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# MAURINE

AND OTHER POEMS

BY  
ELLA WHEELER WILCOX

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W. B. CONKEY COMPANY  
CHICAGO

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*I step across the mystic border-land,  
And look upon the wonder-world of Art.  
How beautiful, how beautiful its hills!  
And all its valleys, how surpassing fair!*

*The winding paths that lead up to the heights  
Are polished by the footsteps of the great.  
The mountain-peaks stand very near to God:  
The chosen few whose feet have trod thereon  
Have talked with Him, and with the angels walked.*

*Here are no sounds of discord—no profane  
Or senseless gossip of unworthy things—  
Only the songs of chisels and of pens.  
Of busy brushes, and ecstatic strains  
Of souls surcharged with music most divine.  
Here is no idle sorrow, no poor grief  
For any day or object left behind—  
For time is counted precious, and herein  
Is such complete abandonment of Self  
That tears turn into rainbows, and enhance  
The beauty of the land where all is fair.*

*Awed and afraid, I cross the border-land.  
Oh, who am I, that I dare enter here  
Where the great artists of the world have trod—  
The genius-crowned aristocrats of Earth?  
Only the singer of a little song;  
Yet loving Art with such a mighty love  
I hold it greater to have won a place  
Just on the fair land's edge, to make my grave,  
Than in the outer world of greed and gain  
To sit upon a royal throne and reign.*

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**MAURINE**

[Pg 9]

*PART I.*

I sat and sewed, and sang some tender tune,  
Oh, beauteous was that morn in early June!  
Mellow with sunlight, and with blossoms fair:  
The climbing rose-tree grew about me there,  
And checked with shade the sunny portico  
Where, morns like this, I came to read, or sew.

I heard the gate click, and a firm quick tread  
Upon the walk. No need to turn my head;  
I would mistake, and doubt my own voice sounding,  
Before his step upon the gravel bounding.  
In an unstudied attitude of grace,  
He stretched his comely form; and from his face  
He tossed the dark, damp curls; and at my knees,  
With his broad hat he fanned the lazy breeze,  
And turned his head, and lifted his large eyes,  
Of that strange hue we see in ocean dyes,  
And call it blue sometimes, and sometimes green  
And save in poet eyes, not elsewhere seen.

"Lest I should meet with my fair lady's scorning,  
For calling quite so early in the morning,  
I've brought a passport that can never fail,"  
He said, and, laughing, laid the morning mail  
Upon my lap. "I'm welcome? so I thought!  
I'll figure by the letters that I brought  
How glad you are to see me. Only one?  
And that one from a lady? I'm undone!  
That, lightly skimmed, you'll think me *such* a bore,  
And wonder why I did not bring you four.  
It's ever thus: a woman cannot get  
So many letters that she will not fret  
O'er one that did not come."

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"I'll prove you wrong,"

I answered gayly, "here upon the spot!  
This little letter, precious if not long,  
Is just the one, of all you might have brought,  
To please me. You have heard me speak, I'm sure,  
Of Helen Trevor: she writes here to say  
She's coming out to see me; and will stay  
Till Autumn, maybe. She is, like her note,  
Petite and dainty, tender, loving, pure.  
You'd know her by a letter that she wrote,  
For a sweet tinted thing. 'Tis always so:—  
Letters all blots, though finely written, show  
A slovenly person. Letters stiff and white  
Bespeak a nature honest, plain, upright.  
And tissuey, tinted, perfumed notes, like this,  
Tell of a creature formed to pet and kiss."

My listener heard me with a slow, odd smile;  
Stretched in abandon at my feet, the while,  
He fanned me idly with his broad-brimmed hat.  
"Then all young ladies must be formed for that!"  
He laughed, and said.

[Pg 11]

"Their letters read, and look,

As like as twenty copies of one book.  
They're written in a dainty, spider scrawl,  
To 'darling, precious Kate,' or 'Fan,' or 'Moll.'  
The 'dearest, sweetest' friend they ever had.  
They say they 'want to see you, oh, so bad!'  
Vow they'll 'forget you, never, \_never\_, oh!'  
And then they tell about a splendid beau—  
A lovely hat—a charming dress, and send  
A little scrap of this to every friend.  
And then to close, for lack of something better,  
They beg you'll 'read and burn this horrid letter.'"

He watched me, smiling. He was prone to vex  
And hector me with flings upon my sex.  
He liked, he said, to have me flash and frown,  
So he could tease me, and then laugh me down.  
My storms of wrath amused him very much:  
He liked to see me go off at a touch;  
Anger became me—made my color rise,  
And gave an added luster to my eyes.  
So he would talk—and so he watched me now,  
To see the hot flush mantle cheek and brow.

Instead, I answered coolly, with a smile,  
Felling a seam with utmost care, meanwhile.  
"The caustic tongue of Vivian Dangerfield  
Is barbed as ever, for my sex, this morn.  
Still unconvinced, no smallest point I yield.  
Woman I love, and trust, despite your scorn.  
There is some truth in what you say? Well, yes!  
Your statements usually hold more or less.  
Some women write weak letters—(some men do;)  
Some make professions, knowing them untrue.  
And woman's friendship, in the time of need,  
I own, too often proves a broken reed.  
But I believe, and ever will contend,  
Woman can be a sister woman's friend,  
Giving from out her large heart's bounteous store  
A living love—claiming to do no more  
Than, through and by that love, she knows she can;  
And living by her professions, \_like a man\_.  
And such a tie, true friendship's silken tether,  
Binds Helen Trevor's heart and mine together.  
I love her for her beauty, meekness, grace;  
For her white lily soul and angel face.  
She loves me, for my greater strength, may be;  
Loves—and would give her heart's best blood for me  
And I, to save her from a pain, or cross,  
Would suffer any sacrifice or loss.  
Such can be woman's friendship for another.  
Could man give more, or ask more from a brother?"

[Pg 12]

I paused: and Vivian leaned his massive head  
Against the pillar of the portico,  
Smiled his slow, skeptic smile, then laughed, and said:  
"Nay, surely not—if what you say be so.  
You've made a statement, but no proof's at hand.  
Wait—do not flash your eyes so! Understand  
I think you quite sincere in what you say:  
You love your friend, and she loves you, to-day;  
But friendship is not friendship at the best  
Till circumstances put it to the test.  
Man's, less demonstrative, stands strain and tear,  
While woman's, half profession, fails to wear.  
Two women love each other passing well—  
Say Helen Trevor and Maurine La Pelle,  
Just for example.

[Pg 13]

Let them daily meet  
At ball and concert, in the church and street,  
They kiss and coo, they visit, chat, caress;  
Their love increases, rather than grows less;  
And all goes well, till 'Helen dear' discovers  
That 'Maurine darling' wins too many lovers.

And then her 'precious friend,' her 'pet,' her 'sweet,'

Becomes a 'minx,' a 'creature all deceit.'  
Let Helen smile too oft on Maurine's beaux,  
Or wear more stylish or becoming clothes,  
Or sport a hat that has a longer feather—  
And lo! the strain has broken 'friendship's tether.'  
Maurine's sweet smile becomes a frown or pout;  
'She's just begun to find that Helen out'  
The breach grows wider—anger fills each heart;  
They drift asunder, whom 'but death could part.'  
You shake your head? Oh, well, we'll never know!  
It is not likely Fate will test you so.  
You'll live, and love; and, meeting twice a year,  
While life shall last, you'll hold each other dear.  
I pray it may be so; it were not best  
To shake your faith in woman by the test.  
Keep your belief, and nurse it while you can.  
I've faith in woman's friendship too—for man!  
They're true as steel, as mothers, friends, and wives:  
And that's enough to bless us all our lives.  
That man's a selfish fellow, and a bore,  
Who is unsatisfied, and asks for more."

[Pg 14]

"But there is need of more!" I here broke in.  
"I hold that woman guilty of a sin,  
Who would not cling to, and defend another,  
As nobly as she would stand by a brother.  
Who would not suffer for a sister's sake,  
And, were there need to prove her friendship, make  
'Most any sacrifice, nor count the cost.  
Who would not do this for a friend is lost  
To every nobler principle."

"Shame, shame!"

Cried Vivian, laughing, "for you now defame  
The whole sweet sex; since there's not one would do  
The thing you name, nor would I want her to.  
I love the sex. My mother was a woman—  
I hope my wife will be, and wholly human.  
And if she wants to make some sacrifice,  
I'll think her far more sensible and wise  
To let her husband reap the benefit,  
Instead of some old maid or senseless chit.  
Selfish? Of course! I hold all love is so:  
And I shall love my wife right well, I know.  
Now there's a point regarding selfish love,  
You thirst to argue with me, and disprove.  
But since these cosy hours will soon be gone  
And all our meetings broken in upon,  
No more of these rare moments must be spent  
In vain discussions, or in argument.  
I wish Miss Trevor was in—Jericho!  
(You see the selfishness begins to show.)  
She wants to see you?—So do I: but she  
Will gain her wish, by taking you from me.  
'Come all the same?' that means I'll be allowed  
To realize that 'three can make a crowd.'  
I do not like to feel myself *de trop*.  
With two girl cronies would I not be so?  
My ring would interrupt some private chat.  
You'd ask me in and take my cane and hat,  
And speak about the lovely summer day,  
And think—'The lout! I wish he'd kept away.'  
Miss Trevor'd smile, but just to hide a pout  
And count the moments till I was shown out.  
And, while I twirled my thumbs, I would sit wishing  
That I had gone off hunting birds, or fishing.  
No, thanks, Maurine! The iron hand of Fate,  
(Or otherwise Miss Trevor's dainty fingers,)  
Will bar my entrance into Eden's gate;  
And I shall be like some poor soul that lingers  
At heaven's portal, paying the price of sin,  
Yet hoping to be pardoned and let in."

[Pg 15]

He looked so melancholy sitting there,  
I laughed outright. "How well you act a part;  
You look the very picture of despair!

You've missed your calling, sir! suppose you start  
Upon a starrng tour, and carve your name  
With Booth's and Barrett's on the heights of Fame.  
But now, tabooing nonsense, I shall send  
For you to help me entertain my friend,  
Unless you come without it. 'Cronies?' True,  
Wanting our 'private chats' as cronies do  
And we'll take those, while you are reading Greek,  
Or writing 'Lines to Dora's brow' or 'cheek.'  
But when you have an hour or two of leisure,  
Call as you now do, and afford like pleasure.  
For never yet did heaven's sun shine on,  
Or stars discover, that phenomenon,  
In any country, or in any clime:  
Two maids so bound, by ties of mind and heart.  
They did not feel the heavy weight of time  
In weeks of scenes wherein no man took part.  
God made the sexes to associate:  
Nor law of man, nor stern decree of Fate,  
Can ever undo what His hand has done,  
And, quite alone, make happy either one.  
My Helen is an only child:—a pet  
Of loving parents: and she never yet  
Has been denied one boon for which she pleaded.  
A fragile thing, her lightest wish was heeded.  
Would she pluck roses? they must first be shorn,  
By careful hands, of every hateful thorn.  
And loving eyes must scan the pathway where  
Her feet may tread, to see no stones are there.  
She'll grow dull here, in this secluded nook,  
Unless you aid me in the pleasant task  
Of entertaining. Drop in with your book—  
Read, talk, sing for her sometimes. What I ask,  
Do once, to please me: then there'll be no need  
For me to state the case again, or plead.  
There's nothing like a woman's grace and beauty  
To waken mankind to a sense of duty."

[Pg 16]

[Pg 17]

"I bow before the mandate of my queen:  
Your slightest wish is law, Ma Belle Maurine,"  
He answered smiling, "I'm at your command;  
Point but one lily finger, or your wand,  
And you will find a willing slave obeying.  
There goes my dinner bell! I hear it saying  
I've spent two hours here, lying at your feet,  
Not profitable, maybe—surely sweet.  
All time is money; now were I to measure  
The time I spend here by its solid pleasure,  
And that were coined in dollars, then I've laid  
Each day a fortune at your feet, fair maid.  
There goes that bell again! I'll say good-bye,  
Or clouds will shadow my domestic sky.  
I'll come again, as you would have me do,  
And see your friend, while she is seeing you.  
That's like by proxy being at a feast;  
Unsatisfactory, to say the least."

He drew his fine shape up, and trod the land  
With kingly grace. Passing the gate, his hand  
He lightly placed the garden wall upon,  
Leaped over like a leopard, and was gone.

And, going, took the brightness from the place,  
Yet left the June day with a sweeter grace,  
And my young soul so steeped in happy dreams,  
Heaven itself seemed shown to me in gleams.  
There is a time with lovers, when the heart  
First slowly rouses from its dreamless sleep,  
To all the tumult of a passion life,  
Ere yet have wakened jealousy and strife.  
Just as a young, untutored child will start  
Out of a long hour's slumber, sound and deep,  
And lie and smile with rosy lips, and cheeks,  
In a sweet, restful trance, before it speaks.  
A time when yet no word the spell has broken,

[Pg 18]

Save what the heart unto the soul has spoken,  
In quickened throbs, and sighs but half suppressed.  
A time when that sweet truth, all unconfessed,  
Gives added fragrance to the summer flowers,  
A golden glory to the passing hours,  
A hopeful beauty to the plainest face,  
And lends to life a new and tender grace.

When the full heart has climbed the heights of bliss,  
And, smiling, looks back o'er the golden past,  
I think it finds no sweeter hour than this  
In all love-life. For, later, when the last  
Translucent drop o'erflows the cup of joy,  
And love, more mighty than the heart's control,  
Surges in words of passion from the soul,  
And vows are asked and given, shadows rise  
Like mists before the sun in noonday skies,  
Vague fears, that prove the brimming cup's alloy;  
A dread of change—the crowning moment's curse,  
Since what is perfect, change but renders worse:  
A vain desire to cripple Time, who goes  
Bearing our joys away, and bringing woes.  
And later, doubts and jealousies awaken.  
And plighted hearts are tempest-tossed, and shaken.  
Doubt sends a test, that goes a step too far,  
A wound is made, that, healing, leaves a scar,  
Or one heart, full with love's sweet satisfaction,  
Thinks truth once spoken always understood,  
While one is pining for the tender action  
And whispered word by which, of old, 'twas wooed.

[Pg 19]

But this blest hour, in love's glad, golden day,  
Is like the dawning, ere the radiant ray  
Of glowing Sol has burst upon the eye,  
But yet is heralded in earth and sky,  
Warm with its fervor, mellow with its light,  
While Care still slumbers in the arms of night.  
But Hope, awake, hears happy birdlings sing,  
And thinks of all a summer day may bring.

In this sweet calm, my young heart lay at rest,  
Filled with a blissful sense of peace; nor guessed  
That sullen clouds were gathering in the skies  
To hide the glorious sun, ere it should rise.

## ***PART II.***

[Pg 20]

To little birds that never tire of humming  
About the garden, in the summer weather,  
Aunt Ruth compared us, after Helen's coming,  
As we two roamed, or sat and talked together.  
Twelve months apart, we had so much to say  
Of school days gone—and time since passed away;  
Of that old friend, and this; of what we'd done;  
Of how our separate paths in life had run;  
Of what we would do, in the coming years;  
Of plans and castles, hopes and dreams and fears.  
All these, and more, as soon as we found speech,  
We touched upon, and skimmed from this to that  
But at the first, each only gazed on each,  
And, dumb with joy, that did not need a voice  
Like lesser joys, to say, "Lo! I rejoice,"  
With smiling eyes and clasping hands we sat  
Wrapped in that peace, felt but with those dear,  
Contented just to know each other near.  
But when this silent eloquence gave place  
To words, 'twas like the rising of a flood  
Above a dam. We sat there, face to face,  
And let our talk glide on where'er it would,  
Speech never halting in its speed or zest,  
Save when our rippling laughter let it rest;  
Just as a stream will sometimes pause and play  
About a bubbling spring, then dash away.  
No wonder, then, the third day's sun was nigh

[Pg 21]



Up to the zenith when my friend and I  
Opened our eyes from slumber long and deep:  
Nature demanding recompense for hours  
Spent in the portico, among the flowers,  
Halves of two nights we should have spent in sleep.

So this third day, we breakfasted at one:  
Then walked about the garden in the sun,  
Hearing the thrushes and the robins sing,  
And looking to see what buds were opening.

The clock chimed three, and we yet strayed at will  
About the yard in morning dishabille,  
When Aunt Ruth came, with apron o'er her head,  
Holding a letter in her hand, and said,  
"Here is a note, from Vivian I opine;  
At least his servant brought it. And now, girls,  
You may think this is no concern of mine,  
But in my day young ladies did not go,  
Till almost bed-time roaming to and fro  
In morning wrappers, and with tangled curls,  
The very pictures of forlorn distress.  
'Tis three o'clock, and time for you to dress.  
Come! read your note and hurry in, Maurine,  
And make yourself fit object to be seen."

Helen was bending o'er an almond bush,  
And ere she looked up I had read the note,  
And calmed my heart, that, bounding, sent a flush  
To brow and cheek, at sight of aught *he* wrote.  
"Ma Belle Maurine:" (so Vivian's billet ran,) [Pg 22]  
"Is it not time I saw your cherished guest?  
'Pity the sorrows of a poor young man,'  
Banished from all that makes existence blest.  
I'm dying to see—your friend; and I will come  
And pay respects, hoping you'll be at home  
To-night at eight. Expectantly, V. D."

Inside my belt I slipped the billet, saying,  
"Helen, go make yourself most fair to see:  
Quick! hurry now! no time for more delaying!  
In just five hours a caller will be here,  
And you must look your prettiest, my dear!  
Begin your toilet right away. I know  
How long it takes you to arrange each bow—  
To twist each curl, and loop your skirts aright.  
And you must prove you are *au fait* to-night,  
And make a perfect toilet: for our caller  
Is man, and critic, poet, artist, scholar,  
And views with eyes of all."

"Oh, oh! Maurine,"  
Cried Helen with a well-feigned look of fear,  
"You've frightened me so I shall not appear:  
I'll hide away, refusing to be seen  
By such an ogre. Woe is me! bereft  
Of all my friends, my peaceful home I've left,  
And strayed away into the dreadful wood  
To meet the fate of poor Red Riding Hood.  
No, Maurine, no! you've given me such a fright,  
I'll not go near your ugly wolf to-night."

Meantime we'd left the garden; and I stood [Pg 23]  
In Helen's room, where she had thrown herself  
Upon a couch, and lay, a winsome elf,  
Pouting and smiling, cheek upon her arm,  
Not in the least a portrait of alarm.  
"Now sweet!" I coaxed, and knelt by her, "be good!  
Go curl your hair; and please your own Maurine,  
By putting on that lovely grenadine.  
Not wolf, nor ogre, neither Caliban,  
Nor Mephistopheles, you'll meet to-night,  
But what the ladies call 'a nice young man!'  
Yet one worth knowing—strong with health and might  
Of perfect manhood; gifted, noble, wise;  
Moving among his kind with loving eyes,

And helpful hand; progressive, brave, refined,  
After the image of his Maker's mind."

"Now, now, Maurine!" cried Helen, "I believe  
It is your lover coming here this eve.  
Why have you never written of him, pray?  
Is the day set?—and when? Say, Maurine, say!"

Had I betrayed by some too fervent word  
The secret love that all my being stirred?  
My lover? Ay! My heart proclaimed him so;  
But first *his* lips must win the sweet confession,  
Ere even Helen be allowed to know.  
I must straightway erase the slight impression  
Made by the words just uttered.

"Foolish child!"

I gayly cried, "your fancy's straying wild.  
Just let a girl of eighteen hear the name  
Of maid and youth uttered about one time,  
And off her fancy goes, at break-neck pace,  
Defying circumstances, reason, space—  
And straightway builds romances so sublime  
They put all Shakespeare's dramas to the shame.  
This Vivian Dangerfield is neighbor, friend  
And kind companion; bringing books and flowers.  
And, by his thoughtful actions without end,  
Helping me pass some otherwise long hours;  
But he has never breathed a word of love.  
If you still doubt me, listen while I prove  
My statement by the letter that he wrote.  
'Dying to meet—my friend!' (she could not see  
The dash between that meant so much to me.)  
'Will come this eve, at eight, and hopes we may  
Be in to greet him.' Now I think you'll say  
'Tis not much like a lover's tender note."

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We laugh, we jest, not meaning what we say;  
We hide our thoughts, by light words lightly spoken,  
And pass on heedless, till we find one day  
They've bruised our hearts, or left some other broken.

I sought my room, and trilling some blithe air,  
Opened my wardrobe, wondering what to wear.  
Momentous question! femininely human!  
More than all others, vexing mind of woman,  
Since that sad day, when in her discontent,  
To search for leaves, our fair first mother went.  
All undecided what I should put on,  
At length I made selection of a lawn—  
White, with a tiny pink vine overrun:—  
My simplest robe, but Vivian's favorite one.  
And placing a single flowret in my hair,  
I crossed the hall to Helen's chamber, where  
I found her with her fair locks all let down,  
Brushing the kinks out, with a pretty frown.  
'T was like a picture, or a pleasing play,  
To watch her make her toilet. She would stand,  
And turn her head first this and then that way,  
Trying effect of ribbon, bow or band.  
Then she would pick up something else, and curve  
Her lovely neck, with cunning, bird-like grace,  
And watch the mirror while she put it on,  
With such a sweetly grave and thoughtful face;  
And then to view it all would sway, and swerve  
Her lithe young body, like a graceful swan.

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Helen was over medium height, and slender  
Even to frailty. Her great, wistful eyes  
Were like the deep blue of autumnal skies;  
And through them looked her soul, large, loving, tender.  
Her long, light hair was lusterless, except  
Upon the ends, where burnished sunbeams slept,  
And on the earlocks; and she looped the curls  
Back with a shell comb, studded thick with pearls,  
Costly yet simple. Her pale loveliness,

That night, was heightened by her rich, black dress,  
That trailed behind her, leaving half in sight  
Her taper arms, and shoulders marble white.

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I was not tall as Helen, and my face  
Was shaped and colored like my grandsire's race;  
For through his veins my own received the warm,  
Red blood of southern France, which curved my form,  
And glowed upon my cheek in crimson dyes,  
And bronzed my hair, and darkled in my eyes.  
And as the morning trails the skirts of night,  
And dusky night puts on the garb of morn,  
And walk together when the day is born,  
So we two glided down the hall and stair,  
Arm clasping arm, into the parlor, where  
Sat Vivian, bathed in sunset's gorgeous light.  
He rose to greet us. Oh! his form was grand;  
And he possessed that power, strange, occult,  
Called magnetism, lacking better word,  
Which moves the world, achieving great result  
Where genius fails completely. Touch his hand,  
It thrilled through all your being—meet his eye,  
And you were moved, yet knew not how, or why.  
Let him but rise, you felt the air was stirred  
By an electric current.

This strange force  
Is mightier than genius. Rightly used,  
It leads to grand achievements; all things yield  
Before its mystic presence, and its field  
Is broad as earth and heaven. But abused,  
It sweeps like a poison simoon on its course  
Bearing miasma in its scorching breath,  
And leaving all it touches struck with death.

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Far-reaching science shall yet tear away  
The mystic garb that hides it from the day,  
And drag it forth and bind it with its laws,  
And make it serve the purposes of men,  
Guided by common sense and reason. Then  
We'll hear no more of seance, table-rapping,  
And all that trash, o'er which the world is gaping,  
Lost in effect, while science seeks the cause.

Vivian was not conscious of his power:  
Or, if he was, knew not its full extent.  
He knew his glance would make a wild beast cower,  
And yet he knew not that his large eyes sent  
Into the heart of woman the same thrill  
That made the lion servant of his will.  
And even strong men felt it.

He arose,  
Reached forth his hand, and in it clasped my own,  
While I held Helen's; and he spoke some word  
Of pleasant greeting in his low, round tone,  
Unlike all other voices I have heard.  
Just as the white cloud, at the sunrise, glows  
With roseate colors, so the pallid hue  
Of Helen's cheek, like tinted sea-shells grew.  
Through mine, his hand caused hers to tremble; such  
Was the all-mast'ring magic of his touch.

Then we sat down, and talked about the weather,  
The neighborhood—some author's last new book.  
But, when I could, I left the two together  
To make acquaintance, saying I must look  
After the chickens—my especial care;  
And ran away, and left them, laughing, there.

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Knee-deep, through clover, to the poplar grove,  
I waded, where my pets were wont to rove:  
And there I found the foolish mother hen  
Brooding her chickens underneath a tree,  
An easy prey for foxes. "Chick-a-dee,"

Quoth I, while reaching for the downy things  
That, chirping, peeped from out the mother-wings,  
"How very human is your folly! When  
There waits a haven, pleasant, bright, and warm,  
And one to lead you thither from the storm  
And lurking dangers, yet you turn away.  
And, thinking to be your own protector, stray  
Into the open jaws of death: for, see!  
An owl is sitting in this very tree  
You thought safe shelter. Go now to your pen."  
And, followed by the clucking, clamorous hen,  
So like the human mother here again,  
Moaning because a strong, protecting arm  
Would shield her little ones from cold and harm,  
I carried back my garden hat brimful  
Of chirping chickens, like white balls of wool,  
And snugly housed them.

And just then I heard  
A sound like gentle winds among the trees,  
Or pleasant waters in the Summer, stirred  
And set in motion by a passing breeze.  
'T was Helen singing: and, as I drew near,  
Another voice, a tenor full and clear,  
Mingled with hers, as murmuring streams unite,  
And flow on stronger in their wedded might.  
It was a way of Helen's, not to sing  
The songs that other people sang. She took  
Sometimes an extract from an ancient book;  
Again some floating, fragmentary thing  
And such she fitted to old melodies,  
Or else composed the music. One of these  
She sang that night; and Vivian caught the strain,  
And joined her in the chorus, or refrain,

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#### SONG.

O thou, mine other, stronger part!  
Whom yet I cannot hear, or see,  
Come thou, and take this loving heart,  
That longs to yield its all to thee,  
I call mine own—Oh, come to me!  
Love, answer back, I come to thee,  
I come to thee.  
This hungry heart, so warm, so large,  
Is far too great a care for me.  
I have grown weary of the charge  
I keep so sacredly for thee.  
Come thou, and take my heart from me.  
Love, answer back, I come to thee,  
I come to thee.  
I am aweary, waiting here  
For one who tarries long from me.  
O! art thou far, or art thou near?  
And must I still be sad for thee?  
Or wilt thou straightway come to me?  
Love, answer, I am near to thee,  
I come to thee.

The melody, so full of plaintive chords,  
Sobbed into silence—echoing down the strings  
Like voice of one who walks from us, and sings.  
Vivian had leaned upon the instrument  
The while they sang. But, as he spoke those words,  
"Love, I am near to thee, I come to thee,"  
He turned his grand head slowly round, and bent  
His lustrous, soulful, speaking gaze on me.  
And my young heart, eager to own its king,  
Sent to my eyes a great, glad, trustful light  
Of love and faith, and hung upon my cheek  
Hope's rose-hued flag. There was no need to speak.  
I crossed the room, and knelt by Helen. "Sing  
That song you sang a fragment of one night,  
Out on the porch, beginning, 'Praise me not,'"  
I whispered: and her sweet and plaintive tone  
Rose, low and tender, as if she had caught  
From some sad passing breeze, and made her own,

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The echo of the wind-harp's sighing strain,  
Or the soft music of the falling rain.

SONG.

O praise me not with your lips, dear one!  
Though your tender words I prize.  
But dearer by far is the soulful gaze  
Of your eyes, your beautiful eyes,  
Your tender, loving eyes.

O chide me not with your lips, dear one!  
Though I cause your bosom sighs.  
You can make repentance deeper far  
By your sad, reproving eyes,  
Your sorrowful, troubled eyes.

Words, at the best, are but hollow sounds;  
Above, in the beaming skies,  
The constant stars say never a word,  
But only smile with their eyes—  
Smile on with their lustrous eyes.

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Then breathe no vow with your lips, dear one;  
On the winged wind speech flies.  
But I read the truth of your noble heart  
In your soulful, speaking eyes—  
In your deep and beautiful eyes.

The twilight darkened 'round us, in the room,  
While Helen sang; and, in the gathering gloom,  
Vivian reached out, and took my hand in his,  
And held it so; while Helen made the air  
Languid with music. Then a step drew near,  
And voice of Aunt Ruth broke the spell:

"Dear! dear!

Why Maurie, Helen, children! how is this?  
I hear you, but you have no light in there.  
Your room is dark as Egypt. What a way  
For folks to visit!—Maurie, go, I pray,  
And order lamps."

And so there came a light,  
And all the sweet dreams hovering around  
The twilight shadows flitted in affright:  
And e'en the music had a harsher sound.

In pleasant converse passed an hour away:  
And Vivian planned a picnic for next day—  
A drive the next, and rambles without end,  
That he might help me entertain my friend.  
And then he rose, bowed low, and passed from sight,  
Like some great star that drops out from the night;  
And Helen watched him through the shadows go,  
And turned and said, her voice subdued and low,  
"How tall he is! in all my life, Maurine,  
A grander man I never yet have seen."

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**PART III.**

[Pg 33]

One golden twelfth-part of a checkered year;  
One summer month, of sunlight, moonlight, mirth  
With not a hint of shadows lurking near,  
Or storm-clouds brewing.

'T was a royal day:  
Voluptuous July held her lover, Earth,  
With her warm arms, upon her glowing breast,  
And twined herself about him, as he lay  
Smiling and panting in his dream-stirred rest.  
She bound him with her limbs of perfect grace,  
And hid him with her trailing robe of green,  
And wound him in her long hair's shimmering sheen,  
And rained her ardent kisses on his face.

Through the glad glory of the summer land  
Helen and I went wandering, hand in hand.

In winding paths, hard by the ripe wheat-field,  
White with the promise of a bounteous yield,  
Across the late shorn meadow—down the hill,  
Red with the tiger-lily blossoms, till  
We stood upon the borders of the lake,  
That like a pretty, placid infant, slept  
Low at its base: and little ripples crept  
Along its surface, just as dimples chase  
Each other o'er an infant's sleeping face

Helen in idle hours had learned to make  
A thousand pretty, feminine knick-knacks:  
For brackets, ottomans, and toilet stands—  
Labor just suited to her dainty hands.  
That morning she had been at work in wax,  
Molding a wreath of flowers for my room,—  
Taking her patterns from the living blows,  
In all their dewy beauty and sweet bloom,  
Fresh from my garden. Fuchsia, tulip, rose,  
And trailing ivy, grew beneath her touch,  
Resembling the living plants as much  
As life is copied in the form of death:  
These lacking but the perfume, and that, breath.

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And now the wreath was all completed, save  
The mermaid blossom of all flowerdom,  
A water-lily, dripping from the wave.  
And 'twas in search of it that we had come  
Down to the lake, and wandered on the beach,  
To see if any lilies grew in reach.  
Some broken stalks, where flowers late had been;  
Some buds, with all their beauties folded in,  
We found, but not the treasure that we sought  
And then we turned our footsteps to the spot  
Where, all impatient of its chain, my boat,  
"The Swan," rocked, asking to be set afloat  
It was a dainty row-boat—strong, yet light;  
Each side a swan was painted snowy white:  
A present from my uncle, just before  
He sailed, with Death, to that mysterious strand,  
Where freighted ships go sailing evermore,  
But none return to tell us of the land.

I freed the "Swan," and slowly rowed about,  
Wherever sea-weeds, grass, or green leaves lifted  
Their tips above the water. So we drifted,  
While Helen, opposite, leaned idly out  
And watched for lilies in the waves below,  
And softly crooned some sweet and dreamy air,  
That soothed me like a mother's lullabies.  
I dropped the oars, and closed my sun-kissed eyes,  
And let the boat go drifting here and there.  
Oh, happy day! the last of that brief time  
Of thoughtless youth, when all the world seems bright,  
Ere that disguised angel men call Woe  
Leads the sad heart through valleys dark as night,  
Up to the heights exalted and sublime.  
On each blest, happy moment, I am fain  
To linger long, ere I pass on to pain  
And sorrow that succeeded.

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From day-dreams,  
As golden as the summer noontide's beams,  
I was awakened by a voice that cried:  
"Strange ship, ahoy! Fair frigate, whither bound?"  
And, starting up, I cast my gaze around,  
And saw a sail-boat o'er the water glide  
Close to the "Swan," like some live thing of grace;  
And from it looked the glowing, handsome face  
Of Vivian.

"Beauteous sirens of the sea,  
Come sail across the raging main with me!"  
He laughed; and leaning, drew our drifting boat  
Beside his own. "There, now! step in!" he said,

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"I'll land you anywhere you want to go—  
My boat is safer far than yours, I know:  
And much more pleasant with its sails all spread.  
The Swan? We'll take the oars, and let it float  
Ashore at leisure. You, Maurine, sit there—  
Miss Helen here. Ye gods and little fishes!  
I've reached the height of pleasure, and my wishes.  
Adieu despondency! farewell to care!"

'T was done so quickly: that was Vivian's way.  
He did not wait for either yea or nay.  
He gave commands, and left you with no choice  
But just to do the bidding of his voice.  
His rare, kind smile, low tones, and manly face  
Lent to his quick imperiousness a grace  
And winning charm, completely stripping it  
Of what might otherwise have seemed unfit.  
Leaving no trace of tyranny, but just  
That nameless force that seemed to say, "You must."  
Suiting its pretty title of "The Dawn,"  
(So named, he said, that it might rhyme with "Swan,")  
Vivian's sail-boat, was carpeted with blue,  
While all its sails were of a pale rose hue.  
The daintiest craft that flirted with the breeze;  
A poet's fancy in an hour of ease.

Whatever Vivian had was of the best.  
His room was like some Sultan's in the East.  
His board was always spread as for a feast.  
Whereat, each meal, he was both host and guest.  
He would go hungry sooner than he'd dine  
At his own table if 'twere illy set.  
He so loved things artistic in design—  
Order and beauty, all about him. Yet  
So kind he was, if it befell his lot  
To dine within the humble peasant's cot,  
He made it seem his native soil to be,  
And thus displayed the true gentility.

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Under the rosy banners of the "Dawn,"  
Around the lake we drifted on, and on.  
It was a time for dreams, and not for speech.  
And so we floated on in silence, each  
Weaving the fancies suiting such a day.  
Helen leaned idly o'er the sail-boat's side,  
And dipped her rosy fingers in the tide;  
And I among the cushions half reclined,  
Half sat, and watched the fleecy clouds at play  
While Vivian with his blank-book, opposite,  
In which he seemed to either sketch or write  
Was lost in inspiration of some kind.

No time, no change, no scene, can e'er efface  
My mind's impression of that hour and place;  
It stands out like a picture. O'er the years,  
Black with their robes of sorrow—veiled with tears,  
Lying with all their lengthened shapes between,  
Untouched, undimmed, I still behold that scene.  
Just as the last of Indian-summer days,  
Replete with sunlight, crowned with amber haze,  
Followed by dark and desolate December,  
Through all the months of winter we remember.

The sun slipped westward. That peculiar change  
Which creeps into the air, and speaks of night  
While yet the day is full of golden light,  
We felt steal o'er us.

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Vivian broke the spell  
Of dream-fraught silence, throwing down his book:  
"Young ladies, please allow me to arrange  
These wraps about your shoulders. I know well  
The fickle nature of our atmosphere,—  
Her smile swift followed by a frown or tear,—  
And go prepared for changes. Now you look,  
Like—like—oh, where's a pretty simile?"

Had you a pocket mirror here you'd see  
How well my native talent is displayed  
In shawling you. Red on the brunette maid;  
Blue on the blonde—and quite without design  
(Oh, where *is* that comparison of mine?)  
Well—like a June rose and a violet blue  
In one bouquet! I fancy that will do.  
And now I crave your patience and a boon,  
Which is to listen, while I read my rhyme,  
A floating fancy of the summer time.  
'Tis neither witty, wonderful, nor wise,  
So listen kindly—but don't criticise  
My maiden effort of the afternoon:

"If all the ships I have at sea  
Should come a-sailing home to me,  
Ah, well! the harbor could not hold  
So many sails as there would be  
If all my ships came in from sea.

"If half my ships came home from sea,  
And brought their precious freight to me,  
Ah, well! I should have wealth as great  
As any king who sits in state—  
So rich the treasures that would be  
In half my ships now out at sea.

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"If just one ship I have at sea  
Should come a-sailing home to me,  
Ah, well! the storm-clouds then might frown:  
For if the others all went down  
Still rich and proud and glad I'd be,  
If that one ship came back to me.

"If that one ship went down at sea,  
And all the others came to me,  
Weighed down with gems and wealth untold,  
With glory, honor, riches, gold,  
The poorest soul on earth I'd be  
If that one ship came not to me.

"O skies be calm? O winds blow free—  
Blow all my ships safe home to me.  
But if thou sendest some a-wrack  
To never more come sailing back,  
Send any—all, that skim the sea,  
But bring my love-ship home to me."

Helen was leaning by me, and her head  
Rested against my shoulder: as he read,  
I stroked her hair, and watched the fleecy skies,  
And when he finished, did not turn my eyes.  
I felt too happy and too shy to meet  
His gaze just then. I said, "'Tis very sweet,  
And suits the day; does it not, Helen, dear?"  
But Helen, voiceless, did not seem to hear.  
"'Tis strange," I added, "how you poets sing  
So feelingly about the very thing  
You care not for! and dress up an ideal  
So well, it looks a living, breathing real!  
Now, to a listener, your love song seemed  
A heart's out-pouring; yet I've heard you say  
Almost the opposite; or that you deemed  
Position, honor, glory, power, fame,  
Gained without loss of conscience or good name,  
The things to live for."

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"Have you? Well you may,"  
Laughed Vivian, "but 'twas years—or months ago!  
And Solomon says wise men change, you know!  
I now speak truth! if she I hold most dear  
Slipped from my life, and no least hope were left,  
My heart would find the years more lonely here.  
Than if I were of wealth, fame, friends, bereft,  
And sent an exile to a foreign land."



His voice was low, and measured: as he spoke,  
New, unknown chords of melody awoke  
Within my soul. I felt my heart expand  
With that sweet fullness born of love. I turned  
To hide the blushes on my cheek that burned,  
And leaning over Helen, breathed her name.  
She lay so motionless I thought she slept:  
But, as I spoke, I saw her eyes unclose,  
And o'er her face a sudden glory swept,  
And a slight tremor thrilled all through her frame.  
"Sweet friend," I said, "your face is full of light:  
What were the dreams that made your eyes so bright?"

She only smiled for answer, and arose  
From her reclining posture at my side,  
Threw back the clust'ring ringlets from her face  
With a quick gesture, full of easy grace,  
And, turning, spoke to Vivian. "Will you guide  
The boat up near that little clump of green  
Off to the right? There's where the lilies grow.  
We quite forgot our errand here, Maurine,  
And our few moments have grown into hours.  
What will Aunt Ruth think of our ling'ring so?  
There—that will do—now I can reach the flowers."

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"Hark! just hear that!" and Vivian broke forth singing,  
"Row, brothers, row." "The six o'clock bell's ringing!  
Who ever knew three hours to go so fast  
In all the annals of the world, before?  
I could have sworn not over one had passed.  
Young ladies, I am forced to go ashore!  
I thank you for the pleasure you have given;  
This afternoon has been a glimpse of heaven.  
Good night—sweet dreams! and by your gracious leave,  
I'll pay my compliments to-morrow eve."

A smile, a bow, and he had gone his way:  
And, in the waning glory of the day,  
Down cool, green lanes, and through the length'ning shadows,  
Silent, we wandered back across the meadows.  
The wreath was finished, and adorned my room;  
Long afterward, the lilies' copied bloom  
Was like a horrid specter in my sight,  
Staring upon me morning, noon, and night.

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The sun went down. The sad new moon rose up,  
And passed before me, like an empty cup,  
The Great Unseen brims full of pain or bliss,  
And gives His children, saying, "Drink of this."

A light wind, from the open casement, fanned  
My brow and Helen's, as we, hand in hand,  
Sat looking out upon the twilight scene,  
In dreamy silence. Helen's dark blue eyes,  
Like two lost stars that wandered from the skies  
Some night adown the meteor's shining track,  
And always had been grieving to go back,  
Now gazed up, wistfully, at heaven's dome,  
And seemed to recognize and long for home.  
Her sweet voice broke the silence: "Wish, Maurine,  
Before you speak! you know the moon is new,  
And anything you wish for will come true  
Before it wanes. I do believe the sign!  
Now tell me your wish, and I'll tell you mine."

I turned and looked up at the slim young moon;  
And, with an almost superstitious heart,  
I sighed, "Oh, new moon! help me, by thine art,  
To grow all grace and goodness, and to be  
Worthy the love a true heart proffers me."  
Then smiling down, I said, "Dear one! my boon,  
I fear, is quite too silly or too sweet  
For my repeating: so we'll let it stay  
Between the moon and me. But if I may  
I'll listen now to your wish. Tell me, please!"

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All suddenly she nestled at my feet,  
And hid her blushing face upon my knees.  
Then drew my hand against her glowing cheek,  
And, leaning on my breast, began to speak,  
Half sighing out the words my tortured ear  
Reached down to catch, while striving not to hear.

"Can you not guess who 'twas about, Maurine?  
Oh, my sweet friend! you must ere this have seen  
The love I tried to cover from all eyes  
And from myself. Ah, foolish little heart!  
As well it might go seeking for some art  
Whereby to hide the sun in noonday skies.  
When first the strange sound of his voice I heard,  
Looked on his noble face, and touched his hand,  
My slumb'ring heart thrilled through and through, and stirred  
As if to say, 'I hear, and understand.'  
And day by day mine eyes were blest beholding  
The inner beauty of his life, unfolding  
In countless words and actions, that portrayed  
The noble stuff of which his soul was made.  
And more and more I felt my heart upreaching  
Toward the truth, drawn gently by his teaching,  
As flowers are drawn by sunlight. And there grew  
A strange, shy something in its depths, I knew  
At length was love, because it was so sad,  
And yet so sweet, and made my heart so glad,

Yet seemed to pain me. Then, for very shame,  
Lest all should read my secret and its name.  
I strove to hide it in my breast away,  
Where God could see it only. But each day  
It seemed to grow within me, and would rise,  
Like my own soul, and look forth from my eyes,  
Defying bonds of silence; and would speak,  
In its red-lettered language, on my cheek,  
If but his name was uttered. You were kind,  
My own Maurine! as you alone could be,  
So long the sharer of my heart and mind,  
While yet you saw, in seeming not to see.  
In all the years we have been friends, my own.  
And loved as women very rarely do,  
My heart no sorrow and no joy has known  
It has not shared at once, in full, with you  
And I so longed to speak to you of this,  
When first I felt its mingled pain and bliss;  
Yet dared not, lest you, knowing him, should say,  
In pity for my folly—'Lack-a-day!  
You are undone: because no mortal art  
Can win the love of such a lofty heart.'  
And so I waited, silent and in pain,  
Till I could know I did not love in vain.  
And now I know, beyond a doubt or fear.  
Did he not say, 'If she I hold most dear  
Slipped from my life, and no least hope were left,  
My heart would find the years more lonely here  
Than if I were of wealth, fame, friends, bereft,  
And sent, an exile, to a foreign land'?  
Oh, darling, you must *love*, to understand  
The joy that thrilled all through me at those words.  
It was as if a thousand singing birds  
Within my heart broke forth in notes of praise.  
I did not look up, but I knew his gaze  
Was on my face, and that his eyes must see  
The joy I felt almost transfigured me.  
He loves me—loves me! so the birds kept singing,  
And all my soul with that sweet strain is ringing.  
If there were added but one drop of bliss,  
No more my cup would hold: and so, this eve,  
I made a wish that I might feel his kiss  
Upon my lips, ere yon pale moon should leave  
The stars all lonely, having waned away,  
Too old and weak and bowed with care to stay."

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Her voice sighed into silence. While she spoke  
My heart writhed in me, praying she would cease—  
Each word she uttered falling like a stroke  
On my bare soul. And now a hush like death,  
Save that 'twas broken by a quick-drawn breath,  
Fell 'round me, but brought not the hoped-for peace.  
For when the lash no longer leaves its blows,  
The flesh still quivers, and the blood still flows.

She nestled on my bosom like a child.  
And 'neath her head my tortured heart throbbed wild  
With pain and pity. She had told her tale—  
Her self-deceiving story to the end.  
How could I look down on her as she lay  
So fair, and sweet, and lily-like, and frail—  
A tender blossom on my breast, and say,  
"Nay, you are wrong—you do mistake, dear friend!  
'Tis I am loved, not you"? Yet that were truth,  
And she must know it later.

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Should I speak,  
And spread a ghastly pallor o'er the cheek  
Flushed now with joy?—And while I, doubting, pondered,  
She spoke again. "Maurine! I oft have wondered  
Why you and Vivian were not lovers. He  
Is all a heart could ask its king to be;  
And you have beauty, intellect and youth.  
I think it strange you have not loved each other—  
Strange how he could pass by you for another  
Not half so fair or worthy. Yet I know  
A loving Father pre-arranged it so.  
I think my heart has known him all these years,  
And waited for him. And if when he came  
It had been as a lover of my friend,  
I should have recognized him, all the same,  
As my soul-mate, and loved him to the end,  
Hiding my grief, and forcing back my tears  
Till on my heart, slow dropping, day by day,  
Unseen they fell, and wore it all away.  
And so a tender Father kept him free,  
With all the largeness of his love, for me—  
For me, unworthy such a precious gift!  
Yet I will bend each effort of my life  
To grow in grace and goodness, and to lift  
My soul and spirit to his lofty height,  
So to deserve that holy name, his wife.  
Sweet friend, it fills my whole heart with delight  
To breathe its long hid secret in your ear.  
Speak, my Maurine, and say you love to hear!"  
The while she spoke, my active brain gave rise  
To one great thought of mighty sacrifice  
And self-denial. Oh! it blanched my cheek,  
And wrung my soul; and from my heart it drove  
All life and feeling. Coward-like, I strove  
To send it from me; but I felt it cling  
And hold fast on my mind like some live thing;  
And all the Self within me felt its touch  
And cried, "No, no! I cannot do so much—  
I am not strong enough—there is no call."  
And then the voice of Helen bade me speak,  
And with a calmness born of nerve, I said,  
Scarce knowing what I uttered, "Sweetheart, all  
Your joys and sorrows are with mine own wed.  
I thank you for your confidence, and pray  
I may deserve it always. But, dear one,  
Something—perhaps our boat-ride in the sun,  
Has set my head to aching. I must go  
To bed directly; and you will, I know,  
Grant me your pardon, and another day  
We'll talk of this together. Now good night  
And angels guard you with their wings of light."

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I kissed her lips, and held her on my heart,  
And viewed her as I ne'er had done before.  
I gazed upon her features o'er and o'er;  
Marked her white, tender face—her fragile form,

Like some frail plant that withers in the storm;  
Saw she was fairer in her new-found joy  
Than e'er before; and thought, "Can I destroy  
God's handiwork, or leave it at the best  
A broken harp, while I close clasp my bliss?"  
I bent my head and gave her one last kiss,  
And sought my room, and found there such relief  
As sad hearts feel when first alone with grief.

[Pg 48]

The moon went down, slow sailing from my sight,  
And left the stars to watch away the night.  
O stars, sweet stars, so changeless and serene!  
What depths of woe your pitying eyes have seen!  
The proud sun sets, and leaves us with our sorrow,  
To grope alone in darkness till the morrow.  
The languid moon, e'en if she deigns to rise,  
Soon seeks her couch, grown weary of our sighs;  
But from the early gloaming till the day  
Sends golden-liveried heralds forth to say  
He comes in might; the patient stars shine on,  
Steadfast and faithful, from twilight to dawn.  
And, as they shone upon Gethsemane,  
And watched the struggle of a God-like soul,  
Now from the same far height they shone on me,  
And saw the waves of anguish o'er me roll.

The storm had come upon me all unseen:  
No sound of thunder fell upon my ear;  
No cloud arose to tell me it was near;  
But under skies all sunlit, and serene,  
I floated with the current of the stream,  
And thought life all one golden-haloed dream.  
When lo! a hurricane, with awful force,  
Swept swift upon its devastating course,  
Wrecked my frail bark, and cast me on the wave  
Where all my hopes had found a sudden grave.  
Love makes us blind and selfish: otherwise  
I had seen Helen's secret in her eyes;  
So used I was to reading every look  
In her sweet face, as I would read a book.  
But now, made sightless by love's blinding rays,  
I had gone on unseeing, to the end  
Where Pain dispelled the mist of golden haze  
That walled me in, and lo! I found my friend  
Who journeyed with me—at my very side,  
Had been sore wounded to the heart, while I  
Both deaf and blind, saw not, nor heard her cry.  
And then I sobbed, "O God! I would have died  
To save her this." And as I cried in pain,  
There leaped forth from the still, white realm of Thought  
Where Conscience dwells, that unimpassioned spot  
As widely different from the heart's domain  
As north from south—the impulse felt before,  
And put away; but now it rose once more,  
In greater strength, and said, "Heart, would'st thou prove  
What lips have uttered? Then go lay thy love  
On Friendship's altar, as thy offering."  
"Nay!" cried my heart, "ask any other thing—  
Ask life itself—'twere easier sacrifice.  
But ask not love, for that I cannot give."

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"But," spoke the voice, "the meanest insect dies,  
And is no hero! heroes dare to live  
When all that makes life sweet is snatched away."  
So with my heart, in converse, till the day  
In gold and crimson billows, rose and broke,  
The voice of Conscience, all unwearied, spoke.  
Love warred with Friendship: heart with Conscience fought,  
Hours rolled away, and yet the end was not.  
And wily Self, tricked out like tenderness,  
Sighed, "Think how one, whose life thou wert to bless,  
Will be cast down, and grope in doubt and fear!  
Wouldst thou wound him, to give thy friend relief?  
Can wrong make right?"

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"Nay!" Conscience said, "but Pride

And Time can heal the saddest hurts of Love.  
While Friendship's wounds gape wide and yet more wide,  
And bitter fountains of the spirit prove."

At length, exhausted with the wearing strife,  
I cast the new-found burden of my life  
On God's broad breast, and sought that deep repose  
That only he who watched with sorrow knows.

**PART IV.**

[Pg 51]

"Maurine, Maurine! 'tis ten o'clock! arise,  
My pretty sluggard! open those dark eyes,  
And see where yonder sun is! Do you know  
I made my toilet just four hours ago?"

'T was Helen's voice: and Helen's gentle kiss  
Fell on my cheek. As from a deep abyss,  
I drew my weary self from that strange sleep  
That rests not, nor refreshes. Scarce awake  
Or conscious, yet there seemed a heavy weight  
Bound on my breast, as by a cruel Fate.  
I knew not why, and yet I longed to weep.  
Some dark cloud seemed to hang upon the day;  
And, for a moment, in that trance I lay,  
When suddenly the truth did o'er me break,  
Like some great wave upon a helpless child.  
The dull pain in my breast grew like a knife—  
The heavy throbbing of my heart grew wild,  
And God gave back the burden of the life  
He kept what time I slumbered.

"You are ill,"  
Cried Helen, "with that blinding headache still!  
You look so pale and weary. Now let me  
Play nurse, Maurine, and care for you to-day!  
And first I'll suit some dainty to your taste,  
And bring it to you, with a cup of tea."  
And off she ran, not waiting my reply.  
But, wanting most the sunshine and the light,  
I left my couch, and clothed myself in haste,  
And, kneeling, sent to God an earnest cry  
For help and guidance.

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"Show Thou me the way,  
Where duty leads; for I am blind! my sight  
Obscured by self. Oh, lead my steps aright!  
Help me see the path: and if it may,  
Let this cup pass:—and yet Thou heavenly One  
Thy will in all things, not mine own, be done."  
Rising, I went upon my way, receiving  
The strength prayer gives alway to hearts believing.  
I felt that unseen hands were leading me,  
And knew the end was peace.

"What! are you up?"  
Cried Helen, coming with a tray, and cup,  
Of tender toast, and fragrant smoking tea.  
"You naughty girl! you should have stayed in bed  
Until you ate your breakfast, and were better  
I've something hidden for you here—a letter.  
But drink your tea before you read it, dear!  
'Tis from some distant cousin, Auntie said,  
And so you need not hurry. Now be good,  
And mind your Helen."

So, in passive mood,  
I laid the still unopened letter near,  
And loitered at my breakfast more to please  
My nurse, than any hunger to appease.  
Then listlessly I broke the seal and read  
The few lines written in a bold free hand:  
"New London, Canada. Dear Coz. Maurine!  
(In spite of generations stretched between  
Our natural right to that most handy claim  
Of cousinship, we'll use it all the same)  
I'm coming to see you! honestly, in truth!  
I've threatened often—now I mean to act.

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You'll find my coming is a stubborn fact.  
Keep quiet though, and do not tell Aunt Ruth  
I wonder if she'll know her petted boy  
In spite of changes. Look for me until  
You see me coming. As of old I'm still  
Your faithful friend, and loving cousin, Roy."

So Roy was coming! He and I had played  
As boy and girl, and later, youth and maid,  
Full half our lives together. He had been,  
Like me, an orphan; and the roof of kin  
Gave both kind shelter. Swift years sped away  
Ere change was felt: and then one summer day  
A long lost uncle sailed from India's shore—  
Made Roy his heir, and he was ours no more.

"He'd write us daily, and we'd see his face  
Once every year." Such was his promise given  
The morn he left. But now the years were seven  
Since last he looked upon the olden place.  
He'd been through college, traveled in all lands,  
Sailed over seas, and trod the desert sands.  
Would write and plan a visit, then, ere long,  
Would write again from Egypt or Hong Kong—  
Some fancy called him thither unforeseen.  
So years had passed, till seven lay between  
His going and the coming of this note,  
Which I hid in my bosom, and replied  
To Aunt Ruth's queries, "What the truant wrote?"  
By saying he was still upon the wing,  
And merely dropped a line, while journeying,  
To say he lived: and she was satisfied.

[Pg 54]

Sometimes it happens, in this world so strange,  
A human heart will pass through mortal strife,  
And writhe in torture: while the old sweet life  
So full of hope, and beauty, bloom and grace,  
Is slowly strangled by remorseless Pain:  
And one stern, cold, relentless, takes its place—  
A ghastly, pallid specter of the slain.  
Yet those in daily converse see no change  
Nor dream the heart has suffered.

So that day

I passed along toward the troubled way  
Stern duty pointed, and no mortal guessed  
A mighty conflict had disturbed my breast.

I had resolved to yield up to my friend  
The man I loved. Since she, too, loved him so  
I saw no other way in honor left.  
She was so weak and fragile, once bereft  
Of this great hope, that held her with such power  
She would wilt down, like some frost-bitten flower  
And swift untimely death would be the end.  
But I was strong: and hardy plants, which grow  
In out-door soil, can bear bleak winds that blow  
From Arctic lands, whereof a single breath  
Would lay the hot-house blossom low in death.

The hours went by, too slow, and yet too fast.  
All day I argued with my foolish heart  
That bade me play the shrinking coward's part  
And hide from pain. And when the day had past  
And time for Vivian's call drew near and nearer,  
It pleaded. "Wait, until the way seems clearer:  
Say you are ill—or busy: keep away  
Until you gather strength enough to play  
The part you have resolved on."

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"Nay, not so,"

Made answer clear-eyed Reason, "Do you go  
And put your resolution to the test.  
Resolve, however nobly formed, at best  
Is but a still born babe of Thought, until  
It proves existence of its life and will

By sound or action."

So when Helen came  
And knelt by me, her fair face all aflame  
With sudden blushes, whispering, "My sweet!  
My heart can hear the music of his feet—  
Go down with me to meet him," I arose,  
And went with her all calmly, as one goes  
To look upon the dear face of the dead.

That eve, I know not what I did or said.  
I was not cold—my manner was not strange:  
Perchance I talked more freely than my wont,  
But in my speech was naught could give affront;  
Yet I conveyed, as only woman can,  
That nameless *something*, which bespeaks a change.

'Tis in the power of woman, if she be  
Whole-souled and noble, free from coquetry—  
Her motives all unselfish, worthy, good,  
To make herself and feelings understood  
By nameless acts—thus sparing what to man,  
However gently answered, causes pain,  
The offering of his hand and heart in vain.

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She can be friendly, unrestrained, and kind,  
Assume no airs of pride or arrogance;  
But in her voice, her manner, and her glance,  
Convey that mystic something, undefined,  
Which men fail not to understand and read,  
And, when not blind with egoism, heed.  
My task was harder. 'T was the slow undoing  
Of long sweet months of unimpeded wooing.  
It was to hide and cover and conceal  
The truth—assuming, what I did not feel.  
It was to dam love's happy singing tide  
That blessed me with its hopeful, tuneful tone,  
By feigned indiff'rence, till it turned aside,  
And changed its channel, leaving me alone  
To walk parched plains, and thirst for that sweet draught  
My lips had tasted, but another quaffed.  
It could be done. For no words yet were spoken—  
None to recall—no pledges to be broken.  
"He will be grieved, then angry, cold, then cross,"  
I reasoned, thinking what would be his part  
In this strange drama. "Then, because his he  
Feels something lacking, to make good his loss,  
He'll turn to Helen: and her gentle grace  
And loving acts will win her soon the place  
I hold to-day: and like a troubled dream  
At length, our past, when he looks back, will seem."  
That evening passed with music, chat and song:  
But hours that once had flown on airy wings  
Now limped on weary, aching limbs along,  
Each moment like some dreaded step that brings  
A twinge of pain.

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As Vivian rose to go,  
Slow bending to me, from his greater height,  
He took my hand, and, looking in my eyes,  
With tender questioning and pained surprise,  
Said, "Maurine, you are not yourself to-night!  
What is it? Are you ailing?"

"Ailing? no,"

I answered, laughing lightly, "I am not:  
Just see my cheek, sir! is it thin, or pale?  
Now tell me, am I looking very frail?"  
"Nay, nay!" he answered, "it can not be *seen*,  
The change I speak of—'twas more in your mien:  
Preoccupation, or—I know not what!  
Miss Helen, am I wrong, or does Maurine  
Seem to have something on her mind this eve?"  
"She does!" laughed Helen, "and I do believe  
I know what 'tis! A letter came to-day  
Which she read slyly, and then hid away  
Close to her heart, not knowing I was near:  
And since she's been as you have seen her here.

See how she blushes! so my random shot  
We must believe has struck a tender spot."

Her rippling laughter floated through the room,  
And redder yet I felt the hot blood rise,  
Then surge away to leave me pale as death,  
Under the dark and swiftly gathering gloom  
Of Vivian's questioning, accusing eyes,  
That searched my soul. I almost shrieked beneath  
That stern, fixed gaze; and stood spellbound until  
He turned with sudden movement, gave his hand  
To each in turn, and said, "You must not stand  
Longer, young ladies, in this open door.  
The air is heavy with a cold damp chill.  
We shall have rain to-morrow, or before.  
Good night."

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He vanished in the darkling shade;  
And so the dreaded evening found an end,  
That saw me grasp the conscience-whetted blade,  
And strike a blow for honor and for friend.

"How swiftly passed the evening!" Helen sighed.  
"How long the hours!" my tortured heart replied.  
Joy, like a child, with lightsome steps doth glide  
By Father Time, and, looking in his face,  
Cries, snatching blossoms from the fair road-side,  
"I could pluck more, but for thy hurried pace."  
The while her elder brother Pain, man grown,  
Whose feet are hurt by many a thorn and stone,  
Looks to some distant hill-top, high and calm,  
Where he shall find not only rest, but balm  
For all his wounds, and cries in tones of woe,  
"O Father Time! why is thy pace so slow?"

Two days, all sad with lonely wind and rain,  
Went sobbing by, repeating o'er and o'er  
The miserere, desolate and drear,  
Which every human heart must sometime hear.  
Pain is but little varied. Its refrain,  
Whate'er the words are, is for aye the same.  
The third day brought a change: for with it came  
Not only sunny smiles to Nature's face,  
But Roy, our Roy came back to us. Once more  
We looked into his laughing, handsome eyes,  
Which, while they gave Aunt Ruth a glad surprise  
In no way puzzled her: for one glance told  
What each succeeding one confirmed, that he  
Who bent above her with the lissome grace  
Of his fine form, though grown so tall, could be  
No other than the Roy Montaine of old.

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It was a sweet reunion: and he brought  
So much of sunshine with him, that I caught,  
Just from his smile alone, enough of gladness  
To make my heart forget a time its sadness.  
We talked together of the dear old days:  
Leaving the present, with its depths and heights  
Of life's maturer sorrows and delights,  
I turned back to my childhood's level land,  
And Roy and I, dear playmates, hand in hand,  
Wandered in mem'ry, through the olden ways.

It was the second evening of his coming.  
Helen was playing dreamily, and humming  
Some wordless melody of white-souled thought,  
While Roy and I sat by the open door,  
Re-living childish incidents of yore.  
My eyes were glowing, and my cheeks were hot  
With warm young blood; excitement, joy, or pain  
Alike would send swift coursing through each vein.  
Roy, always eloquent, was waxing fine,  
And bringing vividly before my gaze  
Some old adventure of those halcyon days,  
When suddenly in pauses of the talk,  
I heard a well-known step upon the walk,

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And looked up quickly to meet full in mine  
The eyes of Vivian Dangerfield. A flash  
Shot from their depths:—a sudden blaze of light  
Like that swift followed by the thunder's crash,  
Which said, "Suspicion is confirmed by sight,"  
As they fell on the pleasant door-way scene.  
Then o'er his clear-cut face, a cold white look  
Crept, like the pallid moonlight o'er a brook,  
And, with a slight, proud bending of the head,  
He stepped toward us haughtily and said,  
"Please pardon my intrusion, Miss Maurine:  
I called to ask Miss Trevor for a book  
She spoke of lending me: nay, sit you still!  
And I, by grant of your permission, will  
Pass by to where I hear her playing."

"Stay!"

I said, "one moment, Vivian, if you please;"  
And suddenly bereft of all my ease,  
And scarcely knowing what to do, or say,  
Confused as any school-girl, I arose,  
And some way made each to the other known  
They bowed, shook hands: then Vivian turned away  
And sought out Helen, leaving us alone.

"One of Miss Trevor's, or of Maurine's beaux?  
Which may he be, who cometh like a prince  
With haughty bearing, and an eagle eye?"  
Roy queried, laughing: and I answered, "Since  
You saw him pass me for Miss Trevor's side,  
I leave your own good judgment to reply."

[Pg 61]

And straightway caused the tide of talk to glide  
In other channels, striving to dispel  
The sudden gloom that o'er my spirit fell.

We mortals are such hypocrites at best!  
When Conscience tries our courage with a test,  
And points to some steep pathway, we set out  
Boldly, denying any fear or doubt;  
But pause before the first rock in the way,  
And, looking back, with tears, at Conscience, say  
"We are so sad, dear Conscience! for we would  
Most gladly do what to thee seemeth good;  
But lo! this rock! we cannot climb it, so  
Thou must point out some other way to go."  
Yet secretly we are rejoicing: and,  
When right before our faces, as we stand  
In seeming grief, the rock is cleft in twain,  
Leaving the pathway clear, we shrink in pain!  
And loth to go, by every act reveal  
What we so tried from Conscience to conceal.

I saw that hour, the way made plain, to do  
With scarce an effort, what had seemed a strife  
That would require the strength of my whole life.

Women have quick perceptions: and I knew  
That Vivian's heart was full of jealous pain,  
Suspecting—nay *believing* Roy Montaine  
To be my lover.—First my altered mien—  
And next the letter—then the door-way scene—  
My flushed face gazing in the one above  
That bent so near me, and my strange confusion  
When Vivian came, all led to one conclusion:  
That I had but been playing with his love,  
As women sometimes cruelly do play  
With hearts when their true lovers are away.

[Pg 62]

There could be nothing easier, than just  
To let him linger on in this belief  
Till hourly-fed Suspicion and Distrust  
Should turn to scorn and anger all his grief.  
Compared with me, so doubly sweet and pure  
Would Helen seem, my purpose would be sure,  
And certain of completion in the end.

But now, the way was made so straight and clear,  
My coward heart shrank back in guilty fear,  
Till Conscience whispered with her "still small voice,"  
"The precious time is passing—make thy choice—  
Resign thy love, or slay thy trusting friend."

The growing moon, watched by the myriad eyes  
Of countless stars, went sailing through the skies,  
Like some young prince, rising to rule a nation,  
To whom all eyes are turned in expectation.  
A woman who possesses tact and art  
And strength of will can take the hand of doom,  
And walk on, smiling sweetly as she goes,  
With rosy lips, and rounded cheeks of bloom,  
Cheating a loud-tongued world that never knows  
The pain and sorrow of her hidden heart.  
And so I joined in Roy's bright changing chat;  
Answered his sallies—talked of this and that,  
My brow unruffled as the calm still wave  
That tells not of the wrecked ship, and the grave  
Beneath its surface.

[Pg 63]

Then we heard, ere long,  
The sound of Helen's gentle voice in song,  
And, rising, entered where the subtle power  
Of Vivian's eyes, forgiving while accusing,  
Finding me weak, had won me, in that hour;  
But Roy, alway polite and debonair  
Where ladies were, now hung about my chair  
With nameless delicate attentions, using  
That air devotional, and those small arts  
Acquaintance with society imparts  
To men gallant by nature.

"T was my sex  
And not myself he bowed to. Had my place  
Been filled that evening by a dowager,  
Twice his own age, he would have given her  
The same attentions. But they served to vex  
Whatever hope in Vivian's heart remained.  
The cold, white look crept back upon his face,  
Which told how deeply he was hurt and pained.

Little by little all things had conspired,  
To bring events I dreaded, yet desired.  
We were in constant intercourse: walks, rides,  
Picnics and sails, filled weeks of golden weather,  
And almost hourly we were thrown together.  
No words were spoken of rebuke or scorn:  
Good friends we seemed. But as a gulf divides  
This land and that, though lying side by side,  
So rolled a gulf between us—deep and wide—  
The gulf of doubt, which widened slowly morn  
And noon and night.

[Pg 64]

Free and informal were  
These picnics and excursions. Yet, although  
Helen and I would sometimes choose to go  
Without our escorts, leaving them quite free.  
It happened alway Roy would seek out me  
Ere passed the day, while Vivian walked with her.  
I had no thought of flirting. Roy was just  
Like some dear brother, and I quite forgot  
The kinship was so distant it was not  
Safe to rely upon in perfect trust,  
Without reserve or caution. Many a time  
When there was some steep mountain side to climb,  
And I grew weary, he would say, "Maurine,  
Come rest you here." And I would go and lean  
My head upon his shoulder, or would stand  
And let him hold in his my willing hand.  
The while he stroked it gently with his own.  
Or I would let him clasp me with his arm,  
Nor entertained a thought of any harm,  
Nor once supposed but Vivian was alone  
In his suspicions. But ere long the truth  
I learned in consternation! both Aunt Ruth  
And Helen, honestly, in faith believed

That Roy and I were lovers.

Undeceived,  
Some careless words might open Vivian's eyes  
And spoil my plans. So reasoning in this wise,  
To all their sallies I in jest replied,  
To naught assented, and yet naught denied,  
With Roy unchanged remaining, confident  
Each understood just what the other meant.

[Pg 65]

If I grew weary of this double part,  
And self-imposed deception caused my heart  
Sometimes to shrink, I needed but to gaze  
On Helen's face: that wore a look ethereal,  
As if she dwelt above the things material  
And held communion with the angels. So  
I fed my strength and courage through the days.  
What time the harvest moon rose full and clear  
And cast its ling'ring radiance on the earth,  
We made a feast; and called from far and near,  
Our friends, who came to share the scene of mirth.  
Fair forms and faces flitted to and fro;  
But none more sweet than Helen's. Robed in white,  
She floated like a vision through the dance.  
So frailly fragile and so phantom fair,  
She seemed like some stray spirit of the air,  
And was pursued by many an anxious glance  
That looked to see her fading from the sight  
Like figures that a dreamer sees at night.

And noble men and gallants graced the scene:  
Yet none more noble or more grand of mien  
Than Vivian—broad of chest and shoulder, tall  
And finely formed, as any Grecian god  
Whose high-arched foot on Mount Olympus trod.  
His clear-cut face was beardless; and, like those  
Same Grecian statues, when in calm repose,  
Was it in hue and feature. Framed in hair  
Dark and abundant; lighted by large eyes  
That could be cold as steel in winter air,  
Or warm and sunny as Italian skies.

[Pg 66]

Weary of mirth and music, and the sound  
Of tripping feet, I sought a moment's rest  
Within the lib'ry, where a group I found  
Of guests, discussing with apparent zest  
Some theme of interest—Vivian, near the while,  
Leaning and listening with his slow odd smile.  
"Now Miss La Pelle, we will appeal to you,"  
Cried young Guy Semple, as I entered. "We  
Have been discussing right before his face,  
All unrebuked by him, as you may see,  
A poem lately published by our friend:  
And we are quite divided. I contend  
The poem is a libel and untrue  
I hold the fickle women are but few,  
Compared with those who are like yon fair moon  
That, ever faithful, rises in her place  
Whether she's greeted by the flowers of June,  
Or cold and dreary stretches of white space."

"Oh!" cried another, "Mr. Dangerfield,  
Look to your laurels! or you needs must yield  
The crown to Semple, who, 'tis very plain,  
Has mounted Pegasus and grasped his mane."

All laughed: and then, as Guy appealed to me  
I answered lightly, "My young friend, I fear  
You chose a most unlucky simile  
To prove the truth of woman. To her place  
The moon does rise—but with a different face  
Each time she comes. But now I needs must hear  
The poem read, before I can consent  
To pass my judgment on the sentiment."

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All clamored that the author was the man

To read the poem: and, with tones that said  
More than the cutting, scornful words he read,  
Taking the book Guy gave him, he began:

#### HER LOVE.

The sands upon the ocean side  
That change about with every tide,  
And never true to one abide,  
A woman's love I liken to.

The summer zephyrs, light and vain,  
That sing the same alluring strain  
To every grass blade on the plain—  
A woman's love is nothing more.

The sunshine of an April day  
That comes to warm you with its ray,  
But while you smile has flown away—  
A woman's love is like to this.

God made poor woman with no heart,  
But gave her skill, and tact, and art,  
And so she lives, and plays her part.  
We must not blame, but pity her.

She leans to man—but just to hear  
The praise he whispers in her ear,  
Herself, not him, she holdeth dear—  
O fool! to be deceived by her.

To sate her selfish thirst she quaffs  
The love of strong hearts in sweet draughts  
Then throws them lightly by and laughs,  
Too weak to understand their pain.

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As changeful as the winds that blow  
From every region, to and fro,  
Devoid of heart, she cannot know  
The suffering of a human heart.

I knew the cold, fixed gaze of Vivian's eyes  
Saw the slow color to my forehead rise;  
But lightly answered, toying with my fan,  
"That sentiment is very like a man!  
Men call us fickle, but they do us wrong;  
We're only frail and helpless, men are strong;  
And when love dies, they take the poor dead thing  
And make a shroud out of their suffering,  
And drag the corpse about with them for years.  
But we?—we mourn it for a day with tears!  
And then we robe it for its last long rest,  
And being women, feeble things at best,  
We cannot dig the grave ourselves. And so  
We call strong-limbed New Love to lay it low:  
Immortal sexton he! whom Venus sends  
To do this service for her earthly friends,  
The trusty fellow digs the grave so deep  
Nothing disturbs the dead laid there to sleep."

The laugh that followed had not died away  
Ere Roy Montaine came seeking me, to say  
The band was tuning for our waltz, and so  
Back to the ball-room bore me. In the glow  
And heat and whirl, my strength ere long was spent,  
And I grew faint and dizzy, and we went  
Out on the cool moonlighted portico,  
And, sitting there, Roy drew my languid head  
Upon the shelter of his breast, and bent  
His smiling eyes upon me, as he said,  
"I'll try the mesmerism of my touch  
To work a cure: be very quiet now,  
And let me make some passes o'er your brow.

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Why, how it throbs! you've exercised too much!  
I shall not let you dance again to-night."

Just then before us, in the broad moonlight,  
Two forms were mirrored: and I turned my face  
To catch the teasing and mischievous glance  
Of Helen's eyes, as, heated by the dance,  
Leaning on Vivian's arm, she sought this place.

"I beg your pardon," came in that round tone  
Of his low voice. "I think we do intrude."  
Bowing, they turned, and left us quite alone  
Ere I could speak, or change my attitude.

### ***PART V.***

[Pg 70]

A visit to a cave some miles away  
Was next in order. So, one sunny day,  
Four prancing steeds conveyed a laughing load  
Of merry pleasure-seekers o'er the road.  
A basket picnic, music and croquet  
Were in the programme. Skies were blue and clear,  
And cool winds whispered of the Autumn near.  
The merry-makers filled the time with pleasure:  
Some floated to the music's rhythmic measure,  
Some played, some promenaded on the green.

Ticked off by happy hearts, the moments passed.  
The afternoon, all glow and glimmer, came.  
Helen and Roy were leaders of some game,  
And Vivian was not visible.

"Maurine,  
I challenge you to climb yon cliff with me!  
And who shall tire, or reach the summit last  
Must pay a forfeit," cried a romping maid.  
"Come! start at once, or own you are afraid."  
So challenged I made ready for the race,  
Deciding first the forfeit was to be  
A handsome pair of bootees to replace  
The victor's loss who made the rough ascent.  
The cliff was steep and stony. On we went  
As eagerly as if the path was Fame,  
And what we climbed for, glory and a name.  
My hands were bruised; my garments sadly rent,  
But on I clambered. Soon I heard a cry,  
"Maurine! Maurine! my strength is wholly spent!  
You've won the boots! I'm going back—good bye!"  
And back she turned, in spite of laugh and jeer.

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I reached the summit: and its solitude,  
Wherein no living creature did intrude,  
Save some sad birds that wheeled and circled near,  
I found far sweeter than the scene below.  
Alone with One who knew my hidden woe,  
I did not feel so much alone as when  
I mixed with th' unthinking throngs of men.

Some flowers that decked the barren, sterile place  
I plucked, and read the lesson they conveyed,  
That in our lives, albeit dark with shade  
And rough and hard with labor, yet may grow  
The flowers of Patience, Sympathy, and Grace.

As I walked on in meditative thought,  
A serpent writhed across my pathway; not  
A large or deadly serpent; yet the sight  
Filled me with ghastly terror and affright.  
I shrieked aloud: a darkness veiled my eyes—  
And I fell fainting 'neath the watchful skies.

I was no coward. Country-bred and born,  
I had no feeling but the keenest scorn  
For those fine lady "ah's" and "oh's" of fear  
So much assumed (when any man is near).

But God implanted in each human heart  
A natural horror, and a sickly dread  
Of that accursèd, slimy, creeping thing  
That squirms a limbless carcass o'er the ground.  
And where that inborn loathing is not found  
You'll find the serpent qualities instead.  
Who fears it not, himself is next of kin,  
And in his bosom holds some treacherous art  
Whereby to counteract its venom'd sting.  
And all are sired by Satan—Chief of Sin.

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Who loathes not that foul creature of the dust,  
However fair in seeming, I distrust.

I woke from my unconsciousness, to know  
I leaned upon a broad and manly breast,  
And Vivian's voice was speaking, soft and low,  
Sweet whispered words of passion, o'er and o'er.  
I dared not breathe. Had I found Eden's shore?  
Was this a foretaste of eternal bliss?  
"My love," he sighed, his voice like winds that moan  
Before a rain in Summer time, "My own,  
For one sweet stolen moment, lie and rest  
Upon this heart that loves and hates you both!  
O fair false face! Why were you made so fair!  
O mouth of Southern sweetness! that ripe kiss  
That hangs upon you, I do take an oath  
*His* lips shall never gather. There!—and there!  
I steal it from him. Are you his—all his?  
Nay you are mine, this moment, as I dreamed—  
Blind fool—believing you were what you seemed—  
You would be mine in all the years to come.  
Fair fiend! I love and hate you in a breath.  
O God! if this white pallor were but *death*,  
And I were stretched beside you, cold and dumb,  
My arms about you, so—in fond embrace!  
My lips pressed, so—upon your dying face!"

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"Woman, how dare you bring me to such shame!  
How dare you drive me to an act like this,  
To steal from your unconscious lips the kiss  
You lured me on to think my rightful claim!  
O frail and puny woman! could you know  
The devil that you waken in the hearts  
You snare and bind in your enticing arts,  
The thin, pale stuff that in your veins doth flow  
Would freeze in terror.

Strange you have such power  
To please, or pain us, poor, weak, soulless things—  
Devoid of passion as a senseless flower!  
Like butterflies, your only boast, your wings.  
There, now, I scorn you—scorn you from this hour,  
And hate myself for having talked of love!"

He pushed me from him. And I felt as those  
Doomed angels must, when pearly gates above  
Are closed against them.

With a feigned surprise  
I started up and opened wide my eyes,  
And looked about. Then in confusion rose  
And stood before him.

"Pardon me, I pray!"  
He said quite coldly. "Half an hour ago  
I left you with the company below,  
And sought this cliff. A moment since you cried,  
It seemed, in sudden terror and alarm.  
I came in time to see you swoon away.  
You'll need assistance down the rugged side  
Of this steep cliff. I pray you take my arm."

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So, formal and constrained, we passed along,  
Rejoined our friends, and mingled with the throng  
To have no further speech again that day.

Next morn there came a bulky document,  
The legal firm of Blank & Blank had sent,  
Containing news unlooked for. An estate  
Which proved a cosy fortune—no-wise great  
Or princely—had in France been left to me,  
My grandsire's last descendant. And it brought  
A sense of joy and freedom in the thought  
Of foreign travel, which I hoped would be  
A panacea for my troubled mind,  
That longed to leave the olden scenes behind  
With all their recollections, and to flee  
To some strange country.

I was in such haste  
To put between me and my native land  
The briny ocean's desolating waste,  
I gave Aunt Ruth no peace, until she planned  
To sail that week, two months: though she was fain  
To wait until the Springtime. Roy Montaine  
Would be our guide and escort.

No one dreamed  
The cause of my strange hurry, but all seemed  
To think good fortune had quite turned my brain.  
One bright October morning, when the woods  
Had donned their purple mantles and red hoods  
In honor of the Frost King, Vivian came,  
Bringing some green leaves, tipped with crimson flame,—  
First trophies of the Autumn time.

And Roy  
Made a proposal that we all should go  
And ramble in the forest for a while.  
But Helen said she was not well—and so  
Must stay at home. Then Vivian, with a smile,  
Responded, "I will stay and talk to you,  
And they may go;" at which her two cheeks grew  
Like twin blush roses;—dyed with love's red wave,  
Her fair face shone transfigured with great joy.

And Vivian saw—and suddenly was grave.

Roy took my arm in that protecting way  
Peculiar to some men, which seems to say,  
"I shield my own," a manner pleasing, e'en  
When we are conscious that it does not mean  
More than a simple courtesy. A woman  
Whose heart is wholly feminine and human,  
And not unsexed by hobbies, likes to be  
The object of that tender chivalry,  
That guardianship which man bestows on her,  
Yet mixed with deference; as if she were  
Half child, half angel.

Though she may be strong,  
Noble and self-reliant, not afraid  
To raise her hand and voice against all wrong  
And all oppression, yet if she be made,  
With all the independence of her thought,  
A woman womanly, as God designed,  
Albeit she may have as great a mind  
As man, her brother, yet his strength of arm  
His muscle and his boldness she has not,  
And cannot have without she loses what  
Is far more precious, modesty and grace.  
So, walking on in her appointed place,  
She does not strive to ape him, nor pretend  
But that she needs him for a guide and friend,  
To shield her with his greater strength from harm.

We reached the forest; wandered to and fro  
Through many a winding path and dim retreat.  
Till I grew weary: when I chose a seat  
Upon an oak tree, which had been laid low  
By some wind storm, or by some lightning stroke.  
And Roy stood just below me, where the ledge  
On which I sat sloped steeply to the edge  
Of sunny meadows lying at my feet.  
One hand held mine; the other grasped a limb

That cast its checkered shadows over him;  
And, with his head thrown back, his dark eyes raised  
And fixed upon me, silently he gazed  
Until I, smiling, turned to him and spoke:  
"Give words, my cousin, to those thoughts that rise,  
And, like dumb spirits, look forth from your eyes."

The smooth and even darkness of his cheek  
Was stained one moment by a flush of red.  
He swayed his lithe form nearer as he stood  
Still clinging to the branch above his head.  
His brilliant eyes grew darker; and he said,  
With sudden passion, "Do you bid me speak?  
I can not, then, keep silence if I would.  
That hateful fortune, coming as it did,  
Forbade my speaking sooner; for I knew  
A harsh tongued world would quickly misconstrue  
My motive for a meaner one. But, sweet,  
So big my heart has grown with love for you  
I can not shelter it, or keep it hid.  
And so I cast it throbbing at your feet,  
For you to guard and cherish, or to break.  
Maurine, I love you better than my life.  
My friend—my cousin—be still more, my wife!  
Maurine, Maurine, what answer do you make?"

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I scarce could breathe for wonderment; and numb  
With truth that fell too suddenly, sat dumb  
With sheer amaze, and stared at Roy with eyes  
That looked no feeling but complete surprise.  
He swayed so near his breath was on my cheek.  
"Maurine, Maurine," he whispered, "will you speak?"

Then suddenly, as o'er some magic glass  
One picture in a score of shapes will pass,  
I seemed to see Roy glide before my gaze.  
First, as the playmate of my earlier days—  
Next, as my kin—and then my valued friend,  
And last, my lover. As when colors blend  
In some unlooked-for group before our eyes,  
We hold the glass, and look them o'er and o'er  
So now I gazed on Roy in his new guise,  
In which he ne'er appeared to me before.

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His form was like a panther's in its grace,  
So lithe and supple, and of medium height,  
And garbed in all the elegance of fashion.  
His large black eyes were full of fire and passion,  
And in expression fearless, firm, and bright.  
His hair was like the very deeps of night,  
And hung in raven clusters 'round a face  
Of dark and flashing beauty.

He was more  
Like some romantic maiden's grand ideal  
Than like a common being. As I gazed  
Upon the handsome face to mine upraised,  
I saw before me, living, breathing, real,  
The hero of my early day-dreams: though  
So full my heart was with that clear-cut face,  
Which, all unlike, yet claimed the hero's place,  
I had not recognized him so before,  
Or thought of him, save as a valued friend.  
So now I called him, adding,

"Foolish boy!

Each word of love you utter aims a blow  
At that sweet trust I had reposed in you.  
I was so certain I had found a true,  
Steadfast man friend, on whom I could depend,  
And go on wholly trusting, to the end.  
Why did you shatter my delusion, Roy,  
By turning to a lover?"

"Why, indeed!

Because I loved you more than any brother,  
Or any friend could love." Then he began  
To argue like a lawyer, and to plead

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With all his eloquence. And, listening,  
I strove to think it was a goodly thing  
To be so fondly loved by such a man,  
And it were best to give his wooing heed,  
And not deny him. Then before my eyes  
In all its clear-cut majesty, that other  
Haughty and poet-handsome face would rise  
And rob my purpose of all life and strength.

Roy urged and argued, as Roy only could,  
With that impetuous, boyish eloquence.  
He held my hands, and vowed I must, and should  
Give some least hope; till, in my own defense,  
I turned upon him, and replied at length:  
"I thank you for the noble heart you offer:  
But it deserves a true one in exchange.  
I could love you if I loved not another  
Who keeps my heart; so I have none to proffer."

Then, seeing how his dark eyes flashed, I said,  
"Dear Roy! I know my words seem very strange;  
But I love one I cannot hope to wed.  
A river rolls between us, dark and deep.  
To cross it—were to stain with blood my hand.  
You force my speech on what I fain would keep  
In my own bosom, but you understand?  
My heart is given to love that's sanctified,  
And now can feel no other.

Be you kind

Dear Roy, my brother! speak of this no more,  
Lest pleading and denying should divide  
The hearts so long united. Let me find  
In you my cousin and my friend of yore  
And now come home. The morning, all too soon  
And unperceived, has melted into noon.  
Helen will miss us, and we must return."

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He took my hand, and helped me to arise,  
Smiling upon me with his sad dark eyes.  
Where passion's fires had, sudden, ceased to burn.

"And so," he said, "too soon and unforeseen  
My friendship melted into love, Maurine.  
But, sweet! I am not wholly in the blame,  
For what you term my folly. You forgot,  
So long we'd known each other, I had not  
In truth a brother's or a cousin's claim.  
But I remembered, when through every nerve  
Your lightest touch went thrilling; and began  
To love you with that human love of man  
For comely woman. By your coaxing arts,  
You won your way into my heart of hearts,  
And all Platonic feelings put to rout.  
A maid should never lay aside reserve  
With one who's not her kinsman, out and out.  
But as we now, with measured steps, retrace  
The path we came, e'en so my heart I'll send,  
At your command, back to the olden place,  
And strive to love you only as a friend."  
I felt the justice of his mild reproof,  
But answered laughing, "'Tis the same old cry:  
'The woman tempted me, and I did eat.'  
Since Adam's time we've heard it. But I'll try  
And be more prudent, sir, and hold aloof  
The fruit I never once had thought so sweet  
'Twould tempt you any. Now go dress for dinner,  
Thou sinned against! as also will the sinner.  
And guard each act, that no least look betray  
What's passed between us."

[Pg 81]

Then I turned away

And sought my room, low humming some old air  
That ceased upon the threshold; for mine eyes  
Fell on a face so glorified and fair  
All other senses, merged in that of sight,

Were lost in contemplation of the bright  
And wond'rous picture, which had otherwise  
Made dim my vision.

Waiting in my room,  
Her whole face lit as by an inward flame  
That shed its halo 'round her, Helen stood;  
Her fair hands folded like a lily's leaves  
Weighed down by happy dews of summer eves.  
Upon her cheek the color went and came  
As sunlight flickers o'er a bed of bloom;  
And, like some slim young sapling of the wood,  
Her slender form leaned slightly; and her hair  
Fell 'round her loosely, in long curling strands  
All unconfined, and as by loving hands  
Tossed into bright confusion.

Standing there,  
Her starry eyes uplifted, she did seem  
Like some unearthly creature of a dream;  
Until she started forward, gliding slowly,  
And broke the breathless silence, speaking lowly,  
As one grown meek, and humble in an hour,  
Bowing before some new and mighty power.

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"Maurine, Maurine!" she murmured, and again,  
"Maurine, my own sweet friend, Maurine!"

And then,  
Laying her love light hands upon my head,  
She leaned, and looked into my eyes, and said  
With voice that bore her joy in ev'ry tone,  
As winds that blow across a garden bed  
Are weighed with fragrance, "He is mine alone,  
And I am his—all his—his very own.  
So pledged this hour, by that most sacred tie  
Save one beneath God's over-arching sky.  
I could not wait to tell you of my bliss:  
I want your blessing, sweetheart! and your kiss."  
So hiding my heart's trouble with a smile,  
I leaned and kissed her dainty mouth; the while  
I felt a guilt-joy, as of some sweet sin,  
When my lips fell where his so late had been.  
And all day long I bore about with me  
A sense of shame—yet mixed with satisfaction,  
As some starved child might steal a loaf, and be  
Sad with the guilt resulting from her action,  
While yet the morsel in her mouth was sweet.  
That ev'ning when the house had settled down  
To sleep and quiet, to my room there crept  
A lithe young form, robed in a long white gown:  
With steps like fall of thistle-down she came,  
Her mouth smile-wreathed; and, breathing low my name,  
Nestled in graceful beauty at my feet.

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"Sweetheart," she murmured softly, "ere I sleep,  
I needs must tell you all my tale of joy.  
Beginning where you left us—you and Roy.  
You saw the color flame upon my cheek  
When Vivian spoke of staying. So did he;—  
And, when we were alone, he gazed at me  
With such a strange look in his wond'rous eyes.  
The silence deepened; and I tried to speak  
Upon some common topic, but could not,  
My heart was in such tumult.

In this wise  
Five happy moments glided by us, fraught  
With hours of feeling. Vivian rose up then,  
And came and stood by me, and stroked my hair.  
And, in his low voice, o'er and o'er again,  
Said, 'Helen, little Helen, frail and fair.'  
Then took my face, and turned it to the light,  
And looking in my eyes, and seeing what  
Was shining from them, murmured, sweet and low,  
'Dear eyes, you cannot veil the truth from sight.  
You love me, Helen! answer, is it so?'  
And I made answer straightway, 'With my life  
And soul and strength I love you, O my love!'

He leaned and took me gently to his breast,  
And said, 'Here then this dainty head shall rest  
Henceforth forever: O my little dove!  
My lily-bud—my fragile blossom-wife!'

"And then I told him all my thoughts; and he  
Listened, with kisses for his comments, till  
My tale was finished. Then he said, 'I will  
Be frank with you, my darling, from the start,  
And hide no secret from you in my heart.  
I love you, Helen, but you are not first  
To rouse that love to being. Ere we met  
I loved a woman madly—never dreaming  
She was not all in truth she was in seeming.  
Enough! she proved to be that thing accursed  
Of God and man—a wily vain coquette.  
I hate myself for having loved her. Yet  
So much my heart spent on her, it must give  
A love less ardent, and less prodigal,  
Albeit just as tender and as true—  
A milder, yet a faithful love to you.  
Just as some evil fortune might befall  
A man's great riches, causing him to live  
In some low cot, all unpretending, still  
As much his home—as much his loved retreat,  
As was the princely palace on the hill,  
E'en so I give you all that's left, my sweet!  
Of my heart-fortune.'

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'That were more to me,'  
I made swift smiling answer, 'than to be  
The worshiped consort of a king.' And so  
Our faith was pledged. But Vivian would not go  
Until I vowed to wed him New Year day.  
And I am sad because you go away  
Before that time. I shall not feel half wed  
Without you here. Postpone your trip and stay,  
And be my bridesmaid."

"Nay, I cannot, dear!  
'Twould disarrange our plans for half a year.  
I'll be in Europe New Year day," I said,  
"And send congratulations by the cable."  
And from my soul thanked Providence for sparing  
The pain, to me, of sharing in, and wearing  
The festal garments of a wedding scene,  
While all my heart was hung with sorrow's sable.  
Forgetting for a season, that between  
The cup and lip lies many a chance of loss,  
I lived in my near future, confident  
All would be as I planned it; and, across  
The briny waste of waters, I should find  
Some balm and comfort for my troubled mind.  
The sad Fall days, like maidens auburn-tressed  
And amber-eyed, in purple garments dressed,  
Passed by, and dropped their tears upon the tomb  
Of fair Queen Summer, buried in her bloom.

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Roy left us for a time, and Helen went  
To make the nuptial preparations. Then,  
Aunt Ruth complained one day of feeling ill:  
Her veins ran red with fever; and the skill  
Of two physicians could not stem the tide.  
The house, that rang so late with laugh and jest,  
Grew ghostly with low whispered sounds; and when  
The Autumn day, that I had thought to be  
Bounding upon the billows of the sea,  
Came sobbing in, it found me pale and worn,  
Striving to keep away that unloved guest  
Who comes unbidden, making hearts to mourn.  
Through all the anxious weeks I watched beside  
The sufferer's couch, Roy was my help and stay;  
Others were kind, but he alone each day  
Brought strength and comfort, by his cheerful face,  
And hopeful words, that fell in that sad place  
Like rays of light upon a darkened way.  
November passed; and Winter, crisp and chill,

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In robes of ermine walked on plain and hill.  
Returning light and life dispelled the gloom  
That cheated Death had brought us from the tomb.  
Aunt Ruth was saved, and slowly getting better—  
Was dressed each day, and walked about the room.  
Then came one morning in the Eastern mail,  
A little white-winged birdling of a letter.  
I broke the seal and read,

"Maurine, my own!

I hear Aunt Ruth is better, and am glad.  
I felt so sorry for you; and so sad  
To think I left you when I did—alone  
To bear your pain and worry, and those nights  
Of weary, anxious watching.

Vivian writes

Your plans are changed now, and you will not sail  
Before the Springtime. So you'll come and be  
My bridesmaid, darling! Do not say me nay.  
But three weeks more of girlhood left to me.  
Come, if you can, just two weeks from to-day,  
And make your preparations here. My sweet!  
Indeed I am not glad Aunt Ruth was ill—  
I'm sorry she has suffered so; and still  
I'm thankful something happened, so you stayed.  
I'm sure my wedding would be incomplete  
Without your presence. Selfish, I'm afraid  
You'll think your Helen. But I love you so,  
How can I be quite willing you should go?  
Come Christmas Eve, or earlier. Let me know  
And I will meet you, dearie! at the train.  
Your happy, loving Helen."

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Then the pain

That, hidden under later pain and care,  
Had made no moan, but silent, seemed to sleep,  
Woke from its trance-like lethargy, to steep  
My tortured heart in anguish and despair.

I had relied too fully on my skill  
In bending circumstances to my will:  
And now I was rebuked and made to see  
That God alone knoweth what is to be.  
Then came a messenger from Vivian, who  
Came not himself, as he was wont to do,  
But sent his servant each new day to bring  
A kindly message, or an offering  
Of juicy fruits to cool the lips of fever,  
Or dainty hot-house blossoms, with their bloom  
To brighten up the convalescent's room.  
But now the servant only brought a line  
From Vivian Dangerfield to Roy Montaine,  
"Dear Sir, and Friend"—in letters bold and plain,  
Written on cream-white paper, so it ran:  
"It is the will and pleasure of Miss Trevor,  
And therefore doubly so a wish of mine,  
That you shall honor me next New Year Eve,  
My wedding hour, by standing as best man.  
Miss Trevor has six bridesmaids I believe.  
Being myself a novice in the art—  
If I should fail in acting well my part,  
I'll need protection 'gainst the regiment  
Of outraged ladies. So, I pray, consent  
To stand by me in time of need, and shield  
Your friend sincerely, Vivian Dangerfield."

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The last least hope had vanished; I must drain,  
E'en to the dregs, this bitter cup of pain.

## **PART VI.**

[Pg 89]

There was a week of bustle and of hurry;  
A stately home echoed to voices sweet,  
Calling, replying; and to tripping feet  
Of busy bridesmaids, running to and fro,  
With all that girlish fluttering and flurry

Preceding such occasions.

Helen's room

Was like a lily-garden, all in bloom,  
Decked with the dainty robes of her trousseau.  
My robe was fashioned by swift, skillful hands—  
A thing of beauty, elegant and rich,  
A mystery of loopings, puffs and bands;  
And as I watched it growing, stitch by stitch,  
I felt as one might feel who should behold  
With vision trance-like, where his body lay  
In deathly slumber, simulating clay,  
His grave-cloth sewed together, fold on fold.

I lived with ev'ry nerve upon the strain,  
As men go into battle; and the pain,  
That, more and more, to my sad heart revealed,  
Grew ghastly with its horrors, was concealed  
From mortal eyes by superhuman power,  
That God bestowed upon me, hour by hour.

What night the Old Year gave unto the New  
The key of human happiness and woe,  
The pointed stars, upon their field of blue,  
Shone, white and perfect, o'er a world below,  
Of snow-clad beauty; all the trees were dressed  
In gleaming garments, decked with diadems,  
Each seeming like a bridal-bidden guest,  
Coming o'er-laden with a gift of gems.

[Pg 90]

The bustle of the dressing room; the sound  
Of eager voices in discourse; the clang  
Of "sweet bells jangled"; thud of steel-clad feet  
That beat swift music on the frozen ground—  
All blent together in my brain, and rang  
A medley of strange noises, incomplete,  
And full of discords.

Then out on the night

Streamed from this open vestibule, a light  
That lit the velvet blossoms which we trod,  
With all the hues of those that deck the sod.  
The grand cathedral windows were ablaze  
With gorgeous colors; through a sea of bloom,  
Up the long aisle, to join the waiting groom,  
The bridal cortege passed.

As some lost soul

Might surge on with the curious crowd, to gaze  
Upon its confined body, so I went  
With that glad festal throng. The organ sent  
Great waves of melody along the air,  
That broke and fell, in liquid drops, like spray,  
On happy hearts that listened. But to me  
It sounded faintly, as if miles away,  
A troubled spirit, sitting in despair  
Beside the sad and ever-moaning sea,  
Gave utterance to sighing sounds of dole.  
We paused before the altar. Framed in flowers,  
The white-robed man of God stood forth.

[Pg 91]

I heard

The solemn service open; through long hours  
I seemed to stand and listen, while each word  
Fell on my ear as falls the sound of clay  
Upon the coffin of the worshiped dead.  
The stately father gave the bride away:  
The bridegroom circled with a golden band  
The taper finger of her dainty hand.  
The last imposing, binding words were said—  
"What God has joined let no man put asunder"—  
And all my strife with self was at an end;  
My lover was the husband of my friend.

How strangely, in some awful hour of pain,  
External trifles with our sorrows blend!  
I never hear the mighty organ's thunder,  
I never catch the scent of heliotrope,  
Nor see stained windows all ablaze with light,

Without that dizzy whirling of the brain,  
And all the ghastly feeling of that night,  
When my sick heart relinquished love and hope.

The pain we feel so keenly may depart,  
And e'en its memory cease to haunt the heart;  
But some slight thing, a perfume, or a sound  
Will probe the closed recesses of the wound,  
And for a moment bring the old-time smart.

Congratulations, kisses, tears and smiles,  
Good-byes and farewells given; then across  
The snowy waste of weary wintry miles,  
Back to my girlhood's home, where, through each room,  
For evermore pale phantoms of delight  
Should aimless wander, always in my sight,  
Pointing, with ghostly fingers, to the tomb  
Wet with the tears of living pain and loss.

[Pg 92]

The sleepless nights of watching and of care,  
Followed by that one week of keenest pain,  
Taxing my weakened system, and my brain,  
Brought on a ling'ring illness.

Day by day,  
In that strange, apathetic state I lay,  
Of mental and of physical despair.  
I had no pain, no fever, and no chill,  
But lay without ambition, strength, or will,  
Knowing no wish for anything but rest,  
Which seemed, of all God's store of gifts, the best.

Physicians came and shook their heads and sighed;  
And to their score of questions I replied,  
With but one languid answer, o'er and o'er.  
"I am so weary—weary—nothing more."

I slept, and dreamed I was some feathered thing,  
Flying through space with ever-aching wing,  
Seeking a ship called Rest all snowy white,  
That sailed and sailed before me, just in sight,  
But always one unchanging distance kept,  
And woke more weary than before I slept.

I slept, and dreamed I ran to win a prize.  
A hand from heaven held down before my eyes.  
All eagerness I sought it—it was gone,  
But shone in all its beauty farther on.  
I ran, and ran, and ran, in eager quest  
Of that great prize, whereon was written "rest,"  
Which ever just beyond my reach did gleam,  
And wakened doubly weary with my dream.

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I dreamed I was a crystal drop of rain,  
That saw a snow-white lily on the plain,  
And left the cloud to nestle in her breast.  
I fell and fell, but nevermore found rest—  
I fell and fell, but found no stopping place,  
Through leagues and leagues of never-ending space,  
While space illimitable stretched before.

And all these dreams but wearied me the more.

Familiar voices sounded in my room—  
Aunt Ruth's and Roy's, and Helen's: but they seemed  
A part of some strange fancy I had dreamed,  
And now remembered dimly.

Wrapped in gloom,  
My mind, o'er taxed, lost hold of time at last,  
Ignored its future, and forgot its past,  
And groped along the present, as a light,  
Carried, uncovered, through the fogs of night,  
Will flicker faintly.

But I felt, at length,  
When March winds brought vague rumors of the spring,  
A certain sense of "restlessness with rest."

My aching frame was weary of repose,  
And wanted action.

Then slow-creeping strength  
Came back with Mem'ry, hand in hand, to bring  
And lay upon my sore and bleeding breast,  
Grim-visaged Recollection's thorny rose.  
I gained, and failed. One day could ride and walk,  
The next would find me prostrate: while a flock  
Of ghostly thoughts, like phantom birds, would flit  
About the chambers of my heart, or sit,  
Pale spectres of the past, with folded wings,  
Perched, silently, upon the voiceless strings,  
That once resounded to Hope's happy lays.

[Pg 94]

So passed the ever-changing April days.  
When May came, lightsome footed, o'er the lea,  
Accompanied by kind Aunt Ruth and Roy,  
I bade farewell to home with secret joy,  
And turned my wan face eastward to the sea.  
Roy planned our route of travel: for all lands  
Were one to him. Or Egypt's burning sands,  
Or Alps of Switzerland, or stately Rome,  
All were familiar as the fields of home.

There was a year of wand'ring to and fro,  
Like restless spirits; scaling mountain heights;  
Dwelling among the countless, rare delights  
Of lands historic; turning dusty pages,  
Stamped with the tragedies of mighty ages;  
Gazing upon the scenes of bloody acts,  
Of kings long buried—bare, unvarnished facts,  
Surpassing wildest fictions of the brain;  
Rubbing against all people, high and low,  
And by this contact feeling Self to grow  
Smaller and less important, and the vein  
Of human kindness deeper, seeing God,  
Unto the humble delver of the sod,  
And to the ruling monarch on the throne,  
Has given hope, ambition, joy, and pain,  
And that all hearts have feelings like our own.

[Pg 95]

There is no school that disciplines the mind,  
And broadens thought, like contact with mankind.  
The college-prisoned greybeard, who has burned  
The midnight lamp, and book-bound knowledge learned,  
Till sciences or classics hold no lore  
He has not conned and studied, o'er and o'er,  
Is but a babe in wisdom, when compared  
With some unlettered wand'rer, who has shared  
The hospitalities of every land;  
Felt touch of brother in each proffered hand;  
Made man his study, and the world his college,  
And gained this grand epitome of knowledge:  
Each human being has a heart and soul,  
And self is but an atom of the whole.  
I hold he is best learnèd and most wise,  
Who best and most can love and sympathize.  
Book-wisdom makes us vain and self-contained;  
Our banded minds go round in little grooves;  
But constant friction with the world removes  
These iron foes to freedom, and we rise  
To grander heights, and, all untrammèd, find  
A better atmosphere and clearer skies;  
And through its broadened realm, no longer chained,  
Thought travels freely, leaving Self behind.  
Where'er we chanced to wander or to roam,  
Glad letters came from Helen; happy things,  
Like little birds that followed on swift wings,  
Bringing their tender messages from home.  
Her days were poems, beautiful, complete.  
The rhythm perfect, and the burden sweet.  
She was so happy—happy, and so blest.

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My heart had found contentment in that year.

With health restored, my life seemed full of cheer  
The heart of youth turns ever to the light;  
Sorrow and gloom may curtain it like night,  
But, in its very anguish and unrest,  
It beats and tears the pall-like folds away,  
And finds again the sunlight of the day.

And yet, despite the changes without measure,  
Despite sight-seeing, round on round of pleasure;  
Despite new friends, new suitors, still my heart  
Was conscious of a something lacking, where  
Love once had dwelt, and afterward despair.  
Now love was buried; and despair had flown  
Before the healthful zephyrs that had blown  
From heights serene and lofty; and the place  
Where both had dwelt, was empty, voiceless space  
And so I took my long-loved study, art,  
The dreary vacuum in my life to fill,  
And worked, and labored, with a right good will.  
Aunt Ruth and I took rooms in Rome; while Roy  
Lingered in Scotland, with his new-found joy.  
A dainty little lassie, Grace Kildare,  
Had snared him in her flossy, flaxen hair,  
And made him captive.

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We were thrown, by chance,  
In contact with her people while in France  
The previous season: she was wholly sweet  
And fair and gentle; so naïve, and yet  
So womanly, she was at once the pet  
Of all our party; and, ere many days,  
Won by her fresh face, and her artless ways,  
Roy fell a helpless captive at her feet.  
Her home was in the Highlands; and she came  
Of good old stock, of fair untarnished fame.

Through all these months Roy had been true as steel;  
And by his every action made me feel  
He was my friend and brother, and no more.  
The same big-souled and trusty friend of yore.  
Yet, in my secret heart, I wished I knew  
Whether the love he felt one time was dead,  
Or only hidden, for my sake, from view.  
So when he came to me one day, and said,  
The velvet blackness of his eyes ashine  
With light of love and triumph: "Cousin, mine,  
Congratulate me! She whom I adore  
Has pledged to me the promise of her hand;  
Her heart I have already," I was glad  
With double gladness, for it freed my mind  
Of fear that he, in secret, might be sad.

From March till June had left her moons behind,  
And merged her rose-red beauty in July,  
There was no message from my native land.  
Then came a few brief lines, by Vivian penned:  
Death had been near to Helen, but passed by;  
The danger was now over. God was kind;  
The mother and the child were both alive;  
No other child was ever known to thrive  
As throve this one, nurse had been heard to say.  
The infant was a wonder, every way.  
And, at command of Helen he would send  
A lock of baby's golden hair to me.  
And did I, on my honor, ever see  
Such hair before? Helen would write, ere long:  
She gained quite slowly, but would soon be strong—  
Stronger than ever, so the doctors said.  
I took the tiny ringlet, golden—fair,  
Mayhap his hand had severed from the head  
Of his own child, and pressed it to my cheek  
And to my lips, and kissed it o'er and o'er.  
All my maternal instincts seemed to rise,  
And clamor for their rights, while my wet eyes,  
Rained tears upon the silken tress of hair.  
The woman struggled with her heart before!

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It was the mother in me now did speak,  
Moaning, like Rachel, that her babes were not,  
And crying out against her barren lot.

Once I bemoaned the long and lonely years  
That stretched before me, dark with love's eclipse;  
And thought how my unmated heart would miss  
The shelter of a broad and manly breast—  
The strong, bold arm—the tender clinging kiss—  
And all pure love's possessions, manifold;  
But now I wept a flood of bitter tears,  
Thinking of little heads of shining gold,  
That would not on my bosom sink to rest;  
Of little hands that would not touch my cheek;  
Of little lisping voices, and sweet lips,  
That never in my list'ning ear would speak  
The blessed name of mother.

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Oh, in woman  
How mighty is the love of offspring! Ere  
Unto her wond'ring, untaught mind unfolds  
The myst'ry that is half divine, half human,  
Of life and birth, the love of unborn souls  
Within her, and the mother-yearning creeps  
Through her warm heart, and stirs its hidden deeps,  
And grows and strengthens with each riper year.

As storms may gather in a placid sky,  
And spend their fury, and then pass away,  
Leaving again the blue of cloudless day,  
E'en so the tempest of my grief passed by.  
'T was weak to mourn for what I had resigned,  
With the deliberate purpose of my mind,  
To my sweet friend.

Relinquishing my love,  
I gave my dearest hope of joy to her.  
If God, from out his boundless store above,  
Had chosen added blessings to confer,  
I would rejoice, for her sake—not repine  
That th' immortal treasures were not mine.

Better my lonely sorrow, than to know  
My selfish joy had been another's woe;  
Better my grief and my strength to control,  
Than the despair of her frail-bodied soul;  
Better to go on, loveless, to the end,  
Than wear love's rose, whose thorn had slain my friend.

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Work is the salve that heals the wounded heart.  
With will most resolute I set my aim  
To enter on the weary race for Fame,  
And if I failed to climb the dizzy height,  
To reach some point of excellence in art.

E'en as the Maker held earth incomplete,  
Till man was formed, and placed upon the sod,  
The perfect, living image of his God,  
All landscape scenes were lacking in my sight,  
Wherein the human figure had no part.  
In that, all lines of symmetry did meet—  
All hues of beauty mingle. So I brought  
Enthusiasm in abundance, thought,  
Much study, and some talent, day by day,  
To help me in my efforts to portray  
The wond'rous power, majesty and grace  
Stamped on some form, or looking from some face.  
This was to be my specialty: To take  
Human emotion for my theme, and make  
The unassisted form divine express  
Anger or Sorrow, Pleasure, Pain, Distress;  
And thus to build Fame's monument above  
The grave of my departed hope and love.

This is not Genius. Genius spreads its wings  
And soars beyond itself, or selfish things.  
Talent has need of stepping-stones: some cross,

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Some cheated purpose, some great pain or loss,  
Must lay the groundwork, and arouse ambition,  
Before it labors onward to fruition.

But, as the lark from beds of bloom will rise  
And sail and sing among the very skies,  
Still mounting near and nearer to the light,  
Impelled alone by love of upward flight,  
So Genius soars—it does not need to climb—  
Upon God-given wings, to heights sublime.  
Some sportman's shot, grazing the singer's throat,  
Some venomous assault of birds of prey,  
May speed its flight toward the realm of day,  
And tinge with triumph every liquid note.  
So deathless Genius mounts but higher yet,  
When Strife and Envy think to slay or fret.

There is no balking Genius. Only death  
Can silence it, or hinder. While there's breath  
Or sense of feeling, it will spurn the sod,  
And lift itself to glory, and to God.  
The acorn sprouted—weeds nor flowers can choke  
The certain growth of th' upreaching oak.

Talent was mine, not Genius; and my mind  
Seemed bound by chains, and would not leave behind  
Its selfish love and sorrow.

Did I strive

To picture some emotion, lo! *his* eyes,  
Of emerald beauty, dark as ocean dyes,  
Looked from the canvas: and my buried pain  
Rose from its grave, and stood by me alive.  
Whate'er my subject, in some hue or line,  
The glorious beauty of his face would shine.

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So for a time my labor seemed in vain,  
Since it but freshened, and made keener yet,  
The grief my heart was striving to forget.

While in his form all strength and magnitude  
With grace and supple sinews were entwined,  
While in his face all beauties were combined  
Of perfect features, intellect and truth,  
With all that fine rich coloring of youth,  
How could my brush portray aught good or fair  
Wherein no fatal likeness should intrude  
Of him my soul had worshiped?

But, at last,

Setting a watch upon my unwise heart  
That thus would mix its sorrow with my art,  
I resolutely shut away the past,  
And made the toilsome present passing bright  
With dreams of what was hidden from my sight  
In the far distant future, when the soil  
Should yield me golden fruit for all my toil.

### **PART VII.**

[Pg 103]

With much hard labor and some pleasure fraught,  
The months rolled by me noiselessly, that taught  
My hand to grow more skillful in its art,  
Strengthened my daring dream of fame, and brought  
Sweet hope and resignation to my heart.

Brief letters came from Helen, now and then:  
She was quite well—oh, yes! quite well, indeed!  
But still so weak and nervous. By and by,  
When baby, being older, should not need  
Such constant care, she would grow strong again.  
She was as happy as a soul could be;  
No least cloud hovered in her azure sky;  
She had not thought life held such depths of bliss.  
Dear baby sent Maurine a loving kiss,  
And said she was a naughty, naughty girl,

Not to come home and see ma's little pearl.

No gift of costly jewels, or of gold,  
Had been so precious or so dear to me,  
As each brief line wherein her joy was told.  
It lightened toil, and took the edge from pain,  
Knowing my sacrifice was not in vain.

Roy purchased fine estates in Scotland, where  
He built a pretty villa-like retreat.  
And when the Roman Summer's languid heat  
Made work a punishment, I turned my face  
Toward the Highlands, and with Roy and Grace  
Found rest and freedom from all thought and care.

[Pg 104]

I was a willing worker. Not an hour  
Passed idly by me: each, I would employ  
To some good purpose, ere it glided on  
To swell the tide of hours forever gone.  
My first completed picture, known as "Joy,"  
Won pleasant words of praise. "Possesses power,"  
"Displays much talent," "Very fairly done."  
So fell the comments on my grateful ear.

Swift in the wake of Joy, and always near,  
Walks her sad sister Sorrow. So my brush  
Began depicting sorrow, heavy-eyed,  
With pallid visage, ere the rosy flush  
Upon the beaming face of Joy had dried.  
The careful study of long months, it won  
Golden opinions; even bringing forth  
That certain sign of merit—a critique  
Which set both pieces down as daubs, and weak  
As empty heads that sang their praises—so  
Proving conclusively the pictures' worth.  
These critics and reviewers do not use  
Their precious ammunition to abuse  
A worthless work. That, left alone, they know  
Will find its proper level; and they aim  
Their batteries at rising works which claim  
Too much of public notice. But this shot  
Resulted only in some noise, which brought  
A dozen people, where one came before  
To view my pictures; and I had my hour  
Of holding those frail baubles, Fame and Pow'r.  
An English Baron who had lived two score  
Of his allotted three score years and ten,  
Bought both the pieces. He was very kind,  
And so attentive, I, not being blind,  
Must understand his meaning.

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Therefore, when  
He said,  
"Sweet friend, whom I would make my wife,  
The 'Joy' and 'Sorrow' this dear hand portrayed  
I have in my possession: now resign  
Into my careful keeping, and make mine,  
The joy and sorrow of your future life,"—  
I was prepared to answer, but delayed,  
Grown undecided suddenly.

My mind  
Argued the matter coolly pro and con,  
And made resolve to speed his wooing on  
And grant him favor. He was good and kind;  
Not young, no doubt he would be quite content  
With my respect, nor miss an ardent love;  
Could give me ties of family and home;  
And then, perhaps, my mind was not above  
Setting some value on a titled name—  
Ambitious woman's weakness!

Then my art  
Would be encouraged and pursued the same,  
And I could spend my winters all in Rome.  
Love never more could touch my wasteful heart  
That all its wealth upon one object spent.  
Existence would be very bleak and cold,

After long years, when I was gray and old,  
With neither home nor children.

Once a wife,  
I would forget the sorrow of my life,  
And pile new sods upon the grave of pain.  
My mind so argued; and my sad heart heard,  
But made no comment.

Then the Baron spoke,  
And waited for my answer. All in vain  
I strove for strength to utter that one word  
My mind dictated. Moments rolled away—  
Until at last my torpid heart awoke,  
And forced my trembling lips to say him nay.  
And then my eyes with sudden tears o'erran,  
In pity for myself and for this man  
Who stood before me, lost in pained surprise.  
"Dear friend," I cried, "Dear generous friend forgive  
A troubled woman's weakness! As I live,  
In truth I meant to answer otherwise.  
From out its store, my heart can give you naught  
But honor and respect; and yet methought  
I would give willing answer, did you sue.  
But now I know 'twere cruel wrong I planned;  
Taking a heart that beat with love most true,  
And giving in exchange an empty hand.  
Who weds for love alone, may not be wise:  
Who weds without it, angels must despise.  
Love and respect together must combine  
To render marriage holy and divine;  
And lack of either, sure as Fate, destroys  
Continuation of the nuptial joys,  
And brings regret, and gloomy discontent,  
To put to rout each tender sentiment.  
Nay, nay! I will not burden all your life  
By that possession—an unloving wife;  
Nor will I take the sin upon my soul  
Of wedding where my heart goes not in whole.  
However bleak may be my single lot,  
I will not stain my life with such a blot.  
Dear friend, farewell! the earth is very wide;  
It holds some fairer woman for your bride;  
I would I had a heart to give to you,  
But, lacking it, can only say—adieu!"

He whom temptation never has assailed,  
Knows not that subtle sense of moral strength;  
When sorely tried, we waver, but at length,  
Rise up and turn away, not having failed.

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The Autumn of the third year came and went;  
The mild Italian winter was half spent,  
When this brief message came across the sea:  
"My darling! I am dying. Come to me.  
Love, which so long the growing truth concealed,  
Stands pale within its shadow. O, my sweet!  
This heart of mine grows fainter with each beat—  
Dying with very weight of bliss. O, come!  
And take the legacy I leave to you,  
Before these lips forevermore are dumb.  
In life or death, Yours, Helen Dangerfield."

This plaintive letter bore a month old date;  
And, wild with fears lest I had come too late,  
I bade the old world and new friends adieu.  
And with Aunt Ruth, who long had sighed for home,  
I turned my back on glory, art, and Rome.

All selfish thoughts were merged in one wild fear  
That she for whose dear sake my heart had bled,  
Rather than her sweet eyes should know one tear,  
Was passing from me; that she might be dead;  
And, dying, had been sorely grieved with me,  
Because I made no answer to her plea.

"O, ship, that sailest slowly, slowly on,  
Make haste before a wasting life is gone!  
Make haste that I may catch a fleeting breath!  
And true in life, be true e'en unto death.

"O, ship, sail on! and bear me o'er the tide  
To her for whom my woman's heart once died.  
Sail, sail, O, ship! for she hath need of me,  
And I would know what her last wish may be!  
I have been true, so true, through all the past,  
Sail, sail, O, ship! I would not fail at last."

So prayed my heart still o'er, and ever o'er,  
Until the weary lagging ship reached shore.  
All sad with fears that I had come too late,  
By that strange source whence men communicate,  
Though miles on miles of space between them lie,  
I spoke with Vivian: "Does she live? Reply."  
The answer came. "She lives, but hasten, friend!  
Her journey draweth swiftly to its end."

Ah me! ah me! when each remembered spot,  
My own dear home, the lane that led to his—  
The fields, the woods, the lake, burst on my sight,  
Oh! then, Self rose up in asserting might;  
Oh, then, my bursting heart all else forgot,  
But those sweet early years of lost delight,  
Of hope, defeat, of anguish and of bliss.

[Pg 109]

I have a theory, vague, undefined,  
That each emotion of the human mind,  
Love, pain or passion, sorrow or despair,  
Is a live spirit, dwelling in the air,  
Until it takes possession of some breast;  
And, when at length, grown weary of unrest,  
We rise up strong and cast it from the heart,  
And bid it leave us wholly, and depart,  
It does not die, it cannot die; but goes  
And mingles with some restless wind that blows  
About the region where it had its birth.  
And though we wander over all the earth,  
That spirit waits, and lingers, year by year,  
Invisible, and clothèd like the air,  
Hoping that we may yet again draw near,  
And it may haply take us unaware,  
And once more find safe shelter in the breast  
It stirred of old with pleasure or unrest.

Told by my heart, and wholly positive,  
Some old emotion long had ceased to live;  
That, were it called, it could not hear or come,  
Because it was so voiceless and so dumb,  
Yet, passing where it first sprang into life,  
My very soul has suddenly been rife  
With all the old intensity of feeling.  
It seemed a living spirit, which came stealing  
Into my heart from that departed day;  
Exiled emotion, which I fancied clay.

[Pg 110]

So now into my troubled heart, above  
The present's pain and sorrow, crept the love  
And strife and passion of a by-gone hour,  
Possessed of all their olden might and power.  
'T was but a moment, and the spell was broken  
By pleasant words of greeting, gently spoken,  
And Vivian stood before us.

But I saw  
In him the husband of my friend alone.  
The old emotions might at times return,  
And smold'ring fires leap up an hour and burn;  
But never yet had I transgressed God's law,  
By looking on the man I had resigned,  
With any hidden feeling in my mind,  
Which she, his wife, my friend, might not have known.

He was but little altered. From his face  
The nonchalant and almost haughty grace,  
The lurking laughter waiting in his eyes,  
The years had stolen, leaving in their place  
A settled sadness, which was not despair,  
Nor was it gloom, nor weariness, nor care,  
But something like the vapor o'er the skies  
Of Indian summer, beautiful to see,  
But spoke of frosts, which had been and would be.  
There was that in his face which cometh not,  
Save when the soul has many a battle fought,  
And conquered self by constant sacrifice.

[Pg 111]

There are two sculptors, who, with chisels fine,  
Render the plainest features half divine.  
All other artists strive and strive in vain,  
To picture beauty perfect and complete.  
Their statues only crumble at their feet,  
Without the master touch of Faith and Pain.  
And now his face, that perfect seemed before,  
Chiseled by these two careful artists, wore  
A look exalted, which the spirit gives  
When soul has conquered, and the body lives  
Subservient to its bidding.

In a room  
Which curtained out the February gloom,  
And, redolent with perfume, bright with flowers,  
Rested the eye like one of Summer's bowers,  
I found my Helen, who was less mine now  
Than Death's; for on the marble of her brow,  
His seal was stamped indelibly.

Her form  
Was like the slender willow, when some storm  
Has stripped it bare of foliage. Her face,  
Pale always, now was ghastly in its hue:  
And, like two lamps, in some dark, hollow place,  
Burned her large eyes, grown more intensely blue.  
Her fragile hands displayed each cord and vein,  
And on her mouth was that drawn look, of pain  
Which is not uttered. Yet an inward light  
Shone through and made her wasted features bright  
With an unearthly beauty; and an awe  
Crept o'er me, gazing on her, for I saw  
She was so near to Heaven that I seemed  
To look upon the face of one redeemed.  
She turned the brilliant luster of her eyes  
Upon me. She had passed beyond surprise,  
Or any strong emotion linked with clay.  
But as I glided to her where she lay,  
A smile, celestial in its sweetness, wreathed  
Her pallid features. "Welcome home!" she breathed,  
"Dear hands! dear lips! I touch you and rejoice."  
And like the dying echo of a voice  
Were her faint tones that thrilled upon my ear.

[Pg 112]

I fell upon my knees beside her bed;  
All agonies within my heart were wed,  
While to the aching numbness of my grief,  
Mine eyes refused the solace of a tear,—  
The tortured soul's most merciful relief.  
Her wasted hand caressed my bended head  
For one sad, sacred moment. Then she said,  
In that low tone so like the wind's refrain,  
"Maurine, my own! give not away to pain;  
The time is precious. Ere another dawn  
My soul may hear the summons and pass on.  
Arise, sweet sister! rest a little while,  
And when refreshed, come hither. I grow weak  
With every hour that passes. I must speak  
And make my dying wishes known to-night.  
Go now." And in the halo of her smile,  
Which seemed to fill the room with golden light,  
I turned and left her.

[Pg 113]

Later in the gloom,

Of coming night, I entered that dim room,  
And sat down by her. Vivian held her hand:  
And on the pillow at her side, there smiled  
The beauteous count'nance of a sleeping child.

"Maurine," spoke Helen, "for three blissful years,  
My heart has dwelt in an enchanted land;  
And I have drank the sweetened cup of joy,  
Without one drop of anguish or alloy.  
And so, ere Pain embitters it with gall,  
Or sad-eyed Sorrow fills it full of tears,  
And bids me quaff, which is the Fate of all  
Who linger long upon this troubled way,  
God takes me to the realm of Endless Day,  
To mingle with his angels, who alone  
Can understand such bliss as I have known.  
I do not murmur. God has heaped my measure,  
In three short years, full to the brim with pleasure;  
And, from the fullness of an earthly love,  
I pass to th' Immortal arms above,  
Before I even brush the skirts of Woe.

"I leave my aged parents here below,  
With none to comfort them. Maurine, sweet friend!  
Be kind to them, and love them to the end,  
Which may not be far distant.

And I leave  
A soul immortal in your charge, Maurine.  
From this most holy, sad and sacred eve,  
Till God shall claim her, she is yours to keep,  
To love and shelter, to protect and guide."  
She touched the slumb'ring cherub at her side,  
And Vivian gently bore her, still asleep,  
And laid the precious burden on my breast.

[Pg 114]

A solemn silence fell upon the scene.  
And when the sleeping infant smiled, and pressed  
My yielding bosom with her waxen cheek,  
I felt it would be sacrilege to speak,  
Such wordless joy possessed me.

Oh! at last  
This infant, who, in that tear-blotted past,  
Had caused my soul such travail, was my own:  
Through all the lonely coming years to be  
Mine own to cherish—wholly mine alone.  
And what I mourned, so hopelessly as lost  
Was now restored, and given back to me.

The dying voice continued:

"In this child  
You yet have me, whose mortal life she cost.  
But all that was most pure and undefiled,  
And good within me, lives in her again.  
Maurine, my husband loves me; yet I know,  
Moving about the wide world, to and fro,  
And through, and in the busy haunts of men,  
Not always will his heart be dumb with woe,  
But sometime waken to a later love.  
Nay, Vivian, hush! my soul has passed above  
All selfish feelings! I would have it so.  
While I am with the angels, blest and glad,  
I would not have you sorrowing and sad,  
In loneliness go mourning to the end.  
But, love! I could not trust to any other  
The sacred office of a foster-mother  
To this sweet cherub, save my own heart-friend.

[Pg 115]

"Teach her to love her father's name, Maurine,  
Where'er he wanders. Keep my memory green  
In her young heart, and lead her in her youth,  
To drink from th' eternal fount of Truth;  
Vex her not with sectarian discourse,  
Nor strive to teach her piety by force;  
Ply not her mind with harsh and narrow creeds,  
Nor frighten her with an avenging God,

Who rules his subjects with a burning rod;  
But teach her that each mortal simply needs  
To grow in hate of hate and love of love,  
To gain a kingdom in the courts above.

"Let her be free and natural as the flowers,  
That smile and nod throughout the summer hours.  
Let her rejoice in all the joys of youth,  
But first impress upon her mind this truth:  
No lasting happiness is e'er attained  
Save when the heart some *other* seeks to please.  
The cup of selfish pleasures soon is drained,  
And full of gall and bitterness the lees.  
Next to her God, teach her to love her land;  
In her young bosom light the patriot's flame  
Until the heart within her shall expand  
With love and fervor at her country's name.  
"No coward-mother bears a valiant son.  
And this, my last wish, is an earnest one.

[Pg 116]

"Maurine, my o'er-taxed strength is waning; you  
Have heard my wishes, and you will be true  
In death as you have been in life, my own!  
Now leave me for a little while alone  
With him—my husband. Dear love! I shall rest  
So sweetly with no care upon my breast.  
Good night, Maurine, come to me in the morning."

But lo! the bridegroom with no further warning  
Came for her at the dawning of the day.  
She heard his voice, and smiled, and passed away  
Without a struggle.

Leaning o'er her bed  
To give her greeting, I found but her clay,  
And Vivian bowed beside it.

And I said,  
"Dear friend! my soul shall treasure thy request,  
And when the night of fever and unrest  
Melts in the morning of Eternity,  
Like a freed bird, then I will come to thee.

"I will come to thee in the morning, sweet!  
I have been true; and soul with soul shall meet  
Before God's throne, and shall not be afraid.  
Thou gav'st me trust, and it was not betrayed.

"I will come to thee in the morning, dear!  
The night is dark. I do not know how near  
The morn may be of that Eternal Day;  
I can but keep my faithful watch and pray.

"I will come to thee in the morning, love!  
Wait for me on the Eternal Heights above.  
The way is troubled where my feet must climb,  
Ere I shall tread the mountain-top sublime.

[Pg 117]

"I will come in the morning, O, mine own!  
But for a time must grope my way alone,  
Through tears and sorrow, till the Day shall dawn,  
And I shall hear the summons, and pass on.

"I will come in the morning. Rest secure!  
My hope is certain and my faith is sure.  
After the gloom and darkness of the night  
I will come to thee with the morning light."

---

Three peaceful years slipped silently away.

We dwelt together in my childhood's home,  
Aunt Ruth and I, and sunny-hearted May.  
She was a fair and most exquisite child;  
Her pensive face was delicate and mild



Like her dead mother's; but through her dear eyes  
Her father smiled upon me, day by day.  
Afar in foreign countries did he roam,  
Now resting under Italy's blue skies,  
And now with Roy in Scotland.

And he sent  
Brief, friendly letters, telling where he went  
And what he saw, addressed to May or me.  
And I would write and tell him how she grew—  
And how she talked about him o'er the sea  
In her sweet baby fashion; how she knew  
His picture in the album; how each day  
She knelt and prayed the blessed Lord would bring  
Her own papa back to his little May.

[Pg 118]

It was a warm bright morning in the Spring.  
I sat in that same sunny portico,  
Where I was sitting seven years ago  
When Vivian came. My eyes were full of tears,  
As I looked back across the checkered years.  
How many were the changes they had brought!  
Pain, death, and sorrow! but the lesson taught  
To my young heart had been of untold worth.  
I had learned how to "suffer and grow strong"—  
That knowledge which best serves us here on earth,  
And brings reward in Heaven.

Oh! how long  
The years had been since that June morning when  
I heard his step upon the walk, and yet  
I seemed to hear its echo still.

Just then  
Down that same path I turned my eyes, tear-wet,  
And lo! the wanderer from a foreign land  
Stood there before me!—holding out his hand  
And smiling with those wond'rous eyes of old.

To hide my tears, I ran and brought his child;  
But she was shy, and clung to me, when told  
This was papa, for whom her prayers were said.  
She dropped her eyes and shook her little head,  
And would not by his coaxing be beguiled,  
Or go to him.

Aunt Ruth was not at home,  
And we two sat and talked, as strangers might,  
Of distant countries which we both had seen.  
But once I thought I saw his large eyes light  
With sudden passion, when there came a pause  
In our chit-chat, and then he spoke:

"Maurine,  
I saw a number of your friends in Rome.  
We talked of you. They seemed surprised, because  
You were not 'mong the seekers for a name.  
They thought your whole ambition was for fame."

[Pg 119]

"It might have been," I answered, "when my heart  
Had nothing else to fill it. Now my art  
Is but a recreation. I have *this*  
To love and live for, which I had not then."  
And, leaning down, I pressed a tender kiss  
Upon my child's fair brow.

"And yet," he said,  
The old light leaping to his eyes again,  
"And yet, Maurine, they say you might have wed  
A noble Baron! one of many men  
Who laid their hearts and fortunes at your feet.  
Why won the bravest of them no return?"

I bowed my head, nor dared his gaze to meet.  
On cheek and brow I felt the red blood burn,  
And strong emotion strangled speech.

He rose  
And came and knelt beside me.

"Sweet, my sweet!"

[Pg 120]

He murmured softly, "God in Heaven knows  
How well I loved you seven years ago.  
He only knows my anguish, and my grief,  
When your own acts forced on me the belief  
That I had been your plaything and your toy.  
Yet from his lips I since have learned that Roy  
Held no place nearer than a friend and brother.  
And then a faint suspicion, undefined,  
Of what had been—was—might be, stirred my mind,  
And that great love, I thought died at a blow,  
Rose up within me, strong with hope and life.

"Before all heaven and the angel mother  
Of this sweet child that slumbers on your heart,  
Maurine, Maurine, I claim you for my wife—  
Mine own, forever, until death shall part!"

Through happy mists of upward welling tears,  
I leaned, and looked into his beauteous eyes.  
"Dear heart," I said, "if she who dwells above  
Looks down upon us, from yon azure skies,  
She can but bless us, knowing all these years  
My soul had yearned in silence for the love  
That crowned her life, and left mine own so bleak.  
I turned you from me for her fair, frail sake.  
For her sweet child's, and for my own, I take  
You back to be all mine, for evermore."

Just then the child upon my breast awoke  
From her light sleep, and laid her downy cheek  
Against her father as he knelt by me.  
And this unconscious action seemed to be  
A silent blessing, which the mother spoke  
Gazing upon us from the mystic shore.

[Pg 121]

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## TWO SUNSETS.

[Pg 122]

In the fair morning of his life,  
When his pure heart lay in his breast,  
Panting, with all that wild unrest  
To plunge into the great world's strife

That fills young hearts with mad desire,  
He saw a sunset. Red and gold  
The burning billows surged and rolled,  
And upward tossed their caps of fire.

He looked. And as he looked, the sight  
Sent from his soul through breast and brain  
Such intense joy, it hurt like pain.  
His heart seemed bursting with delight.

So near the Unknown seemed, so close  
He might have grasped it with his hand.  
He felt his inmost soul expand,  
As sunlight will expand a rose.

One day he heard a singing strain—  
A human voice, in bird-like trills.  
He paused, and little rapture-rills  
Went trickling downward through each vein.

And in his heart the whole day long,  
As in a temple veiled and dim,  
He kept and bore about with him  
The beauty of that singer's song.

And then? But why relate what then?  
His smouldering heart flamed into fire—  
He had his one supreme desire.  
And plunged into the world of men.

[Pg 123]

For years queen Folly held her sway.  
With pleasures of the grosser kind  
She fed his flesh and drugged his mind,  
Till, shamed, he sated turned away.

He sought his boyhood's home. That hour  
Triumphant should have been, in sooth,  
Since he went forth an unknown youth,  
And came back crowned with wealth and power.

The clouds made day a gorgeous bed;  
He saw the splendor of the sky  
With unmoved heart and stolid eye;  
He only knew the West was red.

Then suddenly a fresh young voice  
Rose, bird-like, from some hidden place,  
He did not even turn his face;  
It struck him simply as a noise.

He trod the old paths up and down.  
Their rich-hued leaves by Fall winds whirled—  
How dull they were—how dull the world—  
Dull even in the pulsing town.

O! worst of punishments, that brings  
A blunting of all finer sense,  
A loss of feelings keen, intense,  
And dulls us to the higher things.

O! penalty most dire, most sure,  
Swift following after gross delights,  
That we no more see beauteous sights,  
Or hear as hear the good and pure.

[Pg 124]

O! shape more hideous and more dread  
Than Vengeance takes in creed-taught minds,  
This certain doom that blunts and blinds,  
And strikes the holiest feelings dead.

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## UNREST.

In the youth of the year, when the birds were building,  
When the green was showing on tree and hedge,  
And the tenderest light of all lights was gilding  
The world from zenith to outermost edge,  
My soul grew sad and longingly lonely!  
I sighed for the season of sun and rose,  
And I said, "In the Summer and that time only  
Lies sweet contentment and blest repose."

With bee and bird for her maids of honor  
Came Princess Summer in robes of green.  
And the King of day smiled down upon her  
And wooed her, and won her, and made her queen.  
Fruit of their union and true love's pledges,  
Beautiful roses bloomed day by day,  
And rambled in gardens and hid in hedges  
Like royal children in sportive play.

My restless soul for a little season  
Reveled in rapture of glow and bloom,  
And then, like a subject who harbors treason,  
Grew full of rebellion and gray with gloom.  
And I said, "I am sick of the Summer's blisses,  
Of warmth and beauty, and nothing more.  
The full fruition my sad soul misses  
That beauteous Fall time holds in store!"

[Pg 125]

But now when the colors are almost blinding,

Burning and blending on bush and tree,  
And the rarest fruits are mine for the finding,  
And the year is ripe as a year can be,  
My soul complains in the same old fashion;  
Crying aloud in my troubled breast  
Is the same old longing, the same old passion.  
O where is the treasure which men call rest?

---

## "ARTIST'S LIFE."

Of all the waltzes the great Strauss wrote,  
Mad with melody, rhythm—rife  
From the very first to the final note,  
Give me his "Artist's Life!"

It stirs my blood to my finger ends,  
Thrills me and fills me with vague unrest,  
And all that is sweetest and saddest blends  
Together within my breast.

It brings back that night in the dim arcade,  
In love's sweet morning and life's best prime.  
When the great brass orchestra played and played.  
And set our thoughts to rhyme.

[Pg 126]

It brings back that Winter of mad delights,  
Of leaping pulses and tripping feet,  
And those languid moon-washed Summer nights  
When we heard the band in the street.

It brings back rapture and glee and glow,  
It brings back passion and pain and strife,  
And so of all the waltzes I know,  
Give me the "Artist's Life."

For it is so full of the dear old time—  
So full of the dear old friends I knew.  
And under its rhythm, and lilt, and rhyme,  
I am always finding—*you*.

---

## NOTHING BUT STONES.

I think I never passed so sad an hour,  
Dear friend, as that one at the church to-night.  
The edifice from basement to the tower  
Was one resplendent blaze of colored light.  
Up through broad aisles the stylish crowd was thronging,  
Each richly robed like some king's bidden guest.  
"Here will I bring my sorrow and my longing,"  
I said, "and here find rest."

I heard the heavenly organ's voice of thunder,  
It seemed to give me infinite relief.  
I wept. Strange eyes looked on in well-bred wonder.  
I dried my tears: their gaze profaned my grief.  
Wrapt in the costly furs, and silks and laces  
Beat alien hearts, that had no part with me.  
I could not read, in all those proud cold faces,  
One thought of sympathy.

[Pg 127]

I watched them bowing and devoutly kneeling,  
Heard their responses like sweet waters roll.  
But only the glorious organ's sacred pealing  
Seemed gushing from a full and fervent soul.  
I listened to the man of holy calling,  
He spoke of creeds, and hailed his own as best;  
Of man's corruption and of Adam's falling,  
But naught that gave me rest.

Nothing that helped me bear the daily grinding  
Of soul with body, heart with heated brain.  
Nothing to show the purpose of this blinding  
And sometimes overwhelming sense of pain.  
And then, dear friend, I thought of thee, so lowly,  
So unassuming, and so gently kind,  
And lo! a peace, a calm serene and holy,  
Settled upon my mind.

Ah, friend, my friend! one true heart, fond and tender,  
That understands our troubles and our needs,  
Brings us more near to God than all the splendor  
And pomp of seeming worship and vain creeds.  
One glance of thy dear eyes so full of feeling,  
Doth bring me closer to the Infinite,  
Than all that throng of worldly people kneeling  
In blaze of gorgeous light.

[Pg 128]

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## THE COQUETTE.

Alone she sat with her accusing heart,  
That, like a restless comrade frightened sleep,  
And every thought that found her, left a dart  
That hurt her so, she could not even weep.

Her heart that once had been a cup well filled  
With love's red wine, save for some drops of gall  
She knew was empty; though it had not spilled  
Its sweets for one, but wasted them on all.

She stood upon the grave of her dead truth,  
And saw her soul's bright armor red with rust,  
And knew that all the riches of her youth  
Were Dead Sea apples, crumbling into dust.

Love that had turned to bitter, biting scorn,  
Hearthstones despoiled, and homes made desolate,  
Made her cry out that she was ever born,  
To loathe her beauty and to curse her fate.

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## INEVITABLE.

[Pg 129]

To-day I was so weary and I lay  
In that delicious state of semi-waking,  
When baby, sitting with his nurse at play,  
Cried loud for "mamma," all his toys forsaking.

I was so weary and I needed rest,  
And signed to nurse to bear him from the room.  
Then, sudden, rose and caught him to my breast,  
And kissed the grieving mouth and cheeks of bloom.

For swift as lightning came the thought to me,  
With pulsing heart-throes and a mist of tears,  
Of days inevitable, that are to be,  
If my fair darling grows to manhood's years;

Days when he will not call for "mamma," when  
The world with many a pleasure and bright joy,  
Shall tempt him forth into the haunts of men  
And I shall lose the first place with my boy;

When other homes and loves shall give delight,  
When younger smiles and voices will seem best.  
And so I held him to my heart to-night,  
Forgetting all my need of peace and rest.

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## THE OCEAN OF SONG

In a land beyond sight or conceiving,  
 In a land where no blight is, no wrong,  
 No darkness, no graves, and no grieving,  
 There lies the great ocean of song.  
 And its waves, oh, its waves un beholden  
 By any save gods, and their kind,  
 Are not blue, are not green, but are golden,  
 Like moonlight and sunlight combined.

It was whispered to me that their waters  
 Were made from the gathered-up tears,  
 That were wept by the sons and the daughters  
 Of long-vanished eras and spheres.  
 Like white sands of heaven the spray is  
 That falls all the happy day long,  
 And whoever it touches straightway is  
 Made glad with the spirit of song.

Up, up to the clouds where their hoary  
 Crowned heads melt away in the skies,  
 The beautiful mountains of glory  
 Each side of the song ocean rise.  
 Here day is one splendor of sky light  
 Of God's light with beauty replete.  
 Here night is not night, but is twilight,  
 Pervading, enfolding and sweet.

Bright birds from all climes and all regions  
 That sing the whole glad summer long,  
 Are dumb, till they flock here in legions  
 And lave in the ocean of song.  
 It is here that the four winds of heaven,  
 The winds that do sing and rejoice,  
 It is here they first came and were given  
 The secret of sound and a voice.

[Pg 131]

Far down along beautiful beeches,  
 By night and by glorious day,  
 The throng of the gifted ones reaches,  
 Their foreheads made white with the spray.  
 And a few of the sons and the daughters  
 Of this kingdom, cloud-hidden from sight,  
 Go down in the wonderful waters,  
 And bathe in those billows of light

And their souls ever more are like fountains,  
 And liquid and lucent and strong,  
 High over the tops of the mountains  
 Gush up the sweet billows of song.  
 No drouth-time of waters can dry them.  
 Whoever has bathed in that sea,  
 All dangers, all deaths, they defy them,  
 And are gladder than gods are, with glee.

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## "IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN."

[Pg 132]

We will be what we could be. Do not say,  
 "It might have been, had not or that, or this."  
 No fate can keep us from the chosen way;  
 He only might, who *is*.

We will do what we could do. Do not dream  
 Chance leaves a hero, all uncrowned to grieve.  
 I hold, all men are greatly what they seem;  
 He does, who could achieve.

We will climb where we could climb. Tell me not  
Of adverse storms that kept thee from the height.  
What eagle ever missed the peak he sought?  
He always climbs who might.

I do not like the phrase, "It might have been!"  
It lacks all force, and life's best truths perverts:  
For I believe we have, and reach, and win,  
Whatever our deserts.

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## IF.

Dear love, if you and I could sail away,  
With snowy pennons to the winds unfurled,  
Across the waters of some unknown bay,  
And find some island far from all the world;

If we could dwell there, ever more alone,  
While unrecorded years slip by apace,  
Forgetting and forgotten and unknown  
By aught save native song-birds of the place;

If Winter never visited that land,  
And Summer's lap spilled o'er with fruits and flowers,  
And tropic trees cast shade on every hand,  
And twined boughs formed sleep-inviting bowers;

If from the fashions of the world set free,  
And hid away from all its jealous strife,  
I lived alone for you, and you for me—  
Ah! then, dear love, how sweet were wedded life.

But since we dwell here in the crowded way,  
Where hurrying throngs rush by to seek for gold,  
And all is common-place and work-a-day,  
As soon as love's young honeymoon grows old;

Since fashion rules and nature yields to art,  
And life is hurt by daily jar and fret,  
'Tis best to shut such dreams down in the heart  
And go our ways alone, love, and forget.

[Pg 133]

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## GETHSEMANE.

In golden youth when seems the earth  
A Summer-land of singing mirth,  
When souls are glad and hearts are light,  
And not a shadow lurks in sight,  
We do not know it, but there lies  
Somewhere veiled under evening skies  
A garden which we all must see—  
The garden of Gethsemane.

With joyous steps we go our ways,  
Love lends a halo to our days;  
Light sorrows sail like clouds afar,  
We laugh, and say how strong we are.  
We hurry on; and hurrying, go  
Close to the border-land of woe,  
That waits for you, and waits for me—  
Forever waits Gethsemane.

Down shadowy lanes, across strange streams  
Bridged over by our broken dreams;  
Behind the misty caps of years,  
Beyond the great salt fount of tears,  
The garden lies. Strive as you may,  
You cannot miss it in your way.

[Pg 134]

All paths that have been, or shall be,  
Pass somewhere through Gethsemane.

All those who journey, soon or late,  
Must pass within the garden's gate;  
Must kneel alone in darkness there,  
And battle with some fierce despair.  
God pity those who can not say,  
"Not mine but thine," who only pray,  
"Let this cup pass," and cannot see  
The *purpose* in Gethsemane.

[Pg 135]

---

## DUST-SEALED.

I know not wherefore, but mine eyes  
See bloom, where other eyes see blight.  
They find a rainbow, a sunrise,  
Where others but discern deep night.

Men call me an enthusiast,  
And say I look through gilded haze:  
Because where'er my gaze is cast,  
I see some thing that calls for praise.

I say, "Behold those lovely eyes—  
That tinted cheek of flower-like grace."  
They answer in amused surprise:  
"We thought it such a common face."

I say, "Was ever scene more fair?  
I seem to walk in Eden's bowers."  
They answer with a pitying air,  
"The weeds are choking out the flowers."

I know not wherefore, but God lent  
A deeper vision to my sight.  
On whatsoe'er my gaze is bent  
I catch the beauty Infinite;

[Pg 136]

That underlying, hidden half  
That all things hold of Deity.  
So let the dull crowd sneer and laugh—  
Their eyes are blind, they cannot see.

---

## "ADVICE."

I must do as you do? Your way I own  
Is a very good way. And still,  
There are sometimes two straight roads to a town,  
One over, one under the hill.

You are treading the safe and the well-worn way,  
That the prudent choose each time;  
And you think me reckless and rash to-day,  
Because I prefer to climb.

Your path is the right one, and so is mine.  
We are not like peas in a pod,  
Compelled to lie in a certain line,  
Or else be scattered abroad.

'Twere a dull old world, methinks, my friend,  
If we all went just one way;  
Yet our paths will meet no doubt at the end,  
Though they lead apart to-day.

You like the shade, and I like the sun;  
You like an even pace,

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I like to mix with the crowd and run,  
And then rest after the race.

I like danger, and storm and strife,  
You like a peaceful time;  
I like the passion and surge of life,  
You like its gentle rhyme.

You like buttercups, dewy sweet,  
And crocuses, framed in snow;  
I like roses, born of the heat,  
And the red carnation's glow.

I must live my life, not yours, my friend,  
For so it was written down;  
We must follow our given paths to the end,  
But I trust we shall meet—in town.

---

## OVER THE BANISTERS.

Over the banisters bends a face,  
Daringly sweet and beguiling.  
Somebody stands in careless grace,  
And watches the picture, smiling.

The light burns dim in the hall below,  
Nobody sees her standing,  
Saying good-night again, soft and slow,  
Half way up to the landing.

Nobody only the eyes of brown,  
Tender and full of meaning,  
That smile on the fairest face in town,  
Over the banisters leaning.

[Pg 138]

Tired and sleepy, with drooping head,  
I wonder why she lingers;  
Now, when the good-nights all are said,  
Why somebody holds her fingers.

He holds her fingers and draws her down,  
Suddenly growing bolder,  
Till the loose hair drops its masses brown  
Like a mantle over his shoulder.

Over the banisters soft hands, fair,  
Brush his cheeks like a feather,  
And bright brown tresses and dusky hair,  
Meet and mingle together.

There's a question asked, there's a swift caress,  
She has flown like a bird from the hallway,  
But over the banisters drops a "yes,"  
That shall brighten the world for him always.

---

## MOMUS, GOD OF LAUGHTER.

Though with gods the world is cumbered,  
Gods unnamed, and gods unnumbered,  
Never god was known to be  
Who had not his devotee.  
So I dedicate to mine,  
Here in verse, my temple-shrine.

'Tis not Ares,—mighty Mars,  
Who can give success in wars.  
'Tis not Morpheus, who doth keep  
Guard above us while we sleep,

[Pg 139]

'Tis not Venus, she whose duty  
'Tis to give us love and beauty;  
Hail to these, and others, after  
Momus, gleesome god of laughter.

Quirinus would guard my health!  
Plutus would insure me wealth  
Mercury looks after trade,  
Hera smiles on youth and maid.  
All are kind, I own their worth,  
After Momus, god of mirth.

Though Apollo, out of spite,  
Hides away his face of light.  
Though Minerva looks askance,  
Deigning me no smiling glance,  
Kings and queens may envy me  
While I claim the god of glee.

Wisdom wearies, Love has wings—  
Wealth makes burdens, Pleasure stings,  
Glory proves a thorny crown—  
So all gifts the gods throw down  
Bring their pains and troubles after;  
All save Momus, god of laughter.  
He alone gives constant joy,  
Hail to Momus, happy boy.

---

## I DREAM.

[Pg 140]

Oh, I have dreams. I sometimes dream of Life  
In the full meaning of that splendid word.  
Its subtle music which few men have heard,  
Though all may hear it, sounding through earth's strife.  
Its mountain heights by mystic breezes kissed,  
Lifting their lovely peaks above the dust;  
Its treasures which no touch of time can rust,  
Its emerald seas, its dawns of amethyst,  
Its certain purpose, its serene repose,  
Its usefulness, that finds no hour for woes,  
This is my dream of Life.

Yes, I have dreams. I oftentimes dream of Love  
As radiant and brilliant as a star.  
As changeless, too, as that fixed light afar  
Which glorifies vast worlds of space above.  
Strong as the tempest when it holds its breath,  
Before it bursts in fury; and as deep  
As the unfathomed seas, where lost worlds sleep  
And sad as birth, and beautiful as death.  
As fervent as the fondest soul could crave,  
Yet holy as the moonlight on a grave.  
This is my dream of Love.

Yes, yes, I dream. One oft-recurring dream,  
Is beautiful and comforting and blest.  
Complete with certain promises of rest.  
Divine content, and ecstasy supreme.  
When that strange essence, author of all faith,  
That subtle something, which cries for the light,  
Like a lost child who wanders in the night,  
Shall solve the mighty mystery of Death,  
Shall find eternal progress, or sublime  
And satisfying slumber for all time.  
This is my dream of Death.

[Pg 141]

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## THE PAST.

I fling my past behind me, like a robe  
Worn threadbare in the seams, and out of date.  
I have outgrown it. Wherefore should I weep  
And dwell upon its beauty, and its dyes  
Of Oriental splendor, or complain  
That I must needs discard it? I can weave  
Upon the shuttles of the future years  
A fabric far more durable. Subdued,  
It may be, in the blending of its hues,  
Where somber shades commingle, yet the gleam  
Of golden warp shall shoot it through and through,  
While over all a fadeless luster lies,  
And starred with gems made out of crystallized tears,  
My new robe shall be richer than the old.

---

## THE SONNET.

[Pg 142]

Alone it stands in Poesy's fair land,  
A temple by the muses set apart;  
A perfect structure of consummate art,  
By artists builded and by genius planned.  
Beyond the reach of the apprentice hand,  
Beyond the ken of the untutored heart,  
Like a fine carving in a common mart,  
Only the favored few will understand.  
A *chef-d'œuvre* toiled over with great care,  
Yet which the unseeing careless crowd goes by,  
A plainly set, but well-cut solitaire,  
An ancient bit of pottery, too rare  
To please or hold aught save the special eye,  
These only with the sonnet can compare.

---

## SECRETS.

Think not some knowledge rests with thee alone;  
Why, even God's stupendous secret, Death,  
We one by one, with our expiring breath,  
Do pale with wonder seize and make our own;  
The bosomed treasures of the earth are shown,  
Despite her careful hiding; and the air  
Yields its mysterious marvels in despair  
To swell the mighty store-house of things known.  
In vain the sea expostulates and raves;  
It cannot cover from the keen world's sight  
The curious wonders of its coral caves.  
And so, despite thy caution or thy tears,  
The prying fingers of detective years  
Shall drag *thy* secret out into the light.

[Pg 143]

## A DREAM.

That was a curious dream; I thought the three  
Great planets that are drawing near the sun  
With such unerring certainty, begun  
To talk together in a mighty glee.  
They spoke of vast convulsions which would be  
Throughout the solar system—the rare fun  
Of watching haughty stars drop, one by one,  
And vanish in a seething vapor sea.

I thought I heard them comment on the earth—  
That small dark object—doomed beyond a doubt.  
They wondered if live creatures moved about  
Its tiny surface, deeming it of worth.  
And then they laughed—'twas such a ringing shout

That I awoke and joined too in their mirth.

---

## USELESSNESS.

Let mine not be that saddest fate of all  
To live beyond my greater self; to see  
My faculties decaying, as the tree  
Stands stark and helpless while its green leaves fall.  
Let me hear rather the imperious call,  
Which all men dread, in my glad morning time,  
And follow death ere I have reached my prime,  
Or drunk the strengthening cordial of life's gall.  
The lightning's stroke or the fierce tempest blast  
Which fells the green tree to the earth to-day  
Is kinder than the calm that lets it last,  
Unhappy witness of its own decay.  
May no man ever look on me and say,  
"She lives, but all her usefulness is past."

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## WILL

There is no chance, no destiny, no fate,  
Can circumvent or hinder or control  
The firm resolve of a determined soul.  
Gifts count for nothing; will alone is great;  
All things give way before it, soon or late.  
What obstacle can stay the mighty force  
Of the sea-seeking river in its course,  
Or cause the ascending orb of day to wait?

Each well-born soul must win what it deserves.  
Let the fool prate of luck. The fortunate  
Is he whose earnest purpose never swerves,  
Whose slightest action or inaction serves  
The one great aim.  
Why, even Death stands still,  
And waits an hour sometimes for such a will.

---

## WINTER RAIN.

Falling upon the frozen world last night,  
I heard the slow beat of the Winter rain—  
Poor foolish drops, down-dripping all in vain;  
The ice-bound Earth but mocked their puny might,  
Far better had the fixedness of white  
And uncomplaining snows—which make no sign,  
But coldly smile, when pitying moonbeams shine—  
Concealed its sorrow from all human sight.  
Long, long ago, in blurred and burdened years,  
I learned the uselessness of uttered woe.  
Though sinewy Fate deals her most skillful blow,  
I do not waste the gall now of my tears,  
But feed my pride upon its bitter, while  
I look straight in the world's bold eyes, and smile.

[Pg 145]

---

## APPLAUSE.

I hold it one of the sad certain laws  
Which makes our failures sometimes seem more kind  
Than that success which brings sure loss behind—  
True greatness dies, when sounds the world's applause  
Fame blights the object it would bless, because

Weighed down with men's expectancy, the mind  
Can no more soar to those far heights, and find  
That freedom which its inspiration was.  
When once we listen to its noisy cheers  
Or hear the populace' approval, then  
We catch no more the music of the spheres,  
Or walk with gods, and angels, but with men.  
Till, impotent from our self-conscious fears,  
The plaudits of the world turn into sneers.

[Pg 146]

---

## LIFE.

Life, like a romping schoolboy, full of glee,  
Doth bear us on his shoulders for a time.  
There is no path too steep for him to climb,  
With strong, lithe limbs, as agile and as free,  
As some young roe, he speeds by vale and sea,  
By flowery mead, by mountain peak sublime,  
And all the world seems motion set to rhyme,  
Till, tired out, he cries, "Now carry me!"  
In vain we murmur, "Come," Life says, "fair play!"  
And seizes on us. God! he goads us so!  
He does not let us sit down all the day.  
At each new step we feel the burden grow,  
Till our bent backs seem breaking as we go,  
Watching for Death to meet us on the way.

---

## BURDENED.

"Genius, a man's weapon, a woman's burden."—*Lamartine*.

Dear God! there is no sadder fate in life,  
Than to be burdened so that you can not  
Sit down contented with the common lot  
Of happy mother and devoted wife.

To feel your brain wild and your bosom rife  
With all the sea's commotion; to be fraught  
With fires and frenzies which you have not sought,  
And weighed down with the wide world's weary strife.

[Pg 147]

To feel a fever always in your breast,  
To lean and hear half in affright, half shame.  
A loud-voiced public boldly mouth your name,  
To reap your hard-sown harvest in unrest,  
And know, however great your meed of fame,  
You are but a weak woman at the best.

---

## THE STORY.

They met each other in the glade—  
She lifted up her eyes;  
Alack the day! Alack the maid!  
She blushed in swift surprise.  
Alas! alas! the woe that comes from lifting up the eyes.

The pail was full, the path was steep—  
He reached to her his hand;  
She felt her warm young pulses leap,  
But did not understand.  
Alas! alas! the woe that comes from clasping hand with hand.

She sat beside him in the wood—  
He wooed with words and sighs;  
Ah! love in spring seems sweet and good,

[Pg 148]

And maidens are not wise.  
Alas! alas! the woe that comes from listing lovers' sighs.

The summer sun shone fairly down,  
The wind blew from the south;  
As blue eyes gazed in eyes of brown,  
His kiss fell on her mouth.  
Alas! alas! the woe that comes from kisses on the mouth.

And now the autumn time is near,  
The lover roves away,  
With breaking heart and falling tear,  
She sits the livelong day.  
Alas! alas! for breaking hearts when lovers rove away.

---

## LET THEM GO.

Let the dream go. Are there not other dreams  
In vastness of clouds hid from thy sight  
That yet shall gild with beautiful gold gleams,  
And shoot the shadows through and through with light?  
What matters one lost vision of the night?  
Let the dream go!

Let the hope set. Are there not other hopes  
That yet shall rise like new stars in thy sky?  
Not long a soul in sullen darkness gropes  
Before some light is lent it from on high;  
What folly to think happiness gone by!  
Let the hope set!

[Pg 149]

Let the joy fade. Are there not other joys,  
Like frost-bound bulbs, that yet shall start and bloom?  
Severe must be the winter that destroys  
The hardy roots locked in their silent tomb.  
What cares the earth for her brief time of gloom?  
Let the joy fade!

Let the love die. Are there not other loves  
As beautiful and full of sweet unrest,  
Flying through space like snowy-pinioned doves?  
They yet shall come and nestle in thy breast,  
And thou shalt say of each, "Lo, this is best!"  
Let the love die!

---

## THE ENGINE.

Into the gloom of the deep, dark night,  
With panting breath and a startled scream;  
Swift as a bird in sudden flight  
Darts this creature of steel and steam.

Awful dangers are lurking nigh,  
Rocks and chasms are near the track,  
But straight by the light of its great white eye  
It speeds through the shadows, dense and black.

Terrible thoughts and fierce desires  
Trouble its mad heart many an hour,  
Where burn and smoulder the hidden fires,  
Coupled ever with might and power.

[Pg 150]

It hates, as a wild horse hates the rein,  
The narrow track by vale and hill;  
And shrieks with a cry of startled pain,  
And longs to follow its own wild will.

Oh, what am I but an engine, shod

With muscle and flesh, by the hand of God,  
Speeding on through the dense, dark night,  
Guided alone by the soul's white light.

Often and often my mad heart tires,  
And hates its way with a bitter hate,  
And longs to follow its own desires,  
And leave the end in the hand of fate.

O mighty engine of steel and steam;  
O human engine of blood and bone,  
Follow the white light's certain beam—  
There lies safety and there alone.

The narrow track of fearless truth,  
Lit by the soul's great eye of light,  
O passionate heart of restless youth,  
Alone will carry you through the night.

---

## NOTHING NEW.

[Pg 151]

From the dawn of spring till the year grows hoary,  
Nothing is new that is done or said,  
The leaves are telling the same old story—  
"Budding, bursting, dying, dead."  
And ever and always the wild bird's chorus  
Is "coming, building, flying, fled."

Never the round earth roams or ranges  
Out of her circuit, so old, so old,  
And the smile o' the sun knows but these changes—  
Beaming, burning, tender, cold,  
As Spring time softens or Winter estranges  
The mighty heart of this orb of gold.

From our great sire's birth to the last morn's breaking  
There were tempest, sunshine, fruit and frost,  
And the sea was calm or the sea was shaking  
His mighty main like a lion crossed,  
And ever this cry the heart was making—  
Longing, loving, losing, lost.

Forever the wild wind wanders, crying,  
Southerly, easterly, north and west,  
And one worn song the fields are sighing,  
"Sowing, growing, harvest, rest,"  
And the tired thought of the world, replying  
Like an echo to what is last and best,  
Murmurs—"Rest."

---

## DREAMS.

[Pg 152]

Thank God for dreams! I, desolate and lone,  
In the dark curtained night, did seem to be  
The centre where all golden sun-rays shone,  
And, sitting there, held converse sweet with thee.  
No shadow lurked between us; all was bright  
And beautiful as in the hours gone by,  
I smiled, and was rewarded by the light  
Of olden days soft beaming from thine eye.  
Thank God, thank God for dreams!

I thought the birds all listened; for thy voice  
Pulsed through the air, like beat of silver wings.  
It made each chamber of my soul rejoice  
And thrilled along my heart's tear-rusted strings.  
As some devout and ever-prayerful nun  
Tells her bright beads, and counts them o'er and o'er,

Thy golden words I gathered, one by one,  
And slipped them into memory's precious store.  
Thank God, thank God for dreams!

My lips met thine in one ecstatic kiss.  
Hand pressed in hand, and heart to heart we sat.  
Why even now I am surcharged with bliss—  
With joy supreme, if I but think of that.  
No fear of separation or of change  
Crept in to mar our sweet serene content.  
In that blest vision, nothing could estrange  
Our wedded souls, in perfect union blent.  
Thank God, thank God for dreams!

[Pg 153]

Thank God for dreams! when nothing else is left.  
When the sick soul, all tortured with its pain,  
Knowing itself forever more bereft,  
Finds waiting hopeless and all watching vain,  
When empty arms grow rigid with their ache,  
When eyes are blinded with sad tides of tears,  
When stricken hearts do suffer, yet not break,  
For loss of those who come not with the years—  
Thank God, thank God for dreams!

---

## HELENA.

Last night I saw Helena. She whose praise  
Of late all men have sounded. She for whom  
Young Angus rashly sought a silent tomb  
Rather than live without her all his days.

Wise men go mad who look upon her long,  
She is so ripe with dangers. Yet meanwhile  
I find no fascination in her smile,  
Although I make her theme of this poor song.

"Her golden tresses?" yes, they may be fair,  
And yet to me each shining silken tress  
Seems robbed of beauty and all lusterless—  
Too many hands have stroked Helena's hair.

(I know a little maiden so demure  
She will not let her one true lover's hands  
In playful fondness touch her soft brown bands,  
So dainty-minded is she, and so pure.)

[Pg 154]

"Her great dark eyes that flash like gems at night?  
Large, long-lashed eyes and lustrous?" that may be,  
And yet they are not beautiful to me.  
Too many hearts have sunned in their delight.

(I mind me of two tender blue eyes, hid  
So underneath white curtains, and so veiled  
That I have sometimes plead for hours, and failed  
To see more than the shyly lifted lid.)

"Her perfect mouth so like a carved kiss?"  
"Her honeyed mouth, where hearts do, fly-like, drown?"  
I would not taste its sweetness for a crown;  
Too many lips have drank its nectared bliss.

(I know a mouth whose virgin dew, undried,  
Lies like a young grape's bloom, untouched and sweet,  
And though I plead in passion at her feet,  
She would not let me brush it if I died.)

In vain, Helena! though wise men may vie  
For thy rare smile or die from loss of it,  
Armored by my sweet lady's trust, I sit,  
And know thou art not worth her faintest sigh.



---

## NOTHING REMAINS.

Nothing remains of unrecorded ages  
 That lie in the silent cemetery of time;  
 Their wisdom may have shamed our wisest sages,  
 Their glory may have been indeed sublime.  
 How weak do seem our strivings after power,  
 How poor the grandest efforts of our brains,  
 If out of all we are, in one short hour  
 Nothing remains.

Nothing remains but the Eternal Spaces,  
 Time and decay uproot the forest trees.  
 Even the mighty mountains leave their places,  
 And sink their haughty heads beneath strange seas;  
 The great earth writhes in some convulsive spasm  
 And turns the proudest cities into plains.  
 The level sea becomes a yawning chasm—  
 Nothing remains.

Nothing remains but the Eternal Forces,  
 The sad seas cease complaining and grow dry;  
 Rivers are drained and altered in their courses,  
 Great stars pass out and vanish from the sky.  
 Ideas die and old religions perish,  
 Our rarest pleasures and our keenest pains  
 Are swept away with all we hate or cherish—  
 Nothing remains.

Nothing remains but the Eternal Nameless  
 And all-creative spirit of the Law,  
 Uncomprehended, comprehensive, blameless,  
 Invincible, resistless, with no flaw;  
 So full of love it must create forever,  
 Destroying that it may create again  
 Persistent and perfecting in endeavor,  
 It yet must bring forth angels, after men—  
 This, this remains.

[Pg 156]

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## LEAN DOWN.

Lean down and lift me higher, Josephine!  
 From the Eternal Hills hast thou not seen  
 How I do strive for heights? but lacking wings,  
 I cannot grasp at once those better things  
 To which I in my inmost soul aspire.  
 Lean down and lift me higher.

I grope along—not desolate or sad,  
 For youth and hope and health all keep me glad;  
 But too bright sunlight, sometimes, makes us blind,  
 And I do grope for heights I cannot find.  
 Oh, thou must know my one supreme desire—  
 Lean down and lift me higher.

Not long ago we trod the self-same way.  
 Thou knowest how, from day to fleeting day  
 Our souls were vexed with trifles, and our feet,  
 Were lured aside to by-paths which seemed sweet,  
 But only served to hinder and to tire;  
 Lean down and lift me higher.

Thou hast gone onward to the heights serene,  
 And left me here, my loved one, Josephine;  
 I am content to stay until the end,  
 For life is full of promise; but, my friend,  
 Canst thou not help me in my best desire  
 And lean, and lift me higher?

[Pg 157]

Frail as thou wert, thou hast grown strong and wise,

And quick to understand and sympathize  
With all a full soul's needs. It must be so,  
Thy year with God hath made thee great I know.  
Thou must see how I struggle and aspire—  
Oh, warm me with a breath of heavenly fire,  
And lean, and lift me higher.

---

## COMRADES.

I and my Soul are alone to-day,  
All in the shining weather;  
We were sick of the world, and we put it away,  
So we could rejoice together.

Our host, the Sun, in the blue, blue sky  
Is mixing a rare, sweet wine,  
In the burnished gold of his cup on high,  
For me, and this Soul of mine.

We find it a safe and royal drink,  
And a cure for every pain;  
It helps us to love, and helps us to think,  
And strengthens body and brain.

And sitting here, with my Soul alone,  
Where the yellow sun-rays fall,  
Of all the friends I have ever known  
I find it the *best* of all.

[Pg 158]

We rarely meet when the World is near,  
For the World hath a pleasing art  
And brings me so much that is bright and dear  
That my Soul it keepeth apart.

But when I grow weary of mirth and glee,  
Of glitter, and glow, and splendor,  
Like a tried old friend it comes to me,  
With a smile that is sad and tender.

And we walk together as two friends may,  
And laugh, and drink God's wine.  
Oh, a royal comrade any day  
I find this Soul of mine.

---

## WHAT GAIN?

Now, while thy rounded cheek is fresh and fair,  
While beauty lingers, laughing, in thine eyes,  
Ere thy young heart shall meet the stranger, "Care,"  
Or thy blithe soul become the home of sighs,  
Were it not kindness should I give thee rest  
By plunging this sharp dagger in thy breast?  
Dying so young, with all thy wealth of youth,  
What part of life wouldst thou not claim, in sooth?  
Only the woe,  
Sweetheart, that sad souls know.

Now, in this sacred hour of supreme trust,  
Of pure delight and palpitating joy,  
Ere change can come, as come it surely must,  
With jarring doubts and discords, to destroy  
Our far too perfect peace, I pray thee, Sweet,  
Were it not best for both of us, and meet,  
If I should bring swift death to seal our bliss?  
Dying so full of joy, what could we miss?  
Nothing but tears,  
Sweetheart, and weary years.

[Pg 159]

How slight the action! Just one well-aimed blow  
Here where I feel thy warm heart's pulsing beat,  
And then another through my own, and so  
Our perfect union would be made complete:  
So past all parting, I should claim thee mine.  
Dead with our youth, and faith, and love divine,  
Should we not keep the best of life that way?  
What shall we gain by living day on day?  
What shall we gain,  
Sweetheart, but bitter pain?

---

## LIFE.

I feel the great immensity of life.  
All little aims slip from me, and I reach  
My yearning soul toward the Infinite.

As when a mighty forest, whose green leaves  
Have shut it in, and made it seem a bower  
For lovers' secrets, or for children's sports,  
Casts all its clustering foliage to the winds,  
And lets the eye behold it, limitless,  
And full of winding mysteries of ways:  
So now with life that reaches out before,  
And borders on the unexplained Beyond.

[Pg 160]

I see the stars above me, world on world:  
I hear the awful language of all Space;  
I feel the distant surging of great seas,  
That hide the secrets of the Universe  
In their eternal bosoms; and I know  
That I am but an atom of the Whole.

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## TO THE WEST.

[In an interview with Lawrence Barrett, he said: "The literature of the New World must look to the West for its poetry."]

Not to the crowded East,  
Where, in a well-worn groove,  
Like the harnessed wheel of a great machine,  
The trammeled mind must move—  
Where Thought must follow the fashion of Thought,  
Or be counted vulgar and set at naught.

Not to the languid South,  
Where the mariners of the brain  
Are lured by the Sirens of the Sense,  
And wrecked upon its main—  
Where Thought is rocked, on the sweet wind's breath,  
To a torpid sleep that ends in death.

But to the mighty West,  
That chosen realm of God,  
Where Nature reaches her hands to men,  
And Freedom walks abroad—  
Where mind is King, and fashion is naught:  
There shall the New World look for thought.

[Pg 161]

To the West, the beautiful West,  
She shall look, and not in vain—  
For out of its broad and boundless store  
Come muscle, and nerve, and brain.  
Let the bards of the East and the South be dumb—  
For out of the West shall the Poets come.

They shall come with souls as great  
As the cradle where they were rocked;  
They shall come with brows that are touched with fire,

Like the Gods with whom they have walked;  
They shall come from the West in royal state,  
The Singers and Thinkers for whom we wait.

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## THE LAND OF CONTENT.

I set out for the Land of Content,  
By the gay crowded pleasure-highway,  
With laughter, and jesting, I went  
With the mirth-loving throng for a day;  
Then I knew I had wandered astray,  
For I met returned pilgrims, belated,  
Who said, "We are weary and sated,  
But we found not the Land of Content."

I turned to the steep path of fame,  
I said, "It is over yon height—  
This land with the beautiful name—  
Ambition will lend me its light."  
But I paused in my journey ere night,  
For the way grew so lonely and troubled;  
I said—my anxiety doubled—  
"This is not the road to Content."

[Pg 162]

Then I joined the great rabble and throng  
That frequents the moneyed world's mart;  
But the greed, and the grasping and wrong,  
Left me only one wish—to depart.  
And sickened, and saddened at heart,  
I hurried away from the gateway,  
For my soul and my spirit said straightway,  
"This is not the road to Content."

Then weary in body and brain,  
An overgrown path I detected,  
And I said "I will hide with my pain  
In this by-way, unused and neglected."  
Lo! it led to the realm God selected  
To crown with his best gifts of beauty,  
And through the dark pathway of duty  
I came to the land of Content.

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## A SONG OF LIFE.

[Pg 163]

In the rapture of life and of living,  
I lift up my heart and rejoice,  
And I thank the great Giver for giving  
The soul of my gladness a voice.  
In the glow of the glorious weather,  
In the sweet-scented sensuous air,  
My burdens seem light as a feather—  
They are nothing to bear.

In the strength and the glory of power,  
In the pride and the pleasure of wealth,  
(For who dares dispute me my dower  
Of talents and youth-time and health?)  
I can laugh at the world and its sages—  
I am greater than seers who are sad,  
For he is most wise in all ages  
Who knows how to be glad.

I lift up my eyes to Apollo,  
The god of the beautiful days,  
And my spirit soars off like a swallow  
And is lost in the light of its rays.  
Are you troubled and sad? I beseech you  
Come out of the shadows of strife—

Come out in the sun while I teach you  
The secret of life.

Come out of the world—come above it—  
Up over its crosses and graves,  
Though the green earth is fair and I love it,  
We must love it as masters, not slaves.  
Come up where the dust never rises—  
But only the perfume of flowers—  
And your life shall be glad with surprises  
Of beautiful hours.  
Come up where the rare golden wine is  
Apollo distills in my sight,  
And your life shall be happy as mine is,  
And as full of delight.

[Pg 164]

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## WARNING.

High in the heavens I saw the moon this morning,  
Albeit the sun shone bright;  
Unto my soul it spoke, in voice of warning,  
"Remember Night!"

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## THE CHRISTIAN'S NEW YEAR PRAYER.

Thou Christ of mine, thy gracious ear low bending  
Through these glad New Year days,  
To catch the countless prayers to Heaven ascending—  
For e'en hard hearts do raise  
Some secret wish for fame, or gold, or power,  
Or freedom from all care—  
Dear, patient Christ, who listeneth hour on hour,  
Hear now a Christian's prayer.

Let this young year that, silent, walks beside me,  
Be as a means of grace  
To lead me up, no matter what betide me,  
Nearer the Master's face.  
If it need be that ere I reach the fountain  
Where Living waters play,  
My feet should bleed from sharp stones on the mountain,  
Then cast them in my way.

[Pg 165]

If my vain soul needs blows and bitter losses  
To shape it for thy crown,  
Then bruise it, burn it, burden it with crosses,  
With sorrows bear it down.  
Do what thou wilt to mold me to thy pleasure,  
And if I should complain,  
Heap full of anguish yet another measure  
Until I smile at pain.  
Send dangers—deaths! but tell me how to dare them;  
Enfold me in thy care.  
Send trials, tears! but give me strength to bear them—  
This is a Christian's prayer.

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## IN THE NIGHT.

[Pg 166]

Sometimes at night, when I sit and write,  
I hear the strangest things,—  
As my brain grows hot with burning thought,  
That struggles for form and wings,  
I can hear the beat of my swift blood's feet,  
As it speeds with a rush and a whir  
From heart to brain and back again,

Like a race-horse under the spur.

With my soul's fine ear I listen and hear  
The tender Silence speak,  
As it leans on the breast of Night to rest,  
And presses his dusky cheek.  
And the darkness turns in its sleep, and yearns  
For something that is kin;  
And I hear the hiss of a scorching kiss,  
As it folds and fondles Sin.

In its hurrying race through leagues of space,  
I can hear the Earth catch breath,  
As it heaves and moans, and shudders and groans,  
And longs for the rest of Death.  
And high and far, from a distant star,  
Whose name is unknown to me,  
I hear a voice that says, "Rejoice,  
For I keep ward o'er thee!"

Oh, sweet and strange are the sounds that range  
Through the chambers of the night;  
And the watcher who waits by the dim, dark gates,  
May hear, if he lists aright.

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## **GOD'S MEASURE.**

God measures souls by their capacity  
For entertaining his best Angel, Love.  
Who loveth most is nearest kin to God,  
Who is all Love, or Nothing.  
He who sits  
And looks out on the palpitating world,  
And feels his heart swell in him large enough  
To hold all men within it, he is near  
His great Creator's standard, though he dwells  
Outside the pale of churches, and knows not  
A feast-day from a fast-day, or a line  
Of Scripture even. What God wants of us  
Is that outreaching bigness that ignores  
All littleness of aims, or loves, or creeds,  
And clasps all Earth and Heaven in its embrace.

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## **A MARCH SNOW.**

Let the old snow be covered with the new:  
The trampled snow, so soiled, and stained, and sodden.  
Let it be hidden wholly from our view  
By pure white flakes, all trackless and untrodden.  
When Winter dies, low at the sweet Spring's feet,  
Let him be mantled in a clean, white sheet.

Let the old life be covered by the new:  
The old past life so full of sad mistakes,  
Let it be wholly hidden from the view  
By deeds as white and silent as snow-flakes.  
Ere this earth life melts in the eternal Spring  
Let the white mantle of repentance, fling  
Soft drapery about it, fold on fold,  
Even as the new snow covers up the old.

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## **AFTER THE BATTLES ARE OVER.**

[Read at Re-union of the G. A. T., Madison, Wis., July 4, 1872.]

After the battles are over,  
And the war drums cease to beat,  
And no more is heard on the hillside  
The sound of hurrying feet,  
Full many a noble action,  
That was done in the days of strife,  
By the soldier is half forgotten,  
In the peaceful walks of life.

Just as the tangled grasses,  
In Summer's warmth and light,  
Grow over the graves of the fallen  
And hide them away from sight,  
So many an act of valor,  
And many a deed sublime,  
Fade from the mind of the soldier,  
O'ergrown by the grass of time.

Not so should they be rewarded,  
Those noble deeds of old;  
They should live forever and ever,  
When the heroes' hearts are cold.  
Then rally, ye brave old comrades,  
Old veterans, re-unite!  
Uproot Time's tangled grasses—  
Live over the march, and the fight.

[Pg 169]

Let Grant come up from the White House,  
And clasp each brother's hand,  
First chieftain of the army,  
Last chieftain of the land.  
Let him rest from a nation's burdens,  
And go, in thought, with his men,  
Through the fire and smoke of Shiloh,  
And save the day again.

This silent hero of battles  
Knew no such word as defeat.  
It was left for the rebels' learning,  
Along with the word—retreat.  
He was not given to talking,  
But he found that guns would preach  
In a way that was more convincing  
Than fine and flowery speech.

Three cheers for the grave commander  
Of the grand old Tennessee!  
Who won the first great battle—  
Gained the first great victory.  
His motto was always "Conquer,"  
"Success" was his countersign,  
And "though it took all Summer,"  
He kept fighting upon "that line."

[Pg 170]

Let Sherman, the stern old General,  
Come rallying with his men;  
Let them march once more through Georgia  
And down to the sea again.  
Oh! that grand old tramp to Savannah,  
Three hundred miles to the coast,  
It will live in the heart of the nation,  
Forever its pride and boast.

As Sheridan went to the battle,  
When a score of miles away,  
He has come to the feast and banquet,  
By the iron horse, to-day.  
Its pace is not much swifter  
Than the pace of that famous steed  
Which bore him down to the contest  
And saved the day by his speed.

Then go over the ground to-day, boys,  
Tread each remembered spot.  
It will be a gleesome journey,

On the swift-shod feet of thought;  
You can fight a bloodless battle,  
You can skirmish along the route,  
But it's not worth while to forage,  
There are rations enough without.

Don't start if you hear the cannon,  
It is not the sound of doom,  
It does not call to the contest—  
To the battle's smoke and gloom.  
"Let us have peace," was spoken,  
And lo! peace ruled again;  
And now the nation is shouting,  
Through the cannon's voice, "Amen."

[Pg 171]

O boys who besieged old Vicksburg,  
Can time e'er wash away  
The triumph of her surrender,  
Nine years ago to-day?  
Can you ever forget the moment,  
When you saw the flag of white,  
That told how the grim old city  
Had fallen in her might?

Ah, 'twas a bold brave army,  
When the boys, with a right good will,  
Went gayly marching and singing  
To the fight at Champion Hill.  
They met with a warm reception,  
But the soul of "Old John Brown"  
Was abroad on that field of battle,  
And our flag did NOT go down.

Come, heroes of Look Out Mountain,  
Of Corinth and Donelson,  
Of Kenesaw and Atlanta,  
And tell how the day was won!  
Hush! bow the head for a moment—  
There are those who cannot come.  
No bugle-call can arouse them—  
No sound of fife or drum.

[Pg 172]

Oh, boys who died for the country,  
Oh, dear and sainted dead!  
What can we say about you  
That has not once been said?  
Whether you fell in the contest,  
Struck down by shot and shell,  
Or pined 'neath the hand of sickness  
Or starved in the prison cell,

We know that you died for Freedom,  
To save our land from shame,  
To rescue a periled Nation,  
And we give you deathless fame.  
'T was the cause of Truth and Justice  
That you fought and perished for,  
And we say it, oh, so gently,  
"Our boys who died in the war."

Saviors of our Republic,  
Heroes who wore the blue,  
We owe the peace that surrounds us—  
And our Nation's strength to you.  
We owe it to you that our banner,  
The fairest flag in the world,  
Is to-day unstained, unsullied,  
On the Summer air unfurled.

We look on its stripes and spangles,  
And our hearts are filled the while  
With love for the brave commanders,  
And the boys of the rank and file.  
The grandest deeds of valor  
Were never written out,

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The noblest acts of virtue  
The world knows nothing about.

And many a private soldier,  
Who walks his humble way,  
With no sounding name or title,  
Unknown to the world to-day,  
In the eyes of God is a hero  
As worthy of the bays,  
As any mighty General  
To whom the world gives praise.

Brave men of a mighty army,  
We extend you friendship's hand!  
I speak for the "Loyal Women,"  
Those pillars of our land.  
We wish you a hearty welcome,  
We are proud that you gather here  
To talk of old times together  
On this brightest day in the year.

And if Peace, whose snow-white pinions,  
Brood over our land to-day,  
Should ever again go from us,  
(God grant she may ever stay!)  
Should our Nation call in her peril  
For "Six hundred thousand more,"  
The loyal women would hear her,  
And send you out as before.

[Pg 174]

We would bring out the treasured knapsack,  
We would take the sword from the wall,  
And hushing our own hearts' pleadings,  
Hear only the country's call.  
For next to our God, is our Nation;  
And we cherish the honored name,  
Of the bravest of all brave armies  
Who fought for that Nation's fame.

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## **NOBLESSE OBLIGE.**

I hold it the duty of one who is gifted,  
And specially dowered in all men's sight,  
To know no rest till his life is lifted  
Fully up to his great gifts' height.

He must mold the man into rare completeness,  
For gems are set only in gold refined.  
He must fashion his thoughts into perfect sweetness,  
And cast out folly and pride from his mind.

For he who drinks from a god's gold fountain  
Of art or music or rhythmic song  
Must sift from his soul the chaff of malice,  
And weed from his heart the roots of wrong.

Great gifts should be worn, like a crown befitting!  
And not like gems in a beggar's hands.  
And the toil must be constant and unremitting  
Which lifts up the king to the crown's demands.

[Pg 175]

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## **AND THEY ARE DUMB.**

I have been across the bridges of the years.  
Wet with tears  
Were the ties on which I trod, going back  
Down the track  
To the valley where I left, 'neath skies of Truth,

My lost youth.

As I went, I dropped my burdens, one and all—  
Let them fall;  
All my sorrows, all my wrinkles, all my care,  
My white hair,  
I laid down, like some lone pilgrim's heavy pack,  
By the track.

As I neared the happy valley with light feet,  
My heart beat  
To the rhythm of a song I used to know  
Long ago,  
And my spirits gushed and bubbled like a fountain  
Down a mountain.

On the border of that valley I found you,  
Tried and true;  
And we wandered through the golden Summer-Land  
Hand in hand.  
And my pulses beat with rapture in the blisses  
Of your kisses.

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And we met there, in those green and verdant places,  
Smiling faces,  
And sweet laughter echoed upward from the dells  
Like gold bells.  
And the world was spilling over with the glory  
Of Youth's story.

It was but a dreamer's journey of the brain;  
And again  
I have left the happy valley far behind;  
And I find  
Time stands waiting with his burdens in a pack  
For my back.

As he speeds me, like a rough, well-meaning friend,  
To the end,  
Will I find again the lost ones loved so well?  
Who can tell!  
But the dead know what the life will be to come—  
And they are dumb!

---

## NIGHT.

[Pg 177]

As some dusk mother shields from all alarms  
The tired child she gathers to her breast,  
The brunette Night doth fold me in her arms,  
And hushes me to perfect peace and rest.  
Her eyes of stars shine on me, and I hear  
Her voice of winds low crooning on my ear.  
O Night, O Night, how beautiful thou art!  
Come, fold me closer to thy pulsing heart.

The day is full of gladness, and the light  
So beautifies the common outer things,  
I only see with my external sight,  
And only hear the great world's voice which rings  
But silently from daylight and from din  
The sweet Night draws me—whispers, "Look within!"  
And looking, as one wakened from a dream,  
I see what *is*—no longer what doth seem.

The Night says, "Listen!" and upon my ear  
Revealed, as are the visions to my sight,  
The voices known as "Beautiful" come near  
And whisper of the vastly Infinite.  
Great, blue-eyed Truth, her sister Purity,  
Their brother Honor, all converse with me,  
And kiss my brow, and say, "Be brave of heart!"

O holy three! how beautiful thou art!

The Night says, "Child, sleep that thou may'st arise  
Strong for to-morrow's struggle." And I feel  
Her shadowy fingers pressing on my eyes:  
Like thistledown I float to the Ideal—  
The Slumberland, made beautiful and bright  
As death, by dreams of loved ones gone from sight,  
O food for soul's, sweet dreams of pure delight,  
How beautiful the holy hours of Night!

[Pg 178]

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## ALL FOR ME.

The world grows green on a thousand hills—  
By a thousand willows the bees are humming,  
And a million birds by a million rills,  
Sing of the golden season coming.  
But, gazing out on the sun-kist lea,  
And hearing a thrush and a blue-bird singing,  
I feel that the Summer is all for me,  
And all for me are the joys it is bringing.

All for me the bumble-bee  
Drones his song in the perfect weather;  
And, just on purpose to sing to me,  
Thrush and blue-bird came North together.  
Just for me, in red and white,  
Bloom and blossom the fields of clover;  
And all for me and my delight  
The wild Wind follows and plays the lover.

The mighty sun, with a scorching kiss  
(I have read, and heard, and do not doubt it)  
Has burned up a thousand worlds like this,  
And never stopped to think about it.  
And yet I believe he hurries up  
Just on purpose to kiss my flowers—  
To drink the dew from the lily-cup,  
And help it to grow through golden hours.

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I know I am only a speck of dust,  
An individual mite of masses,  
Clinging upon the outer crust  
Of a little ball of cooling gases.  
And yet, and yet, say what you will,  
And laugh, if you please, at my lack of reason,  
For me wholly, and for me still,  
Blooms and blossoms the Summer season.

Nobody else has ever heard  
The story the Wind to me discloses;  
And none but I and the humming-bird  
Can read the hearts of the crimson roses.  
Ah, my Summer—my love—my own!  
The world grows glad in your smiling weather;  
Yet all for me, and me alone,  
You and your Court came north together.

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## PHILOSOPHY.

At morn the wise man walked abroad,  
Proud with the learning of great fools.  
He laughed and said, "There is no God—  
'Tis force creates, 'tis reason rules."

Meek with the wisdom of great faith,  
At night he knelt while angels smiled,  
And wept and cried with anguished breath,

[Pg 180]

## "CARLOS."

Last night I knelt low at my lady's feet.  
One soft, caressing hand played with my hair,  
And one I kissed and fondled. Kneeling there,  
I deemed my meed of happiness complete.

She was so fair, so full of witching wiles—  
Of fascinating tricks of mouth and eye;  
So womanly withal, but not too shy—  
And all my heaven was compassed by her smiles.

Her soft touch on my cheek and forehead sent,  
Like little arrows, thrills of tenderness  
Through all my frame. I trembled with excess  
Of love, and sighed the sigh of great content.

When any mortal dares to so rejoice,  
I think a jealous Heaven, bending low,  
Reaches a stern hand forth and deals a blow.  
Sweet through the dusk I heard my lady's voice.

"My love!" she sighed, "My Carlos!" even now  
I feel the perfumed zephyr of her breath  
Bearing to me those words of living death,  
And starting out the cold drops on my brow.

For I am *Paul*—not Carlos! Who is he  
That, in the supreme hour of love's delight,  
Veiled by the shadows of the falling night,  
She should breathe low his name, forgetting me?

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I will not ask her! 'twere a fruitless task,  
For, woman-like, she would make me believe  
Some well-told tale; and sigh, and seem to grieve,  
And call me cruel. Nay, I will not ask.

But this man Carlos, whosoe'er he be,  
Has turned my cup of nectar into gall,  
Since I know he has claimed some one or all  
Of these delights my lady grants to me.

He must have knelt and kissed her, in some sad  
And tender twilight, when the day grew dim.  
How else could I remind her so of him?  
Why, reveries like these have made men mad!

He must have felt her soft hand on his brow.  
If Heaven was shocked at such presumptuous wrongs,  
And plunged him in the grave, where he belongs,  
*Still she remembers*, though she loves me now.

And if he lives, and meets me to his cost,  
Why, what avails it? I must hear and see  
That curst name "Carlos" always haunting me—  
So has another Paradise been lost.

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## THE TWO GLASSES.

[Pg 182]

There sat two glasses filled to the brim,  
On a rich man's table, rim to rim.  
One was ruddy and red as blood,  
And one was clear as the crystal flood.

Said the glass of wine to his paler brother,  
"Let us tell tales of the past to each other;

[Pg 183]

I can tell of a banquet, and revel, and mirth,  
Where I was king, for I ruled in might;  
For the proudest and grandest souls on earth  
Fell under my touch, as though struck with blight.  
From the heads of kings I have torn the crown;  
From the heights of fame I have hurled men down.  
I have blasted many an honored name;  
I have taken virtue and given shame;  
I have tempted the youth with a sip, a taste,  
That has made his future a barren waste.  
Far greater than any king am I,  
Or than any army beneath the sky.  
I have made the arm of the driver fail,  
And sent the train from the iron rail.  
I have made good ships go down at sea,  
And the shrieks of the lost were sweet to me.  
Fame, strength, wealth, genius before me fall;  
And my might and power are over all!  
Ho, ho! pale brother," said the wine,  
"Can you boast of deeds as great as mine?"

Said the water-glass: "I cannot boast  
Of a king dethroned, or a murdered host,  
But I can tell of hearts that were sad  
By my crystal drops made bright and glad;  
Of thirsts I have quenched, and brows I have laved;  
Of hands I have cooled, and souls I have saved.  
I have leaped through the valley, dashed down the mountain,  
Slept in the sunshine, and dripped from the fountain.  
I have burst my cloud-fetters, and dropped from the sky.  
And everywhere gladdened the prospect and eye;  
I have eased the hot forehead of fever and pain;  
I have made the parched meadows grow fertile with grain.  
I can tell of the powerful wheel of the mill,  
That ground out the flour, and turned at my will.  
I can tell of manhood debased by you,  
That I have uplifted and crowned anew  
I cheer, I help, I strengthen and aid;  
I gladden the heart of man and maid;  
I set the wine-chained captive free,  
And all are better for knowing me."

These are the tales they told each other,  
The glass of wine and its paler brother,  
As they sat together, filled to the brim,  
On a rich man's table, rim to rim.

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## THROUGH TEARS.

[Pg 184]

An artist toiled over his pictures;  
He labored by night and by day.  
He struggled for glory and honor,  
But the world, it had nothing to say.  
His walls were ablaze with the splendors  
We see in the beautiful skies;  
But the world beheld only the colors  
That were made out of chemical dyes.

Time sped. And he lived, loved, and suffered;  
He passed through the valley of grief.  
Again he toiled over his canvas,  
Since in labor alone was relief.  
It showed not the splendor of colors  
Of those of his earlier years,  
But the world? the world bowed down before it,  
Because it was painted with tears.

A poet was gifted with genius,  
And he sang, and he sang all the days.  
He wrote for the praise of the people,  
But the people accorded no praise.

Oh, his songs were as blithe as the morning,  
As sweet as the music of birds;  
But the world had no homage to offer,  
Because they were nothing but words.

Time sped. And the poet through sorrow  
Became like his suffering kind.  
Again he toiled over his poems  
To lighten the grief of his mind.  
They were not so flowing and rhythmic  
As those of his earlier years,  
But the world? lo! it offered its homage  
Because they were written in tears.

So ever the price must be given  
By those seeking glory in art;  
So ever the world is repaying  
The grief-stricken, suffering heart.  
The happy must ever be humble;  
Ambition must wait for the years,  
Ere hoping to win the approval  
Of a world that looks on through its tears.

[Pg 185]

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## INTO SPACE.

If the sad old world should jump a cog  
Sometime, in its dizzy spinning,  
And go off the track with a sudden jog,  
What an end would come to the sinning.  
What a rest from strife and the burdens of life  
For the millions of people in it,  
What a way out of care, and worry and wear,  
All in a beautiful minute.

As 'round the sun with a curving sweep  
It hurries and runs and races,  
Should it lose its balance, and go with a leap  
Into the vast sea-spaces,  
What a blest relief it would bring to the grief,  
And the trouble and toil about us,  
To be suddenly hurled from the solar world  
And let it go on without us.

With not a sigh or a sad good-by  
For loved ones left behind us,  
We would go with a lunge and a mighty plunge  
Where never a grave should find us.  
What a wild mad thrill our veins would fill  
As the great earth, life a feather,  
Should float through the air to God knows where,  
And carry us all together.

No dark, damp tomb and no mourner's gloom,  
No tolling bell in the steeple,  
But in one swift breath a painless death  
For a million billion people.  
What greater bliss could we ask than this,  
To sweep with a bird's free motion  
Through leagues of space to a resting place,  
In a vast and vapory ocean—  
To pass away from this life for aye  
With never a dear tie sundered,  
And a world on fire for a funeral pyre,  
While the stars looked on and wondered?

[Pg 186]

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## THROUGH DIM EYES.

Is it the world, or my eyes, that are sadder?

[Pg 187]

I see not the grace that I used to see  
In the meadow-brook whose song was so glad, or  
In the boughs of the willow tree.  
The brook runs slower—its song seems lower,  
And not the song that it sang of old;  
And the tree I admired looks weary and tired  
Of the changeless story of heat and cold.

When the sun goes up, and the stars go under,  
In that supreme hour of the breaking day,  
Is it my eyes, or the dawn I wonder,  
That finds less of the gold, and more of the gray?  
I see not the splendor, the tints so tender,  
The rose-hued glory I used to see;  
And I often borrow a vague half-sorrow  
That another morning has dawned for me.

When the royal smile of that welcome comer  
Beams on the meadow and burns in the sky,  
Is it my eyes, or does the Summer  
Bring less of bloom than in days gone by?  
The beauty that thrilled me, the rapture that filled me,  
To an overflowing of happy tears,  
I pass unseeing, my sad eyes being  
Dimmed by the shadow of vanished years.

When the heart grows weary, all things seem dreary;  
When the burden grows heavy, the way seems long.  
Thank God for sending kind death as an ending,  
Like a grand Amen to a minor song.

[Pg 188]

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## LA MORT D'AMOUR.

When was it that love died? We were so fond,  
So very fond, a little while ago.  
With leaping pulses, and blood all aglow,  
We dreamed about a sweeter life beyond,

When we should dwell together as one heart,  
And scarce could wait that happy time to come.  
Now side by side we sit with lips quite dumb,  
And feel ourselves a thousand miles apart.

How was it that love died! I do not know.  
I only know that all its grace untold  
Has faded into gray! I miss the gold  
From our dull skies; but did not see it go.

Why should love die? We prized it, I am sure;  
We thought of nothing else when it was ours;  
We cherished it in smiling, sunlit bowers;  
It was our all; why could it not endure?

Alas, we know not how, or when or why  
This dear thing died. We only know it went,  
And left us dull, cold, and indifferent;  
We who found heaven once in each other's sigh.

How pitiful it is, and yet how true  
That half the lovers in the world, one day,  
Look questioning in each other's eyes this way  
And know love's gone forever, as we do.

[Pg 189]

Sometimes I cannot help but think, dear heart,  
As I look out o'er all the wide, sad earth  
And see love's flame gone out on many a hearth,  
That those who would keep love must dwell apart.

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## THE PUNISHED.

Not they who know the awful gibbet's anguish,  
Not they who, while sad years go by them, in  
The sunless cells of lonely prisons languish,  
Do suffer fullest penalty for sin.

'Tis they who walk the highways unsuspected  
Yet with grim fear forever at their side,  
Who hug the corpse of some sin undetected,  
A corpse no grave or coffin-lid can hide—

'Tis they who are in their own chambers haunted  
By thoughts that like unbidden guests intrude,  
And sit down, uninvited and unwanted,  
And make a nightmare of the solitude.

---

## HALF FLEDGED.

[Pg 190]

I feel the stirrings in me of great things.  
New half-fledged thoughts rise up and beat their wings,  
And tremble on the margin of their nest,  
Then flutter back, and hide within my breast.

Beholding space, they doubt their untried strength.  
Beholding men, they fear them. But at length  
Grown all too great and active for the heart  
That broods them with such tender mother art,  
Forgetting fear, and men, and all, that hour,  
Save the impelling consciousness of power  
That stirs within them—they shall soar away  
Up to the very portals of the Day.

Oh, what exultant rapture thrills me through  
When I contemplate all those thoughts may do;  
Like snow-white eagles penetrating space,  
They may explore full many an unknown place,  
And build their nests on mountain heights unseen,  
Whereon doth lie that dreamed-of rest serene.

Stay thou a little longer in my breast,  
Till my fond heart shall push thee from the nest,  
Anxious to see thee soar to heights divine—  
Oh, beautiful but half-fledged thoughts of mine.

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## LOVE'S SLEEP.

[Pg 191]

(Vers de Société.)

We'll cover Love with roses,  
And sweet sleep he shall take.  
None but a fool supposes  
Love always keeps awake.  
I've known loves without number.  
True loves were they, and tried;  
And just for want of slumber  
They pined away and died.

Our love was bright and cheerful  
A little while agone;  
Now he is pale and tearful,  
And—yes, I've seen him yawn.  
So tired is he of kisses  
That he can only weep;  
The one dear thing he misses  
And longs for now is sleep.

We could not let him leave us



One time, he was so dear,  
But now it would not grieve us  
If he slept half a year.  
For he has had his season,  
Like the lily and the rose,  
And it but stands to reason  
That he should want repose.

We prized the smiling Cupid  
Who made our days so bright;  
But he has grown so stupid  
We gladly say good-night.  
And if he wakens tender  
And fond, and fair as when  
He filled our lives with splendor,  
We'll take him back again.

And should he never waken,  
As that perchance may be,  
We will not weep forsaken,  
But sing, "Love, tra-la-lee!"

[Pg 192]

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## TRUE CULTURE.

The highest culture is to speak no ill;  
The best reformer is the man whose eyes  
Are quick to see all beauty and all worth;  
And by his own discreet, well-ordered life,  
Alone reproves the erring.

When they gaze  
Turns it on thine own soul, be most severe.  
But when it falls upon a fellow-man  
Let kindness control it; and refrain  
From that belittling censure that springs forth  
From common lips like weeds from marshy soil.

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## THE VOLUPTUARY.

Oh, I am sick of love reciprocated,  
Of hopes fulfilled, ambitions gratified.  
Life holds no thing to be anticipated,  
And I am sad from being satisfied.

The eager joy felt climbing up the mountain  
Has left me now the highest point is gained.  
The crystal spray that fell from Fame's fair fountain  
Was sweeter than the waters were when drained.

The gilded apple which the world calls pleasure,  
And which I purchased with my youth and strength,  
Pleased me a moment. But the empty treasure  
Lost all its lustre, and grew dim at length.

And love, all glowing with a golden glory,  
Delighted me a season with its tale.  
It pleased the longest, but at last the story  
So oft repeated, to my heart grew stale.

I lived for self, and all I asked was given,  
I have had all, and now am sick of bliss,  
No other punishment designed by Heaven  
Could strike me half so forcibly as this.

I feel no sense of aught but enervation  
In all the joys my selfish aims have brought,  
And know no wish but for annihilation,  
Since that would give me freedom from the thought.

[Pg 193]

Oh, blest is he who has some aim defeated;  
 Some mighty loss to balance all his gain.  
 For him there is a hope not yet completed;  
 For him hath life yet draughts of joy and pain.

But cursed is he who has no balked ambition,  
 No hopeless hope, no loss beyond repair,  
 But sick and sated with complete fruition,  
 Keeps not the pleasure even of despair.

## THE YEAR.

What can be said in New Year rhymes,  
 That's not been said a thousand times?

The new years come, the old years go,  
 We know we dream, we dream we know.

We rise up laughing with the light,  
 We lie down weeping with the night.

We hug the world until it stings,  
 We curse it then and sigh for wings.

We live, we love, we woo, we wed,  
 We wreath our brides, we sheet our dead.

We laugh, we weep, we hope, we fear,  
 And that's the burden of the year.

## THE UNATTAINED.

A vision beauteous as the morn,  
 With heavenly eyes and tresses streaming,  
 Slow glided o'er a field late shorn  
 Where walked a poet idly dreaming.  
 He saw her, and joy lit his face,  
 "Oh, vanish not at human speaking,"  
 He cried, "thou form of magic grace,  
 Thou art the poem I am seeking.

"I've sought thee long! I claim thee now—  
 My thought embodied, living, real."  
 She shook the tresses from her brow.  
 "Nay, nay!" she said, "I am ideal.  
 I am the phantom of desire—  
 The spirit of all great endeavor,  
 I am the voice that says, 'Come higher,'  
 That calls men up and up forever.

"'Tis not alone thy thought supreme  
 That here upon thy path has risen;  
 I am the artist's highest dream,  
 The ray of light he cannot prison.  
 I am the sweet ecstatic note  
 Than all glad music gladder, clearer,  
 That trembles in the singer's throat,  
 And dies without a human hearer.

"I am the greater, better yield,  
 That leads and cheers thy farmer neighbor,  
 For me he bravely tills the field  
 And whistles gayly at his labor.  
 Not thou alone, O poet soul,  
 Dost seek me through an endless morrow,  
 But to the toiling, hoping whole  
 I am at once the hope and sorrow.

The spirit of the unattained,  
I am to those who seek to name me,  
A good desired but never gained.  
All shall pursue, but none shall claim me."

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## IN THE CROWD.

How happy they are, in all seeming,  
How gay, or how smilingly proud,  
How brightly their faces are beaming,  
These people who make up the crowd.  
How they bow, how they bend, how they flutter,  
How they look at each other and smile,  
How they glow, and what *bon mots* they utter!  
But a strange thought has found me the while!

It is odd, but I stand here and fancy  
These people who now play a part,  
All forced by some strange necromancy  
To speak, and to act, from the heart.  
What a hush would come over the laughter!  
What a silence would fall on the mirth!  
And then what a wail would sweep after,  
As the night-wind sweeps over the earth.

[Pg 197]

If the secrets held under and hidden  
In the intricate hearts of the crowd,  
Were suddenly called to, and bidden  
To rise up and cry out aloud,  
How strange one would look to another!  
Old friends of long standing and years—  
Own brothers would not know each other,  
Robed new in their sorrows and fears.

From broadcloth, and velvet, and laces,  
Would echo the groans of despair,  
And there would be blanching of faces  
And wringing of hands and of hair.  
That man with his record of honor,  
That lady down there with the rose,  
That girl with Spring's freshness upon her,  
Who knoweth the secrets of those?

Smile on, O ye maskers, smile sweetly!  
Step lightly, bow low and laugh loud!  
Though the world is deceived and completely,  
I know ye, O sad-hearted crowd!  
I watch you with infinite pity:  
But play on, play ever your part,  
Be gleeful, be joyful, be witty!  
'Tis better than showing the heart.

---

## LIFE AND I.

[Pg 198]

Life and I are lovers, straying  
Arm in arm along;  
Often like two children Maying,  
Full of mirth and song.

Life plucks all the blooming hours  
Growing by the way;  
Binds them on my brow like flowers;  
Calls me Queen of May.

Then again, in rainy weather,  
We sit vis-a-vis,  
Planning work we'll do together  
In the years to be.

Sometimes Life denies me blisses,  
And I frown or pout;  
But we make it up with kisses  
Ere the day is out.

Woman-like, I sometimes grieve him,  
Try his trust and faith,  
Saying I shall one day leave him  
For his rival Death.

Then he always grows more zealous,  
Tender, and more true;  
Loves the more for being jealous,  
As all lovers do.

Though I swear by stars above him,  
And by worlds beyond,  
That I love him—love him—love him;  
Though my heart is fond;

Though he gives me, doth my lover,  
Kisses with each breath—  
I shall one day throw him over,  
And plight troth with Death.

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## GUERDON.

Upon the white cheek of the Cherub Year  
I saw a tear.  
Alas! I murmured, that the Year should borrow  
So soon a sorrow.  
Just then the sunlight fell with sudden flame:  
The tear became  
A wond'rous diamond sparkling in the light—  
A beauteous sight.

Upon my soul there fell such woeful loss,  
I said, "The Cross  
Is grievous for a life as young as mine."  
Just then, like wine,  
God's sunlight shone from His high Heavens down;  
And lo! a crown  
Gleamed in the place of what I thought a burden—  
My sorrow's guerdon.

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## SNOWED UNDER.

[Pg 200]

Of a thousand things that the Year snowed under—  
The busy Old Year who has gone away—  
How many will rise in the Spring, I wonder,  
Brought to life by the sun of May?  
Will the rose-tree branches, so wholly hidden  
That never a rose-tree seems to be,  
At the sweet Spring's call come forth unbidden,  
And bud in beauty, and bloom for me?

Will the fair, green Earth, whose throbbing bosom  
Is hid like a maid's in her gown at night,  
Wake out of her sleep, and with blade and blossom  
Gem her garments to please my sight?  
Over the knoll in the valley yonder  
The loveliest buttercups bloomed and grew;  
When the snow has gone that drifted them under,  
Will they shoot up sunward, and bloom anew?

When wild winds blew, and a sleet-storm pelted,  
I lost a jewel of priceless worth;

If I walk that way when snows have melted,  
Will the gem gleam up from the bare, brown Earth?  
I laid a love that was dead or dying,  
For the year to bury and hide from sight;  
But out of a trance will it waken, crying,  
And push to my heart, like a leaf to the light?

Under the snow lie things so cherished—  
Hopes, ambitions, and dreams of men—  
Faces that vanished, and trusts that perished,  
Never to sparkle and glow again.  
The Old Year greedily grasped his plunder,  
And covered it over and hurried away:  
Of the thousand things that he did, I wonder  
How many will rise at the call of May?  
O wise Young Year, with your hands held under  
Your mantle of ermine, tell me, pray!

[Pg 201]

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## PLATONIC.

I knew it the first of the Summer—  
I knew it the same at the end—  
That you and your love were plighted,  
But couldn't you be my friend?  
Couldn't we sit in the twilight,  
Couldn't we walk on the shore,  
With only a pleasant friendship  
To bind us, and nothing more?

There was never a word of nonsense  
Spoken between us two,  
Though we lingered oft in the garden  
Till the roses were wet with dew.  
We touched on a thousand subjects—  
The moon and the stars above;  
But our talk was tintured with science,  
With never a hint of love.

"A wholly platonic friendship,"  
You said I had proved to you,  
"Could bind a man and a woman  
The whole long season through,  
With never a thought of folly,  
Though both are in their youth."  
What would you have said, my lady,  
If you had known the truth?

[Pg 202]

Had I done what my mad heart prompted—  
Gone down on my knees to you,  
And told you my passionate story  
There in the dusk and dew;  
My burning, burdensome story,  
Hidden and hushed so long,  
My story of hopeless loving—  
Say, would you have thought it wrong?

But I fought with my heart and conquered:  
I hid my wound from sight;  
You were going away in the morning  
And I said a calm good-night.  
But now, when I sit in the twilight  
Or when I walk by the sea,  
That friendship quite "platonic"  
Comes surging over me.  
And a passionate longing fills me  
For the roses, the dusk and the dew,—  
For the beautiful Summer vanished—  
For the moonlit talks—and you.

---

What does our country need? Not armies standing  
With sabres gleaming ready for the fight.  
Not increased navies, skillful and commanding,  
To bound the waters with an iron might.  
Not haughty men with glutted purses trying  
To purchase souls, and keep the power of place.  
Not jeweled dolls with one another vieing  
For palms of beauty, elegance and grace.

But we want women, strong of soul, yet lowly,  
With that rare meekness, born of gentleness,  
Women whose lives are pure and clean and holy,  
The women whom all little children bless.  
Brave, earnest women, helpful to each other,  
With finest scorn for all things low and mean.  
Women who hold the names of wife and mother,  
Far nobler than the title of a Queen.

O these are they who mold the men of story,  
These mothers, oftentimes shorn of grace and youth,  
Who, worn and weary, ask no greater glory  
Than making some young soul the home of truth,  
Who sow in hearts all fallow for the sowing  
The seeds of virtue and of scorn for sin,  
And, patient, watch the beauteous harvest growing  
And weed out tares which crafty hands cast in.

Women who do not hold the gift of beauty  
As some rare treasure to be bought and sold,  
But guard it as a precious aid to duty—  
The outer framing of the inner gold;  
Women who, low above their cradles bending,  
Let flattery's voice go by, and give no heed,  
While their pure prayers like incense are ascending:  
*These* are our country's pride, our country's need.

[Pg 204]

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## "LEUDEMANN'S-ON-THE-RIVER."

Toward even when the day leans down  
To kiss the upturned face of night,  
Out just beyond the loud-voiced town  
I know a spot of calm delight.  
Like crimson arrows from a quiver  
The red rays pierce the waters flowing  
While we go dreaming, singing, rowing  
To Leudemann's-on-the-River.

The hills, like some glad mocking-bird,  
Send back our laughter and our singing,  
While faint—and yet more faint is heard  
The steeple bells all sweetly ringing.  
Some message did the winds deliver  
To each glad heart that August night,  
All heard, but all heard not aright;  
By Leudemann's-on-the-River.

Night falls as in some foreign clime,  
Between the hills that slope and rise.  
So dusk the shades at landing time,  
We could not see each other's eyes.  
We only saw the moonbeams quiver  
Far down upon the stream! that night  
The new moon gave but little light  
By Leudemann's-on-the-River.

[Pg 205]

How dusky were those paths that led  
Up from the river to the hall.  
The tall trees branching overhead  
Invite the early shades that fall.

In all the glad blithe world, oh, never  
Were hearts more free from care than when  
We wandered through those walks, we ten,  
By Leudemann's-on-the-River.

So soon, so soon, the changes came.  
This August day we two alone,  
On that same river, not the same,  
Dream of a night forever flown.  
Strange distances have come to sever  
The hearts that gayly beat in pleasure,  
Long miles we cannot cross or measure—  
From Leudemann's-on-the-River.

We'll pluck two leaves, dear friend, to-day.  
The green, the russet! seems it strange  
So soon, so soon, the leaves can change!  
Ah, me! so runs all life away.  
This night wind chills me, and I shiver;  
The Summer time is almost past.  
One more good-bye—perhaps the last  
To Leudemann's-on-the-River.

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## IN THE LONG RUN.

[Pg 206]

In the long run fame finds the deserving man.  
The lucky wight may prosper for a day,  
But in good time true merit leads the van,  
And vain pretense, unnoticed, goes its way.  
There is no Chance, no Destiny, no Fate,  
But Fortune smiles on those who work and wait,  
In the long run.

In the long run all goodly sorrow pays,  
There is no better thing than righteous pain,  
The sleepless nights, the awful thorn-crowned days,  
Bring sure reward to tortured soul and brain.  
Unmeaning joys enervate in the end.  
But sorrow yields a glorious dividend  
In the long run.

In the long run all hidden things are known,  
The eye of truth will penetrate the night,  
And good or ill, thy secret shall be known,  
However well 'tis guarded from the light.  
All the unspoken motives of the breast  
Are fathomed by the years and stand confest  
In the long run.

In the long run all love is paid by love,  
Though undervalued by the hosts of earth;  
The great eternal Government above  
Keeps strict account and will redeem its worth.  
Give thy love freely; do not count the cost;  
So beautiful a thing was never lost  
In the long run.

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## PLEA TO SCIENCE.

O Science reaching backward through the distance,  
Most earnest child of God,  
Exposing all the secrets of existence,  
With thy divining rod,  
I bid thee speed up to the heights supernal,  
Clear thinker, ne'er sufficed;  
Go seek and bind the laws and truths eternal,  
But leave me Christ.

Upon the vanity of pious sages  
Let in the light of day.  
Break down the superstitions of all ages—  
Thrust bigotry away;  
Stride on, and bid all stubborn foes defiance  
Let Truth and Reason reign.  
But I beseech thee, O Immortal Science,  
Let Christ remain.

What canst thou give to help me bear my crosses,  
In place of Him, my Lord?  
And what to recompense for all my losses,  
And bring me sweet reward?  
*Thou* couldst not with thy clear, cold eyes of reason,  
Thou couldst not comfort me  
Like one who passed through that tear-blotted season,  
In sad Gethsemane!

Through all the weary, wearing hour of sorrow,  
What word that thou hast said,  
Would make me strong to wait for some to-morrow  
When I should find my dead?  
When I am weak, and desolate, and lonely—  
And prone to follow wrong?  
Not thou, O Science—Christ, my Savior, only  
Can make me strong.

Thou are so cold, so lofty and so distant,  
Though great my need might be,  
No prayer, however constant and persistent,  
Could bring thee down to me.  
Christ stands so near, to help me through each hour,  
To guide me day by day.  
O Science, sweeping all before thy power  
Leave Christ, I pray!

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## LOVE'S BURIAL.

Let us clear a little space,  
And make Love a burial place.

He is dead, dear, as you see,  
And he wearies you and me,

Growing heavier, day by day,  
Let us bury him, I say.

Wings of dead white butterflies,  
These shall shroud him, as he lies

In his casket rich and rare,  
Made of finest maiden-hair.

With the pollen of the rose  
Let us his white eye-lids close.

Put the rose thorn in his hand,  
Shorn of leaves—you understand.

Let some holy water fall  
On his dead face, tears of gall—

As we kneel by him and say,  
"Dreams to dreams," and turn away.

Those grave diggers, Doubt, Distrust,  
They will lower him to the dust.

Let us part here with a kiss,  
You go that way, I go this.

[Pg 209]



Since we buried Love to-day  
We will walk a separate way.

---

## LITTLE BLUE HOOD.

Every morning and every night  
There passes our window near the street,  
A little girl with an eye so bright,  
And a cheek so round and a lip so sweet;  
The daintiest, jauntiest little miss  
That ever any one longed to kiss.

She is neat as wax, and fresh to view,  
And her look is wholesome and clean, and good.  
Whatever her gown, her hood is blue,  
And so we call her our "Little Blue Hood,"  
For we know not the name of the dear little lass,  
But we call to each other to see her pass.

[Pg 210]

"Little Blue Hood is coming now!"  
And we watch from the window while she goes by,  
She has such a bonny, smooth, white brow,  
And a fearless look in her long-lashed eye;  
And a certain dignity wedded to grace,  
Seems to envelop her form and face.

Every morning, in sun or rain,  
She walks by the window with sweet, grave air,  
And never guesses behind the pane  
We two are watching and thinking her fair;  
Lovingly watching her down the street,  
Dear little Blue Hood, bright and sweet.

Somebody ties that hood of blue  
Under the face so fair to see,  
Somebody loves her, beside we two,  
Somebody kisses her—why can't we?  
Dear Little Blue Hood fresh and fair,  
Are you glad we love you, or don't you care?

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## NO SPRING.

[Pg 211]

Up from the South come the birds that were banished,  
Frightened away by the presence of frost.  
Back to the vale comes the verdure that vanished,  
Back to the forest the leaves that were lost.  
Over the hillside the carpet of splendor,  
Folded through Winter, Spring spreads down again;  
Along the horizon, the tints that were tender,  
Lost hues of Summer time, burn bright as then.

Only the mountains' high summits are hoary,  
To the ice-fettered river the sun gives a key.  
Once more the gleaming shore lists to the story  
Told by an amorous Summer-kissed sea.  
All things revive that in Winter time perished,  
The rose buds again in the light o' the sun,  
All that was beautiful, all that was cherished,  
Sweet things and dear things and all things—save one.

Late, when the year and the roses were lying  
Low with the ruins of Summer and bloom,  
Down in the dust fell a love that was dying,  
And the snow piled above it, and made it a tomb.  
Lo! now! the roses are budded for blossom—  
Lo! now! the Summer is risen again.  
Why dost thou bud not, O Love of my bosom?  
Why dost thou rise not, and thrill me as then?

Life without love, is a year without Summer,  
 Heart without love, is a wood without song.  
 Rise then, revive then, thou indolent comer,  
 Why dost thou lie in the dark earth so long?  
 Rise! ah, thou canst not! the rose-tree that sheddest  
 Its beautiful leaves, in the Spring time may bloom,  
 But of cold things the coldest, of dead things the deadest,  
 Love buried once, rises not from the tomb.  
 Green things may grow on the hillside and heather,  
 Birds seek the forest and build there and sing.  
 All things revive in the beautiful weather,  
 But unto a dead love there cometh no Spring.

## LIPPO.

Now we must part, my Lippo. Even so,  
 I grieve to see thy sudden pained surprise;  
 Gaze not on me with such accusing eyes—  
 'T was thine own hand which dealt dear Love's death-blow.

I loved thee fondly yesterday. Till then  
 Thy heart was like a covered golden cup  
 Always above my eager lip held up.  
 I fancied thou wert not as other men.

I knew that heart was filled with Love's sweet wine,  
 Pressed wholly for my drinking. And my lip  
 Grew parched with thirsting for one nectared sip  
 Of what, denied me, seemed a draught divine.

Last evening, in the gloaming, that cup spilled  
 Its precious contents. Even to the lees  
 Were offered to me, saying, "Drink of these!"  
 And when I saw it empty, Love was killed.

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No word was left unsaid, no act undone,  
 To prove to me thou wert my abject slave.  
 Ah, Love! hadst thou been wise enough to save  
 One little drop of that sweet wine—but one—

I still had loved thee, longing for it then.  
 But even the cup is mine. I look within,  
 And find it holds not one last drop to win,  
 And cast it down.—Thou art as other men.

## MIDSUMMER.

After the May time, and after the June time  
 Rare with blossoms and perfumes sweet,  
 Cometh the round world's royal noon time,  
 The red midsummer of blazing heat.  
 When the sun, like an eye that never closes,  
 Bends on the earth its fervid gaze,  
 And the winds are still, and the crimson roses  
 Droop and wither and die in its rays.

Unto my heart has come that season,  
 O my lady, my worshiped one,  
 When over the stars of Pride and Reason  
 Sails Love's cloudless, noonday sun.  
 Like a great red ball in my bosom burning  
 With fires that nothing can quench or tame.  
 It glows till my heart itself seems turning  
 Into a liquid lake of flame.

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The hopes half shy, and the sighs all tender,  
 The dreams and fears of an earlier day,

Under the noontide's royal splendor,  
Droop like roses and wither away.  
From the hills of doubt no winds are blowing,  
From the isle of pain no breeze is sent.  
Only the sun in a white heat glowing  
Over an ocean of great content.

Sink, O my soul, in this golden glory,  
Die, O my heart, in thy rapture-swoon,  
For the Autumn must come with its mournful story,  
And Love's midsummer will fade too soon.

---

## A REMINISCENCE.

I saw the wild honey-bee kissing a rose  
A wee one, that grows  
Down low on the bush, where her sisters above  
Cannot see all that's done  
As the moments roll on.  
Nor hear all the whispers and murmurs of love.

They flaunt out their beautiful leaves in the sun,  
And they flirt, every one,  
With the wild bees who pass, and the gay butterflies.  
And that wee thing in pink—  
Why, they never once think  
That she's won a lover right under their eyes.

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It reminded me, Kate, of a time—you know when!  
You were so petite then,  
Your dresses were short, and your feet were so small.  
Your sisters, Maud-Belle  
And Madeline—well,  
They *both* set their caps for me, after that ball.

How the blue eyes and black eyes smiled up in my face!  
'T was a neck-and-neck race,  
Till that day when you opened the door in the hall,  
And looked up and looked down,  
With your sweet eyes of brown,  
And *you* seemed so tiny, and *I* felt so tall.

Your sisters had sent you to keep me, my dear,  
Till they should appear.  
Then you were dismissed like a child in disgrace.  
How meekly you went!  
But your brown eyes, they sent  
A thrill to my heart, and a flush to my face.

We always were meeting some way after that.  
You hung up my hat,  
And got it again, when I finished my call.  
Sixteen, and *so* sweet!  
Oh, those cute little feet!  
Shall I ever forget how they tripped down the hall?

Shall I ever forget the first kiss by the door,  
Or the vows murmured o'er,  
Or the rage and surprise of Maud-Belle? Well-a-day,  
How swiftly time flows,  
And who would suppose  
That a *bee* could have carried me so far away.

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## RESPITE.

The mighty conflict, which we call existence,  
Doth wear upon the body and the soul.  
Our vital forces wasted in resistance,

So much there is to conquer and control.

The rock which meets the billows with defiance.

Undaunted and unshaken day by day,  
In spite of its unyielding self-reliance,  
Is by the warfare surely worn away.

And there are depths and heights of strong emotions  
That surge at times within the human breast,  
More fierce than all the tides of all the oceans  
Which sweep on ever in divine unrest.

I sometimes think the rock worn with adventures,  
And sad with thoughts of conflicts yet to be,  
Must envy the frail reed which no one censures,  
When overcome 'tis swallowed by the sea.

This life is all resistance and repression,  
Dear God, if in that other world unseen,  
Not rest, we find, but new life and progression,  
Grant us a respite in the grave between.

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## A GIRL'S FAITH.

Across the miles that stretch between,  
Through days of gloom or glad sunlight,  
There shines a face I have not seen  
Which yet doth make my world more bright.

He may be near, he may be far,  
Or near or far I cannot see,  
But faithful as the morning star  
He yet shall rise and come to me.

What though fate leads us separate ways,  
The world is round, and time is fleet.  
A journey of a few brief days,  
And face to face we two shall meet.

Shall meet beneath God's arching skies,  
While suns shall blaze, or stars shall gleam,  
And looking in each other's eyes  
Shall hold the past but as a dream.

But round and perfect and complete,  
Life like a star shall climb the height,  
As we two press with willing feet  
Together toward the Infinite.

And still behind the space between,  
As back of dawns the sunbeams play,  
There shines the face I have not seen,  
Whose smile shall wake my world to Day.

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## TWO.

One leaned on velvet cushions like a queen—  
To see him pass, the hero of an hour,  
Whom men called great. She bowed with languid mien,  
And smiled, and blushed, and knew her beauty's power.

One trailed her tinsel garments through the street,  
And thrust aside the crowd, and found a place  
So near, the blooded courser's prancing feet  
Cast sparks of fire upon her painted face.

One took the hot-house blossoms from her breast,  
And tossed them down, as he went riding by.

And blushed rose-red to see them fondly pressed  
To bearded lips, while eye spoke unto eye.

One, bold and hardened with her sinful life,  
Yet shrank and shivered painfully, because  
His cruel glance cut keener than a knife,  
The glance of him who made her what she was.

One was observed, and lifted up to fame,  
Because the hero smiled upon her! while  
One who was shunned and hated, found her shame  
In basking in the death-light of his smile.

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## SLIPPING AWAY.

Slipping away—slipping away!  
Out of our brief year slips the May;  
And Winter lingers, and Summer flies;  
And Sorrow abideth, and Pleasure dies;  
And the days are short, and the nights are long;  
And little is right, and much is wrong.

Slipping away is the Summer time;  
It has lost its rhythm and lilting rhyme—  
For the grace goes out of the day so soon,  
And the tired head aches in the glare of noon,  
And the way seems long to the hills that lie  
Under the calm of the western sky.

Slipping away are the friends whose worth  
Lent a glow to the sad old earth:  
One by one they slip from our sight;  
One by one their graves gleam white;  
Or we count them lost by the crueler death  
Of a trust betrayed, or a murdered faith.

Slipping away are the hopes that made  
Bliss out of sorrow, and sun out of shade.  
Slipping away is our hold on life.  
And out of the struggle and wearing strife,  
From joys that diminish, and woes that increase,  
We are slipping away to the shores of Peace.

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## IS IT DONE?

It is done! in the fire's fitful flashes,  
The last line has withered and curled.  
In a tiny white heap of dead ashes  
Lie buried the hopes of your world.  
There were mad foolish vows in each letter,  
It is well they have shriveled and burned,  
And the ring! oh, the ring was a fetter,  
It was better removed and returned.

But ah, is it done? in the embers  
Where letters and tokens were cast,  
Have you burned up the heart that remembers,  
And treasures its beautiful past?  
Do you think in this swift reckless fashion  
To ruthlessly burn and destroy  
The months that were freighted with passion,  
The dreams that were drunken with joy?

Can you burn up the rapture of kisses  
That flashed from the lips to the soul?  
Or the heart that grows sick for lost blisses  
In spite of its strength of control?  
Have you burned up the touch of warm fingers

That thrilled through each pulse and each vein,  
Or the sound of a voice that still lingers  
And hurts with a haunting refrain?

Is it done? is the life drama ended?  
You have put all the lights out, and yet,  
Though the curtain, rung down, has descended,  
Can the actors go home and forget?  
Ah, no! they will turn in their sleeping  
With a strange restless pain in their hearts,  
And in darkness, and anguish and weeping,  
Will dream they are playing their parts.

[Pg 221]

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## A LEAF.

Somebody said, in the crowd, last eve,  
That you were married, or soon to be.  
I have not thought of you, I believe,  
Since last we parted. Let me see:  
Five long Summers have passed since then—  
Each has been pleasant in its own way—  
And you are but one of a dozen men  
Who have played the suitor a Summer day.

But, nevertheless, when I heard your name,  
Coupled with some one's, not my own,  
There burned in my bosom a sudden flame,  
That carried me back to the day that is flown.  
I was sitting again by the laughing brook,  
With you at my feet, and the sky above,  
And my heart was fluttering under your look—  
The unmistakable look of Love.

Again your breath, like a South wind, fanned  
My cheek, where the blushes came and went;  
And the tender clasp of your strong, warm hand  
Sudden thrills through my pulses sent.  
Again you were mine by Love's own right—  
Mine forever by Love's decree:  
So for a moment it seemed last night,  
When somebody mentioned your name to me.

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Just for the moment I thought you mine—  
Loving me, wooing me, as of old.  
The tale remembered seemed half divine—  
Though I held it lightly enough when told.  
The past seemed fairer than when it was near,  
As "Blessings brighten when taking flight;"  
And just for the moment I held you dear—  
When somebody mentioned your name last night.

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## AESTHETIC.

In a garb that was guiltless of colors  
She stood, with a dull, listless air—  
A creature of dumps and of dolors,  
But most undeniably fair.

The folds of her garment fell round her,  
Revealing the curve of each limb;  
Well proportioned and graceful I found her,  
Although quite alarmingly slim.

From the hem of her robe peeped one sandal—  
"High art" was she down to her feet;  
And though I could not understand all  
She said, I could see she was sweet.

[Pg 223]

Impressed by her limpness and languor,  
I proffered a chair near at hand;  
She looked back a mild sort of anger—  
Posed anew, and continued to stand.

Some praises I next tried to mutter  
Of the fan that she held to her face;  
She said it was "utterly utter,"  
And waved it with languishing grace.

I then, in a strain quite poetic,  
Begged her gaze on the bow in the sky,  
She looked—said its curve was "æsthetic."  
But the "tone was too dreadfully high."

Her lovely face, lit by the splendor  
That glorified landscape and sea,  
Woke thoughts that were daring and tender:  
Did *her* thoughts, too, rest upon me?

"Oh, tell me," I cried, growing bolder,  
"Have I in your musings a place?"  
"Well, yes," she said over her shoulder:  
"I was thinking of nothing in space."

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## POEMS OF THE WEEK.

[Pg 224]

### SUNDAY.

Lie still and rest, in that serene repose  
That on this holy morning comes to those  
Who have been burdened with the cares which make  
The sad heart weary and the tired head ache.  
Lie still and rest—  
God's day of all is best.

### MONDAY.

Awake! arise! Cast off thy drowsy dreams!  
Red in the East, behold the Morning gleams.  
"As Monday goes, so goes the week," dames say.  
Refreshed, renewed, use well the initial day.  
And see! thy neighbor  
Already seeks his labor.

### TUESDAY.

Another morning's banners are unfurled—  
Another day looks smiling on the world.  
It holds new laurels for thy soul to win:  
Mar not its grace by slothfulness or sin,  
Nor sad, away,  
Send it to yesterday.

### WEDNESDAY.

Half-way unto the end—the week's high noon.  
The morning hours do speed away so soon!  
And, when the noon is reached, however bright,  
Instinctively we look toward the night.  
The glow is lost  
Once the meridian crost.

[Pg 225]

## THURSDAY.

So well the week has sped, hast thou a friend  
Go spend an hour in converse. It will lend  
New beauty to thy labors and thy life  
To pause a little sometimes in the strife.  
    Toil soon seems rude  
    That has no interlude.

## FRIDAY.

From feasts abstain; be temperate, and pray;  
Fast if thou wilt; and yet, throughout the day,  
Neglect no labor and no duty shirk:  
Not many hours are left thee for thy work—  
    And it were meet  
    That all should be complete.

## SATURDAY.

Now with the almost finished task make haste;  
So near the night thou hast no time to waste.  
Post up accounts, and let thy Soul's eyes look  
For flaws and errors in Life's ledger-book.  
    When labors cease,  
    How sweet the sense of peace!

---

## GHOSTS.

[Pg 226]

There are ghosts in the room.  
As I sit here alone, from the dark corners there  
    They come out of the gloom,  
And they stand at my side and they lean on my chair.

There's the ghost of a Hope  
That lighted my days with a fanciful glow,  
    In her hand is the rope  
That strangled her life out. Hope was slain long ago.

But her ghost comes to-night,  
With its skeleton face and expressionless eyes,  
    And it stands in the light,  
And mocks me, and jeers me with sobs and with sighs.

There's the ghost of a Joy,  
A frail, fragile thing, and I prized it too much,  
    And the hands that destroy  
Clasped it close, and it died at the withering touch.

There's the ghost of a Love,  
Born with joy, reared with hope, died in pain and unrest,  
    But he towers above  
All the others—this ghost: yet a ghost at the best.

I am weary, and fain  
Would forget all these dead: but the gibbering host  
    Make my struggle in vain,  
In each shadowy corner there lurketh a ghost.

[Pg 227]

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## FLEEING AWAY.

My thoughts soar not as they ought to soar,  
    Higher and higher on soul-lent wings;  
But ever and often, and more and more



They are dragged down earthward by little things,  
By little troubles and little needs,  
As a lark might be tangled among the weeds.

My purpose is not what it ought to be,  
Steady and fixed, like a star on high,  
But more like a fisherman's light at sea;  
Hither and thither it seems to fly—  
Sometimes feeble, and sometimes bright,  
Then suddenly lost in the gloom of night.

My life is far from my dream of life—  
Calmly contented, serenely glad;  
But, vexed and worried by daily strife,  
It is always troubled, and oftentimes sad—  
And the heights I had thought I should reach one day  
Grow dimmer and dimmer, and farther away.

My heart finds never the longed-for rest;  
Its worldly striving, its greed for gold,  
Chilled and frightened the calm-eyed guest,  
Who sometimes sought me in days of old;  
And ever fleeing away from me  
Is the higher self that I long to be.

[Pg 228]

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## ALL MAD.

"He is mad as a hare, poor fellow,  
And should be in chains," you say.  
I haven't a doubt of your statement,  
But who isn't mad, I pray?  
Why, the world is a great asylum,  
And people are all insane,  
Gone daft with pleasure or folly,  
Or crazed with passion and pain.

The infant who shrieks at a shadow,  
The child with his Santa Claus faith,  
The woman who worships Dame Fashion,  
Each man with his notions of death,  
The miser who hoards up his earnings,  
The spendthrift who wastes them too soon,  
The scholar grown blind in his delving,  
The lover who stares at the moon.

The poet who thinks life a pæan,  
The cynic who thinks it a fraud,  
The youth who goes seeking for pleasure,  
The preacher who dares talk of God,  
All priests with their creeds and their croaking,  
All doubters who dare to deny,  
The gay who find aught to wake laughter,  
The sad who find aught worth a sigh,  
Whoever is downcast or solemn,  
Whoever is gleeful and glad,  
Are only the dupes of delusions—  
We are all of us—all of us mad.

[Pg 229]

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## HIDDEN GEMS.

We know not what lies in us, till we seek;  
Men dive for pearls—they are not found on shore,  
The hillsides most unpromising and bleak  
Do sometimes hide the ore.

Go, dive in the vast ocean of thy mind,  
O man! far down below the noisy waves,  
Down in the depths and silence thou mayst find

Rare pearls and coral caves.

Sink thou a shaft into the mine of thought;  
Be patient, like the seekers after gold;  
Under the rocks and rubbish lieth what  
May bring thee wealth untold.

Reflected from the vasty Infinite,  
However dulled by earth, each human mind  
Holds somewhere gems of beauty and of light  
Which, seeking, thou shalt find.

---

## BY-AND-BY.

[Pg 230]

"By-and-by," the maiden sighed—"by-and-by  
He will claim me for his bride,  
Hope is strong and time is fleet;  
Youth is fair, and love is sweet,  
Clouds will pass that fleck my sky.  
He will come back by-and-by—by-and-by."

"By-and-by," the soldier said—"by-and-by,  
After I have fought and bled,  
I shall go home from the wars,  
Crowned with glory, seamed with scars.  
Joy will flash from some one's eye  
When she greets me by-and-by—by-and-by."

"By-and-by," the mother cried—"by-and-by,  
Strong and sturdy at my side,  
Like a staff supporting me,  
Will my bonnie baby be.  
Break my rest, then, wail and cry—  
Thou'lt repay me by-and-by—by-and-by."

Fleeting years of time have sped—hurried by—  
Still the maiden is unwed;  
All unknown the soldier lies,  
Buried under alien skies;  
And the son, with blood-shot eye  
Saw his mother starve and die.  
God in Heaven! dost Thou on high,  
Keep the promised by-and-by—by-and-by?

---

## OVER THE MAY HILL.

[Pg 231]

All through the night time, and all through the day time,  
Dreading the morning and dreading the night,  
Nearer and nearer we drift to the May time  
Season of beauty and season of blight,  
Leaves on the linden, and sun on the meadow,  
Green in the garden, and bloom everywhere,  
Gloom in my heart, and a terrible shadow,  
Walks by me, sits by me, stands by my chair.

Oh, but the birds by the brooklet are cheery,  
Oh, but the woods show such delicate greens,  
Strange how you droop and how soon you are weary—  
Too well I know what that weariness means.  
But how could I know in the crisp winter weather  
(Though sometimes I noticed a catch in your breath),  
Riding and singing and dancing together,  
How could I know you were racing with death?

How could I know when we danced until morning,  
And you were the gayest of all the gay crowd—  
With only that shortness of breath for a warning,  
How could I know that you danced for a shroud?

Whirling and whirling through moonlight and starlight,  
Rocking as lightly as boats on the wave,  
Down in your eyes shone a deep light—a far light,  
How could I know 'twas the light to your grave?

[Pg 232]

Day by day, day by day, nearing and nearing,  
Hid under greenness, and beauty and bloom,  
Cometh the shape and the shadow I'm fearing,  
"Over the May hill" is waiting your tomb.  
The season of mirth and of music is over—  
I have danced my last dance, I have sung my last song,  
Under the violets, under the clover,  
My heart and my love will be lying ere long.

---

## A SONG.

Is any one sad in the world, I wonder?  
Does any one weep on a day like this,  
With the sun above, and the green earth under?  
Why, what is life but a dream of bliss?

With the sun, and the skies, and the birds above me,  
Birds that sing as they wheel and fly—  
With the winds to follow and say they love me—  
Who could be lonely? O ho, not I!

Somebody said, in the street this morning,  
As I opened my window to let in the light,  
That the darkest day of the world was dawning;  
But I looked, and the East was a gorgeous sight.

One who claims that he knows about it  
Tells me the Earth is a vale of sin;  
But I and the bees and the birds—we doubt it,  
And think it a world worth living in.

[Pg 233]

Some one says that hearts are fickle,  
That love is sorrow, that life is care,  
And the reaper Death, with his shining sickle,  
Gathers whatever is bright and fair.

I told the thrush, and we laughed together,  
Laughed till the woods were all a-ring:  
And he said to me, as he plumed each feather,  
"Well, people must croak, if they cannot sing."

Up he flew, but his song, remaining,  
Rang like a bell in my heart all day,  
And silenced the voices of weak complaining,  
That pipe like insects along the way.

O world of light, and O world of beauty!  
Where are there pleasures so sweet as thine?  
Yes, life is love, and love is duty;  
And what heart sorrows? O no, not mine!

---

## FOES.

[Pg 234]

Thank Fate for foes! I hold mine dear  
As valued friends. He cannot know  
The zest of life who runneth here  
His earthly race without a foe.

I saw a prize. "Run," cried my friend;  
"Tis thine to claim without a doubt."  
But ere I half-way reached the end,  
I felt my strength was giving out.

My foe looked on the while I ran;  
A scornful triumph lit his eyes.  
With that perverseness born in man,  
I nerved myself, and won the prize.

All blinded by the crimson glow  
Of sin's disguise, I tempted Fate.  
"I knew thy weakness!" sneered my foe,  
I saved myself, and balked his hate.

For half my blessings, half my gain,  
I needs must thank my trusty foe;  
Despite his envy and disdain,  
He serves me well where'er I go.

So may I keep him to the end,  
Nor may his enmity abate:  
More faithful than the fondest friend,  
He guards me ever with his hate.

---

## FRIENDSHIP.

[Pg 235]

Dear friend, I pray thee, if thou wouldst be proving  
Thy strong regard for me,  
Make me no vows. Lip-service is not loving;  
Let thy faith speak for thee.

Swear not to me that nothing can divide us—  
So little such oaths mean.  
But when distrust and envy creep beside us  
Let them not come between.

Say not to me the depths of thy devotion  
Are deeper than the sea;  
But watch, lest doubt or some unkind emotion  
Embitter them for me.

Vow not to love me ever and forever,  
Words are such idle things;  
But when we differ in opinions, never  
Hurt me by little stings.

I'm sick of words: they are so lightly spoken,  
And spoken, are but air.  
I'd rather feel thy trust in me unbroken  
Than list thy words so fair.

If all the little proofs of trust are heeded,  
If thou art always kind,  
No sacrifice, no promise will be needed  
To satisfy my mind.

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\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK MAURINE AND OTHER POEMS \*\*\*

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