet; but is this a time,
When sad is he to whom is my desire,
And lying under sorrow as from God?"

He answered, "Yea, it is a time of times;
Bring in the maid." Niloiya said, "The maid
That first I spoke on, shall not Japhet wed;
It likes not her, nor yet it likes not me.
But I have found another; yea, good sooth,
The damsel will not tarry, she will come
With all her slaves by sundown."

And she said,

"Comfort thy heart, and eat: moreover, know

How that thy great work even to-day is done.
Sir, thy great ship is finished, and the folk
(For I, according to thy will, have paid
All that was left us to them for their wage,
Have brought, as to a storehouse, flour of wheat,
Honey and oil,—much victual; yea, and fruits,
Curtains and household gear. And, sir, they say
It is thy will to take it for thy hold
Our fastness and abode." He answered, "Yea,
Else wherefore was it built?" She said, "Good sir,
I pray you make us not the whole earth's scorn.
And now, to-morrow in thy father's house
Is a great feast, and weddings are toward;
Let be the ship, till after, for thy words
Have ever been, 'If God shall send a flood,
There will I dwell'; I pray you therefore wait
At least till He DOTTH send it."

And he turned,
And answered nothing. Now the sun was low
While yet she spake; and Japhet came to them
In goodly raiment, and upon his arm
The garment of betrothal. And with that
A noise, and then brake in a woman slave
And Amarant. This, with folding of her hands,
Did say full meekly, "If I do offend,
Yet have not I been willing to offend;
For now this woman will not be denied
Herself to tell her errand."

And they sat.
Then spoke the woman, "If I do offend,
Pray you forgive the bondslave, for her tongue
Is for her mistress. 'Lo!' my mistress saith,
'Put off thy bravery, bridegroom; fold away,
Mother, thy webs of pride, thy costly robes
Woven of many colors. We have heard
Thy master. Lo, to-day right evil things
He prophesied to us, that were his friends;
Therefore, my answer:—God do so to me;
Yea, God do so to me, more also, more
Than He did threaten, if my damsel's foot
Ever draw nigh thy door.'"

And when she heard,
Niloiya sat amazed, in grief of soul.
But Japhet came unto the slave, where low
She bowed herself for fear. He said, "Depart;
Say to thy mistress, 'It is well.'" With that
She turned herself, and she made haste to flee,
Lest any, for those evil words she brought,
Would smite her. But the bondmaid of the house
Lift up her hand and said, "If I offend,
It was not of my heart: thy damsel knew
Naught of this matter." And he held to her
His hand and touched her, and said, "Amarant!"
And when she looked upon him, she did take
And spread before her face her radiant locks,
Trembling. And Japhet said, "Lift up thy face,
O fairest of the daughters, thy fair face;
For, lo! the bridegroom standeth with the robe
Of thy betrothal! "—and he took her locks
In his two hands to part them from her brow,
And laid them on her shoulders; and he said,
"Sweet are the blushes of thy face," and put
The robe upon her, having said, "Behold,
I have repented me; and oft by night,

In the waste wilderness, while all things slept,
I thought upon thy words, for they were sweet.

"For this I make thee free. And now thyself
Art loveliest in mine eyes; I look, and lo!
Thou art of beauty more than any thought
I had concerning thee. Let, then, this robe,
Wrought on with imagery of fruitful bough,
And graceful leaf, and birds with tender eyes,
Cover the ripples of thy tawny hair."
So when she held her peace, he brought her nigh
To hear the speech of wedlock; ay, he took
The golden cup of wine to drink with her,
And laid the sheaf upon her arms. He said,
"Like as my fathers in the older days
Led home the daughters whom they chose, do I;
Like as they said, 'Mine honor have I set
Upon thy head!' do I. Eat of my bread,
Rule in my house, be mistress of my slaves,
And mother of my children."

And he brought
The damsel to his father, saying, "Behold
My wife! I have betrothed her to myself;
I pray you, kiss her." And the Master did:
He said, "Be mother of a multitude,
And let them to their father even so
Be found, as he is found to me."

With that
She answered, "Let this woman, sir, find grace
And favor in your sight."

And Japhet said,
"Sweet mother, I have wed the maid ye chose
And brought me first. I leave her in thy hand;
Have care on her, till I shall come again
And ask her of thee." So they went apart,
He and his father to the marriage feast.

BOOK IX.

The prayer of Noah. The man went forth by night
And listened; and the earth was dark and still,
And he was driven of his great distress
Into the forest; but the birds of night
Sang sweetly; and he fell upon his face,
And cried, "God, God! Thy billows and Thy waves
Have swallowed up my soul.

"Where is my God?
For I have somewhat yet to plead with Thee;
For I have walked the strands of Thy great deep,
Heard the dull thunder of its rage afar,
And its dread moaning. O, the field is sweet,—
Spare it. The delicate woods make white their trees
With blossom,—spare them. Life is sweet; behold
There is much cattle, and the wild and tame,
Father, do feed in quiet,—spare them.

"God!
Where is my God? The long wave doth not rear
Her ghostly crest to lick the forest up,
And like a chief in battle fall,—not yet.
The lightnings pour not down, from ragged holes
In heaven, the torment of their forkéd tongues,
And, like fell serpents, dart and sting,—not yet.
The winds awake not, with their awful wings

To winnow, even as chaff, from out their track,
All that withstandeth, and bring down the pride
Of all things strong and all things high—

"Not yet.

O, let it not be yet. Where is my God?
How am I saved, if I and mine be saved
Alone? I am not saved, for I have loved
My country and my kin. Must I, Thy thrall,
Over their lands be lord when they are gone?
I would not: spare them. Mighty. Spare Thyself,
For Thou dost love them greatly,—and if not ..."

Another praying unremote, a Voice
Calm as the solitude between wide stars.

"Where is my God, who loveth this lost world,—
Lost from its place and name, but won for Thee?
Where is my multitude, my multitude,
That I shall gather?" And white smoke went up
From incense that was burning, but there gleamed
No light of fire, save dimly to reveal
The whiteness rising, as the prayer of him
That mourned. "My God, appear for me, appear;
Give me my multitude, for it is mine.
The bitterness of death I have not feared,
To-morrow shall Thy courts, O God, be full.
Then shall the captive from his bonds go free,
Then shall the thrall find rest, that knew not rest
From labor and from blows. The sorrowful—
That said of joy, 'What is it?' and of songs,
'We have not heard them'—shall be glad and sing;
Then shall the little ones that knew not Thee,
And such as heard not of Thee, see Thy face,
And seeing, dwell content."

The prayer of Noah.

He cried out in the darkness, "Hear, O God,
Hear HIM: hear this one; through the gates of death,
If life be all past praying for, O give
To Thy great multitude a way to peace;
Give them to HIM.

"But yet," said he, "O yet,
If there be respite for the terrible,
The proud, yea, such as scorn Thee,—and if not....
Let not mine eyes behold their fall."

He cried,

"Forgive. I have not done Thy work, Great Judge,
With a perfect heart; I have but half believed,
While in accustomed language I have warned;
And now there is no more to do, no place
For my repentance, yea, no hour remains
For doing of that work again. O, lost,
Lost world!" And while he prayed, the daylight dawned.

And Noah went up into the ship, and sat
Before the Lord. And all was still; and now
In that great quietness the sun came up,
And there were marks across it, as it were
The shadow of a Hand upon the sun,—
Three fingers dark and dread, and afterward
There rose a white, thick mist, that peacefully
Folded the fair earth in her funeral shroud,
The earth that gave no token, save that now
There fell a little trembling under foot.

And Noah went down, and took and hid his face
Behind his mantle, saying, "I have made
Great preparation, and it may be yet,
Beside my house, whom I did charge to come
This day to meet me, there may enter in
Many that yesternight thought scorn of all
My bidding." And because the fog was thick,
He said, "Forbid it, Heaven, if such there be,
That they should miss the way." And even then
There was a noise of weeping and lament;
The words of them that were affrighted, yea,
And cried for grief of heart. There came to him
The mother and her children, and they cried,
"Speak, father, what is this? What hast thou done?"
And when he lifted up his face, he saw
Japhet, his well-belovéd, where he stood
Apart; and Amarant leaned upon his breast,
And hid her face, for she was sore afraid;
And lo! the robes of her betrothal gleamed
White in the deadly gloom.

And at his feet
The wives of his two other sons did kneel,
And wring their hands.

One cried, "O, speak to us;
We are affrighted; we have dreamed a dream,
Each to herself. For me, I saw in mine
The grave old angels, like to shepherds, walk,
Much cattle following them. Thy daughter looked,
And they did enter here."

The other lay
And moaned, "Alas! O father, for my dream
Was evil: lo, I heard when it was dark,
I heard two wicked ones contend for me.
One said, 'And wherefore should this woman live,
When only for her children, and for her,
Is woe and degradation?' Then he laughed,
The other crying, 'Let alone, O prince;
Hinder her not to live and bear much seed,
Because I hate her.'"

But he said, "Rise up,
Daughters of Noah, for I have learned no words
To comfort you." Then spake her lord to her,
"Peace! or I swear that for thy dream, myself
Will hate thee also."

And Niloiya said,
"My sons, if one of you will hear my words,
Go now, look out, and tell me of the day,
How fares it?"

And the fateful darkness grew.
But Shem went up to do his mother's will;
And all was one as though the frightened earth
Quivered and fell a-trembling; then they hid
Their faces every one, till he returned,
And spake not. "Nay," they cried, "what hast thou seen?
O, is it come to this?" He answered them,
"The door is shut."

NOTES TO "A STORY OF DOOM."

PAGE 358.

The name of the patriarch's wife is intended to be pronounced
Nigh-loi-ya.

Of the three sons of Noah,—Shem, Ham, and Japhet,—I have called Japhet the youngest (because he is always named last), and have supposed that, in the genealogies where he is called "Japhet the elder," he may have received the epithet because by that time there were younger Japhets.

PAGE 425.

The quivering butterflies in companies,
That slowly crept adown the sandy marge,
Like *living crocus beds*.

This beautiful comparison is taken from "The Naturalist on the River Amazons." "Vast numbers of orange-colored butterflies congregated on the moist sands. They assembled in densely-packed masses, sometimes two or three yards in circumference, their wings all held in an upright position, so that the sands looked as though variegated with *beds of crocuses*."

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK POEMS BY JEAN INGELOW, IN TWO VOLUMES,
VOLUME II ***

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