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Author: Frederick Locker-Lampson

Editor: A. D. Godley

Illustrator: George Cruikshank

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LONDON LYRICS

By FREDERICK LOCKER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
By A. D. GODLEY

WITH A FRONTISPIECE
By GEORGE CRUIKSHANK

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INTRODUCTION

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The father of Frederick Locker Lampson (or Frederick Locker, according to the name by which he is generally known) was Edward Hawke Locker, at one time Commissioner of Greenwich Hospital. He is described in the "Dictionary of National Biography" as "a man of varied talents and accomplishments, Fellow of the Royal Society, an excellent artist in water-colour, a charming conversationalist, an esteemed friend of Southey and Scott." Frederick, the author of "London Lyrics," "was born," Mr Augustine Birrell, his son-in-law, writes in *Scribner's Magazine* (January 1896), "in Greenwich Hospital in 1821. After divers adventures in various not over well selected schools, and a brief experience of the City and of Somerset House, he became a clerk in the Admiralty, serving under Lord Haddington, Sir James Graham, and Sir Charles Wood. He was twice married—first, to Lady Charlotte Bruce, a daughter of Lord Elgin (of the Marbles); and secondly, to the only daughter of Sir Curtis Lampson, Bart., of Rowfant in Sussex."

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The present volume is Locker's earliest literary venture; produced, however, at the comparatively mature age of thirty-six. "In 1857," he says in "My Confidences," "I published a thin volume—certain sparrow-flights of song, called 'London Lyrics.'" Subsequently, about 1860, Thackeray, who was then editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*, invited Locker to contribute; and poems published there and elsewhere were collected and reprinted from time to time, the original title being always retained. Ten editions, besides some selections privately printed, appeared before the poet's death. In almost all something new was added, in all something old was taken away; so

that only eight of the twenty-five pieces composing the early "thin volume" survive in the issue of 1893, and some of these are much altered. It is hoped that readers of Locker's later and more highly finished work will consider a republication of his "Primitiæ" justified by the interest which attaches to all beginnings.

So many people even now confuse minor poetry with bad poetry that it is almost invidious to call a poet minor. Yet there is no doubt that minor poetry can be good in its way, just as major poetry can be good in *its* way. "If he [Locker] was a minor poet he was at least [why 'at least'?] a master of the instrument he touched, which cannot," writes Mr Coulson Kernahan in the *Nineteenth Century* for October 1895, "be said of all who would be accounted *major*." Locker was not of those, in his own opinion, who would be accounted major. "My aim," he says, "was humble. I used the ordinary metres and rhymes, the simplest language and ideas, I hope, flavoured with an individuality. I strove . . . not to be flat, and above all, not to be tedious." It is not necessary to prove by argument and illustration that Locker is a minor poet, nor that he belongs to that honourable company of writers of what we now call "light verse"—the masters of which are, after all, among the immortals—Horace and Herrick. His place in that company is not so easy to define. Probably he stands half way between the serious singers—who succeed by virtue of grace and artistic finish, yet lack the touch of passion, the indefinable something that makes greatness —and the bards whose primary object, like Calverley's, is to make the reader laugh. "He elected," says Mr Coulson Kernahan, "to don the cap and bells when he might have worn the singing robes of the poet": a description of one who chose to be a jester when he might have been serious, and hardly applicable to Locker, who is never a professed "funny man." Mr Kernahan is far more just when he claims for "London Lyrics" a kind of sober gentleness which moves neither to laugh nor to weep: "his sad scenes may touch us to tender melancholy, but never to tears; his gay ones to smile, but seldom to laughter." Locker's Muse is not the Muse of high spirits. He does not start with the intention of jesting. He is the gentle and serious spectator of things which are not the most serious in life—with a sense of the humorous which is not repressible, and which enters into all his reflections, but which he never allows wholly to master him.

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It is really impossible to classify poets on any satisfactory principle. Every good poet is a class by himself. But if the attempt must be made, one may say that the author of "London Lyrics" belongs to that school of which the other chief representatives, in English or American literature, have been Praed, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Mr Austin Dobson. It has always been the fashion to class him with the first named of the trio as a writer of "occasional verse" or "vers de société." These titles, like other parts of the nomenclature of the poetic art, are not satisfying. Why "smoothly written verse, where a boudoir decorum is or ought always to be preserved: where sentiment never surges into passion, and where humour never overflows into boisterous merriment" should be conventionally called "society verse," or "occasional verse," is not very clear. To write "society verse" is to be the laureate of the cultured, leisured, pleasure-loving upper classes; but some poets satisfy the above requirements—Locker himself included—yet certainly do not write exclusively of or for "Society." Then again, what is "occasional"? Many serious poems are inspired by the transient occasion. But we are not, presumably, to class "Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints" among occasional pieces, nor is Wordsworth's sonnet on London at dawn to be called occasional; yet the source of it, the fact that the poet happened to be upon Westminster Bridge in the early morning, was transient, not (apparently) inherent in the nature of things. However, these names must be accepted as we find them. Here is Locker's own law: "Occasional verse," he says, "should be short, graceful, refined, and fanciful, not seldom distinguished by chastened sentiment, and often playful. The tone should not be pitched high: it should be terse and idiomatic, and rather in the conversational key; the rhythm should be crisp and sparkling, and the rhyme frequent and never forced, while the entire poem should be marked by tasteful moderation, high finish, and completeness: for, however trivial the subject-matter may be, indeed, rather in proportion to its triviality, subordination to the rules of composition, and perfection of execution, are of the utmost importance." Among the enviable versifiers who can satisfy these requirements Praed and Locker both hold a high place. Praed, indeed, is the chief among writers of "vers de société," for not only does his manner conform to the laws laid down by high authorities, but his theme is generally "Society" with a capital S. "Praed," says Locker in "My Confidences," "is the very best of his school: indeed, he has a unique position; for in his narrower vein of whimsical wit, vernacular banter, and antithetical rhetoric, which may correctly be called *vers de société* in its most perfected form, and its exactest sense, he has never been equalled." These phrases hit off Praed very well—if one does not exactly see what "Society" has to do with antithetical rhetoric.

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These two poets, so often classed together, are not really very much alike. Both are certainly "in lighter vein"; but they differ apparently in temperament, and certainly in method. No one would deny to Praed the gift of humour. But the period in which he wrote was one which admired primarily wit; and while it would be too much to say that his heart is not in his theme—that he stands detached from it—still, his sympathies are indubitably subordinated to the effort, the successful effort, to bring off a neat point, to make a pun in the right place, to be striking, antithetical, epigrammatic. His verses have the finish, in their way, of Pope's couplet and Ovid's pentameter. His best known and most praised work appeals, primarily, to the taste and the ear: always, perhaps, to the head rather than to the heart. There is something of "hard brilliance" in Praed: he writes for effect, he is epideictic. Of course, this is one object of writers of "society verses":

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> "Sole secret to jingle and scan,"

as an unduly severe critic says somewhere. One need hardly say that this is not Praed's sole secret: but technique is certainly his strong point.

"Where are my friends? I am alone:
  No playmate shares my beaker:
Some lie beneath the churchyard stone
  And some—before the Speaker:
And some compose a tragedy,
  And some compose a rondo:
And some draw sword for Liberty,
  And some draw pleas for John Doe.

Tom Mill was used to blacken eyes
  Without the fear of sessions:
Charles Medlar loathed false quantities
  As much as false professions:
Now Mill keeps order in the land,
  A magistrate pedantic:
And Medlar's feet repose unscanned
  Beneath the wide Atlantic."

This is the art which does not conceal itself. One may not be able to do the trick; but it is possible to see how the trick is done.

"No one," says Locker, when speaking of occasional or society verse, "has fully succeeded who did not possess a certain gift of irony." That is profoundly true. A would-be writer of light verse who has not an ironical habit of mind had better change his purpose and write an epic. Locker has his full share of the necessary gift. Half gay, half melancholy, always ironical—dissembling most of pain and some of pleasure—he is in certain ways the appropriate spokesman of a society like our own, which is really most natural when most dissembling, or dismissing with a smile, its deeper emotions. There is nothing about Locker which is not natural. As he is, so (apparently) does he speak: far more candidly and with more of self-revelation than Praed, more candidly than Mr Austin Dobson, who is apt to veil his personality behind a mask of elegant antiquarianism. But Locker is more artless and naïve (which qualities are in him not the least inconsistent with irony) than any modern writer, except, perhaps, R. L. Stevenson now and then; and with the latter *naïveté* itself is sometimes an artifice. Mr Brander Matthews rightly lays stress on this aspect of Locker's poetry; "individuality and directness of expression"—that is the true note of "London Lyrics." He is far more genuine and spontaneous than Praed. It is difficult and perhaps invidious to compare the two as "humorists." It may be that Locker's vein of humour is larger and truer than the earlier poet's. Praed belongs, as has been said, to a period of other men and other manners. Probably he is the wittier of the two; yet this might be contradicted. Locker's humour has the reflective vein, with a suggestion of pathos, of the great writers who flourished in the early and middle Victorian era. We are perhaps a little out of tune now with the sentiment of the middle of the nineteenth century and perhaps, too, with Praed's "antithetical rhetoric"; but Locker's humour can never be quite out of fashion. Readers will always smile (not laugh) at "The Housemaid" or "The Pilgrims of Pall Mall" or the lines "To my Grandmother"—

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"With her bridal-wreath, bouquet,
Lace farthingale, and gay
    Falbala,—
If Romney's touch be true,
What a lucky dog were you,
    Grandpapa!

. . . . .

What funny fancy slips
From atween these cherry lips?
    Whisper me,
Fair Sorceress in paint,
What canon says I mayn't
    Marry thee?"

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But perhaps, for a nutshell's content of whimsical Lockerian humour, the gem which will occur to most is the delightful reminiscence of infancy:

"I recollect a nurse call'd Ann,
  Who carried me about the grass,
And one fine day a fine young man
  Came up, and kiss'd the pretty Lass:
She did not make the least objection!
    Thinks I. 'Aha!
When I can talk I'll tell Mamma.'
—And that's my earliest recollection."

(Locker's "mottoes," of which this is one, often contain his most characteristic lines.) Praed could no more have written that, or the lines "To my Grandmother," than Locker could have written "The Vicar." Both poets have other strings. Praed's more serious vein could win a

contemporary reputation: but he would not have been remembered for this alone, after eighty years. In “At Her Window,” which Mr Coulson Kernahan rightly calls “one of the most beautiful love-songs of the century,” Locker is no longer ironical, but rises to the heights of real passion: p. xviii

“Beating Heart! we come again
  Where my Love reposes:
This is Mabel’s window-pane:
  These are Mabel’s roses.

. . . . .

Mabel will be deck’d anon,
  Zoned in bride’s apparel;
Happy zone! Oh hark to yon
  Passion-shaken carol!
Sing thy song, thou trancèd thrush,
  Pipe thy best, thy clearest;—
Hush, her lattice moves, O hush—
  Dearest Mabel!—*dearest*” . . .

“I once tried,” says Locker in “My Confidences,” “to write like Praed.” The effort was not wholly successful: Locker is weakest where his manner is most Praedian; and the poet, either realising this, or moulded by the temper of his time, appears to have altered most of the obviously imitative passages. Thus in “Tempora Mutantur” the last stanza runs, in 1857:

“What brought this wanderer here, and why p. xix
  Was Pamela away?
It might be she had found her grave
  Or he had found her gay”;

but the antithetical pun is excised in the 1893 edition, where the lines are:

“The pilgrim sees an empty chair
  Where Pamela once sat:
It may be she had found her grave,
  It might be worse than that.”

So in “Bramble-Rise”

“My bank of early violets
Is now a bank of savings”

(“you mark the paronomasia, play ’pon words”?) does not continue to please the taste of the pun-despising *fin-de-siècle* public or of Locker himself: the corresponding stanza in the poem as published in 1893 is purified of such tricks. These alterations are characteristic of Locker’s literary method. He was keenly critical of himself—“never,” says Mr Birrell, “could mistake good verses for bad”—and was therefore always changing and polishing his work, adding here, pruning there. Thus only eight poems from the 1857 volume form part of the “London Lyrics” of p. xx 1893, and only five of these—“Bramble-Rise,” “Piccadilly,” “The Pilgrims of Pall Mall,” “Circumstance,” “The Widow’s Mite”—have maintained their footing throughout in all intervening editions: the three others are, as it were, “rusticated” from the very severely edited selection of 1881. The variety of forms under which his verses appear at different periods will probably make the poet’s works a happy hunting-ground for the future commentator, who will no doubt assign this “lay” (as he will probably call it) to Locker, that to Lampson, that again to the Lockeridae or the Lampsonschule. The method is familiar. No one, probably, ever was so careful of the “limae labor.” “He took,” we are told, “great pains with his verses,” always aiming at a more perfect finish, with no loss of that naturalness which, as has been said, characterises all his work. According to the saying quoted by Matthew Arnold of Joubert, he “s’inquiétait de perfection.” Perfection, to him, implied an appearance of spontaneity: what *looked* laboured or artificial must be elaborated till it *looked* spontaneous—as it was in thought if not altogether in p. xxi development. His critical sense seems to have grown keener with his interest in the making of verses: “he was a great student of verse,” Mr Birrell says, and a student especially of that kind of verse of which he was himself one of the masters. In 1867 he published the well-known collection “Lyra Elegantiarum,” assisted by Mr Kernahan: the preface, written by Locker, contains some excellent rules for “light verse,” from which the selections are made. This anthology ranges over the whole field of English poetry, and, like everything else of Locker’s, it shows the man. “Its charm,” writes the editor’s collaborator, “is entirely of the editor’s individuality”—at least, from his favourites in literature, one may make a very fair guess at some part of his character. So, too, “Patchwork”—a kind of scrap-book, a collection of miscellaneous anecdotes, mostly humorous, but not as a rule broadly or farcically funny—illustrates his delicate and subtle perception of the laughable.

Locker married Lady Charlotte Bruce in 1850, and soon after left the service of Government. Thenceforward he appears to have led a very placid life, happy in his family, seeing much of his p. xxii large circle of friends, devoted to poetry and book-collecting. “Lyra Elegantiarum” was published in 1867, “Patchwork” in 1879. In 1886 Locker published a catalogue of what he called the “Rowfant Library”—his collection of rare and valuable books (mostly the poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries) and autographs—of which Mr Andrew Lang has sung:

"The Rowfant books, how fair they shew,
  The Quarto quaint, the Aldine tall,
Print, autograph, portfolio!
  Back from the outer air they call
  The athletes from the Tennis ball,
This Rhymer from his rod and hooks,
  Would I could sing them, one and all,
      The Rowfant books!"

Locker's first wife died in 1872. In 1874 he married Miss Lampson, adding her family name to his own. The rest of his life was spent for the most part at Rowfant: he died there, 30th May 1895. His autobiography, "My Confidences," was published posthumously in 1896.

THE CASTLE IN THE AIR

"I would build a cloudy house,
  For my thoughts to live in,
When for earth too fancy loose,
  And too low for heaven!

Hush! I talk my dream alone:
  I build it bright to see;
I build it on the moon-lit cloud,
  To which I look with thee!"

Mrs E. B. Browning.

You shake your curls, and ask me why
I don't build castles in the sky;
You smile, and you are thinking too,
He's nothing else on earth to do.
It needs, my dear, romantic ware

To raise such fabrics in the air—
Ethereal bricks, and rainbow beams,
The gossamer of Fancy's dreams:
And much the architect may lack
Who labours in the zodiac
To rear what I, from chime to chime,
Attempted once upon a time.

My Castle was a glad retreat,
  Adorn'd with bloom and scented briars,—
A Cupid's model country-seat,
  With all that such a seat requires.
A rustic thatch, a purple mountain,
A sweet, mysterious, haunted fountain,
A terraced lawn, a summer lake,
  By sun or moonbeam ever burnish'd;
And then my cot, by some mistake,
  Unlike most cots was neatly furnish'd.

A trelliss'd porch, a mirror'd hall,
A Hebe, laughing from the wall,
Frail vases from remote Cathay,—

  While, under arms and armour wreath'd
  In trophied guise, the marble breath'd—
A peering fawn, a startled fay.

And cabinets with gems inlaid,
  The legacy of parted years,
Full curtains of festoon'd brocade,
  And Venice lent her chandeliers.
Quaint carvings dark, and, pillow'd light,
Meet couches for the Sybarite;
Embroider'd carpets, soft as down,
The last new novel fresh from town.
On silken cushion, rich with braid,
A shaggy pet from Skye was laid,
And, drowsy eyed, would dosing swing
A parrot in his golden ring.

All these I saw one happy day,
  And more than now I care to name;
Here, lately shut, that workbox lay,

There stood your own embroidery frame.
And over this piano bent
A Form, from some pure region sent.

Her dusky tresses lustrous shone,
In massy clusters, like your own;
And, as her fingers pressed the keys,
How strangely they resembled these.

Yes, you, you only, Lady Fair,
Adorn'd my Castle in the Air;
And Life, without the least foundation,
Became a charming occupation.
We viewed, with much serene disdain,
The smoke and scandal of Cockaigne,
Its dupes and dancers, knaves and nuns,
Possess'd by blues, or bored by duns.
With souls released from earthly tether,
We gazed upon the moon together.
Our sympathy, from night to noon,
Rose crescent with that crescent moon,
We lived and loved in cloudless climes,
And died (in rhymes) a thousand times.

Yes, you, you only, Lady Fair,
Adorn'd my Castle in the Air,
Now, tell me, could you dwell content
In such a baseless tenement?
Or could so delicate a flower
Exist in such a breezy bower?
Because, if you *would* settle in it,
'Twere built, for love, in half a minute.

What's love? you ask;—why, love at best
Is only a delightful jest;—
As sad for one, as bad for three,
So *I* suggest you jest with me.

You shake your head, and wonder why
A denizen of dear May-Fair
Should ever condescend to try
And build her Castle in the Air.

I've music, books, and all, you say,
To make the gravest lady gay;
I'm told my essays show research,
My sketches have endow'd a church.
I've partners, who have witty parts;
I've lovers, who have broken hearts;
Quite undisturbed by nerves or blues,
My doctor gives me—all the news.
Poor Polly would not care to fly;
And Wasp, you know, was born in Skye.

To realise your tête-à-tête
Might jeopardise a giddy pate;
And *quel ennui*! if, pride apart,
I lost my head, or you your heart.
I'm more than sorry, I'm afraid
My Castle is already made.

And is this all we gain by fancies
For noon-day dreams, and waking trances,—
Such dreams as brought poor souls mishap,
When Baby-Time was fond of pap:
And still will cheat with feigning joys,
While women smile, and men are boys?

The blooming rose conceals an asp,
And bliss coquetting flies the grasp:
And, waking up, snap goes the slight
Poor cord that held my foolish kite,—
Your slave, you may not care to know it,
Your humble slave will be your Poet.

Farewell!—can aught for her be will'd
Whose every wish is all fulfill'd?
Farewell!—could wishing weave a spell,

There's promise in those words "Fare well!"

I wish your wish may not be marr'd;—
Now wish yourself a better Bard!

THE CRADLE

Aye, here is your cradle! Why surely, my Jenny,
  Such slender dimensions go somewhat to show
You were an exceedingly small pic-a-ninny
  Some nineteen or twenty short summers ago.

Your baby-days flow'd in a much-troubled channel;
  I see you as then in your impotent strife,—
A tight little bundle of wailing and flannel,
  Perplex'd with that newly-found fardel called life.

To hint at an infantine frailty's a scandal;
  All bye-gones are bye-gones—and somebody knows
It was bliss such a baby to dance and to dandle,
  Your cheeks were so velvet—so rosy your toes.

Aye, here is your cradle! and Hope, a bright spirit,
  With Love now is watching beside it, I know;
They guard o'er the nest you yourself did inherit
  Some nineteen or twenty short summers ago.

It is Hope gilds the future, Love welcomes it smiling;
  Thus wags this old world, therefore stay not to ask,—
"My future bids fair, is my future beguiling?"
  If mask'd, still it pleases, then raise not its mask.

Is life a poor coil some would gladly be doffing?
  He is riding post-haste who their wrongs will adjust;
For at most 'tis a footstep from cradle to coffin,—
  From a spoonful of pap to a mouthful of dust.

Then smile as your future is smiling, my Jenny!
  I see you, except for that infantine woe,
Scarce changed since you were but a small pic-a-ninny,—
  Your cheek is still velvet—pray what is your toe?

Aye, here is your cradle! much, much to my liking,
  Though nineteen or twenty long winters have sped;
But, hark! as I'm talking there's six o'clock striking,
  It is time Jenny's Baby should be in its bed!

O TEMPORA MUTANTUR!

  "O cruel Time! O tyrant Time!
  Whose winter all the streams of rhyme,
  The flowing waves of Love sublime,
    In bitter passage freezes.
  I only see the scrambling goat,
  The lotos on the water float,
  While an old shepherd with an oat
    Pipes to the autumn breezes."

Mr M. Collins.

Yes! here, once more, a traveller,
  I find the Angel Inn,
Where landlord, maids, and serving-men,
  Receive me with a grin:
They surely can't remember *me*,
  My hair is grey and scanter;
I'm chang'd, so chang'd since I was here—
  "O tempora mutantur!"

The Angel's not much alter'd since
  That sunny month of June,

Which brought me here with Pamela
To spend our honey-moon!
I recollect it down to e'en
The shape of this decanter.
We've since been both much put about—
"O tempora mutantur!"

Aye, there's the clock, and looking-glass
Reflecting me again;
She vow'd her Love was very fair—
I see I'm very plain.
And there's that daub of Prince Leboo,
'Twas Pamela's fond banter
To fancy it resembled me—
"O tempora mutantur!"

The curtains have been dyed; but there, p. 14
Unbroken, is the same,
The very same cracked pane of glass
On which I scratch'd her name.
Yes! there's her tiny flourish still,
It used to so enchant her
To link two happy names in one—
"O tempora mutantur!"

* * * * *

What brought this wand'rer here, and why
Was Pamela away?
It may be she had found her grave,
Or he had found her gay.
The fairest fade; the best of men
May meet with a supplanter;—
How natural, how trite the cry,
"O tempora mutantur!"

PICCADILLY p. 15

> "Often, when I have felt a weariness or distaste at home, have I rushed out into her crowded Strand, and fed my humour till tears have wetted my cheek for unutterable sympathies with the multitudinous moving picture; * * nursed amid her noise, her crowds, her beloved smoke, what have I been doing all my life, if I have not lent out my heart with usury to such scenes!"
>
> C. Lamb.

Gay shops, stately palaces, bustle and breeze,
The whirring of wheels, and the murmur of trees,
By night, or by day, whether noisy or stilly,
Whatever my mood is—I love Piccadilly.

Wet nights, when the gas on the pavement is streaming,
And young Love is watching, and old Love is dreaming,
And Beauty is whirl'd off to conquest, where shrilly p. 16
Cremona makes nimble thy toes, Piccadilly!

Bright days, when I leisurely pace to and fro,
And meet all the people I do or don't know.
Here is jolly old Brown, and his fair daughter Lillie;—
No wonder some pilgrims affect Piccadilly!

See yonder pair, fonder ne'er rode at a canter,—
She smiles on her Poet, contented to saunter;
Some envy her spouse, and some covet her filly,
He envies them both—he's an ass, Piccadilly!

Now were I that gay bride, with a slave at my feet,
I would choose me a house in my favourite street.
Yes or No—I would carry my point, willy, nilly;
If "no," pick a quarrel, if "yes," Piccadilly.

Thus the high frolic by—thus the lowly are seen, p. 17
As perched on the roof of yon bulky machine,
The Kensington dilly—and Tom Smith or Billy
Smoke doubtful cigars in ill-used Piccadilly.

And there's the balcony, where, ages ago,
Old Q sat and gazed on the damsels below.
There are plausible wolves even now, seeking silly
Red Riding Hoods small in thy woods, Piccadilly!

And there is a Statesman, the Man of the Day,
A laughing philosopher, gallant and gay;
No darling of Fortune more manfully trod,
Full of years, full of fame, and the world at his nod,
Can the thought reach his heart, and then leave it more chilly,—
"Old P or Old Q I must quit Piccadilly?"

Life is chequer'd, a patchwork of smiles and of frowns; p. 18
We valued its ups, let us muse on its downs.
There's a side that is bright, it will then turn the other,
One turn, if a good one, deserves such another.
These downs are delightful, *these* ups are not hilly,—
Let us turn one more turn ere we quit Piccadilly!

THE OLD CLERK p. 19

We knew an old Clerk, it was "once on time,"
An era to set sober datists despairing;
Then let them despair!—Darby sat in a chair
Near a cross that takes name from the village of Charing.

Though silent and lean, Darby was not morose,
What hair he had left was more silver than sable,
His feet had begun to turn up at the toes,
From constantly being curled under a table.

His pay and expenditure, quite in accord, p. 20
Were both on the strictest economy founded;
His rulers, in conclave, were known as the Board,
His rulers were sticks of mahogany rounded.

In his heart he looked down on this dignified knot,—
For why, the forefather of one of these senators,
A rascal concern'd in the Gunpowder Plot,
Had been barber-surgeon to Darby's progenitors.

Poor fool! to resent the caprices of Luck.
Still, a long thirty years (it was rather degrading)
He'd been writing despatches,—which means he had stuck
Some heads and some tails to much rhodomontading.

This sounds rather weary and dreary; but, no! p. 21
Though strictly inglorious, his days were quiescent,
And his red-tape was tied in a true-lover's bow
Each night when returning to Rosemary Crescent.

There Joan meets him smiling, the young ones are there,
His coming is bliss to the half-dozen wee things;
Of his advent the dog and the cat are aware,
And Phyllis, neat handed, is laying the tea-things.

This greeting the silent old Clerk understands.
Now his friends he can love, had he foes, he could mock them;
So met, so surrounded, his bosom expands,—
Some tongues have more need of such scenes to unlock them.

And Darby, at least, is resign'd to his lot, p. 22
And Joan (rather proud of the sphere he's adorning)
Has well-nigh forgotten that Gunpowder Plot,
And *he* won't recall it till ten the next morning.

A time must arrive when, in pitiful case,
He will drop from his Branch like a fruit more than mellow:
Is he still to be found in his usual place?
Or is he already forgotten, poor fellow?

If still at his duty, he soon will arrive,—
He passes this turning, because it is shorter,—
If not within sight as the clock's striking five,
We shall see him before it is chiming the quarter.

The healthy-wealthy-wise, affirm,
That early birds secure the worm,
  And doubtless so they do;
Who scorns his couch should earn, by rights,
A world of pleasant sounds and sights
  That vanish with the dew.

Bright Phosphor, from his watch released,
Now fading from the purple East—
  The morning waxing stronger;
The comely cock that vainly strives
To crow from sleep his drowsy wives,
  Who would be dosing longer.

Uxorious Chanticleer! and hark! p. 24
Upraise thine eyes, and find the lark,
  That matutine musician,
Who heavenward soars on rapture's wings,
Though sought, unseen, who mounts, and sings
  In musical derision.

A daughter hast'ning to prepare
Her father's humble morning fare—
  The sturdy reaper's meal.
In russet gown and apron blue,
The daughter sings; like "Lucy," too,
  She plies her spinning-wheel.

Anon the early reaper hies
To waving fields that clasp the skies,
  Broad sheets of sunlit water.
All these were heard or seen by one
Who stole a march upon that sun,
  And then—upon that Daughter!

This dainty maid, the hamlet's pride, p. 25
A lambkin trotting at her side,
  Then hied her through the park;
A fond and gentle foster-dam—
May be she slumbered with her lamb,
  Thus rising with the lark!

The lambkin frisk'd, the damsel fain
Would wile him back,—she called in vain.
  The truant gamboll'd farther:
One follow'd for the maiden's sake,
A pilgrim in an Angel's wake—
  A happy pilgrim, rather.

The maid gave chase, the lambkin ran,
As only woolly vagrant can,
  Who never felt a crook;
But stay'd at length, as 'twere disposed
To drink, where tawny sands disclosed
  The margent of a brook.

His mistress, who had follow'd fast, p. 26
Cried, "Little rogue, you're caught at last;
  I'm fleeter, Sir, than you."
Then straight the wanderer convey'd
Where tangled shrubs, in branching shade,
  Protected her from view—

Of all save one. She glanced around,
All fearful lest the slightest sound
  Might mortal footfall be.
Then shrinkingly she stepped aside
One moment, and her garter tied
  The truant to a tree.

Perhaps the world may wish to know
The hue of this delightful bow,
  And how it might be placed:
No, not from him, he only knows—

It might be purple, blue, or rose,—
  ’Twas tied—with maiden taste.

Suffice it that the nymph was fair, p. 27
With dove-like eyes, and golden hair,
  And feet of lily dye:
And, though these feet were pure from stain,
She turned her to the brook again,
  And laved them dreamingly.

Awhile she sat in maiden mood,
And watch’d the shadows in the flood,
  Which varied with the stream:
And as each pretty foot she dips,
The ripples ope their crystal lips
  In welcome, as ’twould seem.

But reveries are fleeting things,
Which come and go on Fancy’s wings,
  Now longer, and now shorter:
The Fair One well her day-dream nurst,
But, when the light-blown bubble burst,
  She wearied of the water;

Betook her to the spot where yet p. 28
Safe tether’d lay her snowy pet,
  To roving tastes a martyr:
But something met the damsel’s gaze,
Which made her cry in sheer amaze,
  “Good gracious! where’s my garter?”

Yes! where indeed? the echoes there,
Inquisitive, responded “where?”
  And mourn’d the missing fetter:
A something else a little space
Must render duty in its place,
  Till banish’d for a better.

The blushing Fair her lamb led home,
Perhaps resolved no more to roam
  At peep of day together;
If chance so takes them, it is plain
She will not venture forth again
  Without an extra tether.

A fair white stone will mark this morn— p. 29
He wears a prize, one lightly worn,
  Love’s gage (though not intended);
Of course he’ll guard it near his heart,
Till suns and even stars depart,
  And chivalry has ended.

And knighthood he’ll not envy you,
The crosses, stars, and cordons bleus,
  Which pride for folly barters;
He’ll bear *his* cross ’mid mundane jars,
His ribbon prize, and thank his stars
  He does not crave your garters!

THE PILGRIMS OF PALL MALL p. 30

My little Friend, so small and neat,
Whom years ago I used to meet
  In Pall Mall daily;
How cheerily you tripp’d away
To work, it might have been to play,
  You tripp’d so gaily.

And Time trips too.—This moral means,
You then were midway in the teens
  That I was crowning:
We never spoke, but when I smil’d
At morn or eve, I know, dear child,
  You were not frowning.

Each morning when we met, I think, p. 31
Some sentiment did us two link—
Nor joy, nor sorrow:
And then at eve, experience-taught,
Our hearts fell back upon the thought,—
We meet to-morrow!

And you were poor; and how? and why?
How kind to come! it was for my
Especial grace meant!
Had you a parlour next the stars,
A bird, some treasur'd plants in jars,
About your casement?

You must have dwelt *au cinquième*,
Like little darling What's-her-name,—
Eugène Sue's glory:
Perchance, unwittingly, I've heard
Your thrilling-toned Canary-bird
From that fifth storey.

I've seen some changes since we met; p. 32
A patient little seamstress yet,
With small means striving,
Have you a Lilliputian spouse?
And do you dwell in some doll's house?
—Is baby thriving?

Can bloom like thine—my heart grows chill—
Have sought that bourne unwelcome still
To bosom smarting?
The most forlorn—what worms we are!—
Would wish to finish this cigar
Before departing.

I sometimes to Pall Mall repair,
And see the damsels passing there;
But though I try to
Obtain one glance, they look discreet,
As though they'd someone else to meet,—
As have not *I* too?

Yet still I often muse upon p. 33
Our many meetings—come and gone!
July—December!
Now let us make a tryste, and when,
Dear little soul, we meet again,
In some serener sphere, why then—
Thy Friend remember!

THE RUSSET PITCHER p. 34

"The Pitcher may go often to the Well, but it gets broken at last."

Away, ye simple ones, away!
Bring no vain fancies hither;
The brightest dreams of youth decay,
The fairest roses wither.

Aye, since this fountain first was plann'd,
And Dryad learnt to drink,
Have lovers held, knit hand in hand,
Sweet parley at its brink.

From youth to age this waterfall
Most tunefully flows on,
But where, aye! tell me where, are all
Those constant lovers gone?

The falcon on the turtle preys, p. 35
And fondest vows are lither,
The brightest dream of youth decays,
The fairest roses wither.

"Thy Russet Pitcher set adown,

Fair maid, and list to one
Who much this sorry world hath known,—
A muser thereupon.

Though youth is ardent, gay, and bold,
Youth flatters and beguiles,
Though Giles is young,—and I am old,—
Ne’er trust thy heart to Giles.

Thy Pitcher may some luckless day
Be broken coming hither,
Thy doting slave may prove a knave,—
The fairest roses wither.”

She laugh’d outright, she scorn’d him quite, p. 36
She fill’d her Russet Pitcher;—
For that dear sight an anchorite
Might deem himself the richer.

Ill-fated maiden! go thy ways,
Thy lover’s vows are lither,
The brightest dream of youth decays,
The fairest roses wither.

* * * * *

These days are soon the days of yore;
Six summers pass, and then
That musing man would see once more
The fountain in the glen.

Again to stray where once he stray’d,
Those woods with verdure richer;
Half hoping to espy the maid
Come tripping with her pitcher.

No light step comes, but, evil-starr’d, p. 37
He finds a mournful token,—
There lies a Russet Pitcher marr’d,
The damsel’s pitcher broken!

Profoundly moved, that muser cried:
The spoiler hath been hither;
O! would the maiden first had died,—
The fairest rose must wither!

The tender flow’ret blooms apace,
But chilling winds blow o’er;
It fades unheeded, and its place
Shall never know it more.

He turn’d from that accursèd ground,
His world-worn bosom throbbing;
A bow-shot thence a child he found,—
The little man was sobbing.

He gently stroked that curly head,— p. 38
“My child, what brings thee hither?
Weep not, my simple child,” he said,
“Or let us weep together.

Thy world, I ween, my child, is green,
As garden undefil’d,
Thy thoughts should run on mirth and fun,—
Where dost thou dwell, my child?”

’Twas then the tiny urchin spoke,—
“My daddy’s Giles the ditcher;
I water fetch, and, oh! I’ve broke
My mammy’s Russet Pitcher!”

THE ENCHANTED ROSE p. 39

“O where dost thou trip it,” the patriarch said,
“A Rose in thy bosom so daintily laid?
A pilgrim, whose shadow extends to the tomb,

Would gaze on its beauty, would breathe its perfume!”

“O raise not thy hand,” cried the maid, “nor suppose
I ever can part with this beautiful Rose;
The bloom is a gift of the fays, who declare it
Will shield me from sorrow as long as I wear it.

And sigh not, old man, such a doleful ‘heigh-ho,’ p. 40
Dost think I possess not the will to say, ‘No’?
And shake not thy head, I could pitiless be
Should supplicants come even younger than thee.”

The damsel pass’d on with a confident smile,
The old man extended his walk for a while,
His musings were trite, and their burthen, forsooth,
The wisdom of age, and the folly of youth.

Noon comes, and noon goes, paler twilight is there;
Rosy day dons the garb of a Penitent Fair;
The patriarch strolls in the path of the maid,
Where cornfields are ripe, and awaiting the blade.

And Echo was mute to the patriarch’s tread,— p. 41
“How tranquil is Nature!” that patriarch said;
He onward advances, where boughs overshade
A lonelier spot, and the barley is laid.

He gazes around, not a creature is there,
No sound upon earth, and no voice in the air;
But fading there lies a poor bloom that he knows,
Neglected, unheeded—a beautiful Rose.

CIRCUMSTANCE p. 42

The Orange

It ripen’d by the river banks,
  Where, musk and moonlight aiding,
Dons Whiskerandos play sad pranks,
  Dark Donnas serenading.

By Moorish maiden it was pluck’d,
  Who broke some hearts, they say, then,
By Saxon sweetheart it was suck’d,—
  Who threw the peel away then.

How little thought the London Fair,
  Or dark-eyed Girl of Seville,
That *I* should reel upon that peel,
  And find my proper level!

A WISH p. 43

To the south of the church, and beneath yonder yew,
  A pair of child-lovers I’ve seen,
More than once were they there, and the years of the two,
  When added, might number thirteen.

They sat on the grave which had never a stone
  The name of the dead to determine,
It was Life paying Death a brief visit—alone
  A notable text for a sermon.

They tenderly prattled,—what was it they said? p. 44
  The turf on that hillock was new:
O! kenn’d ye, poor little ones, aught of the dead,
  Or could he be heedful of you?

I wish to believe, and believe it I must,
  That a father beneath them was laid:
I wish to believe,—I will take it on trust,

That father knew all that they said.

My Own, you are five, very nearly the age
Of that poor little fatherless child;
And some day a true-love your heart will engage
When on earth I my last may have smil'd.

Then visit my grave, like a good little lass,
Where'er it may happen to be,
And if any daisies should peer through the grass,
Be sure they are kisses from me.

And place not a stone to distinguish my name, p. 45
For strangers and gossips to see,
But come with your lover as these lovers came,
And talk to him gaily of me.

And while you are smiling, your father will smile
Such a sweet little daughter to have:
But mind, O yes! mind you are merry the while—
I wish you to visit my grave.

MY LIFE IS A— p. 46

At Worthing an exile from Geraldine G—,
How aimless, how wretched an exile is he!
Promenades are not even prunella and leather
To lovers, if lovers can't foot them together.

He flies the parade, sad by ocean he stands,
He traces a "Geraldine G" on the sands.
But a G, tho' her lov'd patronymic is Green,
"I will not betray thee, my own Geraldine."

The fortunes of men have a time and a tide,
And Fate, the old fury, will not be denied;
That name was, of course, soon wip'd out by the sea,— p. 47
And she jilted the exile, did Geraldine G—.

They meet, but they never have spoken since that,—
He hopes she is happy—he knows she is fat;
She woo'd on the shore, now is wed in the Strand,
And *I*—it was I wrote her name on the sand!

VANITY FAIR p. 48

"Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher, all is vanity."

ECCLESIASTES.

"Vanitas Vanitatum" has rung in the ears
Of gentle and simple for thousands of years;
The wail is still heard, yet its notes never scare
Or simple, or gentle, from Vanity Fair.

This Fair has allurements alike to engage
The dimples of youth and the wrinkles of age;
Though mirth may be feigning, though sheen may be glare,
The gingerbread's gilded in Vanity Fair.

Old Dives there rolls in his chariot of state, p. 49
There Jack takes his Joan at a lowlier rate,
St Giles', St James', from alley and square,
Send votaries plenty to Vanity Fair.

That goal would be vain where the guerdon was dross,
So come whence they may they must come by a loss:
The tree was enticing,—its branches are bare;
Heigh-ho! for the promise of Vanity Fair.

My son, the sham goddess I warn thee to shun,
Beware of the beautiful temptress, my son;

Her blandishments fly,—or, despising the snare,
Go laugh at the follies of Vanity Fair.

That stupid old Dives, once honest enough,
His honesty sold for Stars, Ribbons, and Stuff;
And Joan's pretty face has been clouded with care
Since Jack bought *her* ribbons at Vanity Fair.

Contemptible Dives!—too credulous Joan!
Yet each has a Vanity Fair of his own;—
My son, you have yours, but you need not despair,
Myself, I've a weakness for Vanity Fair.

Philosophy halts, wisest counsels are vain,—
We go, we repent, we return there again;
To-night you will certainly meet with us there,
Exceedingly merry at Vanity Fair.

BRAMBLE-RISE

What changes greet my wistful eyes
In quiet little Bramble-Rise,
  Once fairest of its shire;
How alter'd is each pleasant nook,
The dumpy church used not to look
  So dumpy in the spire.

This village is no longer mine;
And though the inn has chang'd its sign,
  The beer may not be stronger:
The river, dwindled by degrees,
Is now a brook,—the cottages
  Are cottages no longer.

The thatch is slate, the plaster bricks,
The trees have cut their ancient sticks,
  Or else those sticks are stunted:
I'm sure these thistles once grew figs,
These geese were swans, and once those pigs
  More musically grunted.

Where early reapers whistled—shrill
A whistle may be noted still,
  The locomotives' ravings.
New custom newer want begets—
My bank of early violets
  Is now a bank of—savings.

Ah! there's a face I know again,
Fair Patty trotting down the Lane
  To fetch a pail of water;
Yes, Patty! still I much suspect,
'Tis not the child I recollect,
  But Patty, Patty's daughter!

And has she too outliv'd the spells
Of breezy hills and silent dells,
  Where childhood loved to ramble?
Then life was thornless to our ken,
And, Bramble-Rise, thy hills were then
  A rise without a bramble.

Whence comes the change? 'twere easy told
How some grow wise and some grow cold,
  And all feel time and trouble;
And mouldy sages much aver
That if the Past's a gossamer,
  The Future is a bubble.

So let it be, at any rate
My Fate is not the cruel Fate
  Which sometimes I have thought her:
My heart leaps up, and I rejoice
As falls upon my ear thy voice,
  My frisky little daughter.

Come hither, Puss, and perch on these
Your most unworthy Father's knees,
  And try and tell him—Can you?
Are Punch and Judy bits of wood?
Does Dolly boast of ancient blood,
  Or is it only "bran new"?

We talk sad stuff,—and Bramble-Rise
Is lovely to the infant's eyes,
  Whose doll is ever charming;
She does not weigh the pros and cons,
Her pigs still please, her geese are swans,
  Though more or less alarming!

O, mayst thou own, my winsome elf,
Some day a pet just like thyself,
  Her sanguine thoughts to borrow;
Content to use her brighter eyes,
Accept her childish ecstacies,
  And, need be, share her sorrow!

My wife, though life is called a jaunt,
In sadness rife, in sunshine scant,
Though mundane joys, the wisest grant,
  Have no enduring basis:
'Tis something in this desert drear,
For thee so fresh, for me so sere,
To find in Puss, our daughter dear,
  A little cool oasis!

OLD LETTERS

"Fragile creations of still frailer man,
    That men outlast,
Though to eternity, from whence he came,
    The scribe be past.

O there are tongues within these dry brown leaves
    That speak as Autumns do;
They cry of death and sorrow,
    To me—to you."

Mr George Thornbury.

Old letters! wipe away the tear,
  And gaze upon these pale mementoes,
A pilgrim finds his journal here
  Since first he took to walk on ten toes.

Yes, here are scrawls from Clapham Rise,
  Do mothers still their school-boys pamper?
O, how I hated Doctor Wise!
  O, how I lov'd a well-fill'd hamper!

How strange to commune with the Dead—
  Dead joys, dead loves, and wishes thwarted:
Here's cruel proof of friendships fled,
  And sad enough of friends departed.

And here's the offer that I wrote
  In '33 to Lucy Diver;
And here John Wylie's begging note—
  He never paid me back a stiver.

And here my feud with Major Spike,
  Our bet about the French Invasion;
On looking back I acted like
  A donkey upon that occasion.

And here a letter from "the Row,"—
  How mad I was when first I learnt it!
They would not take my Book, and now
  I'd give a trifle to have burnt it.

And here a heap of notes, at last,

With “love” and “dove,” and “sever” “never”—
Though hope, though passion may be past,
Their perfume is as sweet as ever.

A human heart should beat for two,
Whatever say your single scorners,
And all the hearths I ever knew
Had got a pair of chimney corners.

See here a double violet—
Two locks of hair—a deal of scandal:
I’ll burn what only brings regret—
Go, Betty, fetch a lighted candle.

SUSANNAH

“My sprightly neighbour, gone before
To that unknown and silent shore!
Shall we not meet as heretofore
Some summer morning?
When from thy cheerful eyes a ray
Hath struck a bliss upon the day,
A bliss that would not go away,
A sweet forewarning?”

C. Lamb.

Susannah! still that name can raise
The memory of ancient days,
And hearts unwrung:
When all too bright our future smil’d,
When she was Mirth’s adopted child,
And I—was young.

I see the cot with spreading eaves
Embosom’d bright in summer leaves,
As heretofore:
The gables quaint, the pansy bed,—
Old Robin train’d the roses red
About the door.

A seat did most blithe Susan please,
Beneath two shady elder trees,
Of rustic make:
Old Robin’s handiwork again,
He dearly lov’d those elders twain
For Susan’s sake.

Her gleeful tones and laughter gay
Lent sunshine to a gloomy day,
And trouble fled:
Yet when her mirth was passing wild,
Though still the faithful Robin smil’d,
He shook his head.

Perchance the old man harbour’d fears
That happiness is wed with tears
On this poor earth:
Or else, may be, his fancies were
That youth and beauty are a snare
If link’d with mirth.

* * * * *

And times are chang’d,—how chang’d that scene,
For mark old Robin’s alter’d mien,
And feeble tread.
His toil has ceased to be his pride,
At Susan’s name he turns aside,
And shakes his head.

And summer smiles, but summer spells
Can never charm where sorrow dwells,
Nor banish care.
No fair young form the passer sees,

And still the much-lov’d elder trees
  Throw shadows there.

The well-remember’d seat is gone, p. 62
And where it stood is set a stone,
  A simple square:
The worlding gay, or man austere,
May pass the name recorded here,
But we will stay to shed a tear,
  And breathe a prayer.

MY FIRSTBORN p. 63

  “But thou that didst appear so fair
    To fond imagination,
  Dost rival in the light of day,
    Her delicate creation!”

WORDSWORTH.

It shall not be “Albert” nor “Arthur,”
  Though both are respectable men,
His name shall be that of his father,
  My Benjamin shorten’d to “Ben.”

Yes, much as I wish for a corner
  In each of my relative’s wills,
I will not be reckon’d a fawner—
  That creaking of boots must be Squills.

It is clear, though his means may be narrow, p. 64
  This infant his age will adorn;
I shall send him to Oxford from Harrow—
  I wonder how soon he’ll be born.

A spouse thus was airing his fancies
  Below—’twas a labour of love—
And calmly reflecting on Nancy’s
  More practical labour above.

Yet while it so pleas’d him to ponder,
  Elated, at ease, and alone,
That pale, patient victim up yonder
  Had budding delights of her own;

Sweet thoughts in their essence diviner
  Than dreams of ambition and pelf;
A cherub, no babe will be finer,
  Invented and nursed by herself!

One breakfasting, dining, and teaing, p. 65
  With appetite nought can appease,
And quite a young Reasoning Being
  When called on to yawn and to sneeze.

What cares that heart, trusting and tender,
  For fame or avuncular wills;
Except for the name and the gender,
  She is almost as tranquil as Squills.

That father, in reverie centr’d,
  Dumfoundered, his brain in a whirl,
Heard Squills—as the creaking boots enter’d,—
  Announce that his Boy was—a GIRL.

THE WIDOW’S MITE p. 66

ST MARK’S GOSPEL, chap. xii. verses 42, 43, 44

The widow had but only one,
A puny and decrepid son;
  But day and night,

Though fretful oft, and weak, and small,
A loving child, he was her all—
  The widow’s mite.

The widow’s might—yes! so sustain’d
She battled onward, nor complain’d
  Though friends were fewer:
And, cheerful at her daily care,
A little crutch upon the stair
  Was music to her.

I saw her then, and now I see, p. 67
Though cheerful and resign’d, still she
  Has sorrow’d much:
She has—HE gave it tenderly—
Much faith—and carefully laid by
  A little crutch.

ST GEORGE’S, HANOVER SQUARE p. 68

“Dans le *bonheur* de nos meilleurs amis nous trouvons souvent quelque chose qui ne nous plaît pas entièrement.”

She pass’d up the aisle on the arm of her sire,
A delicate lady in bridal attire,
  Fair emblem of virgin simplicity:
Half London was there, and, my word, there were few,
Who stood by the altar, or hid in a pew,
  But envied Lord Nigel’s felicity.

O, beautiful bride, still so meek in thy splendour,
So frank in thy love and its trusting surrender,
  Going hence thou wilt leave us the town dim! p. 69
May happiness wing to thy bosom, unsought,
And Nigel, esteeming his bliss as he ought,
  Prove worthy thy worship, confound him!

A SKETCH IN SEVEN DIALS p. 70

Mary in her hand has sixpence,
  Mary starts to fetch some butter,
Mary’s pinafore is spotless,
  Off she goes across the gutter,
Gleeful, radiant, as she thus did,
Proud to be so largely trusted.

One, two, three, small steps she’s taken,
  Blissfully away she’s tripping,
When good lack, and who’d a thought it,
  Down goes Mary, slipping, slipping;
Daubs her clothes, the little slut—her
Sixpence, too, rolls in the gutter.

Never creep back so despairing, p. 71
  Dry those eyes, my little Mary,
All of us start off in high glee,
  Many come back quite “contrairy”—
I’ve mourn’d sixpences in scores too,
Damag’d hopes and pinafores too.

MISS EDITH p. 72
An Extravaganza

Miss Edith lifts the latch with care,
And now she must brave the chill night air.

She has violet eyes and ruby lips,
A dancing shape—and away she skips;
She hies to the haunt of a hermit weird,
With flaming eyes and a forky beard,
A shocking wizard—who, gossips say,
Has dwelt in his cavern a year to-day.

“O, ancient man! I am filled with fear,
My lover has left me full a year.
‘I swear to return in a year,’ said he,
‘Or question the man of mystery.
Your eyes are blue, and your lips are red; p. 73
I swear, my love, to come back,’ he said.
O, fearsome man! I pray of you,
Can he prove so false whom I think so true?”

“O, daughter fair! I am sad to say
That young men now and then betray:
Thy lover, I wis, has thy trust betray’d,
For he presently woos a witching maid:
Her eyes are blue, and, I tell thee this,
She has tempting lips that he fain would kiss;
But courage, my child, thou mayst yet discover
A clue to the heart of this worthless lover.”

He mutter’d, when thus he the maid had cheer’d,
A strange sound that was drown’d in the forky beard;
Then all around loud thunders broke,
And the cave was wrapp’d in fire and smoke,
And that fearsome man has disappear’d p. 74
With his flaming eyes and his forky beard;
And Edith weeps in rapture sweet
To find her lover at her feet!

A GLIMPSE OF GRETNA GREEN, IN THE DISTANCE p. 75

“My Kate, at the Waterloo column,
To-morrow, precisely at eight;
Remember, thy promise was solemn,
And—thine till to-morrow, my Kate!”

* * * * *

That evening seem’d strangely to linger,
The licence and luggage were packt,
And Time, with a long and short finger,
Approvingly mark’d me exact.

Arrived, woman’s constancy blessing,
No end of nice people I see,
Some hither, some thitherwards pressing,
But none of them waiting for me.

Time passes, my watch how I con it, p. 76
I see her—she’s coming—no, stuff!
Instead of Kate’s smart little bonnet,
It is aunt and her wonderful muff!

(Yes! Fortune deserves to be chidden,
It is a coincidence queer,
Whenever one wants to be hidden,
One’s relatives always appear.)

Near nine! how the passers despise me,
They smile at my anguish, I think;
And even the sentinel eyes me,
And tips that policeman the wink.

Ah! Kate made me promises solemn,
At eight she had vow’d to be mine;
While waiting for one at this column,
I find I’ve been waiting for nine.

O Fame! on thy pillar so steady, p. 77
Some dupes watch beneath thee in vain:

How many have done it already!
  How many will do it again!

THE FOUR SEASONS

p. 78

Two wayward imps, all smiles or tears,
  With large round eyes of ceaseless wonder,
Small pitchers with extensive ears,
  And fingers prone to urchin plunder.

Two whisp'ring lovers—blissful pair!
  Is *he* the rogue? or hath she trick'd him?
Unless he dupes his mistress there,
  The chances are, he'll fall a victim.

Two toiling ones of sober age
  (Their bet with Care a losing wager);
They own, though now so very sage,
  They might have been a trifle sager!

Two frail old wretches, sick and sad, p. 79
  Yet sore dismayed lest Death should take them,
—Come, hang it, things, though passing bad,
  Are not so bad as some would make them:

For, like yon clock, when twelve shall sound,
  The call these poor old souls obeying,
Together shall *their* hands be found,
  An earnest they are humbly praying!

ENIGMA

p. 80

He met her with her milking-cans,
  Too fast the moments speeded,
For while they chat on this and that
  My *first* may low unheeded.
And was she call'd a forward jade,
  And was he graceless reckon'd,
Because he stopt the dairy-maid,
  Enchanted by my *second*?

Though stars in thousands stud the pole,
  The fields own stars as yellow,
And when I gave that last my *whole*,
  She thank'd a happy fellow.
But she was call'd a forward jade,
  And I was graceless reckon'd;—
I only kiss'd that dairy-maid,
  Enraptur'd by my *second*.

ENIGMA

p. 81

Toll, toll the bell, its iron tongue
  Is weighty as my *second*,
Dig, dig the grave, to life he clung,
  But now his days are reckon'd.

Old man, who'll ring a knell for thee,
  Or dress thy couch of clay?
Why didst not thou thy death foresee,
  And dig it for to-day?

King Death his journeyman demands,
  On all he works his worst:
His dart he's flung at old and young,—
  Death heedeth not my *first*.

Old man, thou’st dug some scores of graves, p. 82
  Who’ll turn the mould for thine?
And when this spade thy bed hath made,
  Who’ll lift a spade at mine?

TO THE PRINTER’S DEVIL p. 83

Small imp of blackness, off at once,
  Expend thy mirth as likes thee best:
Thy toil is over for the nonce;
  Yes, “opus operatum est.”
When dreary authors vex thee sore,
  Thy Mentor’s old, and would remind thee
That if thy griefs are all before,
  Thy pleasures are not all behind thee.

THE END

NOTES p. 85

The Castle in the Air. Last published in 1872.

The Cradle. Last published in 1878.

O Tempora Mutantur. Written in 1856: last published in 1893: omitted from the 1881 edition. In 1893 the last stanza is different: I have quoted from it in the Introduction.

Piccadilly. Last published in 1893. After the words “If ‘yes,’ Piccadilly,” the 1893 version is as follows:—

> “From Primrose balcony, long ages ago
> ‘Old Q’ sat at gaze,—who now passes below?
> A frolicsome statesman, the Man of the Day,”
> etc.

The Old Clerk. Written in 1856: last published in 1893: omitted in 1881. The final version (title, “The Old Government Clerk”) is a good deal elaborated, and a stanza added.

The Garter. Last published in 1878. In the 1862 and subsequent editions the title is “Arcadia.”

Pilgrims of Pall Mall. Written in 1856: last published in 1893. The first lines of the fifth stanza run, as finally revised:

> “I often wander up and down, p. 86
> When morning bathes the silent town
> In dewy glory”;

and the seventh stanza is altered to:

> “My heart grows chill! Can Soul like thine,
> Weary of this clear world of mine,
> Have loosed its fetter,
> To find a world whose promised bliss
> Is better than the best of this?—
> And is it better?”

These are the most important changes.

The Russet Pitcher. Last published in 1870: omitted in 1868.

The Enchanted Rose. “The Fairy Rose” in subsequent editions. Last published in 1870: omitted in 1868.

Circumstance. Written in 1856: last published in 1893, with some alteration. The last line runs, finally: “And—wish them at the devil.”

A Wish. Last published in 1878.

My Life is a—. Last published in 1893: omitted in 1881. Practically the same in the final version.

Vanity Fair. Last published in 1878.

Bramble-Rise. Written in 1857: last published in 1893, a good deal altered. It is less "Praedian" than in the original form: the puns in stanzas four and nine disappear.

Old Letters. Last published in 1878. Of all the London Lyrics this is the most obviously reminiscent of Praed: and as such it is rejected by Locker's final judgment. It belongs evidently to the period when "I once tried to write like Praed." p. 87

Susannah. Last published (as "Susan") in 1872: omitted in 1868. The first verse, slightly altered, serves as "motto" for the serious poem, "Her quiet resting-place is far away," which is in some of the later editions.

My Firstborn. Last published in 1878, omitted in 1868.

The Widow's Mite. Last published in 1893. In the final form of the poem the pun is (characteristically) dropped.

St George's. Last published in 1878: omitted in 1868.

Seven Dials. Last published in 1862.

Miss Edith. Not again published.

Gretna Green. Subsequently under the title "Vae Victis": last published in 1870.

The Four Seasons. Not again published.

Enigma. 1. / 2. } Not again published.

The Printer's Devil. Not again published.

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EDINBURGH p. 88

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