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POEMS ***

ENAMELS AND CAMEOS

BY

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

TRANSLATED BY AGNES LEE

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THE GOD AND THE OPAL
TO THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

Gray caught he from the cloud, and green from earth,
And from a human breast the fire he drew,
And life and death were blended in one dew.
A sunbeam golden with the morning's mirth,
A wan, salt phantom from the sea, a girth
Of silver from the moon, shot colour through
The soul invisible, until it grew
To fulness, and the Opal Song had birth.

And then the god became the artisan.
With rarest skill he made his gem to glow,
Carving and shaping it to beauty such
That down the cycles it shall gleam to man,
And evermore man's wonderment shall know
The perfect finish, the immortal touch.

Agnes Lee.

PREFACE

When empires lay riven apart,
Fared Goethe at battle time's thunder

To fragrant oases of art,
To weave his *Divan* into wonder.

Leaving Shakespeare, he pondered the note
Of Nisami, and heard in his leisure
The hoopoe's weird monody float,
And set it to soft Orient measure.

As Goethe at Weimar delayed
And dreamed in the fair garden closes,
And, questing in sun or in shade,
With Hafiz plucked redolent roses,—

I, closed from the tempest that shook
My window with fury impassioned,
Sat dreaming, and, safe in my nook,
Enamels and Cameos fashioned.

AFFINITY
A PANTHEISTIC MADRIGAL

On an ancient temple gleaming,
Two great blocks of marble high
Thrice a thousand years lay dreaming
Dreams against an Attic sky.

Set within one silver whiteness,
Two wave-tears for Venus shed,
Two fair pearls of orient brightness,
Through the waste of water sped.

In the Generalife's fresh closes,
By a Moorish light illumed,
Two delicious, tender roses
By a fountain met and bloomed.

In the balm of May's bright weather,
Where the domes of Venice rise,
Lighted on Love's nest together
Two pale doves from azure skies.

All things vanish into wonder,
Marble, pearl, dove, rose on tree,
Pearl shall melt and marble sunder,
Flower shall fade and bird shall flee!

Not a smallest part but lowly
Through the crucible must pass,
Where all shapes are molten slowly
In the universal mass.

Then as gradual Time discloses
Marbles melt to whitest skin,
Roses red to lips of roses,
And anew the lives begin.

And again the doves are plighted
In the hearts of lovers, while
Ocean pearls are reunited,
Set within a coral smile.

Thus affinity comes welling;
By its beauty everywhere
Soul a sister-soul foretelling,
All awakened and aware.

Quickened by a zephyr sunny,
Or a perfume, subtlewise,
As the bee unto the honey,
Atom unto atom flies.

And remembered are the hours
In the temple, down the blue,

And the talks amid the flowers,
Near the fount of crystal dew,

Kisses warm, and on the royal
Golden domes the wings that beat;
For the atoms all are loyal,
And again must love and greet.

Love forgotten wakes imperious,
For the past is never dead,
And the rose with joy delirious
Breathes again from lips of red.

Marble on the flesh of maiden
Feels its own white bloom, and faint
Knows the dove a murmur laden
With the echo of its plaint,

Till resistance giveth over,
And the barriers fall undone,
And the stranger is the lover,
And affinity hath won!

You before whose face I tremble,
Say—what past we know not of
Called our fates to reassemble,—
Pearl or marble, rose or dove?

THE POEM OF WOMAN MARBLE OF PAROS

Unto the dreamer once whose heart she had,
As she was showing forth her treasures rare,
Minded she was to read a poem fair,
The poem of her form with beauty glad.

First stately and superb she swept before
His gazing eyes, with high, Infanta mien,
Trailing behind her all the splendid sheen
Of nacarat floods of velvet that she wore.

Thus at the opera had he watched her bend
From out her box, her body one bright flame,
When all the air was ringing with her name,
And every song made her fair praise ascend.

Then had her art another way, for look!
The weighty velvet dropped, and in its place
A pale and cloudy fabric proved the grace
Of every line her glowing body took;

Till softly from her shoulder marble-sweet
The veil diaphanous fell, the folds whereof
Came fluttering downward like a snowy dove,
To nestle in the wonder of her feet.

She posed as for Apelles pridefully,
A lovely flesh and marble womanhood:—
Anadyomene, she upright stood
Naked upon the margent of the sea.

Fairer than any foam-drops crystalline,
Great pearls of Venice lay upon her breast,
Jewels of milky wonder lightly pressed
Upon the cool, fresh satin of her skin.

Exhaustless as the waves that kiss the brim,
Under the gleaming moon of many moods,
Were all the strophes of her attitudes.
What fascination sang her beauty's hymn!

But soon, grown weary of an art antique,
Of Phidias and of Venus, lo! again

Within another new and plastic strain
She grouped her charms unveiled and unique.

Upon a cashmere opulently spread,
Sultana of Seraglio then she lay,
Laughing unto her little mirror gay,
That laughed again with lips of coral red;

The indolent, soft Georgian, posturing
With her long, supple narghile at lip,
Showing the glorious fashion of her hip,
One foot upon the other languishing.

And, like to Ingres' Odalisque, supine,
Defying prurient modesty turned she,
Displaying in her beauty candidly
Wonder of curve and purity of line.

But hence, thou idle Odalisque! for life
Hath now its own fair picture to display—
The diamond in its rare effulgent ray,—
Beauty in Love hath reached its blossom rife.

She sways her body, bendeth back her head.
Her breathing comes more subtle and more fast.
Rocked in her dream's alluring arms, at last
Down hath she fallen upon her costly bed.

Her eyelids beat like fluttering pinions lit
Upon the darkened silver of her eyes.
Her bright, voluptuous glances upward rise
Into the vague and nacreous infinite.

Deck her with sweet, lush violets, instead
Of death-flowers with their every pearl a tear;
Scatter their purple clusters on her bier,
Who of her being's ecstasy lies dead.

And bear her very gently to her tomb—
Her bed of white. There let the poet stay,
Long hours upon his bended knees to pray,
When night shall close around the funeral room.

A STUDY OF HANDS

I

IMPERIA

A sculptor showed to me one day
A hand, a Cleopatra's lure,
Or an Aspasia's, cast in clay,
Of masterwork a fragment pure.

Seized in a snowy kiss, and fair
As lily in the argent rise
Of dawn, like whitest poem there
Its beauty lay before mine eyes,

Bright in its pallor lustreless,
Reposing on a velvet bed,
Its fingers, weighted with their dress
Of jewels, delicately spread.

A little parted lay the thumb,
Showing the undulating line,
Beautiful, graceful, subtlesome,
Of its proud contour Florentine.

Strange hand! I wonder if it toyed
In silken locks of Don Juan,
Or on a gem-bright caftan joyed
To stroke the beard of some soldan;

Whether, as courtesan or queen,
Within its fingers fair and slight
Was pleasure's gilded sceptre seen,
Or sceptre of a royal might!

But sweet and firm it must have lain
Full oft its touch of power rare
Upon the curling lion-mane
Of some chimera caught in air.

Imperial, idle fantasy,
And love of soft, luxurious things,
Frenzies of passion, wondrous, free,
Impossible dream-flutterings!

Romances wild, and poesy
Of hasheech and of wine, vain speeds
Beneath Bohemia's brilliant sky
On unrestrained and maddened steeds!

All these were in the lines of it,
Of that white book with magic scrolled,
Where ciphers stood, by Venus writ,
That Love had trembled to behold.

II

LACENAIRE

Strange contrast was the severed hand
Of Lacenaire, the murderer dead,
Soaked in a powerful essence, and
Near by upon a cushion spread.

Letting a morbid fancy win,
I touched, despite my loathing sane,
The cold, hair-covered, slimy skin,
Not yet washed clean of deathly stain.

Yellow, uncanny, mummified,
Like to a Pharaoh's hand it lay,
And stretched its faun-shaped fingers wide,
Crisp with temptation's awful play;

As though an itch for flesh and gold
Lured them to horrors yet to be,
Twisting them roughly as of old,
Teasing their immobility.

There every vice and passion's whim
Had seamed the flesh abundantly
With hideous hieroglyphs and grim,
That headsmen read with fluency.

There plainly writ in furrows fell,
I saw the deeds of sin and soil,
Scorchings from every fiery hell
Wherein corruptions seethe and boil.

There was a track of Capri's vice,
Of lupanars and gaming-scores,
Fretted with wine and blood and dice,
Like ennui of old emperors.

Supple and fierce, it had some dower
Of grace unto the searching eye,
Some brutal fascination's power,
A gladiator's mastery.

Cold aristocracy of crime!
No plane inured, no hammer spent
The hand whose task for every time
Had but the knife for implement.

The hand of Lacenaire! No clue
Therein to labour's honest pride!
False poet, and assassin true,
The Manfred of the gutter died!

VARIATIONS ON THE CARNIVAL OF VENICE

I

ON THE STREET

There is a popular old air
That every fiddler loves to scrape.
'T is wrung from organs everywhere,
To barking dog with wrath agape.

The music-box has registered
Its phrases garbled and reviled.
'T is classic to the household bird;
Grandmother learned it as a child.

The trumpet and the clarinet,
In dusty gardens of the dance,
Blow it to clerk and gay grisette,
In shrill, unlovely resonance.

And of a Sunday swarm the folk
Under the honeysuckle vine,
Quaffing, the while they talk and smoke,
The sun, the melody, the wine.

It lurks within the wry bassoon
The blind man plays, the porch beneath.
His poodle whimpers low the tune,
And holds the cup between its teeth.

The players of the light guitar,
Decked with their flimsy tartans, pale,
With voices sad, where feasters are,
Through coffee-houses fling its wail.

Great Paganini at a sign,
One night, as with a needle's gleam,
Picked up with end of bow divine
The little antiquated theme,

And, threading it with fingers deft,
He broidered it with colours bright,
Till up and down the faded weft
Ran golden arabesques of light.

II

ON THE LAGOONS

Tra la, tra la, la, la, la,—who
Knows not the theme's soft spell?
Or sad or light or mock or true,
Our mothers loved it well.

The Carnival of Venice! Long
Adown canals it came,
Till, wafted on a zephyr's song,
The ballet kept its fame.

I seem, whene'er its phrase I hear,
A gondola to view,
With prow voluted, black and clear,
Slip o'er the water blue;

To see, her bosom covered o'er
With pearls, her body suave,
The Adriatic Venus soar
On sound's chromatic wave.

The domes that on the water dwell
Pursue the melody
In clear-drawn cadences, and swell
Like breasts of love that sigh.

My chains around a pillar cast,
I land before a fair
And rosy-pale facade at last,
Upon a marble stair.

Oh! all dear Venice with her towers,
Her boats, her masquers boon,
Her sweet chagrins, her mad, gay hours,
Throbs in that ancient tune.

The tenuous, vibrant chords that smite,
Rebuild in subtle way
The city joyous, free and light
Of Canaletto's day!

III

CARNIVAL

Venice robes her for the ball;
Decked with spangles bright,
Multi-coloured Carnival
Teems with laughter light.

Harlequin with negro mask,
Tights of serpent hue,
Beateth with a note fantasque
His Cassander true.

Flapping loose his long, white sleeve,
Like a penguin spread,
Through a subtle semibreve
Pierrot thrusts his head.

Sleek Bologna's doctor goes
Maundering on a bass.
Punchinello finds for nose
Quaver on his face.

Hurtling Trivellino fine,
On a trill intent,
Scaramouch to Columbine
Gives the fan she lent.

Gliding to the tune, I mark
One veiled figure rise,
While through satin lashes dark
Luring gleam her eyes.

Tender little edge of lace,
Heaving with her breath!
"Under is her own dear face!"
An arpeggio saith.

And beneath the mask I know
Bloom of rosy lips,
And the patch on chin of snow,
As she by me trips!

MOONLIGHT

Amid the chatter gay and mad
Saint Mark to Lido wafts, a tune
Like as a rocket riseth glad
As fountain riseth to the moon.

But in that air with laughter stirred,
That shakes its bells far out to sea,
Regret, a little stifled bird,
Mingles its frail sob audibly.

And in a mist of memory clad,
Like dream well-nigh effaced, I view
The sweet Beloved, fair and sad,
Of dear, long-vanished days I knew.

Ah, pale she is! My soul in tears
An April day remembers yet:—
We sought the violets by the meres,
And in the grass our fingers met. . .

The vibrant note of violin
Is the child voice that struck my heart,
Exquisite, plaintive, argentine,
With all the anguish of its dart.

So sweetly, falsely, doth it steal,
So cruel, yet so tender, too,
So cold, so burning, that I feel
A deadly pleasure pierce me through;

Until my heart, an archway deep
Whose waters feed the fountain's lip,
Lets tears of blood in silence weep
Into my bosom drip by drip.

O Carnival of Venice!—theme
So chilling sad, yet ever warm!
Where laughter toucheth tears supreme,—
How hast thou hurt me with thy charm!

SYMPHONY IN WHITE MAJOR

In the Northern tales of eld,
From the Rhine's escarpments high
Swan-women radiant were beheld,
Singing and floating by,

Or, leaving their plumage bright
On a bough that was bending low,
Displaying skin more gleaming white
Than the white of their down of snow.

At times one comes our way,—
Of all she is pallidest,
White as the moonbeam's shivering ray
On a glacier's icy crest.

Her boreal bloom doth win
Our eyes to feasting rare
On rich delight of nacreous skin,
And a wealth of whiteness fair.

Her rounded breasts, pale globes
Of snow, wage insolent war
With her camellias and her robes
Of whiteness nebular.

In such white wars supreme
She wins, and weft and flower
Leave their revenge's right, and seem
Yellowed with envy's hour.

On the white of her shoulder bare,
Whose marble Paros lends,
As through the Polar twilight fair,
Invisible frost descends.

What beaming virgin snow,
What pith a reed within,
What Host, what taper, did bestow
The white of her matchless skin?

Was she made of a milky drop
On the blue of a winter heaven?
The lily-blow on the stem's green top?
The foam of the sea at even?

Of the marble still and cold,
Wherein the great gods dwell?
Of creamy opal gems that hold
Faint fires of mystic spell?

Or the organ's ivory keys?
Her wingèd fingers oft
Like butterflies flit over these,
With kisses pending soft.

Of the ermine's stainless fold,
Whose white, warm touches fall
On shivering shoulders and on bold,
Bright shields armorial?

Of the phantom flowers of frost
Enscrolled on the window clear?
Of the fountain drop in the chill air lost,
An Undine's frozen tear?

Of May bent low with the sweets
Of her bountiful white-thorn bloom?
Of alabaster that repeats
The pallor of grief and gloom?

Of the feathers of doves that slip
And snow on the gable steep?
Of slow stalactite's tear-white drip
In cavernous places deep?

Came she from Greenland floes
With Seraphita forth?
Is she Madonna of the Snows?
A sphinx of the icy North,

Sphinx buried by avalanche,
The glacier's guardian ghost,
Whose frozen secrets hide and blanch
In her white heart innermost?

What magic of what far name
Shall this pale soul ignite?
Ah! who shall flush with rose's flame
This cold, implacable white?

COQUETRY IN DEATH

I beg ye grant, when low I lie,
Before ye close my coffin-bed,
A little black beneath mine eye,
And on my cheek a touch of red!

Ah, make me beautiful as now!
For I would be upon my bier,
As on the night of his avow
Charming and bloomful, gay and dear.

For me no linen winding-sheet!

But gown me very grand and bright.
Bring forth my frock of muslin sweet,
With many ruffles soft and white.

My favourite frock! I wore it well,
Who wore it at love's flowering.
And since his look upon it fell,
I've kept it as a sacred thing.

For me no funeral coronet,
No tear-embroidered cushion place;
But o'er my fair lace pillow let
My hair droop free about my face.

Dear pillow! Often did it mark,
In mad, sweet nights our brows unlit,
And, all within the gondola dark,
Did count our kisses infinite.

About my waxen hands supine,
Folded in prayer at life's deep gloam,
My rosary of opals twine,
Blessed by His Holiness at Rome.

I'll finger it, when bedded cold
Where never one shall rise. How oft
His lips upon my lips have told
A *Pater* and an *Ave* soft!

HEART'S DIAMOND

Every lover deep hath set
In a sacred nook apart
Some dear token for the heart
In its hope or its regret.

One hath nested safe away
Blackest ringlet ever seen,
Over which an azure sheen
Lieth, as on wing of jay.

One from shoulder pale as milk
Took a tress more golden-fine
Than the threads that softly shine
In the silk-worm's wonder-silk.

In its hiding mystical,
Memory's reliquary sweet,
Glances of another greet
Gloves with fingers white and small.

And another yet may list
To inhale a faint perfume
Of the violets from her room,
Freshly given—faded, kissed.

Here a slipper's curving grace
One with sighing treasureth.
There another guards a breath
In a mask's light edge of lace.

I've no slipper to revere,
Neither glove nor tress nor flower;
But I cherish for love's dower
A divine, adorèd tear,—

Fallen from the blue above,
Clearest dew, heaven's drop for me,
Pearl dissolved secretly
In the chalice of my love.

To mine eyes the dim-worn dew
Beams, a gem of Orient worth,

Standing from the parchment forth,
Diamond of a sapphire blue,—

Steadfast, lustreful and deep!
Tear that fell unhop'd, unsought,
On a song my soul once wrought,
From an eye unused to weep.

SPRING'S FIRST SMILE

While up and down the earth men pant and plod,
March, laughing at the showers and days unsteady,
And whispering secret orders to the sod,
For Spring makes ready.

And slyly when the world is sleeping yet,
He smooths out collars for the Easter daisies,
And fashions golden buttercups to set
In woodland mazes.

Coif-maker fine, he worketh well his plan.
Orchard and vineyard for his touch are prouder.
From a white swan he hath a down to fan
The trees with powder.

While Nature still upon her couch doth lean,
Stealthily hies he to the garden closes,
And laces in their bodices of green
Pale buds of roses.

Composing his solfeggios in the shade,
He whistles them to blackbirds as he treadeth,
And violets in the wood, and in the glade
Snowdrops, he spreadeth.

Where for the restless stag the fountain wells,
His hidden hand glides soft amid the cresses,
And scatters lily-of-the-valley bells,
In silver dresses.

He sinks the sweet, vermilion strawberries
Deep in the grasses for thy roving fingers,
And garlands leaflets for thy forehead's ease,
When sunshine lingers.

When, labour done, he must away, turns he
On April's threshold from his fair creating,
And calleth unto Spring: "Come, Spring—for see,
The woods are waiting!"

CONTRALTO

There lies within a great museum's hall,
Upon a snowy bed of carven stone,
A statue ever strange and mystical,
With some fair fascination all its own.

And is it youth or is it maiden sweet,
A goddess or a god come down to sway?
Love fearful, hesitating, turns his feet,
Nor any word's avowal will betray.

Sideways it lieth, with averted face,
Stretching its lovely limbs, half mischievous,
Unto the curious crowd, an idle grace
Lighting its marble form luxurious.

For fashioning of its evil beauty brought
The sexes twain each one its magic dower.
Man whispers "Aphrodite!" in his thought,

And woman "Eros!" wondering at its power.

Uncertain sex and certain grace, that seem
To melt forever in a fountain's kiss,
Waters that whelm the body as they gleam
And merge, and it is one with Salmacis.

Ardent chimera, effort venturesome
Of Art and Pleasure—figure fanciful!
Into thy presence with delight I come,
Loving thy beauty strange and multiple.

Though I may never close to thee draw nigh,
How often have my glances pierced the taut,
Straight fold of thine austerest drapery,
Fast at the end about thine ankle caught!

O dream of poet passing every bound!
My thought hath built a fancy of thy form,
Till it is molten into silver sound,
And boy and girl are one in cadence warm.

O tone divine, O richest tone of earth,
The beautiful, bright statue's counterpart!
Contralto, thou fantastical of birth,
The voice's own Hermaphrodite thou art!

Thou art the plaintive dove, the linnet rare,
Perched on one rose tree, mellow in one note.
Thou art fair Juliet and Romeo fair,
Singing across the night with one warm throat.

Thou art the young wife of the castellan,
Chaffing an amorous page below her bower,—
Upon her balcony the lady wan,
The lover at the base of her high tower.

Thou art the yellow butterfly that swings,
Pursuing soft a butterfly of snow,
In spiral flights and subtle traversings,
One winging high, the other winging low;

The angel flitting up and down the gold
Of the bright stair's aerial extent,
The bell in whose alloy of mighty mould
Arc voice of bronze and voice of silver blent

Yea, melody and harmony art thou,
Song with its true accompaniment, and grace
Matched unto force,—the woman plighting vow
To her Belovèd with a close embrace;

Or thou art Cinderella doomed to spend
Her night before the embers of the fire,
Deep in a conversation with her friend,
The cricket, as the latter hours expire;

Or Arsaces, the great and valorous,
Waging his righteous battle for a realm,
Or Tancred with his breastplate luminous,
Cuirassed and splendid with his sword and helm;

Or Desdemona with her willow song,
Zerlina laughing at Mazetto, or
Malcolm, his plaid upon his shoulder strong.
Thee, O thou dear Contralto, I adore!

For these thou art, thou dearest charm of each,
O fair Contralto, double-throated dove!
The Kaled of a Lara, for thy speech,
Thou mightest, like the lost Gulnare, prove,—

In whose heart-stirring, passionate caress
In one wild, tremulous note there blend and mount
A woman's sigh of plaintive tenderness,
And virile accents from a firmer fount.

EYES OF BLUE

A woman, mystic, sweet,
Whose beauty draws my soul,
Stands silent where the fleet
And singing waters roll.

Her eyes, the mirrored note
Of heaven, merge heaven's blue
Bestarred of lights remote,
With the sea's glaucous hue.

Within their languor set,
Smiles sadness infinite.
Tears make the sparkles wet,
And tender grows the light.

Like sea-gulls from aloft
That graze the ocean free,
Her lashes flutter soft
Upon an azure sea.

As slumbering treasures drowned
Send shimmers lightly up,
Gleams through the tide profound
The King of Thule's cup.

Athwart the weedy swirl
Brilliant, the waves upon,
Shine Cleopatra's pearl,
And ring of Solomon.

The crown to ocean cast,
That Schiller showed to us,
Still under sea caught fast,
Beams clear and luminous.

A magic in that gaze
Draws me, mad venturer!
Thus mermaid's magic ways
Drew Harold Haarfager.

And all my soul unquelled
Adown the gulf betrayed
Dives, to the quest impelled
Of some elusive shade.

The siren fitfully
Displays her body's gleam,
Her breast and arms that ply
Through waves of amorous dream.

The water heaves and falls,
Like breasts with passion's breath.
The breeze insistent calls
To me, and murmureth:

*"Come to my pearly bed!
My ocean arms shall slip
About thee: salt shall spread
To honey on thy lip!*

*Oh, let the billows link
Above us! Thou shalt, warm,
From cup of kisses drink
Oblivion of the storm!"*

Thus sighs the glance that sweeps
From out those sea-blue gates,
Till heart down treacherous deeps
The hymen consummates.

THE TOREADOR'S SERENADE

RONDALLA

Child with airs imperial,
Dove with falcon's eyes for me
Whom thou hatest,—come I shall
Underneath thy balcony!

There, my foot upon the stone,
I shall twang my chords with grace,
Till thy window-pane hath shone
With thy lamplight and thy face.

Let no lad with his guitar
Strum adown the bordering ways.
Mine the road to watch and bar,
Mine alone to sing thy praise.

Let the first my courage brave.
He shall lose his ears, egad!
Who shall howl his love and rave
In a couplet good or bad.

Restless doth my dagger lie.
Come! who'll venture its rebuff?
Who would wear for every sigh
Blood's red flower upon his ruff?

Blood grows weary of its veins;
For it yearns to be displayed.
Night is ominous with rains.
Haste, ye cowards, back to shade!

On, thou braggart, else aroint!
Well thy forearm cover thou.
On! and with my dagger's point
Let me write upon thy brow.

Let them come, alone, in mass:
Firm of foot I bide my place.
For thy glory, as they pass,
Would I slit each paltry face.

O'er the gutter ere thy clear,
Snowy feet shall be defiled,
By the Rood! a bridge I'll rear
With the bones of gallants wild.

I would slay, thy love to wear,
Any foe, yea, even proud
Satan's very self to dare,
So thy sheets became my shroud.

Sightless window, deafened door!
Wilt thou never heed my sounds?
Like a wounded bull I roar,
Maddening the baying hounds.

Drive at least a poor nail then,
Where my heart may hang inert.
For I want it not again,
With its madness and its hurt!

NOSTALGIA OF THE OBELISKS

THE OBELISK IN PARIS

Distant from my native land,
Ever dull with ennui's pain,
Lonely monolith I stand,

In the snow and frost and rain.

And my shaft, once burnt to red
In a flaming heaven's glare,
Taketh on a pallor dead
In this never azure air.

Oh, to stand again before
Luxor's pylons, and the dear,
Grim Colossi!—be once more
My vermilion brother near!

Oh, to pierce the changeless blue,
Where of old my peak upwon,
With my shadow sharp and true
Trace the footsteps of the sun!

Once, O Rameses! my tall mass
Not the ages could destroy.
But it fell cut down like grass.
Paris took it for a toy.

Now my granite form behold:
Sentinel the livelong day
Twixt a spurious temple old,
And the *Chambre des Députés!*

On the spot where *Louis Seize*
Died, they set me, meaningless,
With my secret which outweighs
Cycles of forgetfulness.

Sparrows lean defile my head,
Where the ibis used to light,
And the fierce gypaetus spread
Talons gold and plumage white.

And the Seine, the drip of street,
Unclean river, crime's abyss,
Now befouls mine ancient feet,
Which the Nile was wont to kiss:

Hoary Nile that, crowned and stern,
To its lotus-laden shores
From its ever bended urn
Crocodiles for gudgeon pours!

Golden chariots gem-belit
Of the Pharaohs' pageanting
Grazed my side the cab-wheels hit,
Bearing out the last poor king.

By my granite shape of yore
Passed the priests, with stately pschent,
And the mystic boat upbore,
Emblemed and magnificent.

But to-day, profane and wan,
Camped between two fountains wide,
I behold the courtesan
In her carriage lounge with pride.

From the first of year to last
I must see the vulgar show—
Solons to the Council passed,
Lovers to the woods that go!

Oh, what skeletons abhorred,
Hence, an hundred years, this race!
Couched, unbandaged, on a board,
In a nailed coffin's place.

Never hypogeum kind,
Safe from foul corruption's fear;
Never hall where century-lined
Generations disappear!

Sacred soil of hieroglyph,
And of sacerdotal laws,
Where the Sphinx is waiting stiff,
Sharpening on the stone its claws,—

Soil of crypt where echoes part,
Where the vulture swoopeth free,
All my being,—all my heart,
O mine Egypt, weeps for thee!

THE OBELISK IN LUXOR

Where the wasted columns brood,
Lonely sentinel stand I,
In eternal solitude
Facing all infinity.

Dumb, with beauty unendowed,
To the horizon limitless
Spreads earth's desert like a shroud
Stained by yellow suns that press.

While above it, blue and clean,
Is another desert cast—
Sky where cloud is never seen,
Pure, implacable, and vast.

And the Nile's great water-course
Glazed with leaden pellicle
Wrinkled by the river-horse
Gleameth dead, unlustreful.

All about the flaming isles,
By a turbid water spanned,
Hot, rapacious crocodiles
Swoon and sob upon the sand.

Perching motionless, alone,
Ibis, bird of classic fame,
From a carven slab of stone
Reads the moon-god's sacred name.

Jackals howl, hyenas grin,
Famished hawks descend and cry.
Down the heavy air they spin,
Commas black against the sky.

These the sounds of solitude,
Where the sphinxes yawn and doze,
Dull and passionless of mood,
Weary of their endless pose.

Child of sand's reflected shine,
And of sun-rays fiercely bent,
Is there ennui like to thine,
Spleen of luminous Orient?

Thou it was cried "Halt!" of yore
To satiety of kings.
Thou hast crushed me more and more
With thine awful weight of wings.

Here no zephyr of the sea
Wipes the tears from skies that fill.
Time himself leans wearily
On the palaces long still.

Naught shall touch the features terse
Of this dull, eternal spot.
In this changing universe,
Only Egypt changeth not!

When the ennui never ends,

And I yearn a friend to hold,
I've the fellahs, mummies, friends,
Of the dynasties of old.

I behold a pillar pale,
Or a chipped Colossus note,
Watch a distant, gleaming sail
Up and down the Nile afloat.

Oh, to seek my brother's side,
In a Paris wondrous, grand,
With his stately form to bide,
In the public place to stand!

For he looks on living men,
And they scan his pictures wrought
By an hieratic pen,
To be read by vision-thought.

Fountains fair as amethyst
On his granite lightly pour
All their irisated mist.
He is growing young once more.

Ah! yet he and I had birth
From Syene's veins of red.
But I keep my spot of earth.
He is living. I am dead.

VETERANS OF THE OLD GUARD

(December 15)

Driven by ennui from my room,
I walked along the Boulevard.
'Twas in December's mist and gloom.
A bitter wind was blowing hard.

And there I saw—strange thing to see!—
In drizzle and in daylight drear,
From out their dark abodes let free,
Dim, spectral shadow-shapes appear.

Yet 't is by night's uncanny hours,
By pallid German moonbeams cast
On old dilapidated towers,
That ghosts are wont to wander past.

It is by night's effulgent star
In dripping robes that elves intrigue
To bear beneath the nenuphar
Their dancer dead of his fatigue.

At night's mysterious tide hath been
The great review—of ballad writs—
Wherein the Emperor, dimly seen,
Numbered the shades of Austerlitz.

But phantoms near the *Gymnase*?—yea,
And wet and miry phantoms, too,
And close to the *Variétés*,
And not a shroud to trick the view!

With yellow teeth and stained dress,
And mossy skull and pierced shoon,
Paris—Montmartre—behold it press,—
Death in the very light of noon!

Ah, 't is a picture to be seen!
Three veteran ghosts in uniform
Of the Old Guard, and, spare and lean,
Two ghost-hussars in daylight's storm.

The lithograph, you would surmise,
Wherein one ray shines down upon
The dead, that Raffet deifies,
That pass and shout "Napoleon!"

No dead are these, whom nightly drum
May rouse to battle fires that burn,
But stragglers of the Old Guard, come
To celebrate the grand return!

Since fighting in the fight supreme,
One has grown thin, another stout;
The coats that fitted once now seem
Too small, too loose, or draggled out.

O epic rags! O tatters light,
Starred with a cross! Heroic things
Of ridicule, ye gleam more bright,
More beautiful than robes of kings!

Limp feathers fluttering adorn
The tawny colbacks worn and grim.
The bullet and the moth have torn
And riddled well the dolmans dim.

Their leathern breeches loosely hang
In furrows on their lank thigh-bones,
Their rusty sabres drag and clang,
As heavily they scrape the stones.

Or some round belly firm and fat,
Squeezed tight in tether labour-donned,
Makes mirth and jest to chuckle at—
Old hero quaint and cheveroned!

But do not mock and jeer, my lad.
Salute him, rather, and, believe,
Achilles he, of Iliad
That Homer's self could not conceive.

Respect these men with battle signs
That twenty skies have painted brown;
Their scars that lengthen out the lines
Of wrinkles age has written down;

Their skin whose colour deep and dun,
Bared to the fronts of many foes,
Tells us of Egypt's burning sun;
Their locks that tell of Russia's snows.

And if they shake, no longer strong?
Ah! Beresina's wind was cold.
And if they limp? The way was long,
From Cairo unto Vilna told.

If they be stiff? They'd but a flag
For sheet to hold their bodies warm.
And if a sleeve be loose, poor rag?
'T is that a bullet tore an arm.

Mock not these veteran shapes bizarre,
At whom the urchin laughs and gapes.
They were the day, of which we are
The evening, and the night, perhaps,—

Remembering if we forget—
Red lancer, grenadier in blue,
With faces to the Column set,
As to their only altar true.

There, proud of pain each scar denotes,
And of long miseries gone by,
They feel beneath their shabby coats
The heart of France beat mightily.

And so our smiles are steeped in tears,
Seeing this holy carnival,

This picture wan that reappears,
Like morning after midnight's ball.

And, cleaving heaven its own to claim,
Wide the Grand Army's eagle spreads
Its golden wings, like glory's flame,
Above their dear and hallowed heads.

SEA-GLOOM

The sea-gulls restless gleam and glance,
The mad white coursers cleave the length
Of ocean as they rear and prance
And toss their manes in stormy strength.

The day is ending. Raindrops choke
The sunset furnaces. The gloom
Brings the great steamboat spitting smoke,
And beating down its long black plume.

And I, more wan than heaven wide,
For land of soot and fog am bound,
For land of smoke and suicide—
And right good weather have I found!

How eagerly I now would pierce
The gulf that groweth wild and hoar!
The vessel rocks. The waves are fierce.
The salt wind freshens more and more.

Ah! bitter is my soul's unrest.
The very ocean sighing heaves
In pity its unhopeful breast,
Like some good friend that knows and grieves.

Let be—lost love's despair supreme!
Let be—illusions fair that rose
And fell from pedestals of dream!
One leap! The dark wet ridges close.

Away! ye sufferings gone by,
That evermore returning brood,
And press the wounds that sleeping lie,
To make them weep afresh their blood.

Away! regret, whose crimson heart
Hath seven swords. Yea, One, maybe,
Doth know the anguish and the smart—
Mother of Seven Sorrows, She!

Each ghostly grief sinks down the vast,
And struggles with the waves that throb
To close about it, and at last
Drown it forever with a sob.

Soul's ballast, treasures of life's hand,
Sink! and we'll wreck together down.
Pale on the pillow of the sand
I'll rest me well at evening brown.

But, now, a woman, as I gaze,
Sits in the bridge's darker nook,
A woman, who doth sweetly raise
Her eyes to mine in one long look.

'T is Sympathy with outstretched arms,
Who smileth to me through the gray
Of dusk with all her thousand charms.
Hail, azure eyes! Green sea, away!

The sea-gulls restless gleam and glance.
The mad white coursers cleave the length
Of Ocean as they rear and prance

And toss their manes in stormy strength.

TO A ROSE-COLOURED GOWN

How I love you in the robes
That disrobe so well your charms!
Your dear breasts, twin ivory globes,
And your bare sweet pagan arms.

Frail as frailest wing of bee,
Fresher than the heart of rose,
All the fabric delicate, free,
Round your body gleams and glows,

Till from skin to silken thread,
Silver shivers lightly win,
And the rosy gown have shed
Roses on the creamy skin.

Whence have you the mystic thing,
Made of very flesh of you,
Living mesh to mix and cling
With your glorious body's hue?

Did you take it from the rud
Of the dawn? From Venus' shell?
From a breast-flower nigh to bud?
From a rose about to swell?

Doth the texture have its dye
From some blushing bashfulness?
No—your portraits do not lie—
Beauty beauty's form shall guess!

Down you cast your garment fair,
Art-dreamed, sweet Reality,
Like Borghese's princess, rare
For Canova's mastery!

Ah! the folds are lips of fire
Sweeping round your lovely form
In a folly of desire,
With a weft of kisses warm!

THE WORLD'S MALICIOUS

Ah, little one, the world's malicious!
With mocking smiles thy beauty greeting.
It says that in thy breast capricious
A watch, and not a heart, is beating.

Yet like the sea thy breast is swelling
With all the wild, tumultuous power
A tide of blood sends pulsing, welling,
Beneath thy flesh in life's young hour.

Ah, little one, the world is spiteful!
It says thy vivid eyes are fooling,
And that they have their charm delightful
From faithful, diplomatic schooling.

Yet on thy lashes' shifting curtain
An iridescent tear-drop trembles,
Like dew unbidden and uncertain,
That no well-water's gleam resembles.

Ah, little one, the world reviles thee!
It says thou hast no spirit's favour,
That verse, which seemingly beguiles thee,
Hath unto thee a Sanskrit savour.

Yet to thy crimson lips inviting,
Intelligence's bee of laughter,
At every flash of wit alighting,
Allures and gleams, and lingers after.

Ah, little one, I know the trouble!
Thou lovest me. The world, it guesses.
Leave me, and hear its praises bubble:—
"What heart, what spirit, she possesses!"

INES DE LAS SIERRAS

TO PETRA CAMARA

In Spain, as Nodier's pen has told,
Three officers in night's mid hours
Came on a castle dark and old,
With sunken eaves and mouldering towers,

A true Anne Radcliffe type it was,
With ruined halls and crumbling rooms
And windows graven by the claws
Of Goya's bats that ranged the glooms.

Now while they feasted, gazed upon
By ancient portraits standing guard
In their ancestral frames, anon
A sudden cry rang thitherward.

Forth from a distant corridor
That many a moonbeam's pallid hue
Fretted fantastically o'er,
A wondrous phantom sped in view.

With bodice high and hair comb-tipped,
A woman, running, dancing, hied.
Adown the dappled gloom she dipped,—
An iridescent form descried.

A languid, dead, voluptuous mood
Filled every act's abandon brief,
Till at the door she stopped, and stood
Sinister, lovely past belief.

Her raiment crumpled in the tomb
Showed here and there a spangle's foil.
At every start a faded bloom
Dropped petals in her hair's black coil.

A dull scar crossed her bloodless throat,
As of a knife. Like rattle chill
Of teeth, her castanets she smote
Full in their faces awed and still.

Ah, poor bacchante, sad of grace!
So wild the sweetness of her spell,
The curvèd lips in her white face
Had lured a saint from heaven to hell!

Like darkling birds her eyelashes
Upon her cheek lay fluttering light.
Her kirtle's swinging cadences
Displayed her limbs of lustrous white.

She bowed amid a mist of gyres,
And with her hand, as dancers may,
Like flowers she gathered up desires,
And grouped them in a bright bouquet.

Was it a wraith or woman seen,
A thing of dreams, or blood and flesh,
The flame that burst from out the sheen
Of beauty's undulating mesh?

It was a phantom of the past,
It was the Spain of olden keep,
Who, at the sound of cheer at last,
Upbounded from her icy sleep,

In one bolero mad, supreme,
Rough-resurrected, powerful,
Showing beneath her kirtle's gleam
The ribbon wrested from the bull.

About her throat the scar of red
The deathblow was, dealt silently
Unto a generation dead
By every new-born century.

I saw this self-same phantom fleet,
All Paris ringing with her praise,
When soft, diaphanous, mystic, sweet,
La Petra Camara held its gaze,—

Closing her eyes with languor rare,
Impassive, passionate of art,
And, like the murdered Ines fair,
Dancing, a dagger in her heart.

ODELET

AFTER ANACREON

Poet of her face divine,
Curb this over-zeal of thine!
Doves wing frightened from the ground
At a step's too sudden sound,
And her passion is a dove,
Frighted by too bold a love.
Mute as marble Hermes wait
By the blooming hawthorn-gate.
Thou shalt see her wings expand,
She shall flutter to thy hand.
On thy forehead thou shalt know
Something like a breath of snow,
Or of pinions pure that beat
In a whirl of whiteness sweet.
And the dove, grown venturesome,
Shall upon thy shoulder come,
And its rosy beak shall sip
From the nectar of thy lip.

SMOKE

Beneath yon tree sits humble
A squalid, hunchbacked house,
With roof precipitous,
And mossy walls that crumble.

Bolted and barred the shanty.
But from its must and mould,
Like breath of lips in cold,
Comes respiration scanty.

A vapour upward welling,
A slender, silver streak,
To God bears tidings meek
Of the soul in the little dwelling.

APOLLONIA

Fair Apollonia, name august,
Greek echo of the sacred vale,
Great name whose harmonies robust
Thee as Apollo's sister hail!

Struck with the plectrum on the lyre,
And in melodious beauty sung,
Brighter than love's and glory's fire,
It resonant rings upon the tongue.

At such a classic sound as this,
The elves plunge down their German lake.
Alone the Delphian worthy is
So lustreful a name to take,—

Pythia! when in her flowing dress
She mounts her place with feet unshod,
And, priestess white and prophetess,
Wistful awaits the tardy god.

THE BLIND MAN

A blind man walks without the gate,
Wild-staring as an owl by day,
Fumbling his flute betimes and late,
Along the way.

He pipeth, weary wretch and worn,
A roundel shrill and obsolete.
The spectre of a dog forlorn
Attends his feet.

For him the days go lustreless.
Invisible life with beat and roar
He heareth like a torrent press
Around, before.

What strange chimeras haunt his head
And on his mind's bedarkened space,
What characters unheard, unread,
Doth fancy trace?

Thus down Venetian leads of doom,
Wan prisoners ensepulchred
In palpable, undying gloom
Have graven their word.

And yet perchance when life's last spark
Death speeds unto eternal night,
The tomb-bred soul, within the dark,
Shall see the light.

SONG

In April earth is white and rose
Like youth and love, now tendering
Her smiles, now fearful to disclose
Her virgin heart unto the Spring.

In June, a little pale and worn,
And full at heart of vague desire,
She hideth in the yellow corn,
With sunburned Summer to respire.

In August, wild Bacchante, she
Her bosom bares to Autumn shapes,
And on the tiger-skin flung free,
Draws forth the purple blood of grapes.

And in December, shrivelled, old,
Bepowdered white from foot to head,
In dream she wakens Winter cold,
That sleeps beside her in her bed.

WINTER FANTASIES

I

Red of nose and white of face,
Bent his desk of ice before,
Winter doth his theme retrace
In the season's quatuor,—

Beating measure and the ground
With a frozen foot for us,
Singing with uncertain sound
Olden tunes and tremulous.

And as Haendel's wig sublime
Trembling shook its powder, oft
Flutter as he taps his time
Snow-flakes in a flurry soft.

II

In the Tuileries fount the swan
Meets the ice, and all the trees,
As in land of fairies wan,
Arc bedecked with filigrees.

Flowers of frost in vases low
Stand unquickened and unstirred,
And we trace upon the snow
Starred footsteps of a bird.

Where with lightest raiment spanned,
Venus was with Phocion met,
Now has Winter's hoary hand
Clodion's "Chilly Maiden" set.

III

Women pass in ermine dress,
Sable, too, and miniver,
And the shivering goddesses
Haste to don the fashion's fur.

Venus of the Brine comes forth,
In her hooded mantle's fluff.
Flora, blown by breezes North,
Hides her fingers in her muff.

And the shepherdesses round
Of Coustou and Coysevox,
Finding scarves too light have wound
Furs about their throats of snow.

IV

Heavy doth the North bedrape
Paris mode from foot to top,
As o'er fair Athenian shape
Scythian should a bearskin drop.

Over winter's garments meet,
Everywhere we see the fur,
Flung with Russian pomp, and sweet
With the fragrant vetiver.

Pleasure's laughing glances feast
Far amid the statues, where
From the bristles of a beast
Bursts a Venus torso fair!

If you venture hitherward,
With a tender veil to cheat
Glances over-daring, guard
Well your Andalusian feet!

Snow shall fashion like a frame
On your foot's impression rare,
Signing with each step your name
On the carpet soft and vair.

Thus were surly master led
To the hidden trysting-place,
Where his Psyche, faintly red,
Were beheld in Love's embrace.

THE BROOK

Near a great water's waste
A brook mid rock and spar
Came bubbling up in haste,
As though to travel far.

It sang: "What joy to rise!
'T was dismal under ground.
I mirror now the skies.
My banks with green abound.

"Forget-me-nots—how fair!
Beseech me from the grass;
Wings frolic in the air,
And graze me as they pass.

"I yet shall be—who knows?—
A river winding down,
And greeting as it flows
Valley and cliff and town.

"I'll broider with my spray
Stone bridge and granite quay,
And bear great ships away
Unto the long wide sea."

So planned it, babbling by,
As water boiling fast
Within a basin high,
To top its brim at last.

Cradle by tomb is crossed.
Giants are early dead.
Scarce born, the brook was lost
Within a lake's deep bed.

TOMBS AND FUNERAL PYRES

No grim cadaver set its flaw
In happy days of pagan art,
And man, content with what he saw,
Stripped not the veil from beauty's heart.

No form once loved that buried lay,
A hideous spectre to appal,
Dropped bit by bit its flesh away,
As one by one our garments fall;

Or, when the days had drifted by
And sundered shrank the vaulted stones,
Showed naked to the daring eye
A motley heap of rattling bones.

But, rescued from the funeral pyre,

Life's ashen, light residuum
Lay soft, and, spent the cleansing fire,
The urn held sweet the body's sum,—

The sum of all that earth may claim
Of the soul's butterfly, soul passed,—
All that is left of spended flame
Upon the tripod at the last.

Between acanthus leaves and flowers
In the white marble gaily went
Loves and bacchantes all the hours,
Dancing about the monument.

At most, a little Genius wild
Trampled a flame out in the gloom,
And art's harmonious flowering smiled
Upon the sadness of the tomb.

The tomb was then a pleasant place.
As bed of child that slumbereth,
With many a fair and laughing grace
The joy of life surrounded death.

Then death concealed its visage gaunt,
Whose sockets deep, and sunken nose,
And railing mouth our spirits haunt,
Past any dream that horror shows.

The monster in flesh raiment clad
Hid deep its spectral form uncouth,
And virgin glances, beauty-glad,
Sped frankly to the naked youth.

'Twas only at Trimalchio's board
A little skeleton made sign,
An ivory plaything unabhorred,
To bid the feasters to the wine.

Gods, whom Art ever must avow,
Ruled the marmoreal sky's demesne.
Olympus yields to Calvary, now;
Jupiter to the Nazarene!

Voices are calling, "Pan is dead!"
Dusk deepeneth within, without.
On the black sheet of sorrow spread,
The whitened skeleton gleams out.

It glideth to the headstone bare,
And signs it with a paraph wild,
And hangs a wreath of bones to glare
Upon the charnel death-defiled.

It lifts the coffin-lid and quaffs
The musty air, and peers within,
Displays a ring of ribs, and laughs
Forever with its awful grin.

It urges unto Death's fleet dance
The Emperor, the Pope, the King,
And makes the pallid steed to prance,
And low the doughty warrior fling;—

Behind the courtesan steals up,
And makes wry faces in her glass;
Drinks from the sick man's trembling cup;
Delves in the miser's golden mass.

Above the team it whirls the thong,
With bone for goad to hurry it,
Follows the plowman's way along,
And guides the furrows to a pit.

It comes, the uninvited guest,
And lurks beneath the banquet chair,
Unseen from the pale bride to wrest

Her little silken garter fair.

The number swells: the young give hand
Unto the old, and none may flee.
The irresistible saraband
Compelleth all humanity.

Forth speeds the tall, ungainly fright,
Playing the rebeck, dancing mad,
Against the dark a frame of white,
As Holbein drew it—horror-sad;—

Or if the times be frivolous,
Trusses the shroud about its hips:
Then like a Cupid mischievous,
Across the ballet-room it skips,

And unto carven tombs it flies,
Where marchionesses rest demure,
Weary of love, in exquisite guise,
In chapels dim and pompadour.

But hide thy hideous form at last,
Worm-eaten actor! Long enough
In death's wan melodrama cast,
Thou'st played thy part without rebuff.

Come back, come back, O ancient Art!
And cover with thy marble's gleam
This Gothic skeleton! Each part
Consume, ye flames of fire supreme!

If man be then a creature made
In God's own image, to aspire,
When shattered must the image fade,
Let the lone fragments feed the fire!

Immortal form! Rise thou in flame
Again to beauty's fount of bloom
Let not thy clay endure the shame,
The degradation of the tomb!

BJORN'S BANQUET

Bjorn, odd and lonely cenobite,
High on a barren rock's plateau,
Far out of time's and the world's sight,
Dwells in a castle none may know.

No modern thought may violate
His darkened and secluded hall.
Bjorn bolts with care his postern-gate,
And barricades his castle wall.

When others wait the rising sun,
He from his mouldering parapet
Still contemplates the valley dun,
Where he beheld the red sun set.

Securely doth the past enlock
His retrospective spirit lone.
The pendulum within his clock
Was broken centuries ago.

Waking the echoes wanders he
Beneath his feudal arches drear,
His ringing footsteps seemingly
Followed by other footsteps clear.

Nor priests nor friends with him make bold,
Nor burghers plain nor gentlemen;
But his ancestral portraits hold
A parley with him now and then.

And of a midnight, sparing him
The ennui of a lonely cup,
Bjorn, harbouring a gloomy whim,
Invites his ancestors to sup.

Forth stepping at the hour's grim stroke,
Come phantoms armed from foot to head.
Bjorn, quaking, to the solemn folk
Proffers with state the goblet red.

To seat itself each panoply
With joints that grumble in revolt
Maketh an angle with its knee,
That creaketh like a rusty bolt;

Till all at once the suit of mail,
Rude coffin of an absent bulk,
Cleaving the silence with a wail,
Falls in its chair, a clanking hulk.

Landgraves and burgraves, spare and stout,
Come down from heaven or up from hell,
The iron guests of many a bout,
Arc bound within the midnight spell.

Their blow-indented helmets bear
Heraldic beasts that bay and grin,
Athwart the shades the red lights glare
On crest and ancient lambrequin.

Each empty, open casque now seems
Like to the helms of heraldries,
Save for two strange and livid gleams
That issue forth in threatening wise.

Seated is each old combatant
In the vast hall, at Bjorn's behest,
And the uncertain shadows grant
A swarthy page to every guest.

The liquors in the candle-shine
Take on suspicious purples. All
The viands in their gravy's wine
Grow lurid and fantastical.

Sometimes a breastplate glitters bright,
A morion speeds its flashes wroth,
A rondelle from a hand of might
Drops heavily upon the cloth.

Heard are the softly flapping wings
Of unseen bats. The shimmer flicks
Upon the carven panellings
The banners of the heretics.

The stiffly bended gauntlets play
In the dull glow incarnadine,
And, creaking, to the helmets gray
Pour bumpers full of Rhenish wine;

Or with their daggers keen of blade
Carve boars upon the plates of gold.
The corridor's uncanny shade
Hath clamours vague and manifold.

The orgy waxes riotous—
One could not hear God's voice for it—
For when a phantom sups from home,
What wrong if he carouse a bit?

Now every ghostly care they drown
With jokes and jeers and loud guffaws.
A wine-cascade is running down
Each rusty helmet's iron jaws.

The full and rounded hauberks bulge,
And to the neck the river mounts.

Their eyes with liquid fire effulge.
They're howling drunk, these valiant counts!

One through the salad idly wields
A foot; another scolds the sick.
Some like the lions on their shields
With gaping mouths the fancy trick.

In voice still hoarse from silence long
In the tomb's dampness and restraint,
Max playfully intones a song
Of thirteen hundred, crude and quaint.

Albrecht, of quarrelsome repute,
Stirs right and left a war intense,
And drubs about with fist and foot,
As once he drubbed the Saracens.

And heated Fritz his helmet doffs,
Not deeming he's a headless trunk.
Then down pell-mell mid roars and scoffs
Together roll the phantoms drunk.

Ah! 'T is a hideous battle-ground,
Where pots and weapons bang and scud,
Where every dead man through some wound
Doth vomit victuals up for blood.

And Bjorn observes them, sad of eye,
And haggard, while athwart the panes
The dawn comes creeping stealthily,
With blue, thin lights, and darkness wanes.

The prostrate mass of rusty brown
Pales like a torch in daylight's room,
Until the drunkest pours him down
At last the stirrup-cup of doom.

The cock crows loud. And with the day
Once more with haughty mien and bold,
Their revel-weary heads they lay
Upon their marble pillows cold.

THE WATCH

Now twice my watch have I taken,
And twice as I've gazing sat,
The hand has pointed unshaken
To one—and it's long past that!

The clock's light cadences linger.
The sun-dial laughs from the lawn,
And points with a long, gaunt finger
The path that its shade has drawn.

A steeple ironically
Calls the true time to me.
The belfry bell makes tally
And taunts me with accents free.

Ah, dead is the wretch! I sought not,
Last night, to my reverie sold,
Its ruby circle! I thought not
Of glimmering key of gold!

No longer I see with pleasure
The spring of the balance-wheel
Flit hither and there at measure,
Like a butterfly form of steel.

When Hippogriff bears me, yearning,
Through skies of another sphere,
My soul-reft body goes turning

Wherever the steed may veer.

Eternity still is giving
Its gaze to the lifeless face.
Time seeketh the heart once living,
His ear at the old watch-case,—

That heart whose regular motion
Was followed within my breast
By wave-beats of life's full ocean!
Ah well! the watch is at rest.

But its brother is beating ever,
Steadfast and sturdy kept
By One Who forgetteth never,—
Who wound it the while I slept.

THE MERMAIDS

There's a sketch you may discover
By an artist of degree
Rime and metre quarrel over—
Théophile Kniatowski.

On the snowy foam that fringes
All the mantle of the brine,
Radiant with the sunlight's tinges,
Three mermaidens softly shine.

Like the drownèd lilies dancing
Turn they, as the spiral wave
Buoys their bodies hiding, glancing,
As they sink and rise and lave.

In their golden hair for dowers
They have twined with beauteous hands
Shells for diadems, and flowers
From the deep wild under sands.

Oysters pour a pearly hoarding
Their enrapturing throats to gem,
And the wave, its wealth according,
Tosses other pearls to them.

Borne above the crest of ocean
By a Triton hand and strong,
Twine they, beautiful of motion,
Under gleaming tresses long.

And the crystal water under,
Down the blue the glories pale
Of each lovely form of wonder,
Tapered to a shimmering tail.

Ah! But who the scaly swimmers
Would behold in modern day—
When a bust of ivory glimmers,
Cool from kisses of the spray?

Look! Oh, mingled truth and fable!
O'er the horizon steady plied,
Comes a vessel proud and stable,
Toward the mermaids terrified!

Tricoloured its flag is flaunted,
And it vomits vapour red,
And it beats the billows daunted,
Till the nymphs dive low for dread.

Fearlessly they did beleaguer
Tliremes immemorial,
And the dolphins arched and eager
Waited for Arion's call.

This of old. But now the steamer—
Vulcan hurtling Venus' charms,—
Would destroy the siren gleamer,
With her fair, nude tail and arms.

Farewell myth! The boat that passes
Thinks to see on silver bar,
Where the widening billow glasses,
Porpoises that plunge afar.

TWO LOVE-LOCKS

Reviving languorous dreaming
Of conquered, conquering eye,
Upon thy forehead gleaming,
Two fairest love-locks lie.

I see them softly nesting,
Of wondrous, golden sheen,
Like little wheels come resting
From car of Mab the Queen;

Or bows of Cupid ready
To let the arrows fly,
Bent circlewise and steady
For archer's mastery.

One heart have I of passion.
Yet two love-locks are thine!
O brow of fickle fashion!
Whose heart is caught with mine?

THE TEA-ROSE

Most beautiful of all the roses
Is this half-open bud, whose bare,
Unpetalled heart a dream discloses
Of carmine very faint and fair.

I wonder, was it once a white rose,
Till butterfly too ardent spoke
A language soft, and in the light rose
A shy, warmer tint awoke?

Its delicate fabric hath the colour
Of lovely and velutinous skin.
Its perfect freshness maketh duller
Envirning hues incarnadine.

For as some rare patrician features
Eclipse the brows of ruddier gleam,
So masquerade as rustic creatures
Gay sisters of this rose supreme.

But, dear one, if your hand caress it,
And raise it for its sweet perfume,
Ere yet your velvet cheek shall press it,
'T will fade before a fairer bloom.

No rose in all the world so tender,
That gloweth in the springtime fleet,
But shall its every charm surrender
Unto your seventeen years, my sweet.

A face hath more than petal's power:
A pure heart's blood that blushing flows
O'er youth's nobility, is flower
High sovereign over every rose.

CARMEN

Slender is Carmen, of lissome guise,
Her hair is black as the midnight's heart;
Dark circles are under her gypsy eyes,
Her swarthy skin is the devil's art.

The women will mock at her form and face;
But the men will follow her all the day.
Toledo's Archbishop (now save His Grace!)
Tones his mass at her knees, they say.

Nestled in warmth of her amber neck
Lies a massive coil, till she fling it down
To be a raiment to frame and deck
Her delicate body from foot to crown.

Then out from her pallid face with power
Her witching, terrible smiles compel.
Her mouth is a mystical poison-flower
That hath drawn its crimson from hearts in hell.

The haughtiest beauty must yield her fame,
When this strange vision shall dusk her sky.
For Carmen rules, and her glance's flame
Shall set the torch to satiety.

Wild, graceless Carmen!—Though yet this be,
Savour she hath of a world undreamt,
Of a world of wonder, whose salt young sea
Provoked a Venus to rise and tempt.

WHAT THE SWALLOWS SAY

AN AUTUMN SONG

The dry, brown leaves have dropped forlorn,
And lie amid the golden grass.
The wind is fresh both eve and morn.
But where are summer days, alas!

The tardy flowers the autumn stayed
For latter treasures now unfold.
The dahlia dons its gay cockade,
Its flaming cap the marigold.

Rain stirs the pool with pelt and shock.
The swallows to the roof repair,
Confabulating as they flock
And feel the winter in the air.

By hundreds gather they to vow
Their little yearnings and intents.
Saith one: "'T is fair in Athens now,
Upon the sun-warm battlements!

"Thither I go to take my nap
Upon the Parthenon high and free.
My cornice nest is in the gap
A cannon-ball made there for me."

And one: "A ceiling meets my needs
Within a Smyrna coffee-house,
Where Hadjis tell their amber beads
Upon the threshold luminous.

"I go and come above the folk,
While their chibouques their clouds upfling.
I skim along through silver smoke,
And graze the turbans with my wing."

Another: "There's a triglyph gray

On one of Baalbec's temples high.
'T is there I go to brood all day
Above my little family."

Another calleth, "My address
Is settled: 'At the Knights of Rhodes.'
In a dark colonnade's recess
I'll make the snuggest of abodes."

"Old age hath made me slow for flight,"
Declares a fifth; "I'll rest at even
On Malta's terraces of white,
Where blue sea melts to blue of heaven."

A sixth: "In Cairo is my home,
Up in a minaret's retreat:
A twig or two, a bit of loam—
My winter lodgings are complete."

A last: "The Second Cataract
Shall mark my place—the nest of brown
A granite king doth hold intact
Within the circle of his crown."

And all together sing: "What miles
To-morrow shall have stretched beneath
Our fleeing swarm:—remembered isles,
Snow peaks, vast waters, lands of heath!"

With calls and cries and beat of wings,
Grown eager now and venturesome,
The swallows hold their twitterings,
To see the blight of winter come.

And I—I understand them all,
Because the poet is a bird,—
Oh! but a sorry bird, and thrall
To a great lack, pressed heavenward.

It's Oh for wings! to seek the star,
To count the seas when day is done,
To breast the air with swallows far,
To verdant spring, to golden sun!

CHRISTMAS

Black is the sky and white the ground.
O ring, ye bells, your carol's grace!
The Child is born! A love profound
Beams o'er Him from His Mother's face.

No silken woof of costly show
Keeps off the bitter cold from Him.
But spider-webs have drooped them low,
To be His curtain soft and dim.

Now trembles on the straw downspread
The Little Child, the Star beneath.
To warm Him in His holy bed,
Upon Him ox and ass do breathe.

Snow hangs its fringes on the byre.
The roof stands open to the tryst
Of aureoled saints, that sweetly choir
To shepherds, "Come, behold the Christ!"

THE DEAD CHILD'S PLAYTHINGS

Marie comes no more at call.
She has wandered from her play.

Ah, how pitifully small
Was the coffin borne away!

See—about the nursery floor
All her little heritage:
Rubber ball and battledore,
Tattered book and coloured page.

Poor forsaken doll! in vain
Stretch your arms. She will not come.
Stopped forever is the train,
And the music-box is dumb.

Some one touched it soft, apart,
Where the silence is her name.
And what sinking of the heart
At the plaintive note that came!

Ah, the anguish! when the tomb
Robs the cradle; when bereft
We discover in the gloom
Child toys that an angel left.

AFTER WRITING MY DRAMATIC REVIEW

My columns are ranged and steady,
Upbearing, though sad forespent,
The newspaper pediment,
And my review is ready.

Now for a week, poetaster,
My door is bolted. Away,
Thou still-born masterpiece,—aye,
Till Monday I am my master.

No melodrama shall whiten
My labour with threadbare leaves.
The warp that my fancy weaves
With silken flowers shall brighten.

Brief moment my spirit's warder,
Ye voices of soul that float,
I'll hearken your sorrow's note,
Nor verses evoke to order.

Then deep in my glass regaining
The health of a day gone by,—
Old visions for company—
The bloom of my vintage draining,

The wine of my thought I'll measure,
Wine virgin of alien glow,
Grapes trodden by life, that flow
From my heart at my heart's own pleasure!

THE CASTLE OF REMEMBRANCE

Before my hearth with head low-bowed
I dream, and strive to reach again,
Across the misty past's gray cloud,
Unto Remembrance's domain,

Where tree and house and upland way
Are blurred and blue like passing ghosts,
And the eye, ponder though it may,
Consults in vain the guiding-posts.

Now gropingly to gain a sight
Of all the buried world, I press
Through mystic marge of shade and light

And limbo of forgetfulness.

But white, diaphanous Memory stands,
Where many roadways meet and spread,
Like Ariadne, in my hands
Thrusting her little ball of thread.

Henceforth the way is all secure.
The shrouded sun hath reappeared,
And o'er the trees with vision sure
I see the castle tower upreared.

Beneath the boughs where day grows dark
With shower on shower of leaves down-poured
The dear old path through moss and bark
Still lengthens far its narrow cord.

But creeping-plant and bramble-spray
Have wrought a net to daunt me now.
The stubborn branch I force away
Swings fiercely back to lash my brow.

I come upon the house at last.
No window lit with lamp or face,
No breath of smoke from gables vast,
To touch with life the mouldering place!

Bridges are crumbling. Moats are still,
And slimed with rank, green refuse-flowers,
And tortuous waves of ivy fill
The crevices and choke the towers.

The portico in moonlight wanes.
Time sculptures it to suit his whim.
And with the wash of many rains
My coloured coat of arms is dim.

The door I open eagerly.
The ancient hinges creak and halt.
A breath of dampness wafts to me
The musty odour of the vault.

The hairy nettle sharp of sting,
The coarse and broad-leafed burdock weed
In court-yard nooks are prospering,
By spreading hemlocks canopied.

Upon two marble monsters near,
That guard the mossy steps of stone,
The shadow of a tree falls clear,
That in my absence has upgrown.

Sudden the lion sentinels raise
Their paws, aggressive and malign,
And challenge me with their white gaze;
But soft I breathe the countersign.

I pass. The old dog menaceth,
But falls back hushed, the shades amid.
My resonant footstep wakeneth
Crouched echoes in their corners hid.

Through yellow panes of glass a ray
Of dubious light creeps down the hall
Where ancient tapestries display
Apollo's fortunes from the wall.

Fair tree-bound Daphne still with grace
Stretches her tufted fingers green.
But in the amorous god's embrace
She fades, a formless phantom seen.

I watch divine Apollo stand,
Herdsman to acarus-riddled sheep,
The Muses Nine, a haggard band,
Upon a faded Pindus weep;

While Solitude in scanty gown
Traces "Desertion" in the dust
That through the air she sifteth down
Upon a marble stand august.

And now, among forgotten things,
I find, like sleepers manifold,
Pastels bedimmed, dark picturings,
Young beauties, and the friends of old.

My faltering fingers lift a crape,—
And lo, my love with look and lure!
With puffing skirts and prisoned shape!
Cidalise à la Pompadour!

A tender, blossoming rose she feels
Against her ribboned bodice pressed,
Whose lace half hides and half reveals
A snowy, azure-veinèd breast.

Within her eyes gleam sparkles lush,
As on the rime-kissed, deadened leaves.
Upon her cheek a purple flush—
Death's own cosmetic hue!—deceives.

She startles as I come before,
And fixeth soft on me her eyes,
Reproachfully forevermore,
Yet with a charm and witching wise.

Life bore me from thee at its will,
Yet on my heart thy name is laid,
Thou dead delight, that lingereth still,
Bedizened for the masquerade!

Envious of Art, fair Nature wrought
To overpass Murillo's fame,—
From Andalusia here she brought
The face that lights the second frame.

By some poetical caprice,
Our atmosphere of mist and cloud,
With rare exotic charm's increase
This other Petra Camara dowed.

Warm orange tones are gilding yet
Her lovely skin of roseate hue.
Her eyelids fair have lashes jet
That beams of sunshine filter through.

There shimmers fine a pearly gleam
Between her scarlet lips elate;
Her beauty flashes forth supreme—
A bright south summer pomegranate.

Long to the sound of Spain's guitar,
I told her praise 'mid song and glass.
She came alone one evenstar,
And all my room Alhambra was.

Farther I see a robust Fair,
With strong and gem-beladen arms.
In pearls of price and velvet rare
Are set her ivory bosom's charms.

Her ennui is a weary queen's,
An adulating court amid.
Superb, aloof, her hand she leans
Upon a casket's jewelled lid.

Her sensuous lips their crimes confess,
As crimson with the blood of hearts.
With brutal, mad voluptuousness
Her conquering eye a challenge darts.

Here dwells, in lieu of tender grace,
Vertiginous allure, whereof

A cruel Venus ruled a race,
Presiding o'er malignant love.

Unnatural mother to her child,
This Venus all imperative!
O thou, my bitter joy and wild,—
Farewell forever! I forgive!

Within its frame in shadow fine,
The misty glass that still endures
Reveals another face than mine,—
The earliest of my portraitures.

A retrospective ghost, with face
Of vanished type, steps from the vast
Dim mirror of his bidding-place
In tenebrous, forgotten past.

Gay in his doublet satin-rose,
Coloured in bold and vivid way,
He seems as if about to pose
For Deveria or Boulanger.

Terror of glabrous commoner,
His flowing locks in royal guise,
Like mane of lion, or sinister
King's hair, fall heavy to his thighs.

Romanticist of bold conceit,
Knight of an art which strives anew,
He hurled himself at Drama's feet,
When erst Hernani's trumpet blew.

Night falls. The corners are astir
With many shapes and shadows tall.
The Unknown—grim stage-carpenter—
Sets up its darksome frights o'er all.

A sudden burst of candles, weird
With aureoles, like lamps of death!
The room is populous, and bleared
With folk brought hither by a breath!

Down step the portraits from the wall,—
A ruddy-litten company!
Circling the fireplace in the hall,
Where the wood blazes suddenly.

The figures wrested from the tombs
Have lost their rigid, frozen mien,
The gradual glow of life illumines
The Past with flush incarnadine.

A colour lights the faces pale,
As in the days of old delight.
Friends whom my thought shall never fail,
I thank ye, that ye came to-night!

Now eighteen-thirty shows to me
Its great and valiant-hearted men.
(Ah, like Otranto's pirates, we
Who were an hundred, are but ten!)

And one his reddish beard spreads out,
Like Barbarossa in his cave.
Another his mustachio stout
Curls at the ends in fashion suave.

Under the ample fold that cloaks
An ever unrevealèd ill,
Petrus a cigarette now smokes,
Naming it "papelito" still.

Another cometh, fain to tell
His visions and his hopes supreme.
Like Icarus on the sands he fell,
Where lie all broken shafts of dream.

And one a drama hath begot,
Planned after some new model's freak,
Which, merging all things in its plot,
Makes Calderon with Molière speak.

Tom, late forsaken by his Dear,
Love's Labour's Lost must low recite;
And Fritz to Cidalise makes clear
Faust's vision of Walpurgis Night.

But dawn comes through the window free.
Diaphanous the phantoms grow.
The objects of reality
Strike through their shapes that merge and go.

The candles are consumed away.
The ember-lights no longer gleam
Upon the hearth. No thing shall stay.
Farewell, O castle of my dream!

December gray shall turn once more
The glass of Time, for all we fret!
The present enters at my door,
And vainly bids me to forget.

CAMELLIA AND MEADOW-DAISY

We praise the hot-house flowers that loom
Far from their native sun and shade,
The flaring forms that flaunt their bloom,
Like jewels under glass displayed.

With never breeze to kiss their heads,
They have their birth and live and die
On costly, artificial beds,
Beneath an ever-crystal sky.

For whomsoever idly scans,
Baring their treasures to entice,
Like fair and sumptuous courtesans,
They stand for sale at golden price.

Fine porcelain holds their gathered groups,
Or glove-clad fingers fondle them
Between the dances, till each droops
Upon a limp or broken stem.

But down amid the grass unreaped,
Shunning the curious, in repose
And silence all the long day steeped,
A little woodland daisy blows.

A butterfly upon the wing
To point the place, a casual look,
And you surprise the sweet, shy thing,
Within its calm, sequestered nook.

Beneath the blue it openeth,
Rising on slender, vernal rod,
Spreading its soul in fragrant breath
For solitude and for its God.

And proud camellias tall and white,
Red tulips in a flaming mass,
Are all at once forgotten quite,
For the small flower amid the grass.

THE FELLAH

On seeing a Water-Colour by Princess Mathilde

Caprice of brush fantastical,
And of imperial idleness,
Your fellah-sphinx presents us all
With an enigma worth the guess.

A rigid fashion, verily,
This mask, this garment, seem to us,
Intriguing with its mystery
The ball-room's every Oedipus.

Isis bequeathed her veil of old
To modern daughters of the Nile.
But through this band austere, behold,
Two stars of radiance beam and smile,—

Two stars, two eyes, two poems that spring,
The soft, voluptuous fires whereof
Resolve the riddle, murmuring:
"Lo, I am Beauty! Be thou Love!"

THE GARRET

From balcony tiles where casual cats
Sit low in wait for birds unwise,
I see the worn and riven slats
Of a poor, humble garret rise.

Now could I as an author lie,
To give you comfort as you think,
Its window I would falsify,
And frame with flowers refined and pink,

And place within it Rigolette
With her cheap looking-glass, somehow,
Whose broken glazing mirrors yet
A portion of her pretty brow;

Or Margery, her dress undone,
Her hair blown free, her tie forgot,
Watering in the pleasant sun
Her pail-encompassed garden-plot;

Or poet-youth whom fame awaits,
Who scans his verse and eyes the hills,
Or in a reverie contemplates
Montmartre with its distant mills.

Alas! my garret is no feint.
There climbeth no convolvulus.
The window with its nibbled paint
Leers filmy and unluminous.

Alike for artist and grisette,
Alike for widower and lad,
A garret—save to music set—
Is never otherwise than sad.

Of old, beneath an angle pent,
That forced the forehead to a kiss,
Love, with a folding-couch content,
To chat with Susan deemed it bliss.

But we must wad our bliss about
With cushioned walls and laces wide,
And silks that flutter in and out,
O'er beds by Monbro canopied.

This evening, to Mount Breda fled
Is Rigolette, to linger there,
And Margery, well clothed and fed,
No longer tends her garden fair.

The poet, tired of catching rimes

Upon the wing, has turned to cull
Reporter's bays, and left betimes
A heaven for an entresol.

And in the window this is all:
An ancient goody chattering,
And railing at a kitten small
That toys forever with a string.

THE CLOUD

Lightly in the azure air
Soars a cloud, emerging free
Like a virgin from the fair
Blue sea;

Or an Aphrodite sweet,
Floating upright and empearled
In the shell, about its feet
Foam-curved.

Undulating overhead,
How its changing body glows!
On its shoulder dawn hath spread
A rose.

Marble, snow, blend amorously
In that form by sunlight kissed—
Slumbering Antiope
Of mist!

Sailing unto distant goal,
Over Alps and Apennines,
Sister of the woman-soul,
It shines;

Till my heart flies forth at last
On the wings of passion warm,
And I yearn to gather fast
Its form.

Reason saith: "Mere vapour thing!
Bursting bubble! Yet, we deem,
Holds this wind-distorted ring
Our dream."

Faith declareth: "Beauty seen,
Like a cloud, is but a thought,
Or a breath, that, having been,
Is naught.

"Have thy vision. Build it proud.
Let thy soul be full thereof.
Love a woman—love a cloud—
But love!"

THE BLACKBIRD

A bird from yonder branch at dawn
Is trilling forth a joyful note,
Or hopping o'er the frozen lawn,
In yellow boots and ebon coat.

It is the blackbird credulous.
Little of calendar knows he,
Whose soul, with sunbeams luminous,
Sings April to the snows that be.

Rain sweeps in torrents unrepressed.
The Arve makes dull the Rhone with mire.

The pleasant hall retains its guest
In goodly cheer before the fire.

The mountains have their ermine on,
Each one a mighty magistrate,
And hold grave conference upon
A case of Winter lasting late.

The bird dries well his wing, and long,
Despite the rains, the mists that roll,
Insists upon his little song,
Believes in Spring with all his soul.

He softly chides the slumberous morn
For dallying so long abed,
And bids the shivering flower forlorn
Be bold, and raise aloft its head;

Behind the dark sees day that smiles,
Even as behind the Holy Rod,
When bare the altar, dim the aisles,
The child of faith beholds his God.

He trusts to Nature's purpose high,
Sure of her laws for here and now.
Who laughs at thy philosophy,
Dear blackbird, is less wise than thou!

THE FLOWER THAT MAKES THE SPRINGTIME

The chestnut trees are soon to flower
At fair *Saint Jean*, the villa dipped
In sun, before whose viny tower
Stretch purple mountains silver-tipped.

The little leaves that yesterday
Pressed in their bodices were seen
Have put their sober garb away,
And touched the tender twigs with green.

But vainly do the sunbeams fill
The branches with a flood of light.
The shy bud hesitateth still
To show the secret thyrse of white.

And yet the rosy peach-tree blooms,
Like some faint blush of first desire.
The apple waves a wealth of plumes,
And laughs in all its fresh attire.

To bask amid the buttercups
The timid speedwell ventures out.
Nature calls every earthling up,
And reassures each tiny sprout.

Yet I must off to other sphere!
Then please your poet, chestnuts tall,
Yea, spread ye forth without a fear
Your firework bloom fantastical!

I know your summer splendour's pride.
I've seen you standing sumptuous
In autumn's tunics purple-dyed,
With golden circlets luminous.

In winter white and crystal-crossed
Your delicate boughs I saw again,—
Like lovely traceries the frost
Limns lightly on the window-pane.

Your every garment I have known,
Ye chestnuts grand that loom aloft,—
Save one to me you've never shown,

Of young green fabric first and soft.

Ah, well, good-bye, for I must go!
Keep, then, your flowers, where'er they be.
There is another flower I know,
That makes the springtime fair for me.

Let May with all her blooms arise,
Let May with all her blooms depart!
That flower sufficeth for mine eyes,
And hath pure honey in its heart.

Let be the season where it waits,
And blue or dull be heaven's dome—
It smiles and charms and captivates,—
The precious violet of my home!

A LAST WISH

How long my soul has loved thee, love!
It is full many a year ago.
Thy spring—what charm of flowers thereof,
My winter—what wild snows thereon!

White lilacs from the land of graves
Blow near my temples. Soon enow
Thou'lt mark the pallid mass that waves
Enshadowing my withered brow.

My westering sun must speedy drop,
And disappear behind the road.
Already on the dim hill-top,
There gleams and waits my last abode.

Then from thy rosy lips let fall
Upon my lips a tardy kiss,
That in my tomb, when comes the call,
My heart may rest, remembering this.

THE DOVE

O tender, beauteous dove,
Calling such plaintive things!
Wilt serve unto my love,
And be my love's own wings?

O, but we 're like, poor heart!
Thy dear one, too, is far.
Remembering, apart,
Each weeps beneath the star.

Let not thy rosy feet
Stay once on any tower,—
I am so fain, my sweet,—
So weary turns the hour!

Forswear the palm's repose
That spreadeth over all,
And gables where the snows
Of other pinions fall.

Now fail me not, nor fear!
He dwelleth near the king.
Give him this letter, dear,
These kisses on thy wing.

Then seek again my breast,
This flaming, throbbing goal,
Then come, my dove, and rest—
But bring me back his soul!

A PLEASANT EVENING

What flurrying of rains and snows!
Now every coachman, blue of nose,
 In fur and ire
Sits petrified. Oh, it were right
To spend this wild December night
 Before one's fire!

The cosy chimney-corner chair
Assumes its most persuasive air.
 I seem to see
Its arms held out, its voice to hear,
Beseeching like a mistress dear:
 "Ah, stay with me!"

A gauze reveals the orbèd lamp,
Like a fair breast beneath a guimpe,
 And drowsily
The shimmer of its light ascends,
Flushing with gold and crimson blends
 The ceiling high.

The silence frames no sound of things,
Save for the pendulum that swings
 Its golden disk,
And many winds that roam and weep,
Or stealthy to the hall-way sweep,
 To dance and frisk.

It's ball-night at the Embassy.
My coat's limp sleeves are signalling me
 To dress anon.
My waistcoat yawns. My shirt obtuse
Seems raising high its wristbands loose,
 To be put on.

A narrow boot's abundant glaze
Reflects the ruddy firelight's blaze.
 Have I forgot?
A glove's flat fingers span the shelf.
A thin cravat protrudes itself,
 And begs a knot.

Then must I forth? But what a bore—
To seek the over-crowded door!
 To fall in line
Of coaches bearing coats of arms
And haughty beauties with their charms,
 Superb and fine!

To stand against a portal wide
And see the surging mass inside
 Bear form on form:
Old faces, faces fresh and young,
Black coats low bodices among,—
 A motley swarm!

And puffy backs that hide their red
With laces fine of costly thread
 Aerial,
Dandies, diplomatists, that press,
With features dull, expressionless,
 At fashion's call.

What! Brave, to win a glance of hers,
The rows of lynx-eyed dowagers!
 Try undeterred
To speak the dear name of my dear,
And whisper softly in her ear
 Love's little word!

Nay, but I'll not! Her eye shall heed

A letter in the flowers I'll speed.
No ball-room now!
Let Parma violets make good
Whatever be her passing mood.
They hold my vow.

Enscenced with Heine or with Taine,
Or, if I like, the Goncourts twain,
The time will go.
I'll dream, until the hour shall stir
Reality, and wait for her.
She'll come, I know.

ART

More fair the work, more strong,
Stamped in resistance long,—
Enamel, marble, song.

Poet, no shackles bear,
Yet bid thy Muse to wear
The buskin bound with care.

A fashion loose forsake,—
A shoe of sloven make,
That any foot may take.

Sculptor, the clay withstand,
That yieldeth to the hand,
Though listless heart command.

Contend till thou have wrought,
Till the hard stone have caught
The beauty of thy thought.

With Paros match thy might,
And with Carrara bright,
That guard the line of light.

Borrow from Syracuse
The bronze's stubborn use,
Wherein thy form to choose.

And with a delicate grace
In the veined onyx trace
Apollo's perfect face.

Painter, put thou aside
The transient. Be thy pride
The colour furnace-tried.

Limn thou, fantastic, free
Blue sirens of the sea,
And beasts of heraldry.

Before a nimbus gold
Transcendently uphold
The Child, the Cross foretold.

Things perish. Gods have passed.
But song sublimely cast
Shall citadels outlast.

And the forgotten seal
Turned by the plowman's steel
An emperor may reveal.

For Art alone is great:
The bust survives the state,
The crown the potentate.

Carve, burnish, build thy theme,—
But fix thy wavering dream
In the stern rock supreme.

[Transcribers notes: I have created this online text from two sources: *Émaux et camées* by Théophile Gautier (Paris: Charpentier, 1872), and Agnes Lee's English translation entitled *Enamels and Cameos*, published in Volume XXIV of *The Complete Works of Théophile Gautier* (Cambridge, MA: University Press, John Wilson and Son, 1903). Lee added line indentations for most of the poems which were not present in Gautier's original text, so I have not included them here. Apart from this, the online text follows Lee's translation, including her dedicatory sonnet.]

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ENAMELS AND CAMEOS AND OTHER POEMS

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