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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DAYS AND DREAMS: POEMS ***

DAYS AND DREAMS

POEMS

BY

MADISON CAWEIN

AUTHOR OF "LYRICS AND IDYLS," "THE TRIUMPH
OF MUSIC," ETC., ETC.

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BY
MADISON CAWEIN

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TO
JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY
WITH
ADMIRATION AND REGARD

*O lyrist of the lowly and the true,
The song I sought for you
Hides yet unsung. What hope for me to*

*find,
 Lost in the dædal mind,
 The living utterance with lovely tongue!
 To say, as erst was sung
 By Ariosto of Knight-errantry,—
 Through lands of Poesy,
 Song's Paladin, knight of the dream and
 day,
 The wizard shield you sway
 Of that Atlantes power, sweet and terse,
 The skyey-built verse:
 The shield that dazzles, brilliant with
 surprise,
 Our unanointed eyes.—
 Oh, had I written as 't were worthy you,
 Each line, a spark of dew,—
 As once Ferdusi shone in Persia,—
 Had strung each rosy spray
 Of the unfolding flower of each song;
 And Iran's bulbul tongue
 Had sobbed its heart out o'er the
 fountain's slab
 In gardens of Afrasiab.*

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ONE DAY AND ANOTHER.

[Pg 1]

PART I.

1.

He waits musing.

Herein the dearness of her is:

The thirty perfect days of June
Made one, in beauty and in bliss
Were not more white to have to kiss,
To love not more in tune.

And oft I think she is too true,
Too innocent for our day;
For in her eyes her soul looks new—
Two crowfoot-blossoms watchet-blue
Are not more soft than they.

[Pg 2]

So good, so kind is she to me,
In darling ways and happy words,
Sometimes my heart fears she may be
Too much with God and secretly
Sweet sister to the birds.

2.

Becoming impatient.

The owls are quavering, two, now three,
And all the green is graying;
The owls our trysting dials be—
There is no time for staying.

I wait you where this buckeye throws
Its tumbled shadow over
Wood-violet and the bramble-rose,
Long lady-fern and clover.

Spice-seeded sassafras weighs deep
Rough rail and broken paling,
Where all day long the lizards sleep
Like lichen on the railing.

[Pg 3]

Behind you you will feel the moon's
Gold stealing like young laughter;
And mists—gray ghosts of picaroons—
Its phantom treasure after.

And here together, youth and youth,
Love will be doubly able;
Each be to each as true as truth,
And dear as fairy fable.

The owls are calling and the maize
With fallen dew is dripping—
Ah, girlhood, through the dewy haze
Come like a moonbeam slipping.

3.

He hums.

There is a fading inward of the day,
And all the pansy sunset hugs one star;
To eastward dwindling all the land is gray,
While barley meadows westward
smoulder far.

[Pg 4]

Now to your glass will you pass
For the last time?
Pass,
Humming that ballad we know?—
Here while I wait it is late
And is past time—
Late,
And love's hours they go, they go.

There is a drawing downward of the night;
The wedded Heaven wends married to
the Moon;
Above, the heights hang golden in her
light,

Below, the woods bathe dewy in the
June.

There through the dew is it you
Coming lawny?
You,
Or a moth in the vines?
You!—at your throat I may note
Twinkling tawny,
Note,
A glow-worm, your brooch that
shines.

4.

[Pg 5]

She speaks.

How many smiles in the asking?—
Herein I can not deceive you;
My "yes" in a "no" was a-masking,
Nor thought, dear, once to grieve
you.
I hid. The humming-bird happiness here
Danced up i' the blood ... but what are
words
When the speech of two souls all truth
affords?
Affirmative, negative what in love's ear?—
I wished to say "yes" and somehow said
"no";
The woman within me knew you would
know,
For it held you six times dear.

He speaks.

So many hopes in a wooing!—
Therein you could not deceive me;
The heart was here and the hope
pursuing,
Knew that you loved, believe me.—
Bunched bells o' the blush pomegranate—
to fix
At your throat; three drops of fire they are;
And the maiden moon and the maiden star
Sink silvery over yon meadow ricks.
Will you look?—till I hug your head back,
so—
For I know it is "yes" though you whisper
"no,"—
And my kisses, sweet, are six.

[Pg 6]

5.

She speaks.

Could I recall every joy that befell me
There in the past with its anguish and
bliss,
Here in my heart it has whispered to tell
me,
These were no joys to this.

Were it not well if our love could forget
them,
Veiling the *was* with the dawn of the *is*?
Dead with the past we should never regret
them,
These were no joys to this.

When they were gone and the present
stood speechful,
Ardent with word and with look and with
kiss,

[Pg 7]

What though we know that their eyes are
beseechful,
These were no joys to this.

Is it not well to have more of the spirit,
Living high futures this earthly must miss?
Less of the flesh with the past pining near
it?—
Such is the joy of this.

6.

She sings.

We will leave reason,
Dear, for a season;
Reason were treason
Since yonder nether
Foot-hills are clad now
In nothing sad now;
We will be glad now,
Glad as this weather.
Heart and heart! in the Maytime, Maytime,
Youth and Love take playtime, playtime ...
I in the dairy; you are the airy
Majesty passing; Love is the fairy
Bringing us two together.

[Pg 8]

He sings.

Starlight in masses
Of mist that passes,
Stars in the grasses;
Star-bud and flower
Laughingly know us;
Secretly show us
Earth is below us
And for the hour
Soul has soul. In the Maytime, Maytime,
Youth and Love take playtime, playtime ...
You are a song; a singer I hear it
Whispered in star and in flower; the spirit,
Love, is the power.

[Pg 9]

7.

He speaks.

And say we can not wed us now,
Since roses and the June are here,
Meseems, beneath the beechen bough
'T is just as sweet, my doubly dear,
To swear anew each old love vow,
And love another year.

When breathe green woodlands through
and through
Wild scents of heliotrope and rain,
Where deep the moss mounds cool with
dew,
Beyond the barley-blowing lane,
More wise than wedding, is to woo—
So we will woo again.

All night I lie awake and mark
The hours by no clanging clock,
But in the dim and dewy dark
Far crowing of some punctual cock;
Until the lyric of the lark
Mounts and Morn's gates unlock.

And would you be a nun and miss
All this delightful ache of love?
Not have the moon for what she is?

[Pg 10]

Love's honey-horn God holds above—
No world, for worlds are in a kiss
If worlds are good enough.

So say we can not wed us now,
Since roses and the June are here
We 'll stroll beneath the doddered bough,
Heaven's mated songsters singing near,
To swear anew each old love vow,
And love another year.

8.

He opens his heart.

And had we lived in the days
Of the Khalif Haroun er Reshid,
We had loved, as the story says,
Did the Sultan's favorite one
And the Persian Emperor's son
Ali ben Bekkar, he
Of the Kisra dynasty.

Do you know the story well
Of the Khalif Haroun's sultana?—
When night on the palace fell,
A slave through a secret door,
Low-arched on the Tigris' shore,
By a hidden winding stair
Ben Bekkar brought to his fair?

[Pg 11]

Then there was laughter and mirth,
And feasting and singing together,
In a chamber of marvellous worth;
In a chamber vaulted high
On columns of ivory;
Its dome, like the irised skies,
Mooned over with peacock eyes;
And the curtains and furniture,
Damask and juniper.

Ten slave-girls—so many blooms—
Stand sconcing tamarisk torches,
Silk-clad from the Irak looms;
Ten handmaidens serve the feast,
Each like to a star in the East;
Ten singers, their lutes a-tune,
Each like to a bosomed moon.

[Pg 12]

For her in the stuff of Merv
Blue-clad, unveiled, and jewelled,
No metaphor made may serve;
Scarved deep with her own dark hair,
The jewels like fire-flies there—
Blossom and moon and star,
The Lady Shemsennehar.

The zone embracing her waist,—
The ransom of forty princes,—
But her form more priceless is placed;
Carbuncles of Istakhar
In her coronet burning are—
Though gems of the Jamshid race,
Far rarer the gem of her face.

Tall-shaped like the letter I,
With a face like an Orient morning;
Eyes of the bronze-black sky;
Lips, of the pomegranate split,
With the light of her language lit;
Cheeks, which the young blood dares
Make blood-red anemone lairs.

[Pg 13]

Kohled with voluptuous look,
From opaline casting-bottles,

Handmaidens over them shook
Rose-water, and strewed with bloom
Mosaics old of the room;
Torch-rays on the walls made bars,
Or minted down golden dinars.

Roses of Rocknabad,
Hyacinths of Bokhara;—
Not a spray of cypress sad;—
Narcissus and jessamine o'er
Carved pillar and cedarn door;
Pomegranates and bells of clear
Tulips of far Kashmeer.

And the chamber glows like a flower
Of the Tuba, or vale of El Liwa;
And the bronzen censers glower;
And scents of ambergris pour
With myrrh brought out of Lahore,
And musk of Khoten, and good
Aloes and sandal-wood.

[Pg 14]

Rubies, a tragacanth-red,
Angered in armet and anklet
Dragon-like eyes that bled:
Bangles and necklaces dangled
Diamonds, whose prisms were angled,
Over veil and from coiffure, each
Or apricot-colored or peach.

And Ghoram now smites her lute,
Sings loves of Mejnoon and Leila,
Or amorous ghazals may suit:—
And the flambeaux snap and wave
Barbaric on free and slave,
Rich fabrics and bezels of gems,
And roses in anadems.

Sherbets in ewers of gold,
Fruits in salvers carnelian;
Flagons of grotesque mold,
Made of a sapphire glass,
Stained with wine of Shirâz;
Shaddock and melon and grape
On plate of an antique shape:

[Pg 15]

Vases of frost and of rose,
An alabaster graven,
Filled with the mountain snows;
Goblets of mother-of-pearl,
One filigree silver-swirl;
Vessels of gold foamed up
With spray of spar on the cup.—

When a slave bursts in with the cry:
"The eunuchs! the Khalif's eunuchs!
With scimitars bared draw nigh!
Wesif and Afif and he,
Chief of the hideous three,
Mesrour! the Sultan 's seen
'Mid a hundred weapons' sheen!"...

We, never had parted, no!
As parted those lovers fearful;
But kissing you so and so,
When they came they had found us dead
On the flowers our blood dyed red;
Our lips together and
The dagger in my hand.

[Pg 16]

9.

She speaks, musing.

O cities built by music! lyres of love

Strung to a songful sea! did I but own
One harp chord of one broken barbiton
What had I budded for our life thereof?

In docile shadows under bluebell skies
A home upon the popped edge of eve,
Beneath lone peaks the splendors never
leave,
In lemon orchards whence the egret flies.

Where pitying gray the pitiless eyes of
Death
Blight no slight bud unfostered, I have
thought;
Deep, lily-deep, pearl-pale daturas,
fraught
With dewy fragrance like an angel's
breath.

Sleep in the days; the twilights tuned and
tame
Through mockbirds throating to
attentive stars;
Each morn outrivalling each in opal
bars;
Eves preaching beauty with rose-tongues
of flame.

[Pg 17]

O country by the undiscovered sea!
The dream infolds thee and the way is
dim—
With head not high, what if I follow him,
Love—with the madness and the melody?

10.

He, after a pause, lightly.

An elf there is who stables the hot
Red wasp that stings o' the apricot;
An elf who rowels his spiteful bay,
Like a mote on a ray, away, away;
An elf who saddles the hornet lean
To din i' the ear o' the swinging bean;
Who hunts with a hat cocked half awry
The bottle-blue o' the dragon-fly:—
O ho, O hi! Oh, well know I.

An elf there is where the clover tips
A horn whence the summer leaks and
drips,
Where lanthorns of mustard-flowers
bloom,
In the dusk awaits the bee's dull boom;
Gay gold brocade from head to knee,
Who robs the caravan bumble-bee;
Big bags of honey bee-merchants pay
To the bandit elf of the Fairy way,—
O ho, O hey! I have heard them say.

[Pg 18]

Another ouphen the butterflies know,
Who paints their wings like the buds that
blow;
Flowers, staining the dew-drops through,
Seals their colors in tubes of dew;
Colors to dazzle the butterflies' wing—
The evening moth is another thing:
The butterfly's glory he got at dawn,
The moon-moth's got when the moon was
wan;
He it is, that the hollyhocks hear,
Who dangles a brilliant i' each one's ear;
Teases at noon the pane's green fly,
And lights at night the glow-worm's eye:—
O ho, O hi! Oh, well know I.

But the dearest elf, so the poets say,
 Is the elf who hides in an eye of gray;
 Who curls in a dimple and slips along
 The strings of a lute or a lover's song;
 Shines in a scent, or wings a rhyme,
 And laughs in the bells of a wedding
 chime;
 Hides unhidden, where none may know,
 In her bosom's blossom or throat's blue
 bow—
 O ho, O ho!—a friend or foe?

11.

She, seriously.

Who the loser, who the winner,
 If the Fancy fail as preacher?—
 None who loved was yet beginner
 Though another's love-beseecher;
 Love's revealment 's of the inner
 Life and deity, the teacher.

Who may falsify the feeling
 To the lover who is loser?
 Has she felt:—the mere revealing
 Of the passion 's his accuser;
 She conceals it; the concealing
 Is her own love's self-abuser.

[Pg 20]

One hath said, no flower knoweth
 Of the fragrance it revealeth;
 Song, its soul that overfloweth,
 Never nightingale's heart feeleth—
 Such the love the spirit groweth,
 Love unconscious if it healeth.

12.

He.

Handsels of anemones
 The surrendered hours
 Pour about the sweet Spring's knees—
 Crowding babies of the breeze,
 Her unstudied flowers.

When 't is dawn, bestowing Day
 Strews with coins of golden
 Every furlong of his way—
 Like a Sultan gone to pray
 At a Kaaba olden.

[Pg 21]

Warlock Night, when dips the dark,
 Opens, tire on tire,
 Windows of an heavenly ark,
 Whence the stars swarm, spark on spark,
 Butterflies of fire.

With the night, the day, the spring,—
 Godly chords of beauty,—
 We the instrument will string
 Of our lives and love shall sing
 Songs of truth and duty.

13.

She.

How it was I can not tell,
 For I know not where nor why,
 And the beautiful befell
 In a land that does not lie
 East or West where mortals dwell—

[Pg 22]

But beneath a vaguer sky.

Was it in the golden ages,
Or the iron, that I heard,
In prophetic speech of sages,
How had come a snowy bird
'Neath whose wing lay written pages
Of an unknown lover's word?

I forget; you may remember
How the earthquake shook our ships;
How our city, one huge ember,
Blazed within the thick eclipse;
When you found me—deep December
Sealed on icy eyes and lips.

I forget. No one may say
Pre-existences are true:
Here 's a flower dies to-day,
Resurrected blooms anew:
Death is dumb and Life is gray—
Who shall doubt what God can do!

14.

[Pg 23]

He.

As to this, nothing to tell,
You being all my belief;
Doubt may not enter or dwell
Here where your image is chief,
Royal, to quicken or quell,
Swaying no sceptre of grief.

Wise with the wisdom of Spring—
Dew-drops, a world in each prism,
Gems from the universe ring:—
Free of all creed and all schism,
Buds that are speechless but bring
God-uttered God aphorism.

See how the synod is met
There of the planets to preach us—
Freed from the frost's oubliette,
Here how the flowers beseech us—
Were it not well to forget
Winter and night as they teach us?

Dew-drop, a bud, and a star,
These—each a separate thought
Over man's logic how far!—
God to a unit hath wrought—
Love, making these what they are,
For without love they were naught.

[Pg 24]

Millions of stars; and they roll
Over your path that is white,
Here where we end the long stroll.—
Seen of the innermost sight,
All of the love of my soul
Kisses your spirit. Good-night.

PART II.

[Pg 25]

1.

She delays, meditating.

Sad skies and a foggy rain
Dripping from streaming eaves;
Over and over again
Dead drop of the trickling leaves;
And the woodward winding lane,
And the hill with its shocks of sheaves,

One scarce perceives.

Must I go in such sad weather
By the lane or over the hill?
Where the splitting milk-weed's feather
Dim, diamond-like rain-drops fill?
Or where, ten stars together,
Buff ox-eyes rank the rill
By the old corn-mill?

The creek by this is swollen,
And its foaming cascades sound;
And the lilies, smeared with pollen,
In the race look dull and drowned;—
'T is the path we oft have stolen
To the bridge, that rambles round
With willows crowned.

[Pg 26]

Through a bottom wild with berry
Or packed with the iron-weeds,
With their blue combs washed and very
Purple; the sorghum meads
Glint green near a wilding cherry;
Where the high wild-lettuce seeds
The fenced path leads.

A bird in the rain beseeches;
And the balsams' budding balls
Smell drenched by the way which reaches
The wood where the water falls;
Where the warty water-beeches
Hang leaves one blister of galls,
The mill-wheel drawls.

My shawl instead of a bonnet!...
Though the wood be soaking yet
Through the wet to the rock I 'll run it—
How sweet to meet in the wet!—
Our rock with the vine upon it,
Each flower a fiery jet— ...
He won't forget!

[Pg 27]

2.

He speaks, rowing.

Deep are the lilies here that lay
Lush, lambent leaves along our way,
Or pollen-dusty bob and float
White nenuphars about our boat
This side the woodland we have reached;
Two rapid strokes our skiff is beached.

There is no path. Heaped foxgrapes choke
Huge trunks they wrap. This giant oak
Floods from the Alleghanies bore
To wedge here by this sycamore;
Its wounded bulk, heart-rotted white,
Lights ghostly foxfire in the night.

Now oar we through this willow fringe
The bulging shore that bosks,—a tinge
Of green mists down the marge;—where
old,
Scarred cottonwoods build walls of shade
With breezy balsam pungent; bowled
Around vined trunks the floods have made
Concentric hollows. On we pass.

[Pg 28]

As we pass, we pass, we pass,
In daisy jungles deep as grass,
A bubbling sparrow flirts above
In wood-words with its woodland love:
A white-streaked woodpecker afar
Knocks: slant the sun dashed, each a star,

Three glittering jays flash over: slim
The piping sand-snipes skip and skim
Before us: and a finch or thrush—
Who may discover where such sing?—
The silence rinses with a gush
Of mellow music gurgling.

On we pass, and onward oar
To yon long lip of ragged shore,
Where from yon rock spouts, babbling
frore

[Pg 29]

A ferny spring; where dodging by
Rests sulphur-disced that butterfly;
Mallows, rank crowded in for room,
'Mid wild bean and wild mustard bloom;
Where fishers 'neath those cottonwoods
Last Spring encamped those ashes say
And charcoal boughs.—'T is long till buds!

—
Here who in August misses May?

3.

He speaks, resting.

Here the shores are irised; grasses
Clump the water gray that glasses
Broken wood and deepened distance:
Far the musical persistence
Of a field-lark lingers low
In the west where tulips blow.

White before us flames one pointed
Star; and Day hath Night anointed
King; from out her azure ewer
Pouring starry fire, truer
Than true gold. Star-crowned he stands
With the starlight in his hands.

[Pg 30]

Will the moon bleach through the ragged
Tree-tops ere we reach yon jagged
Rock, that rises gradually?
Pharos of our homeward valley.
Down the dusk burns golden-red;
Embers are the stars o'erhead.

At my soul some Protean elf is:
You 're Simaetha, I am Delphis;
You are Sappho and her Phaon—
I. We love. There lies a ray on
All the dark Æolian seas
'Round the violet Lesbian leas.

On we drift. He loves you. Nearer
Looms our island. Rosier, clearer
The Leucadian cliff we follow,
Where the temple of Apollo
Lifts a pale and pillared fire—
Strike, oh, strike the Lydian lyre;
Out of Hellas blows the breeze
Singing to the Sapphic seas.

[Pg 31]

4.

He sings.

Night, Night, 't is night. The moon before
to love us,
And all the moonlight tangled in the
stream:
Love, love, my love, and all the stars above
us,
The stars above and every star a dream.

In odorous purple, where the falling

warble
Of water cascades and the plunged foam
glows,
A columned ruin heaps its sculptured
marble
Curled with the chiselled rebeck and the
rose.

She sings.

Sleep, Sleep, sweet Sleep sleeps at the
drifting tiller,
And in our sail the Spirit of the Rain—
Love, love, my love, ah bid thy heart be
still,
And, hark! the music of the harping
main.

[Pg 32]

What flowers are those that blow their
balm unto us?
Bow white their brows' aromas each a
flame?
Ah, child, too kind the love we know, that
knew us,
That kissed our eyes that we might see
the same.

He.

Night! night! good night! no dream it is to
vanish,
The temple and the nightingale are
there;
The thornless roses bruising none to
banish,
The moon and one wild poppy in thy
hair.

She.

Night! night! good night! and love's own
star before thee,
And love's star-image in the starry sea;
Yes, yes, ah yes! a presence to watch o'er
thee—
Night! night! good night and good the
gods to thee!

[Pg 33]

5.

Homeward through flowers: she speaks.

O simple offerings of the common hills;
Love's lowly names, that make you trebly
sweet!
One Johnny-jump-up, but an apron-full
Of starry crowfoot, making mossy dells
Dim with heaven's morning blue; dew-
dripping plumes
Of waxen "dog-mouths"; red the tipping
cups
Of gypsy-lilies all along the creek,
Where dull the freckled silence sleeps, and
dark
The water runs when, at high noon, the
cows
Wade knee-deep and the heat hums
drowsy with
The drone of dizzy flies;—one Samson-
flower
Blue-streaked and crystal as a summer's
cloud;
White violets, milk-weed, scarlet Indian-

pinks,
All fragile-scented and familiar as
Pink baby faces and blue infant eyes.

O fair suggestions of a life more fair!
Love's fragrant whispers of an untaught
faith,
High habitations 'neath a godlier blue
Beyond the sin of Earth, in heavens
prepared—
What is it?—halcyon to utter calm,
Faith? such as wrinkled wisdom, doubting,
has
Yearned for and sought in miser'd lore of
worlds,
And vainly?—Love?—Oh, have I learned to
live?

[Pg 34]

6.

He speaks.

Would you have known it seeing it?
Could you have seen it being it?
Waving me out of the budding land
Sunbeam-jewelled a bloom-white hand,
Wafting me life and hope and love,
Life with the hope of the love thereof,
Love.

—"What is the value of knowing it?"—
Only the worth of owing it;
Need of the bud contents the light;
Dew at dawn and nard at night,
Beauty, aroma, honey at heart,
Which is debtor, part for part,
Heart?

Thoughts, when the heart is heedable,
Then to the heart are readable;
I in the texts of your eyes have read
Deep as the depth of the living dead,
Measures of truth in unsaid song
Learned from the soul to haunt me long,
Song.

[Pg 35]

Love perpend each laudable
Thought of the soul made audible,
Said in gardens of bliss or pain:
Moonlight rays in drops of rain,
Feels the faith in its sleep awake,
Wish of the silent words that shake
Sleep.

7.

She hums and muses.

*If love I have had of thee thou hadst of me,
No loss was in giving it over;
Could I give aught but that I had of thee,
Being no more than thy lover?*

And let it cease. When what befalls befalls,
You cannot love me less,
Loving me much now. Neither weeks nor
walls,
With bitterest distress,

[Pg 36]

Shall all avail. Despair will find reprieve,
Though dark the soul be tossed,
In past possession of that love you grieve,
The love which you have lost.

Ponder the morning, or the midnight

moon,
The wilding of the wold,
The morning slitting from night's brown
cocoon
Wide wings of flaxen gold:

The moon that, had not darkness been
before,
Had never shone to lead;
And think that, though you are, you are
not poor,
Since you have loved indeed.

From flower to star read upward; you shall
see
The purposes of loss,
Deep hierograms of gracious deity,
And comfort in your cross.

8.

[Pg 37]

She speaks.

Sunday shall we ride together?
Not the root-rough, rambling way
Through the woods we went that day,
In the sultry summer weather,

Past the Methodist Camp-Meeting,
Where religion helped the hymn
Gather volume, and a slim
Minister with textful greeting

Welcomed us and still expounded.
From the service on the hill
We had rode three hills and still
Far away the singing sounded.

Nor that road through weed and berry
Drowsy days led me and you
To the old-time barbecue,
Where the country-side made merry.

Dusty vehicles together;
Darkies with the horses by
'Neath the soft Kentucky sky,
And a smell of bark and leather;

[Pg 38]

When you smiled, "Our modern tourney:
Gallantry and politics
Dinner, dance and intermix."
As we went the homeward journey

'Twixt hot chaparrals and thickets,
Heard brisk fiddles, scraping still,
Drone and thump the quaint quadrille,
Like a worried band of crickets.—

Neither road. The shady quiet
Of that way by beech and birch,
Winding to the ruined church
On the Fork that sparkles by it.

Where the silent Sundays listen
For the preacher whom we bring,
In our hearts to preach and sing
Week-day shade to Sabbath glisten.

[Pg 39]

9.

He, at parting.

Yes, to-morrow; when the morn,
Pentecost of flame, uncloses
Portals that the stars adorn,

Whence a golden presence throws his
Fiery swords and burning roses
At the wide wood's world of wall,
Spears of sparkle at each fall;

Then together let us ride
Down deep-wood cathedral places,
Where the pilgrim wild-flowers hide,
Praying Sabbath in their faces;
Where in truest untaught phrases,
Worship in each rhythmic word,
Sings no migratory bird....

Pearl on pearl the high stars dight
Jewels of divine devices
'Round the Afric throat of Night;
Where yon misty glimmer rises
Soon the white moon crystallizes
Out of darkness, like a spell.—
Late, 't is late. Till dawn, farewell.

[Pg 40]

PART III.

[Pg 41]

1.

Now rests the season in forgetfulness,
Careless in beauty of maturity;
The ripened roses 'round brown
temples, she
Fulfils completion in a dreamy guess:
Now Time grants night the more and day
the less;
The gray decides; and brown
Dim golds and reds in dulling greens
express
Themselves and broaden as the year
goes down.
Sadder the croft where, thrusting gray and
high
Their balls of seeds, the hoary onions die,
Where, Falstaff-like, buff-bellied pumpkins
lie:
Deeper each wilderness;
Sadder the blue of hills that lounge along
The lonesome west; sadder the song
Of the wild red-bird in the leafage yellow,
Deeper and dreamier, aye!
Than woods or waters, leans the languid
sky
Above lone orchards where the cider-press
Drips and the russets mellow.

[Pg 42]

Nature grows liberal; under woodland
leaves
The beech-nuts' burs their little
pockets poke,
Plump with the copper of the nuts that
choke;
Above our bristling way the spider weaves
A glittering web for which the Dawn
designs
Thrice twenty rows of sparkles. By the
oak,
That rolls old roots in many gnarly lines,
The acorn thimble, smoothly broke,
Shines by its saucer. On sonorous pines
The far wind organs; but the forest here
To no weak breeze hath woke;
Far off the wind, but crumbling near and
near,—
Each tingling twig expectant, and the gray
Surmise of heaven pilots it the way,
Rippling the leafy spines,
Until the wildwood, one exultant sway,

Booms, and the sunlight, arrowing through
it, shines
Visible applause you hear.

How glows the garden! though the white
mists keep
The vagabond in flowers reminded of
Decay that comes to slay in open love,
When the full moon hangs cold and night
is deep,
Unheeding such their cardinal colors leap
Gay in the crescent of the blade of
death;
Spaced innocents in swaths he weeps to
reap,
Waiting his scythe a breath,
To gravely lay them dead with one last
sweep.—
Long, long admire
Their splendors manifold:—
The scarlet salvia showered with spurts of
fire;
Cascading lattices, dark vines that creep,
Nightshade and cypress; there the
marigold
Burning—a shred of orange sunset caught
And elfed in petals that eve's goblins
brought
From elfland; there, predominant red,
The dahlia lifts its head
By the white balsams' red-bruised horns of
honey,
In humming spaces sunny.
The crickets singing dirges noon and night
For morn-born flowers, at dusk already
dead,
For dusk-dead flowers weep;
While tired Summer white,
Where yonder aster whispering odor
rocks,—
The withered poppies knotted in her locks,
—
Sighs, 'mong her sleepy hollyhocks asleep.

[Pg 43]

[Pg 44]

2.

The hips were reddening on the rose,
The haws hung slips of fire;
We went the woodland way that goes
Up hills of branch and briar.
The hooked thorn held her gown and
seemed
Imploring her be staying
The sunlight of herself that beamed
Beside it gently swaying.

Low bent the golden saxifrage;
Its yellow bells like bangles
The foxglove fluttered. Like a page—
From out the rail-fence angles—
With crimson plume the sumach, hosed
In Lincoln green, attended
My lady of the elder, posed
In blue-black jewels splendid.

And as we mounted up the hill
The rocky path that stumbled
Spread smooth; and all the day was still
And odorous with umbled
Tops of wild-carrots drying gray;
And there, soft-sunned before us,
An orchard dwindling away
With dappled boughs bent o'er us.

[Pg 45]

An orchard where the pippin fell

Worm-bitten, bruised, and dusty;
And hornet-stung, each like a bell,
The Bartlett ripened rusty;
The smell of tawny peach and plum,
That offered luscious yellow;
Of wasp and bee the hidden hum,
Made all the warm air mellow.

And on we went where many-hued
Hung wild the morning-glory,
Their blue balloons in shadows, dewed
With frost-white dew-drops hoary;
In bush and burgrass far away
Beneath us stretched the valley,
Cleft by one creek that laughed with day
And babbled musically.

[Pg 46]

The brown, the bronze, the gray, the red
Of weed and briar ran riot
Flush to dark woodland walls that led
To nooks of whispering quiet.
Long, feathering bursts of golden-rod
Ran golden woolly patches—
Bloom-sunsets of the withered sod
The dying summer catches.

Then o'er the hills, loose-tumbling rolled—
O'erleaping expectation—
The sunset, flaming marigold,
A system's conflagration:
And homeward turning, she and I
Went as one self in being—
God met us in the earth and sky
And Love had purged our seeing.

[Pg 47]

3.

Say, my dear, O my dear,
These are the eves for speaking;
There is no wight will work us spite
Beneath the sunset's streaking.

Yes, my dear, O my dear,
These are the eves for telling;
To walk together in starry weather
Ere springs o' the moon are welling.

O my dear, yes, my dear,
These are the dusks for staying;
When twilight dreams of night who seems
Among long-purples praying.

"No, my dear!"—"Yes, my dear!"
These are the nights to kiss it
Times twice-a-twenty: they grow a-plenty
On lips that will not miss it.

4.

To dream where silence sleeps
A sorrow's sleep that sighs;
Where all heaven's azure peeps
Blue from one wildflower's eyes
Where, in reflecting deeps,—
Of cloudier woods and skies,—
Another gray world lies.

[Pg 48]

Divining God from things
Humble as weeds and bees;
From songs the free bird sings
Learn all are vain but these;
In light-delighted springs,
Wise, star-familiar trees,
Seek love's philosophies.

5.

Here where the days are dimmest,
Each old, big-hearted tree
Gives bounteous sympathy;
Here where dead nights sit grimmest
In druid company;
Here where the days are dimmest.

Leaves of my lone communion,
Leaves; and the listening sigh
Of silence wanders by;
While on my soul the union
Is—of the wood and sky—
Leaves of my lone communion.

[Pg 49]

And eyes with tears are aching,
While life waits wistfully
For love that may not be:
In visions vain of waking
Lives all it can not see.—
And eyes with tears are aching,
And eyes with tears are aching.

6.

And here alone I sit and see it so.
A vale of willows swelling into knobs,
A bulwark eastward. Sloping low
Westward the scooping waters flow
Under a rocky culvert's arch that throbs
With clanging wheels of transient trains
that go
Screaming to north and south.
Here all the weary waters, stagnant
stayed,
Sleep at the culvert's mouth;
The current's hungry hiccup still afraid,
Haply, that I should never know
The secret 'neath the striate scum o' the
stream
The devil and the dream,
I, dropping gravels so the echo sob
Mocking and thin as music of a shade
In shades that wring from rocks a hollow
woe,
Complaining phantoms of faint whispers
rob.

[Pg 50]

There, up the valley where the lank grass
leaps
Blades each a crooked kris,
The currents strike or miss
Dream melodies: No wide-belled mallow
sleeps
Monandrous flowers oval as a kiss;
No mandrake curling convolutions up
Loops heavy blossoms, each a conical cup
That swoons moon-nectar and a serpent's
hiss;
No tiger-lily, where the crayfish play,
Mirrors a savage face, a copper hue
Streaked with a crimson dew;
No dragon-fly in endless error keeps
Sewing the pale-gold gown of day
With tangled stitches of a burning blue,—
Whose brilliant body but a needle is,
An azurn and incarnate ray:—
But here, where haunted with the shade,
The dull stream stales and dies,
Are beauties none or few,
Such sinister and new;
And one at widest noon-gaze shrinks afraid
Beneath the timid skies;
So, if you ask me why I answer this:—

[Pg 51]

You know not; only where the kildees
wade
There in the foamy scum,
There where the wet rocks ail,—
Low rocks to which the water-reptiles
come,
Basking pied bodies in the brindled shade,
—

Dim as a bubble's prism on the grail
Below, an angled sparkle rayed,
While lights and shadows aid
From breeze-blown clouds that lounge at
sunny loss,
Deep down, a sense of wavy features quail
The heart; with lips that writhe and fade
And clench; tough, rooty limbs that twist
and cross,
And flabby hair of smoky moss.

[Pg 52]

A brimstone sunset. And at night
The twinkling flies in will-o'-the-wisp
dance wheel
Through copse and open, all a gnomish
green.
I hear the water, and the wave is white
There where the boulder plants a keel,
And each taunt ripple 's sheen.—
Where instant insects dot
The dark with spurts of sulphur—bright,
Beneath the hazy height,
No bitter-almond trees make wan the
night,
Building bloom ridges of a ghostly lustre,
But white-tops tossing cluster over cluster:
Huge-seen within that twilight spot—
As if a hill-born giant, half asleep,
Had dropped his night-cap while he drove
his sheep
Foldward through fallow browns
And foxy grays,—a something crowns
The knoll—is it the odorous peak
Of one June-savory timothy stack?

[Pg 53]

Now, one dead ash behind,
A weak moon shows a withered cheek
Of Quaker quiet, wasted o'er the vines'
Appentice ruins roofing pillared pines:
Beyond these, back and back,
An oak-wood stretches black—
And here the whining were-wolves of the
wind
Snuff snarling: but their eyes are blind,
Although their fangs are fierce;
And though they never pierce
Beyond the bad, bedevilled woodland
streak,
I hear them, yes, I hear
A padding o' footsteps near,
A prowling pant in ear
And can not fly!—yes!—no!—
What horror holds me?—That uncoiling
slow,
Sure, mastering chimera there,
Hooping firm unseen feelers 'round my
neck

A binding, bruising coil ...
The waters burn and boil;
The fire-flies the dappled darkness fleck
With impish dabs of blazing wizard's oil ...
Deep, deep into the black eye of the beck
I stare, magnetic fixed, and little reck
If all the writhing shadow slips,
Dripping around me, to the eyes and hips,
Where grinning murder leers with lupine
lips.

[Pg 54]

What can it mean for me? what have I
 done to her?
 I in our freedom of love as a sun to her;
 She to our liberty goddess and slumberless
 Moon of the stars shining silver and
 numberless:
 Who on my life, that was thorny and
 showery,
 Came—and made dewyness; smiled—and
 made flowery;
 Mine! the affinitized one of humanity:
 Mine! the elected of soul over vanity—
 What have I done to her, what have I done!

What can it mean for me? what have I said
 to her?
 I, who have idolized, worshipped, and pled
 to her;
 Sung for her, laughed for her, sorrowed
 and sighed for her,
 Lived for her, hated and gladly had died
 for her!
 See; she has written me thus! she has
 written me—
 Sooner would dagger or serpent had
 smitten me!
 Would they had shrivelled or ever they'd
 read of it!
 Eyes, that are wide to the bitterest dread
 of it—
 What have I said to her, what have I said!

[Pg 55]

What shall I make of it, I, who am
 trembling
 Fearful of loss?—Oh, enamored,
 dissembling
 Flame!—of the candle that burning, but
 guttering,
 Flatters the moth that comes circling and
 fluttering
 Out of the summer night; trusting,
 importunate,
 Quitting cool flowers for this—O
 unfortunate!—
 Such has she been to me making me such
 to her,
 Slaying me, saying I never was much to
 her—
 What shall I make of it, what can I make!

Love, in thy everglades, moaning and
 motionless
 Look, I have fallen; the evil is potionless:
 I, with no thought but the heavens that
 lock us in,
 Set naked feet 'mid the cottonmouth,
 moccasin
 Under wild-roses, the Cherokee, eying me:
 —
 In the sweet blue with the egrets that,
 flying me,
 Loosened like blooms from magnolias, rose
 slenderly
 White and pale pink; where the mocking-
 bird tenderly
 Sang, making vistas of mosses melodious,
 Wandered unheeding my steps in the
 odious
 Slime that was venom; I followed the fiery
 Violet curve of thy star falling wiry—
 So was I lost in night, thus am undone!...

[Pg 56]

Have I not told to her—living alone for her

—
 Purposed unfoldments of love I had sown
 for her
 Here in the soil of my soul? their variety
 Endless; and ever she answered with
 piety.—
 See! it has come to this ... all the tale's
 suavity
 At the ninth chapter grows stupid with
 gravity;
 Duller than death all our beautiful history
 —
 Close it!—the *finis* is more than a mystery.
 —
 Yes, I will tell her this; yes, I will tell.

8.

[Pg 57]

I seem to hear her speak and see
 That blue-hung room. Her perfume
 comes
 From lavender folds vined dreamily—
 A-blossom with brocaded blooms,—
 A stuff of Orient looms.

Again I hear her speak and back,
 Where steals the showery sunlight, piles
 A whatnot dainty bric-a-brac
 Beside a tall clock; each glazed tile's
 Blue-patterned profile smiles.

I hear her say, "Ah, had we known,
 Could what has been have ever been?—
 And now!"... How hurt the hard ache
 shone
 In eyes whose sadness seemed to lean
 On something far, unseen!

And as in sleep my own self seems
 Outside my suffering self: I flush
 In mists of undetermined dreams;
 Behold her musing in that hush
 Of lilac light and plush.

Smiling but tortured. Yes, I feel
 Despite that face, not seeming sad,
 In those calm temples thoughts like steel
 Remorseless bore. I had gone mad
 Had I once deemed her glad.

[Pg 58]

Unconsciously, with eyes that yearn
 To pierce beyond the present far,
 Searching some future hope, I turn;—
 There in her garden one fierce star,
 Beyond the window's bar,—

Vermilion as a storm-sunk sun,—
 A phyllocactus?—all the life
 Of torrid middays in but one
 Rich crimson bloom—flames red as
 strife;
 And near it, rankly rife—

Deep coreopsis?—heavy hues
 Of soft seal-bronze and satiny gold,
 Sway girandoles whose jets of dews
 Burn points of starlight diamond-cold,
 Warm-colored, manifold.

She dare not speak; I can not. Yet
 An intercourse 'twixt brain and brain
 Goes feverish on.—Crushed, smelling wet,
 Through silken curtains drift again
 Verbena-scents of rain.

[Pg 59]

I in the doorway turn and stay;

Angry her cameo beauty mark
Set in that smile—Oh! will she say
No farewell? no regret? one spark
Of hope to cheer the dark?

That sepia-sketch—conceive it so—
A roguish head with jaunty eyes
Laughing beneath a rose-chapeau,
Silk-masked, unmasking—it denies
The full-faced flower surprise;

Hung o'er her davenport.... We read
The true beneath the false; perceive
The smile that hides the ache.—Indeed!
Whose soul unmasks?... not mine!—I
grieve
Here, here, but laugh and leave....

9.

[Pg 60]

Beyond the knotty apple-trees
That fade about the old brick-barn,
Its tattered arms and tattered knees
A scare-crow tosses to the breeze
Among the shocks of corn.

All things grow gray in earth and sky;
The cold wind sounding drearily
Makes all the rusty branches fly;
The rustling leaves a-rotting lie;
The year is waning wearily.

At night I hear the far wild geese
Honk in frost-bitten heavens, under
Arcturus. Though I seem to cease
Outside myself and sleep in peace,
I drowse awake and wonder.

I know torn thistles by the creek
Hang hairy with the frost; the tented
Brown acres of the corn stretch bleak
And ghostly in the moonlight, weak
In hollows bitter-scented.

Dream back the ways we strolled at morn
Through woods of summer ever singing;
Moon-trysts beneath the crooked thorn,
The tasselled meads of cane and corn
Their restless shadows swinging....

[Pg 61]

I stand and oar our boat among
The dripping lilies of the river;
I reach her hat the grape-vine long
Struck in the stream; we sing a song,
That song ... I wake and shiver.

And then my feverish mind reverts
To our sad words and sadder parting
In days long gone; and, oh! it hurts
Within here, for the soul asserts
Mine the fool fault from starting.

And I must lie awake and think
Of her with such regrets as gladly
No unrebuking conscience shrink;
And hear the wild-fowls' clangor sink
Through plaintive starlight sadly.

When all are overflown and deep
The stoic night is left forsaken,
For company I well would weep,
Since all my spirit fears to sleep,
Sleep of such visions shaken.

[Pg 62]

Grave visions of dead deeds that flaw
Our waking hours, ever haunting;

Else were we, lacking love and law,
Rude scare-crow things of sticks and straw
Undaunted and undaunting.

10.

The sun a splintered splendor was
In sober trees that broke and blurred,
That afternoon we went together
In droning hum and whirling buzz,
Where hard the dinning locust whirred,
Through fields of golden-rod a-feather.

So sweet it was to look and lean
To your young face and feel the light
Of eyes that fondled mine unsaddened!
The laugh that left lips more serene;
The words that blossomed like the white
Life-everlasting there and gladdened.

[Pg 63]

Maturing Summer, you were fraught
With wiser beauties than than now
Parades rich Autumn's red November;
This stuns: there dreams no subtle thought
As then on hinting bush and bough—
But now I am alone, remember.

11.

Through iron-weeds and roses
And bronzing beech and oak,
Old porches it discloses,
Above the briars and roses
Fall's feeble sunbeams soak.

Neglected walks that tangle
The dodder-strangled grass;
Its chimney shows one angle
Heaped with dead leaves that spangle
The paths that round it pass.

The early mists that bury
And hide them in its rooms,
From spider closets—very
Dim with old webs—will hurry
Out in the raining glooms.

[Pg 64]

They haunt each stair and basement;
They stand on hearth and porch;
Lean from each paneless casement,
Or in the moonlight's lacement
Fly with a phantom torch.

There is a sense of frost here;
And gusts that sob away
Of something that was lost here,
Long, long ago was lost here,
But what, they can not say.

There croons no owl to startle
Despondency within;
No raven o'er its portal
To scare the daring mortal
And guard its cellared sin.

The creaking road descries it
This side the dusty toll;
The farmer passing eyes it;
None stops t' philosophize it,
This symbol of a soul.

[Pg 65]

12.

Though the dog-tooth violet come
With the shower,

And the wild-bee haunt and hum
 Every flower,
We shall never wend as when
Love laughed leading us from men
Over violet vale and glen,
Where the red-bird sang an hour,
And we heard the partridge drum.

Here October shadows pray,
 Till one stills
Joyance, where for buried May
 Sob the rills:
So love's vision has arisen
Of the long ago: I listen—
Memory, tears in eyes that glisten
Points but Indiana hills
Fading dark-blue far away.

[Pg 66]

PART IV.

[Pg 67]

1.

When in her cloudy chiton
Spring freed the donjoned rills,
And trumpeting, a Triton,
Wind-war was on the hills;
O'er ways, hope's buds bedizen,
Long ways the glory lies on,
Love spread us an horizon
Of gold beyond life's ills.

When Summer came with sickle
Stuck in a sheaf of gleams,
And eves were honey-trickle
From bee-hives of the beams;
Scrolls of the days blue-blotted,
Scrolls of the night star-dotted,
To love and us allotted
A world of woven dreams.

When Autumn waited tired—
A fair-faced heretic—
Auto-de-fés Frost fired
In Winter's Bishopric;
Our loves, a song had started,
Grew with the song sad-hearted,
Sweet loves long-sworn were parted,
Though life for love was sick.

[Pg 68]

Now is the Winter waited
'Neath skies of frozen gold,
Or raining heavens hated
Of winds that curse and scold.—
Shall this be so: that never
Shall sunlight snowlight sever?
Forever and forever
The heart wait winter-cold?

2.

Soft music bring that seems to weep
All this dull sorrow of the soul;
Vague music soft to utter sleep,
Sleep and undying dole:
Forgetting not—forgotten most—
How love is well though lost.

[Pg 69]

So weary, oh! and yet so fain
In silent service of the heart;
Still feeling if it be in vain
Love's spirit hath His part;
And if in death God grant the rest
Life were but kind at best.

Last night I slept till midnight
 Then woke, and far away
 A cock crowed; lonely and distant
 Came mournful a watch-dog's bay;
 But lonelier, slower the tedious
 Old clock ticked on towards day.

And what a day!—remember
 The morns of a Summer and Spring,
 That bound two lives together?
 Each morn a wedding ring
 Of dew and dreams and sparkle,
 Of flowers and birds a-wing?

Broad morns when I strolled the garden
 Awaiting one the rose
 Expected, fresh in its blushes—
 The Giant of Battle that grows
 A head of radiance and fragrance,
 The champion of the close.

[Pg 70]

Not in vain did I wait, departed
 Summer, this morning mocks;
 'Mid the powdery crystal and crimson
 Of your hollow hollyhocks;
 Your fairy-bells and poppies,
 And the bee that in them rocks.

Cool-clad 'mid the pendulous purple
 Of the morning-glory vine,
 By the giant pearls pellucid
 Of the peonies a-line,
 The snapdragons' and the pansies'
 Deep-colored jewel mine.

Shall I ever see my mealy,
 Drunk dusty-millers gay;
 My lady-slippers bashful
 Of butterfly and ray;
 My gillyflowers as spicy
 Each as a day of May?

[Pg 71]

Oh, dear when I think of the handfuls
 Of little gold coin a-mass,
 My bachelor's-buttons scatter
 Over the garden grass;
 Of the marigold that boasts its
 One bit of burning brass;

More bitter I feel the winter
 Tighten to spirit and heart;
 And dream of the days remembered
 As lost—of the past a part;
 Of the ways we went, all blotted,
 Tear-blotted on love's chart.

And I see the mill and the diamonds
 Of foam tossed from its wheel;
 Red lilies tumbled together,
 The madcap wind at heel;
 And the timid veronicas' blossoms—
 Those prayers the woods conceal.

The wild-cat gray of the meadows
 That the ox-eyed daisies dot,
 Fawn-eyed and a leopard-yellow,
 That tangle a tawny spot—
 As if some panther tired
 Lay dozing tame and hot.

[Pg 72]

Ah! back again with the present,
 With winds that pinch and twist
 Each leaf in their peevish passion,
 And whirl wherever they list;

With the morning hoary and nipping,
Whose mausolean mist

Builds white a tomb for the daylight—
A frosty, shaggy fog,
That fits gray wigs on the cedars,
And furs with wool each log;
Carpets with satin the meadow,
And velvets white the bog.

Alone at morn—indifferent;
Alone at eve—I sigh;
And wait, like the wind complaining,
Complain and know not why;
But ailing and longing and hating
Because I cannot die.

[Pg 73]

How dull are the sunsets! dreary
Cold, hard and harsh and dead!
Far richer were those of August,
One stain of wine-dark red—
The juice of a mulberry vintage—
To the new moon overhead.

But now I sit with the sighing
Dead wests of a dying year!
Like the fallen leaves and the acorns
Am worthless and feel as sear;
For the soul and the body sicken,
And the heart's one scalding tear.

And I stare from my window! The
darkness,
Like a bravo, his cloak throws on;
The moon, like a hidden lanthorn,
Glitters—or dagger drawn;
All my heart cries out beseeching:
"Strike here! strike and be gone!"

[Pg 74]

4.

When friends are sighing
Round one and one
Nearer is lying,
Nearer the sun,
When one is dying
And all is done;

I may remember,
You may forget
Words, each an ember,
Burning here yet—
In dead December
One will regret.

Love we have given,
Over and o'er,
All, who has driven
Us from his door,
Is he forgiven
When he is poor?

What if you wept once,
What though he knew!
What if he slept once!
Still he was true,
If he but kept once
Something of you.

[Pg 75]

Never forgetful,
Love may forget;
Froward and fretful,
Child, he will fret;
Ever regretful,
He will regret.

Love would be sweeter
If we but knew;
Lives be completer
To themselves true;
Hearts more in metre,
Truth looking through.

Flesh never near it,
Being impure,
Mind must endear it
Making it sure—
Love in the spirit,
That will endure.

[Pg 76]

So when to-morrow
Ceases and we
Quit this we borrow,
Mortality,
Such chastens sorrow
So it may see.

There will be weeping,
Weary and deep,—
God's be the keeping
Of those that weep!—
When our loved, sleeping,
Sleep their long sleep;

Then they are dearer
Than we're aware;
Character clearer,
Being more fair;
Then they are nearer,
Nearer by prayer.

5.

[Pg 77]

They will not say I can not live beyond the
weary night,
But then I know that I shall die before
comes morning's light.
How frail is flesh!—but you 'll forgive me
now I tell you how
I loved you, love you; and the pain it gives
to leave you now?

This could not be on earth; the flesh, that
clothes the soul of me—
Ordained at birth a sacrifice to this
heredity—
Denied, forbade.—Ah, you have seen the
bright spots in my cheeks
Grow hectic, as before comes night blood
dyes the sunset's streaks?

Consumption. "But I promised you my
love"—'t is left forlorn
Of life God summons unto him, and is it
then forsworn?
Oh, I was glad in love of you; but think: if I
had died
Ere babe of mine had come to be a solace
at your side?

[Pg 78]

Had it been little then, your grief, when
Heaven had made us one
In everything that's good on earth and
then the good undone?
No! no!—and had I lived to raise a boy we
saw each day
Bud into beauty, with that blight born in
him that must slay!

Just when we cherish him the most, and
youthful, sunny pride
Sits on his curly front, he pines and dies

ere I have died.
Whose fault?—not mine! but hers or his,
that ancestor who gave
Escutcheon to our humble house—a
death's-head and a grave.

Beneath the pomp of those grim arms we
live and may not move;
Nor faith, nor fame, nor wealth avail to
hurl them down, nor love.
How could I tell you this?—not then! when
all the world was spun
Of morning colors for our love to walk and
dance upon.

[Pg 79]

I could not tell you how disease hid here a
viper germ,
Precedence slowly claiming and so slowly
fixing firm.
And when I broke our plighted troth and
would not tell you why,
I loved you, thinking "time enough when I
have come to die."

Draw off my rings and let my hands rest so
... the wretched cough
Will interrupt my feeble speech and will
not be put off....
Ah, anyhow, my anodyne is this—to feel
that you
Are near me, that your healthy hand
soothes mine's unhealthy dew.

[Pg 80]

And that your heart excuses all, and that
you will not fret
Because you understand me now and
never will forget.—
Now bring me roses pale and pure and tell
me death's a lie,
—Late was it hard for me to live, now it is
hard to die.

PART V.

[Pg 81]

1.

Vased in her bedroom window, white
As her glad girlhood, never lost,
I smelt the roses; and the night
Outside was fog and frost.

What though I claimed her dying there!
God nor one angel understood
Nor cared, who from loved feet to hair
Had changed to mist her blood.

Love, love had claimed us long, and long
Our hearts sang harp-strung, late and
soon;
But God!—God jangles thus the song
And makes discord of tune.

What lily lilier than her face!
More virgin than her lips I kissed!
When morn like God, with gold and grace
Broke massed in mist! broke massed in
mist!

2.

[Pg 82]

Love, to your face farewell now,
Pillowed a flower on flowers;
Eyes, white-weighed with a spell now;
Lips, with nothing to tell now,
That bade adieu to ours.

Dear, is your soul so daggered
There by a world that hates?
Love—is *he* ever laggard?
Hope—is *her* face so haggard?
You, who are one with the Fates?

Never to wait to-morrow
Under such worldly skies!
Never to sleep with sorrow!
Hour by hour to borrow
Joy that has only sighs!

Sweet, farewell forever;
And a burning tear or two—
Will they reach your knowledge ever,
And touch through the dreams that sever
My life from the life of you?

O Life, in my flesh so fearful
Medicine me this pain!
Thy eyes with a science cheerful,
But mine, with a mystery tearful,
Tearful and slumber-fain.

[Pg 83]

Love, to your lips farewell now—
Your spirit through them I kiss;
Lips—so sealed with a spell now!
Lips, with nothing to tell now
But this! but this! but this!...

3.

So long it seems since last I saw her face,
So long ago it seems,
Like some sad soul, in un conjectured
space,
Lost in the happiness of some dead grace
Remembered—I. And, oh! a little while
The sorrow stabs and Death conceals no
smile
From Love bowed weeping in a thorny
place—
So long ago, our love is what are dreams!

Since she is gone no more I feel the light,
Since she is gone beyond,
Burst like a revelation out of night,—
Golden convictions of far futures bright,—
Whiles clouds around the west take marble
tones;
For Hope sits sighing in a place of stones,
Dark locks dishevelled and face very
white,—
Since she is gone and life's an iron bond.

[Pg 84]

Now she is dead the doubt Love dulled
with awe,
Now she is dead to me,
Questions the wisdom of diviner law.
Self-solved of self I search to find a flaw—
O egotism of Earth's fools and slaves!—
For Faith leans thoughtful in a place of
graves,
On that unseen from this seen known to
draw,
Now she is dead and it is hard to see.

4.

Ridged and bleak the gray forsaken
Twilight at the night has guessed,
Where no star of dusk has taken
Flame unshaken in the west.

All the day the woodlands dying

[Pg 85]

Moaned, and drippings as of grief
Tossed from barren boughs with sighing
Death of flying twig and leaf.

Ah, to be a dream unbroken,
Past the ironies of Fate!
Born a tree; with branches oaken
Dear unspoken intimate.

Who may say that man has never
Lived the mighty hearts of trees?
Graduating Godward ever,
The Forever finds through these?

Colors, we have lived, are cherished;
Odors, we have been, are ours;
Entity alone has perished;
Beauty-nourished souls were flowers.

Music, when the fancy guesses,
Lifts us loftier thoughts among;
Spirit that the flesh distresses,
But expresses self with song....

Heaven in darkness bends upbraiding
Without moonlight, without star;
Darkness and the reason aiding,
All but fading phantoms are.

[Pg 86]

Still philosophy is saying:
"Now that hope with life seems gone,
Some are cursing, some are praying,
God smiles raying in the dawn!"

5.

Wild weather; the whip of the sleet
On the shuttered casement tapping;
A shadow from face to feet,
Like a shroud, my spirit wrapping,

Wild weather; and how is she
Now the sting of the storm beats serried,
Over the stone and the tree
Of the grave where she is buried?

Wild weather; I cannot weep—
But the skies weep on and worry;
So I sleep, and dream in my sleep
How I hear dim garments hurry....

Star weather and footsteps of stars;
And I see white raiment glisten,
Like the glow on the face of Mars
When the stars to the angels listen.

[Pg 87]

And with me I see how she stands
With lips high thought has weighted;
With testifying hands,
And eyes with purity mated.

Have I spoken and have I kneeled
To the prayer I worship, I wonder?—
What waits on her lips that are sealed?
God-sealed and who shall sunder!

I sob, "Oh your stay was long!
You are come, but your feet were
laggard,
With mansuetude and song
For a heart your death has daggered."

And I lift wet eyes to her
Unutterable with weeping,
And beg for the loves that were,
Now passed into Heaven's keeping....

I wake and a clock tolls three—
 And the night and the storm lie serried
 On the testament that's she,
 Closed, clasped, and forever buried.

6.

The night is shrewd with storm and sleet;
 Each loose-warped casement raps or
 groans;
 I hear the wailing woodland beat
 The tempest with long blatant moans,
 Like one who fears defeat.

And sitting here beyond the storm,
 Alone within the lonely house,
 It seems of Sleep the Fairy charm
 Weaves incantations; even the mouse
 That scratched has come to harm.

And in this grave light, stolen o'er
 Familiar objects, grown severe,
 I 'm strange—as, opening a door,
 One finds one's dead self standing near,
 One knew not dead before.

The old stair rings with growling gusts;
 Each hearth's flue gasps a gorgon throat
 That snores and sleeps; the spectral dusts,
 Which yonder Shawnee war-gear coat,
 Whose quiver hangs and rusts,

[Pg 89]

Are shaken; till I feel that he,
 Who wore it in the wild war-dance,
 And died in it, fills shadowy
 Its wampumed skins; its plume,
 perchance,
 Shakes, scowling eyes at me.

And so the Swedenborge I toss
 Aside, contented with the dark
 That takes me. O'er the fire-light cross;
 Pass where the andirons spit and spark,
 And ponder o'er her loss.

Or from the flaw-splashed window yearn
 Out toward the waste, where sway and
 dip
 Dank, dark December boughs, where burn
 Some late last leaves, that icy drip
 No matter where you turn.

Where sodden soil, you scarce have trod,
 Fills oozy footprints; and the night
 So ugly that it mocks at God,
 Creating monsters which the sight
 Fancies, unseen, abroad.

[Pg 90]

The months I count: how long it seems
 Since that bland summer when with her,
 There on her porch, in rainy gleams
 We watched the mellow lightning stir
 In rain-clouds gray as dreams!

When all the west a torn gold sheet—
 Swift openings of some Titan's forge—
 Laid bald with storm; in quivering heat
 Pitched precipice and nightmare gorge,
 Where thunder torrents beat.

And strong the wind was as again
 Storm lit the instant earth; and how
 The wood sprang out one virent stain;
 We read no more—lost is it now!—
 In *Romance of a Reign*;

A tale of nowhere; then that we
 Were reading till we heard the plunge
 Of distant thunder sullenly,
 And left to mark long lightnings lunge
 Convulsions fiery.

What worlds love wrought us, dreaming
 there,
 Of sorcery and necromance!
 With spirits lustrous of the air,
 A land like one great pearl, a trance
 Of floods and forests fair.

Where white-faced flowers sang and
 thought;
 Where fragrant birds flew, brilliant-
 blown,
 In winging odors; feather-fraught
 With light, where breathing colors
 shone,
 On throbbing music brought.

Or built us some snug country home
 Among the hills; with terraces
 Vine-hung and orchared o'er the foam
 Of the Ohio, far one sees
 Wind crimson in the gloam.

And this! and this!—alone! alone!
 To hear the sweep of winter rain,
 The missiled sleet's sharp arrows blown;
 Dark shadow on the freezing pane,
 And on my heart a moan!

DAYS AND DREAMS.

He dreamed of hills so deep with woods
 Storm-barriers on the summer sky
 Are not more dark, where plunged loud
 floods
 Down rocks of sullen dye.

Flat ways were his where sparsely grew
 Gnarled, iron-colored oaks, with rifts,
 Between dead boughs, of Eden-blue:
 Ways where the speedwell lifts

Its shy appeal, and spreading far—
 The gold, the fallen gold of dawn
 Staining each blossom's balanced star—
 Hollows of cowslips wan.

Where 'round the feet the lady-smock
 And pearl-pale lady-slipper creep;
 White butterflies upon them rock
 Or seal-brown suck and sleep.

At eve the west shoots crooked fire
 Athwart a half-moon leaning low;
 While one white, arrowy star throbs higher
 In curdled honey-glow.

Was it some elfin euphrasy
 That purged his spirit so that there
 Blue harebells, by those ways that be,
 Seemed summoning to prayer?

For all the death within him prays;
 Not he—his higher self, whose love
 Fire-filled the flesh. Its light still stays

Touched by the soul above.

They found him dead his songs beside,
Six stairs above the din and dust
Of life: and that for which he died
Denied him even a crust.

DEITY.

[Pg 95]

No personal; a God divinely crowned
With gold and raised upon a golden throne
Deep in a golden glory, whence he nods
Man this or that—and little more than
man!

And shalt thou see Him individual?
Not till the freed intelligence hath sought
Ten hundred hundred years to rise and
love,
Piercing the singing cycles under God,—
Their iridescent evolutions orbed
In wild prismatic splendors,—shall it see—
Through God-propinquity become a god—
See, lightening out of spheric harmonies,
Resplendencies of empyrean light,
Prisms and facets of ten million beams
Starring a crystal of berainbowed rays,
And in this—eyes of burning sapphire, eyes
Deep as the music of the beautiful;
And o'er the eyes, limpid hierarchal brows,
As they were lilies of seraphic fire;
Lips underneath, of trembling ruby—lips
Whose tongue's a chord, and every sound
a song:
Cherubic faces of intensity
In multiplying myriads to a word
Forming the unit—God; Supremity
Creative and ubiquitous.

[Pg 96]

From this
Thy intellect, detached, expelled and
breathed
Exaltant into flesh endowed with soul,
One sparkle of the Essence clothed with
clay.—
O high development! devolvings up
From matter to unmattered potencies,
Up to the source and fountain of all mind,
Beauty and truth, inviolable Love,
And so resumed and reabsorbed in God,
One more expression of eternity!

SELF.

[Pg 97]

A Sufi debauchee of dreams
Spake this:—From Sodomite to Peri
Earth tablets us; we live and are
Man's own long commentary.

Is one begat in Bassora,
One lies in Damietta dying—
The plausibilities of God
All possibles o'erlying.

But burns the lust within the flesh?—
Hell's but a homily to Heaven,—
Put then the individual first,
And of thyself be shriven.

Neither in adamant nor brass
The scrutinizing eye records it;
The arm is rooted in the heart,
The heart that rules and lords it.

Be that it is and thou art all;
And what thou art so thou hast written
Thee of the lutanists of Love,
Or of the torture-smitten.

[Pg 98]

SELF AND SOUL.

[Pg 99]

It came to me in my sleep,
And I rose from my sleep and went
Out in the night to weep,
Over the bristling bent.
With my soul, it seemed, I stood
Alone in a moaning wood.

And my soul said, gazing at me,
"Shall I show you another land
Than other this flesh can see?"
And took into hers my hand.—
We passed from the wood to a heath
As starved as the ribs of Death.

Three skeleton trees we pass,
Bare bones on an iron moor,
Where every leaf and the grass
Was a thorn and a thistle hoar.
And my soul said, looking on me,
"The past of your life you see."

[Pg 100]

And a swine-herd passed with his swine,
Deformed; and I heard him growl;
Two eyes of a sottish shine
Leered under two brows as foul.
And my soul said, *"This is the lust
That soils my limbs with the dust."*

And a goose wife hobbled by
On a crutch, with the devil's geese;
A-mumbling how life is a lie,
And cursing my soul without cease.
And my soul said, *"This is desire;
The meaning of life is higher."*

And we came to a garden, close
To a hollow of graves and tombs;
A garden as red as a rose
Hung over of obscene glooms;
The heart of each rose was a spark
That smouldered or splintered the dark.

And I was aware of a girl
With a wild-rose face, who came
With a mouth like a shell's split pearl,
Rose-clad in a robe of flame;
And she plucked the roses and gave,
And my flesh was her veriest slave.

[Pg 101]

She vanished. My lips would have kissed
The flowers she gave me with sighs,
But they writhed in my hands and hissed,
In their hearts were a serpent's eyes.
And my soul said, *"Pleasure is she;
The joys of the flesh you see."*

And I bowed with a heart too weary,
That longed for rest, for sleep;
And my eyes were heavy and teary,
And yearned for a way to weep.
And my soul smiled, *"This may be!"*

THE DREAM OF DREAD.

[Pg 102]

I have lain for an hour or twain
Awake, and the tempest is beating
On the roof, and the sleet on the pane,
And the winds are three enemies
meeting;
And I listen and hear it again,
My name, in the silence, repeating.

Then dumbness of death that must slay,
Till the midnight is burst like a bubble;
And out of the darkness a ray—
'T is she! the all beautiful double;
With a face like the breaking of day,
Eyes dark with the magic of trouble.

I move not; she lies with her lips
At mine; and I feel she is drawing
My life from my heart to their tips,
My heart where the horror is gnawing;
My life in a thousand slow sips,
My flesh with her sorcery awing.

[Pg 103]

She binds me with merciless eyes;
She drinks of my blood, and I hear it
Drain up with a shudder and rise
To the lips, like the serpent's, that steer
it
And she lies and she laughs as she lies,
Saying, "Lo, thy affinitized spirit!"

Then I hear—as if torturing swords
Had shivered and torments had grated
Hoarse iron deep under; and words
As of sins that howled out and awaited
A fiend who lashed into their hords,
And a demon who lacerated.

And I shriek and lie clammy and stark,
As the curse of a devil mounts higher,
Up—out of damnation and dark,
Up—a hobble of hoofs that is dire;
I feel that his mouth is a spark,
His features, of filth and of fire.

"To thy body's corruption, thy grave!
Thy hell! from which thou hast stolen!"
And a blackness rolls down like a wave
With a clamor of tongues that are
swollen—
And I feel that my flesh is the slave
Of a—vampire, diakka, eidolon?

[Pg 104]

DEATH IN LIFE.

[Pg 105]

Within my veins it beats
And burns within my brain;
For when the year is sad and sear
I dream the dream again.

Ah! over young am I
God knows! yet in this sleep
More pain and woe than women know
I know, and doubly deep!...

Seven towers of shaggy rock
Rise red to ragged skies,

Built in a marsh that, black and harsh,
To dead horizons lies.

Eternal sunset pours,
Around its warlock towers,
A glowing urn where garnets burn
With fire-dripping flowers.

O'er bat-like turrets high,
Stretched in a scarlet line,
The crimson cranes through rosy rains
Drop like a ruby wine.

[Pg 106]

Once in the banquet-hall
These scarlet storks are heard:—
I sit at board with men o' th' sword
And knights of noble word;

Cased all in silver mail;
But he, I love and fear,
In glittering gold beside me bold
Sits like a lover near.

Wild music echoes in
The hollow towers there;
Behind bright bars o' his visor, stars
Beam in his eyes and glare.

Wild music oozes from
Arched ceilings, caked with white
Groined pearl; and floors like mythic
shores
That sing to seas of light.

Wild music and a feast,
And one's beloved near
In burning mail—why am I pale,
So pale with grief and fear?

[Pg 107]

Red heavens and slaughter-red
The marsh to west and east;
Seven slits of sky, seven casements high,
Flare on the blood-red feast.

Our torches tall are these,
Our revel torches seven,
That spill from gold soft splendors old—
The hour of night—eleven.

No word. The sparkle aches
In cups of diamond-spar,
That prism the light of ruddy white
In royal wines of war.

No word. Rich plate that rays,
Splashes of splitting fires,
Off beryl brims; while sobs and swims
Enchantment of lost lyres.

I lean to him I love,
And in the silence say:
"Would thy dear grace reveal thy face,
If love should crave and pray?"

[Pg 108]

Grave Silence, like a king,
At that strange feast is set;
Grave Silence still as the soul's will,
That rules the reason yet.

But when I speak, behold!
The charm is snapped, for low
Speaks out the mask o' his golden casque,
"At midnight be it so!"

And Silence waits severe,
Till one sonorous tower,
Owl-swarmed, that looms in glaring

glooms,
Sounds slow the midnight hour.

Three strokes; the knights arise,
The palsy from them flung,
To meward mock like some hoarse rock
When wrecking waves give tongue.

Six strokes; and wailing out
The music hoots away;
The fiery glimmer of eve dies dimmer,
The red grows ghostly gray.

[Pg 109]

Nine strokes; and dropping mould
The crumbling hall is lead;
The plate is rust, the feast is dust,
The banqueters are dead.

Twelve strokes pound out and roll;
The huge walls writhe and shake
O'er hissing things with taloned wings—
Christ Jesus, let me wake!

Then rattling in the night
His iron visor slips—
In rotting mail a death's-head pale
Kisses my loathing lips.

Two hell-fierce lusts its eyes,
Sharp-pointed like a knife,
That flaming seem to say, "*No dream!*
No dream! the truth of Life!"

THE EVE OF ALL-SAINTS.

[Pg 110]

1.

This is the tale they tell,
Of an Hallowe'en;
This is the thing that befell
Me and the village Belle,
Beautiful Aimee Dean.

2.

Did I love her?—God and she,
They know and I!
And love was the life of me—
Whatever else may be,
Would God that I could die!

3.

That All-Saints' eve was dim;
The frost lay white
Under strange stars and a slim
Moon in the graveyard grim,
An Autumn ghost of light.

[Pg 111]

4.

They told her: "Go alone,
With never a word,
To the burial plot's unknown
Grave with the grayest stone,
When the clock on twelve is heard;

5.

"Three times around it pass,
With never a sound;

Each time a wisp of grass
And myrtle pluck, and pass
Out of the ghostly ground;

6.

[Pg 112]

"And the bridegroom that's to be
At smiling wait,
With a face like mist to see,
With graceful gallantry
Will bow you to the gate."

7.

She laughed at this, and so
Bespoke us how
To the burial place she'd go:—
And I was glad to know,
For I'd be there to bow.

8.

An acre from the farm
The homestead graves
Lay walled from sun and storm;
Old cedars of priestly form
Around like sentinel slaves.

9.

[Pg 113]

I loved, but never could say
Such words to her,
And waited from day to day,
Nursing the hope that lay
Under the doubts that were.—

10.

She passed 'neath the iron arch
Of the legended ground,
And the moon like a twisted torch
Burned over one lonesome larch;
She passed with never a sound.

11.

Three times had the circle traced,
Three times had bent
To the grave that the myrtle graced;
Three times, then softly faced
Homeward, and slowly went.

12.

[Pg 114]

Had the moonlight changed me so?
Or fear undone
Her stepping strange and slow?
Did she see and did not know?
Or loved she another one?

13.

Who knows?—She turned to flee
With a face so white
That it haunts and will haunt me;
The wind blew gustily,
The graveyard gate clanged tight.

14.

Did she think it me or—what,
Clutching her dress?

Her face so pinched that not
A star in a stormy spot
Shows half as much distress.

15.

[Pg 115]

Did I speak? did she answer aught?
O God! had I said
"Aimee, 't is I!" but naught!—
And the mist and the moon distraught
Stared with me on her—dead....

16.

This is the tale they tell
Of the Hallowe'en;
This is the thing that befell
Me and the village Belle,
Beautiful Aimee Dean.

MATER DOLOROSA.

[Pg 116]

The nuns sing, "*ora pro nobis*,"
The lancets glitter above;
And the beautiful Virgin whose robe is
Woven of infinite love,
Infinite love and sorrow,
Prays for them there on high;—
Who has most need of her prayers,—to-
morrow
Shall tell them,—they or I?

Up in the hills together
We loved, where the world seemed true;
Our world of the whin and heather,
Our skies of a nearer blue,
A blue from which one borrows
A faith that helps one die—
O Mother, sweet Mother of Sorrows,
None needs such more than I!

We lived, we loved unwedded—
Love's sin and its shame that slays!—
No ill of the year we dreaded,
No day of its coming days;
Its coming days, their many
Trials by morn and night,
And I know no land, not any,
Where love's lilies grow so white!

[Pg 117]

Was he false to me, my Mother!
Or I to him, my God!—
Who gave thee right, O brother!
To take God's right and rod!
God's rod of avenging morrows,
And the life here in my side!
O Mother, God's Mother of Sorrows,
For both I would have died!

By the wall of the Chantry kneeling,
I pray and the organ rings,
"*Gloria! gloria!*" pealing,
"*Sancta Maria*" sings!
They will find us dead to-morrow
By the wall of their nunnery,
O Mother, sweet Mother of Sorrow!
His unborn babe and me.

[Pg 118]

1.

Red-winding from the sleepy town,
One takes the lone, forgotten lane
Straight through the hills. A brush-bird
brown
Bubbles in thorn-flowers sweet with
rain;
Light shivers sink the gleaming grain;
The cautious drip of higher leaves
The lower dips that drip again.—
Above the tangled tops it heaves
Its gables and its haunted eaves.

2.

One creeper, gnarled to bloomlessness,
O'er-forests all its eastern wall;
The sighing cedars rake and press
Dark boughs along the panes they
sprawl;
While, where the sun beats, breaks a
drawl
Of hiving wasps; one bushy bee,
Gold-dusty, hurls along the hall
To hum into a crack.—To me
The shadows seem too scared to flee.

[Pg 120]

3.

Of ragged chimneys martins make
Huge pipes of music; twittering here
Build, breed, and roost.—My footfalls wake
Strange stealing echoes, till I fear
I'll meet my pale self coming near;
My phantom face as in a glass;
Or one men murdered, buried—where?
Dim in gray, stealthy glimmer, pass
With lips that seem to moan "Alas."

LAST DAYS.

[Pg 121]

Aye! heartbreak of the tattered hills,
And mourning of the raining sky!
Heartbreak and mourning, since God wills,
Are mine, and God knows why!

The brutal wind that herds the storm
In hail-big clouds that freeze along,
As this gray heart are doubly warm
With thrice the joy of song.

I held one dearer than each day
Of life God sets in limpid gold—
What thief hath stole that gem away
To leave me poor and old!

The heartbreak of the hills be mine,
Of trampled twig and mired leaf,
Of rain that sobs through thorn and pine
An unavailing grief!

The sorrow of the childless skies'
Good-nights, long said, yet never said,
As when I kissed my child's blue eyes
And lips ice-dumb and dead.

[Pg 122]

THE ROMANZA.

[Pg 123]

In a kingdom of mist and moonlight,
Or ever the world was known,
Past leagues of unsailed water,
There reigned a king with a daughter
That shone like a starry stone.

The day grew out o' the moonlight;
But never a day was there.
The king was wise as hoary,
And his daughter, like the glory
Of seven kingdoms, fair.

And the night dimmed over the moonlight,

—
And ever the mist was gray,—
With slips of dull stars, bluer
Where the princess met her wooer,
A page like the month o' May.

In her eyes the mist, and the moonlight
In hair of a crumpled gold;
By day they wooed a-hawking,
A-hawking laughed, a-mocking
The good, white king and old.

[Pg 124]

On the sea the mist, and the moonlight
Poured pale to the lilies' tips;—
At eve, when the hawks were feeding,
In courts to the kennels leading,
He kissed her mouth and lips.

On towers the mist, and the moonlight
On a dead face staring up;—
His kingly couch was ready,
But and her hand was steady
Giving the poisoned cup.

MY ROMANCE.

[Pg 125]

If it so befalls that the midnight hovers
In mist no moonlight breaks,
The leagues of years my spirit covers,
And myself myself forsakes.

And I live in a land of stars and flowers,
White cliffs by a silver sea;
And the pearly points of her opal towers
From the mountains beckon me.

And I think that I know that I hear her
calling
From a casement bathed with light—
The music of waters in waters falling
To palms from a rocky height.

And I feel that I think my love's awaited
By the romance of her charms;
That her feet are early and mine belated
In a world that chains my arms.

But I break my chains and the rest is easy

[Pg 126]

—
In the shadow of the rose
Snow-white, that blooms in her garden
breezy,
We meet and no one knows.

To dream sweet dreams and kiss sweet
kisses;
The world—it may live or die;
The world that forgets, the soul that
misses
The life that has long gone by.

We speak old vows that have long been
spoken,
And weep a long-gone woe,—
For you must know our hearts were
broken
Hundreds of years ago.

THE EPIC.

[Pg 127]

"To arms!" the battle bugles blew.
The daughter of their Earl was she,
Lord of a thousand swords and true;
He but a squire of low degree.

The horns of war blew up to horse:
He kissed her mouth; her face was
white;

"God grant they bear thee back no
corse!"—

"God give I win my spurs to-night!"

Each watch-tower's blazing beacon
scarred
A blood-blot in the wounded dark:
She heard knights gallop battleward,
And from the turret leaned to mark.

"My God, deliver me and mine!
My child! my God!" all night she prayed:
She saw the battle beacons shine;
She saw the battle beacons fade.

They brought him on a bier of spears.—
For him—the death-won spurs and name;
For her—the sting of secret tears,
And convent walls to hide her shame.

[Pg 128]

THE BLIND HARPER.

[Pg 129]

And thus it came my feet were led
To wizard walls that hairy hung
Old as their rock the moss made dead;
And, like a ditch of fire flung
Around it, uncouth flowers red
Thrust spur and fang and tongue.

And here I harped. Did dead men list?
Or was it hollow hinges gnarred
Huge, iron scorn in donjon-twist?
And when I thought a face sword-
scarred
Would curse me, lo! a woman kissed
At me hands ringed and starred.

And so I sang; for she had leaned
Rare beauty to me, dark and tall;
I sang of Love, whose Court is queened
Of Aliénor the virginal,
Nor saw how rolled on me a fiend
Wolf-eyeballs from the wall.

[Pg 130]

Oh, how I sang! until she laughed
Red lips that made lute harmony;
I sang of knights who fought and quaffed
To Love's own paragon, Marie—
Nor saw the suzerain whose shaft
Was bowed and bent on me.

And I had harped until she wept;
But when I sang of Ermengarde

Of Anjou,—where her Court is kept
By brave, by beauty, and by bard,—
She turned a raven there and swept
Me, like a fury, 'ward.

A bleeding beak had pierced my sight;
A crimson claw each cheek had lined;
One glimpse: wild walls of threatening
night
Heaped raven battlements behind
A moat of blazing serpents bright—
And then I wandered blind.

ELPHIN.

[Pg 131]

The eve was a burning copper,
The night was a boundless black
Where wells of the lightning crumbled
And boiled with blazing rack,
When I came to the coal-black castle
With the wild rain on my back.

Thrice under its goblin towers,
Where the causey of rock was laid,
Thrice, there at its spider portal,
My scornful bugle brayed,
But never a warder questioned,—
An owl's was the answer made.

When the heaven above was blistered
One scald of blinding storm,
And the blackness clanged like a cavern
Of iron where demons swarm,
I rode in the court of the castle
With the shield upon my arm.

[Pg 132]

My sword unsheathed and certain
Of the visor of my casque,
My steel steps challenged the donjon
My gauntlet should unmask;
But never a knight or varlet
To stay or slay or ask.

My heels on the stone ground iron,
My fists on the bolts clashed steel;—
In the hall, the roar of the torrent,
In the turret, the thunder's peal;—
And I found her there in the turret
Alone by her spinning-wheel.

She spun the flax of a spindle,
And I wondered on her face;
She spun the flax of a spindle,
And I marvelled on her grace;
She spun the flax of a spindle,
And I watched a little space.

But nerves of my manhood weakened;
The heart in my breast was wax;
Myself but the hide of an image
Out-stuffed with the hards of flax:—
She spun and she smiled a-spinning
A spindle of blood-red flax.

[Pg 133]

She spun and she laughed a-spinning
The blood of my veins in a skein;
But I knew how the charm was mastered,
And snapped in the hissing vein;
So she wove but a fiery scorpion
That writhed from her hands again....

Fleeing in rain and in tempest,
Saw by the cataract's bed,—

Cancers of ulcerous fire,
Wounds of a bloody red,—
Its windows glare in the darkness
Eyes of a dragon's head.

PRE-ORDINATION.

[Pg 134]

She bewitched me in my childhood,
And the witch's charm is hidden—
Far beyond the wicked wildwood
I shall find it, I am bidden.

She commands me, she who bound me
With soft sorcery to follow;
In a golden snare who wound me
To her bosom's snowy hollow....

Comes a night-dark stallion sired
Of the wind; a mare his mother
Whom Thessalian madness fired,
And the hurricane his brother.

Then my soul delays no longer:
Though the night around is scowling,
Keenly mount him blacker, stronger
Than the tempest that is howling.

At our ears wild shadows whistle;
Brazen forks the lightning o'er us
Flames; and huge the thunder's missile
Bursts behind us, drags before us.

[Pg 135]

Over fire-scorched fields of stubble;
Iron forests dark with wonder;
Evil marshes black with trouble;
Nightmare torrents thundering under:

In the thorn that past us races,
Harelipped hags like crows are rocking;
Stunted oaks have dwarf-like faces
Gnarled that leer an impish mocking:

Rocks, in which the storm is hooting,
Thrust a humpbacked murder over;
Bristling heaths, dead thistles shooting,
Raven-haunted gibbets cover:

Each and all are passed, like water
Under-rolled into a cavern,
Till we see the Devil's daughter
Waiting at the Devil's tavern.

And we stay; I drain the beaker
In her hand; the draught is fire;
World-remembrances grow weaker,
And my spirit, one desire.

[Pg 136]

Course it! course it! Darkness passes
Like an uprolled banner tattered;
Walled before us mountain masses
Rise like centuries unscattered.

And the storm flies ragged. Slowly
Comes a moon of copper-color,
And the evil night grows holy,
Mists the wild ride growing duller.

In the round moon's angry scanning,
Demon-swift cross spider arches
Of the web-thick bridges spanning
Chasms of her kingdom's marches.

We have reached her kingdom, olden
As the sea that sighs its sadness;

Rocks and trees and sands are golden,
And the air a golden gladness.

Shapely ingots are the flowers,
And the waters, amber brightness;
Gold-bright, song-birds in the bowers
Sing with eyes of diamond whiteness.

And she meets me with a chalice
Like the Giamschid ruby burning,
And I drain it without malice,
To her towers of topaz turning.

Many hundred years forgetting
All that's earth: within her power
I possess her: naught regretting
Since each year is as an hour.

[Pg 137]

AT THE STILE.

[Pg 138]

Young Harry leapt over the stile and
kissed her,
Over the stile the stars a-winking;
He thought it was Mary—'t was Mary's
sister—
And love hath a way of thinking.

"Thy pail, sweetheart, I will take and
carry."—
Over the stile the stars hang yellow.—
"Just to the spring, my sweetheart
Harry."—
And love is a heartless fellow.

"Thou saidst me *yea* when the frost did
shower
Over the stile from stars a-shiver."—
"I say thee *nay* now the cherry-trees
flower,
And love is taker and giver."

"O false! thou art false to me,
sweetheart!"—
Over the stile the stars a-glister.
"To thee, the stars, and myself,
sweetheart,
I never was aught save Mary's sister.

[Pg 139]

"Sweet Mary's sister and thou my Harry,
Her Harry and mine, but mine the
weeping:
In a month or twain you two will marry—
And I in my grave be sleeping."

Alone among the meadows of millet,
Over the stile the stars pursuing,
Some tears in her pail as she stoops to fill
it—
And love hath a way of doing.

THE ALCALDE'S DAUGHTER.

[Pg 140]

The times they had kissed and parted
That night were over a score;
Each time that the cavalier started,
Each time she would swear him o'er,

"Thou art going to Barcelona!—
To make Naxera thy bride!
Seduce the Lady Yōna!—

And thy lips have lied! have lied!

"I love thee! I love thee, thou knowest!
And thou shalt not give away
The love to my life thou owest;
And my heart commands thee stay!—

"I say thou hast lied and liest!—
For where is there war in the state?—
Thou goest, by Heaven the highest!
To choose thee a fairer mate.

"Wilt thou go to Barcelona
When thy queen in Toledo is?
To wait on the haughty Yöna,
When thou hast these lips to kiss?"

[Pg 141]

And they stood in the balcony over
The old Toledo square:
And weeping she took for her lover
A red rose out of her hair.

And they kissed farewell; and higher
The moon made amber the air:
And she drew for the traitor and liar
A stiletto out of her hair....

When the night-watch lounged through the
quiet
With the stir of halberds and swords,
Not a bravo was there to defy it,
Not a gallant to brave with words.

One man, at the corner's turning,
Quite dead. And they stoop or stand—
In his heart a dagger burning,
And a red rose crushed in his hand.

AT THE CORREGIDOR'S.

[Pg 142]

To Don Odora says Donna De Vine:
"I yield to thy long endeavor!—
At my balcony be on the stroke of nine,
And, Signor, am thine forever!"

This beauty but once had the Don descried
As she quit the confessional; followed;
"What a foot for silk! a face for a bride—
Hem—!" the rest Odora swallowed.

And with vows as soft as his oaths were
sweet
Her heart he barricaded;
And pressed this point with a present
meet,
And that point serenaded.

What else could the enemy do but yield
To a handsome importuning!
A gallant blade with a lute for shield
All night at her lattice mooning!

"*Que es estrella!* O lily of girls!
Here's that for thy fierce duenna:
A purse of pistoles and a rosary o' pearls
And gold as yellow as henna.

[Pg 143]

"She will drop from thy balcony's rail, my
sweet!
My seraph! this silken ladder;
And then—sweet then!—my soul at thy feet
No lover of lovers gladder!"

And the end of it was!—But I will not say

How he won to the room of the lady:—
Ah! to love is life and to live is gay,
For the rest—a maravedi!

Now comes her betrothed from the wars,
and he,
A Count of the Court Castilian,
A Don Diabolus, sword at knee,
And moustaches—uncivilian.

And his is a jealous love; and—for
He marks that this marriage makes
sadder—
He watches, and sees a robber to her,
Or gallant, ascend a ladder.

So he pushes inquiry unto her room,
With his naked sword demanding—
An Alquazil with the face of Doom,
Sure of a stout withstanding.

[Pg 144]

And weapon to weapon they foined and
fought;
Diabolus' thrusts were vicious;
Three thrusts to the floor Odora had
brought,
A fourth was more malicious,

Through the offered bosom of Donna De
Vine—
And this is the Count's condition ...
Was he right, was he wrong? the question
is mine,
To judge—for the Inquisition.

THE PORTRAIT.

[Pg 145]

In some quaint Nürnberg *maler-atelier*
Uprummaged. When and where was never
clear,
Nor yet how he obtained it. When, by
whom
'T was painted—who shall say? itself a
gloom
Resisting inquisition. I opine
It is a Dürer. Humph?—that touch, this line
Are not deniable; distinguished grace
In the pure oval of the noble face;
The color badly tarnished. Half in light
Extend it, so; incline; the exquisite
Expression leaps abruptly: piercing scorn,
Imperial beauty; icy, each a thorn
Of light—disdainful eyes and ... well! no
use!
Effaced and but beheld, a sad abuse
Of patience. Often, vaguely visible,
The portrait fills each feature, making
swell
The soul with hope: avoiding face and hair
Alive with lively warmth; astonished there
"Occult substantial!" you exult, when, ho!
You hold a blur; an undetermined glow
Dislimns a daub.—Restore?—ah, I have
tried
Our best restorers, all! it has defied ...
Storied, mysterious, say, mayhap a ghost
Lives in the canvas; hers, some artist lost,
A duchess', haply. Her he worshipped;
dared
Not tell he worshipped; from his window
stared
Of Nuremburg one sunny morn when she

[Pg 146]

Passed paged to court. Her cold nobility
Loved, lived for like a purpose; seized and
plied
A feverish brush—her face! despaired and
died.

The narrow Judengasse; gables frown
Around a skinny usurer's, where brown
And dirty in a corner long it lay,
Heaped in a pile of riff-raff, such as—say,
Retables done in tempora and old
Panels by Wohlgemuth; stiff paintings cold
Of martyrs and apostles, names forgot;
Holbeins and Dürers, say, a haloed lot
Of praying saints, madonnas: such,
perchance,
Mid wine-stained purples moth-ed; a whole
romance
Of crucifixes, rosaries; inlaid
Arms Saracen-elaborate; a strayed
Niello of Byzantium; rich work
In bronze, of Florence; here a delicate
dirk,
There holy patens.

[Pg 147]

So, my ancestor,
The first De Herancour, esteemed by far
This piece most precious, most desirable;
Purchased and brought to Paris. It looked
well
In the dark panelling above the old
Hearth of his room. The head's religious
gold,
The soft severity of the nun face,
Made of the room an apostolic place
Revered and feared.—

Like some lived scene I
see
That Gothic room; its Flemish tapestry:
Embossed above the aged lintel, shield—
Deep Or-enthistled, in an Argent field
Three Sable mallets—arms De Herancour,
Carved with the torso of the crest that
bore,
Outstretched, two mallets. Lozenge-paned,
embayed,
Its slender casements; on a lectern laid,
A vellum volume of black-lettered text;
Near by a blinking taper—as if vexed
With silken gusts a nervous curtain sends,
Behind which, maybe, daggered Murder
bends;—
Waxed floors of rosy oak, whereon the red
Torchlight of Medicean wrath is shed,
Down knightly corridors; a carven couch
Sword-slashed; dark velvets of the chairs
that crouch,
It seems, with fright; clear-clashing near,
more near,
The stir of searching steel.

[Pg 148]

What find they
here?—
'T is St. Bartholomew's—a Huguenot
Dead in his chair?—dead! violently shot
With horror, eyes glued on a portrait
there,
Coiling his neck one blood line, like a hair
Of finest fire; the portrait, like a fiend,—
Looking exalted visitation,—leaned
From its black panel; in its eyes a hate
Demonic; hair—a glowing auburn, late
A dim, enduring golden.

[Pg 149]

"Just one thread
Of the fierce hair around his throat," they
said,
"Twisting a burning ray, he—staring-
dead."

ISMAEL.

[Pg 150]

Ismael, the Sultan, in the Ramazan,
Girdled with guards and many a yataghan,
Pachas and amins, viziers wisdom-gray,
And holy marabouts, betook his way
Through Mekinez.—Written the angel's
word,
Of Eden's Kauther, reads, "Slay! praying
the Lord!
Pray! slaying the victims!" so the Sultan
went,
The Cruel Sultan, with this good intent,
In white bournouse and sea-green caftan
clad
First to the mosque. Long each muezzin
had
Summoned the faithful unto prayer and let
The "Allah Akbar!" from each minaret,
Call to their thousand lamps of blazing
gold.

Prostrated prayed the Sultan. On the old
Mosaics of the mosque—whose hollow
steamed

With aloes-incense—lean ecstasies
dreamed

On Allah and his Prophet, and how great
Is God, and how unstable man's estate.
Conviction on him, in this chanting low
Of Koran texts, the Caliph's passion so
Exalted rose,—lamps of religious awe,
Loud smittings of the everlasting law
On unbelievers,—trebly manifest
The Faith's anointed sword he feels
confessed.

[Pg 151]

So from the mosque, whose arabesques
above—
The marvellous work of Oriental love—
Seen with new splendors of Heaven's blue
and gold,
Applauding all, he, as the gates are rolled
Ogival back to let the many forth,
Cries war to all the unbelieving North.

Soon have they passed the tight bazaar;
along
Close, crooked streets, too narrow for the
throng;
The place of owls and tombs; the merloned
wall,
Camel and steed and ass. Projecting all
Its towering battlements, his palace gray,
Seraglios and courts, against the day
Lifts, vanishes. And now, soul-set on hate,
From Mekinez they pass the scalloped
gate.

[Pg 152]

Two dozing beggars, baking each a sore,
Sprawl in the sun the city gate before;
A leprous cripple and a thief, whose eyes—
Burnt out with burning iron,—as supplies
The law for thieves,—two fly-thick wounds
blood-raw,
Lifted shrill voices as they heard or saw;

Praised God, and flung into the dust each
face
With words of "victory and Allah's grace
Attend our Caliph, Mouley-Ismael!
Even at the cost of ours his days be well!"

And grimly smiling as he grimly passed,
"While God most merciful, who is, shall
last,—
Now by Es Sirat!—will a liar's word
And thief's prevail or prosper?—Pray the
Lord!—
What! at your lives' cost?—my devout
intent!
Even as 't is bidden let their necks be
bent!
Though words be pious, evil at the soul
Naught is the prayer!—So let their prayer
be whole.
Nay! give them gold; but when the sequins
cease
From the slaves' hands, by these my
Soudanese
They die!" he said; and even as he said
Rolled in the dust each writhing, withered
head.

[Pg 153]

And frowning westward, as the day grew
late,
Four bleeding heads stared from the city
gate
'Neath this inscription, for the passer-by,
"There is no virtue but in God the High."

A PRE-EXISTENCE.

[Pg 154]

An intimation of some previous life,
Or dark dream, in the present dim-divined,
Of some uncertain sleep—or lived or
dreamed
In some dead life—between a dusk and
dawn;

From heathen battles to Toledo's gates,
Far off defined, his corselet and camail,
Damascened armet, shattered; in an eve's
Anger of brass a galloping glitter, one
Rode arrow-wounded. And the city caught
A cry before him and a wail behind,
Of walls beleaguered; battles; conquered
kings;
Triumphant Taric; broken Spain and
slaves.

And I, a Moslem slave, a miser Jew's,
Housed near the Tagus—squalid and alone
Save for his slave, held dear—to beat and
starve—
Leaner than my lank shadow when the
moon,
A burning beacon, westerns; and my bones
A visible hunger; famished with the fear,
Soul-garb of slaves, I bore him—I, who
held
Him soul and self, more hated than his
God,
Stood silent; fools had laughed; I saw my
way.

[Pg 155]

War-time crops weapons; and the blade I
bought
Was subtly pointed. For, I knew his ways:

The nightly nuptials of his jars of gems
And bags of doublas—oh, I knew his ways.
A shadow, woven in the hangings, hid
Till time said *now*; gaunt from the
hangings stole
Behind him; humped and stooping so, his
heart
Clove through the faded tunic, murrey-
dyed;
Grinned exultation while the grim, slow
blood
Drenched black and darkened round the
oblong wound,
And his old face thinned grayer than
morn's moon.

Rubies from Badakhshân in rose lights
dripped
Slim tears of poppy-purple crystal; dull,
Red, ember-pregnant, carbuncles wherein
Fevered a captive crimson; bugles wan
Of cat-eyed hyacinths; moon-emeralds
With starry greenness stabbed; in limpid
stains
Of liquid lilac, Persian amethysts;
Fire-opals savage and mesmeric with
Voluptuous flame, long, sweet, and
sensuous as
Soft eyes of Orient women; sapphires
beamed
With talismanic violet, from tombs,
Deev-guarded, of primordial Solimans;
Length-agonized with fire, diamonds of
Golconda—This, a sandaled dervise bare
Seven days, beneath a red Arabian sun,
Seven nights, beneath a round Arabian
moon,
Under his tongue; an Emeer's ransom,
held
Of some wild tribe.... Bleached in the
perishing waste
A Bedouin Arab found sand-strangled
bones,
A skeleton, vulture-torn, fierce in whose
skull
One blazing eye—the diamond. At Aleppo
Bartered—a bauble for his desert love.—
Jacinth and Indian pearl, gem jolting gem,
Flashed, rutilating in the irised light,
A rain of splintered fire; and his head,
Long-haired, white-sunk among them.

[Pg 156]

[Pg 157]

Yet I took
All—though his eyes burned in them;
though, meseemed,
Each several jewel glared a separate
curse....
Well! dead men work us mischief from the
grave.
Richer than all Castile and yet not dare
Drink but from cups of Roman murra, spar
Bowl-sprayed with fibrile gold! spar
sensitive
Of poison! I, no slave, yet all a slave
To fear a dead fool's malice!—Still, how
else!
Feasting within the music of my halls,
While perfumed beauty danced in sinuous
robes,
Diaphanous, more silken than those famed
Of loomed Amorgos or of classic Kos,
Draining the unflawed murrhine, Xeres-
brimmed,
Had I reeled poisoned, dying wolfsbane-

BEHRAM AND EDDETMA.

[Pg 158]

Against each prince now she had held her
 own,
 An easy victor for the seven years
 O'er kings and sons of kings; Eddetma, she
 Who, when much sought in marriage,
 hating men,
 Espoused their ways to win beyond their
 worth
 Through martial exercise and hero deeds:
 She, who accomplished in all warlike arts,
 Let cry through every kingdom of the
 kings:—
 "Eddetma weds with none but him who
 proves
 Himself her master in the push of arms,
 Her suitor's foeman she. And he who fails,
 So overcome of woman, woman-scorned,
 Disarmed, dishonored, yet shall he depart,
 Brow-bearing, forehead-stigmatized with
 fire,
 'Behold, a freedman of Eddetma this.'
 Let cry, and many princes put to shame,
 Pretentious courtiers small in thew and
 thigh,
 Proud-palanquined from principalities
 Of Irak and of Hind and farther Sind.
 Though she was queenly as that Empress
 of
 The proud Amalekites, Tedmureh, and
 More beautiful, yet she had held her own.

[Pg 159]

To Behram of the Territories, one
 Son of a Persian monarch swaying kings,
 Came bruit of her and her noised victories,
 Her maiden beauty and her warrior
 strength;
 Eastward he journeyed from his father's
 court,
 With men and steeds and store of wealth
 and arms,
 To the rich city where her father reigned,
 Its seven citadels by Seven Seas.
 And messengered the monarch with a gift
 Of savage vessels wroughten out of gold,
 Of foreign fabrics stiff with gems and gold.
 Vizier-ambassadors the old king gave
 His answer to the suitor:—"I, my son,
 What grace have I above the grace of God?
 What power is mine but a material?
 What rule have I unto the substanceless?
 Me, than the shadow of the Prophet's
 shade
 Less, God invests with power but of man;
 Man! and the right beyond man's right is
 God's;
 His the dominion of the secret soul—
 And His her soul! Now hath my daughter
 sworn,
 By all her vestal soul, that none shall know
 Her but her better in the listed field,
 Determining spear and sword.—Grant Fate
 thy trust;
 She hangs her hand upon to-morrow's
 joust,
 A prize to win.—My greeting and farewell."
 Informed Eddetma and the lists arose.
 Armored and keen with a Chorasmian
 mace,

[Pg 160]

Davidean hauberk came she. Her the
 prince,
 Harnessed in scaly gold Arabian, met;
 So clanged the prologue of the battle. As
 Closer it waxed, Prince Behram, who a
 while
 Withheld his valor,—in that she he loved
 Opposed him and beset him, woman whom
 He had not scathed for the Chosroës'
 wealth,—
 Beheld his madness; how he were undone
 With shining shame unless he strove
 withal,
 Whirled fiery sword and smote; the
 bassinet
 Rushed from the haughty face that long
 had scorned
 The wide world's vanquished royalty, and
 so
 Rushed on his own defeat. For like unto
 A moon gray clouds have caverned all the
 eve,
 The thunder splits and, virgin triumph,
 there
 She sails a silver aspect, vanquished so
 Was Behram by his blow. A wavering
 strength
 Swerved in its purpose; with no final
 stroke
 Stunned stood he and surrendered; stared
 and stared,
 All his strong life absorbed into her face,
 All the wild warrior, arrowed by her eyes,
 Tamed, and obedient to lip and look.
 Then she on him, as condor on a kite,
 Plunged pitiless and beautiful and fierce,
 One trophy more to added victories;
 Haled off his arms, amazement dazing
 him;
 Seized steed and garb, confusion filling
 him;
 And scoffed him forth brow-branded with
 his shame.

[Pg 161]

Dazzled, six days he sat, a staring trance;
 But on the seventh, casting stupor off,
 Rose, and the straitness of the case that
 held
 Him as with manacles of knitted fire,
 Considered, and decided on a way....

[Pg 162]

Once when Eddetma with a houri band
 Of high-born damsels, under eunuch
 guard,
 In the walled palace pleasaunce took her
 ease,
 Under a myrrh-bush by a fountain side,
 Where Afrits' nostrils snorted diamond
 rain
 In scooped cornelian, one, a dim, hoar
 head,—
 A patriarch mid gardener underlings,—
 Bent spreading gems and priceless
 ornaments
 Of jewelled amulets of hollow gold
 Sweet with imprisoned ambergris and
 musk;
 Symbolic stones in sorcerous carcanets,
 Gem-talismans in cabalistic gold.
 Whereon the princess marvelled and bade
 ask,
 What did the elder with his riches there?
 Who, questioned, mumbled in his bushy
 beard,
 "To buy a wife withal"; whereat they

laughed
As oafs when wisdom stumbles. Quoth a
maid,
With orient midnight in her starry eyes,
And tropic music on her languid tongue,
"And what if I should wed with thee, O
beard
Grayer than my great-grandfather's, what
then?"
"One kiss, no more, and, child, thou wert
divorced,"
He; and the humor took them till the birds,
That listened in the spice-tree and the
plane,
Sang gayly of the gray-beard and his kiss.

[Pg 163]

Then quoth the princess, "Thou wilt wed
with him
Ansada?" mirth in her two eyes' gazelles,
And gravity bird-nestled in her speech;
And took Ansada's hand and laid it in
The old man's staggering hand, and he
unbent
Thin, wrinkled brows and on his staff
arose,
Weighed with the weight of many heavy
years,
And kissed her leaning on his shaking
staff,
And heaped her bosom with an Amir's
wealth,
And left them laughing at his foolish
beard.

Now on the next day, as she took her ease
With her glad troop of girlhood,—maidens
who
So many royal tulips seemed,—behold,
Bowed with white years, upon a flowery
sword
The ancient with new jewelry and gems,
Wherefrom the sun coaxed wizard fires
and lit
Glimmers in glowing green and pendent
pearl,
Ultramarine and beaded, vivid rose;
And so they stood to wonder, and one
asked
As yesternoon wherefore the father there
Displayed his Sheikh locks and the genie
gems?
—"Another marriage and another kiss?—
What! doth the tomb-ripe court his youth
again?
O aged, libertine in wish not deed!
O prodigal of wives as well as wealth!
Here stands thy damsel"; trilled the Peri-
tall
Diarra with the raven in her hair,
Two lemon-flowers blowing in her cheeks,
And took the dotard's jewels with the kiss
In merry mockery.

[Pg 164]

Ere the morrow's dawn,
Bethought Eddetma: "Shall my
handmaidens,
Teasing a gray-beard's whim to wrinkled
smiles,
For withered kisses still divide his wealth?
While I stand idle, lose the caravan
Whose least is notable?—My right and
mine—
Betide me what betides."...

And with the morn

Before the man,—for privily she came,
Stood habited as of her tire-maids
In humble raiment. Now the ancient saw
And knew her for the princess that she
was,
And kindling gladness of the knowledge
made

Two sparkling forges of his deep dark eyes
Beneath the ashes of his priestly brows.
Not timidly she came; but coy approach
Became the maiden of Eddetma's suite;
And humbly answered he, "All my old
heart!"—

Responsive to her quavering request—
"The daughter of the king did give thee
leave?

And thou wouldst well?—Then wed with
me forth-right.

Thy hand, thy lips." So he arose and gave
Her of barbaric jewelry and gems,
And seized her hand and from her lips the
kiss,

When from his age, behold, the dotage fell,
And from the man all palsied hoariness;
Victorious-eyed and amorous with youth,
A god in ardent capabilities
Resistless held her; and she, swooning,
saw

Gloating the branded brow of Prince
Behram.

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THE KHALIF AND THE ARAB.

[Pg 166]

A Transcript.

Among the tales, wherein it hath been
told,
In golden letters in a book of gold,
Of Hatim Tai's hospitality,
Who, substanceless in death and shadowy,
Made men his guests upon that mountain
top
Whereon his tomb grayed from a thistle
crop;—
A tomb of rock where women hewn of
stone,
Rude figures, spread dishevelled hair;
whose moan
From dark to daybreak made the silence
cry;
The camel drivers, being tented nigh,
"Ghouls or hyenas," shuddering would say
But only girls of granite find at day:—

And of that city, Sheddad son of Aad
Built mid the Sebaa sands.—A king who
had
Dominion of the world and many kings.—
Built in pride and power out of things
Unstable of the earth. For he had read
Of Paradise, and to his soul had said,
"Now in this life the like of Paradise
I 'll build me and the Prophet's may
despise,

Knowing no need of that he promises."
So for this city taxed the lands and seas,
And Columned Irem, on a blinding height,
Blazed in the desert like a chrysolite;
The manner of its building, it is told,
Alternate bricks of silver and of gold:
How Sheddad with his women and his

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slaves,
His thousand viziers, armored troops as
waves
Of ocean countless, God with awful flame
—
Shot sheer in thunder on him—God, his
shame
Confounded and abolished, ere his eyes
Had glimpsed bright follies of that
Paradise;
Lay blotted to a wilderness the land
Accurséd, and the city lost in sand:
Among such tales—who questions of their
sooth?—
One is recorded of an Arab youth:

The Khalif Hisham ben Abdulmelik
Hunting one day, by some unwonted freak
Rode parted from his retinue and gave
Chase to an antelope. Without or slave,
Amir or vizier to a pasture place
Of sheep he came, where dark, in tattered
grace,
Watched one, an Arab youth. And as it
came
The antelope drew off, with mouth of flame
And tongue of fire to the youth he turned
Shouting, "Ho! fellow! in what school hast
learned!
Seest not the buck escapes me? worthless
one!
O desert dullard!"

[Pg 168]

Rising in the sun,
"O ignorant," he said, "of that just worth
Of those the worthy of our Muslim earth!
In that thou look'st upon me—what thou
art!—
As one fit for contempt, thou lack'st no
part
Of my disdain?—Allah! I would not own
A dog of thine for friend no other known—
Of speech a tyrant, manners of an ass!"
And flung him, rags and rage, into the
grass.

Provoked, astonished, wrinkled angrily,
Hissed Hisham, "Slave! thou know'st me
not I see!"
Calmly the youth, "Aye, verily I know,
O mannerless! thy tongue hath told me so,
Thy tongue commanding ere it spake me
peace—
Soon art thou known, nor late may
knowledge cease."

[Pg 169]

"O dog! I am thy Khalif! by a hair
Thy life hangs rav'ling."

"May it dangle
there
Till thou art rotted!—Whiles, upon thy
head
Misfortunes shower!—Of his dwelling
place,
Allah, be thou forgetful!—What! his grace
Hisham ben Merwan, king of many words
—
Few generosities!"...

A flash of swords
In drifts of dust and lo! the Khalif's troops
Surrounding ride. As when a merlin stoops
Some stranger quarry, prey that swims the
wind,
Heron or eagle; kenning not its kind

There whence 'tis cast until it, towering,
feels
An eagle's tearing talons, falling reels
In broken circles downward—so the youth,
An Arab fearless as the face of Truth
Of all that made him instant of his death,
Waited with eyes indifferent, equal breath.

[Pg 170]

The palace reached, "Bring in the prisoner
Before the Khalif," and he came as were
He in no wise concerned: unquestioning
went
Chin bowed on breast, and on his feet a
bent
Dark gaze of scornful freedom unafraid,
Till at the Khalif's throne his steps were
staid;
And unsaluting, standing head held down,
An armed attendant blazed him with a
frown,
"Dog of the Bedouins! thy eyes rot out!
Insulter! must the whole big world needs
shout
'Commander of the Faithful,' so thou see?"
To him the Arab sneering, "Verily,
Packsaddle of an ass."

The Khalif's rage
Exceeded now, and, "By my realm and
rage!
Arab, thy hour is come, thy very last;
Thy hope is vanished and thy life is past."
The shepherd answered, "Aye?—by Allah,
then,
O Hisham, if my time be stretched again,
Unscissored of what Destiny ordain,
Little or great, thy words give little pain."

[Pg 171]

Then the chief Chamberlain, "O vilest one
Of all the Arabs! wilt thou not be done
Banding thy baseness with the Ruler of
The Faithful?" spat upon his face. A scoff
Fiery made answer:

"There be some have heard
The nonsense of our God, the text absurd,
'One day each soul whatever shall be
prompt
To bow before me and to give accompt.'"

Then wroth indeed was Hisham; hotly said,
"He braves us!—headsman, ho! his peevish
head!
See; canst thou medicine its speech anew,
Doctor its multiplying words to few;
Divorce them well." So, where the Arab
stood,
Bound him; made kneel upon the cloth of
blood:
With curving sword the headsman leaned
at pause,
And, even as 'tis custom made of laws,
To the descendant of the Prophet quoth,
"O Khalif, shall I strike?"

[Pg 172]

"By Iblis' oath!
Strike!" answered Hisham; but again the
slave
Questioned; and yet again the Khalif gave
His nodded "yea"; and for the third time
then
He asked—and knowing neither men nor
Jinn
Might save him if the Khalif spake assent,
Signalled the sword, the youth with body

bent
Laughed—till the wang-teeth of each jaw
appeared,
Laughed—as with scorn the King of kings
he 'd beard,
Insulting death. So, with redoubled spleen
Roared Hisham rising, "It is truly seen
That thou art mad who mockest Azrael!"

The Arab answered: "Listen!—Once befell,
Commander of the Faithful, that a hawk,
A hungry hawk, pounced on a sparrow-
cock;
And winging nestward with his meal in
claw,
To him the sparrow, for the creature saw
The hawk's conceit, addressed this slyly,
'Oh,
Most great, most royal, there is not, I
know,
That in me which will stay thy stomach's
stress,
I am too paltry for thy mightiness';
With which the hawk was pleased, and
flattered so
In his self-praise, he let the sparrow go."

Then smiled the Khalif Hisham; and a sign
Staying the scimitar, that hung malign
A threatening crescent, said, "God bless,
preserve
The Prophet whom all true believers serve!
—

Now by my kinship to the Prophet, and
Had he at first but spake us thus this hand
Had ne'er been reckless, and instead of
hate
He had had all—except the Khalifate."
Bade stuff his mouth with jewels and
entreat
Him courteously, then from the palace
beat.

[Pg 173]

THE END.

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