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Author: William Morris

Editor: Francis Hueffer

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF WILLIAM MORRIS ***

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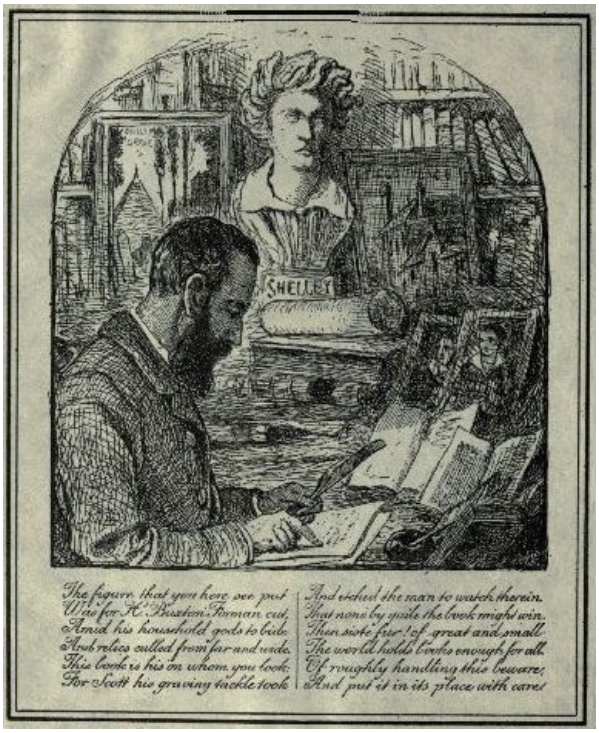
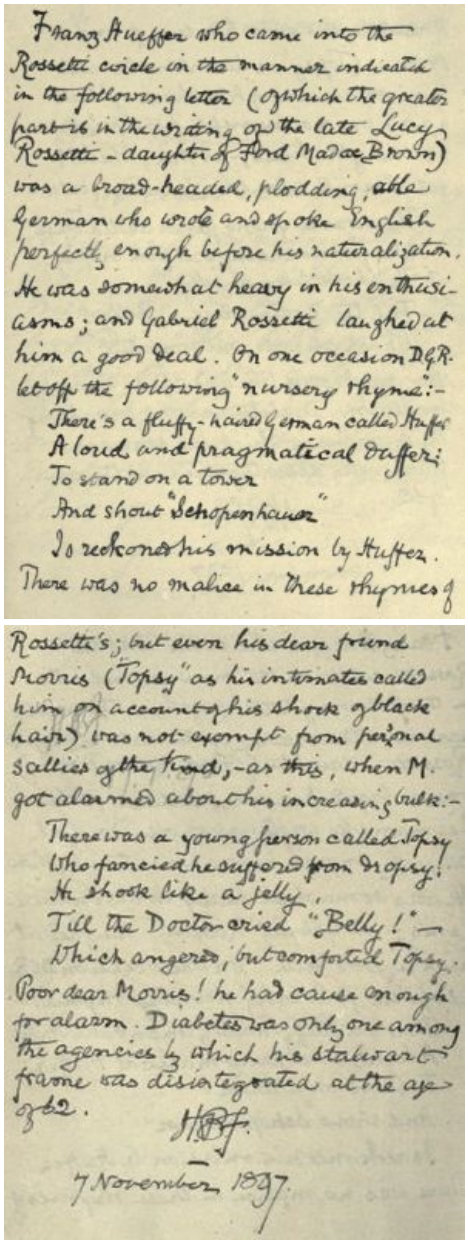




Franz Hueffer who came into the Rossetti circle in the manner indicated in the following letter (of which the greater part is in the writing of the late Lucy Rossetti - daughter of Ford Madox Brown) was a broad-headed, plodding, able German who wrote and spoke English perfectly enough before his naturalization. He was somewhat heavy in his enthusiasms; and Gabriel Rossetti laughed at him a good deal. On one occasion D.G.R. let off the following "nursery rhyme":—

There's a fluffy-haired German called Huffer
A loud and pragmatical duffer:
To stand on a tower
And shout "Schopenhauer"
Is reckoned his mission by Huffer.

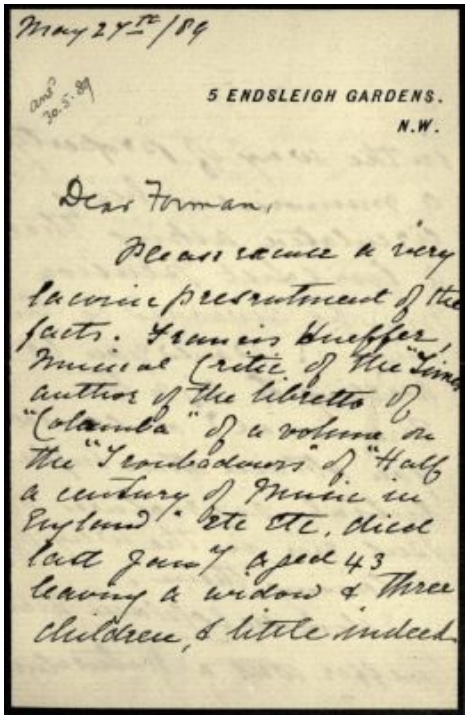
There was no malice in these rhymes of Rossetti's; but even his dear friend Morris ("Topsy" as his intimates called him on account of his shock of black hair) was not exempt from personal sallies of the kind,—as this, when M. got alarmed about his increasing bulk:—

There was a young person called Topsy
Who fancied he suffered from dropsy;
He shook like a jelly,
Till the Doctor cried "Belly!"—
Which angered; but comforted Topsy.

Poor dear Morris! he had cause enough for alarm. Diabetes was only one among the agencies by which his stalwart frame was disintegrated at the age of 62.

H.B.F.

7 November 1897.


May 27th/89

ans 30.5.89

5 ENDSLEIGH GARDENS.
N.W.

Dear Forman,

Please excuse a very laconic presentment of the facts. Francis Hueffer, Musical Critic of the "Times", author of the libretto of "Columba" of a volume on the "Troubadours" of "Half a century of Music in England" etc etc, died last Jan 7 aged 43 leaving a widow & three children, & little indeed.

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POEMS BY WILLIAM MORRIS.

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A SELECTION

FROM

THE POEMS

OF

WILLIAM MORRIS.

EDITED

WITH A MEMOIR

BY FRANCIS HUEFFER.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1886.

MEMOIR

OF

WILLIAM MORRIS.

William Morris, poet, decorative designer and socialist, was born in 1834 at Clay Street, Walthamstow, now almost a suburb of London, at that time a country village in Essex. He went to school at Marlborough College and thence to Exeter College, Oxford, where he took his degree in 1857. During his stay in the University the subsequent mode of his life was prepared and foreshadowed in two important directions. Like most poets Morris was not what is called very assiduous "at his book"; the routine of college training was no more an attraction to him than the ordinary amusements and dissipations of undergraduate existence. But he was studious all the same, reading the classics in his own somewhat spasmodic way and exploring with even greater zeal the mysteries of mediæval lore. His fellow-worker in these studies and his most intimate friend was and is at the present day Mr. Burne Jones, the famous painter, at that time a student of divinity. Artistic and literary pursuits thus went hand in hand, and received additional zest when the two young men became acquainted with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Holman Hunt and other painters of the Pre-Raphaelite school who came to Oxford to execute the frescoes still dimly visible on the ceiling of the Union Debating Hall. Of the aims and achievements of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and of the revival of mediæval feeling in art and literature originally advocated by its members ample account has been given in the memoir of Rossetti prefixed to his poems in the Tauchnitz edition. Its influence on Morris's early work, both in matter and form, will strike every observant reader of the opening ballads of the present collection. Later on the poet worked out for himself a distinct and individual phase of the mediæval movement, as will be mentioned by and by. At one time little was wanting to make Morris follow his friend Burne Jones's example and leave the pen for the brush. There is indeed still extant from his hand an unfinished picture evincing a remarkable sense of colour. He also for a short time became a pupil of the late Mr. G. E. Street, the architect, to whose genius London owes its finest modern Gothic building—the Law Courts in the Strand. On second thoughts, however, Morris came to the conclusion that poetry was his true field of action. His first literary venture was a monthly periodical started under his auspices in 1856 and called *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. It contained, amongst other contributions from Morris's pen, a prose tale of a highly romantic character, and was, as regards artistic tendencies, essentially a sequel of *The Germ*, the organ of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, begun and continued for three numbers only, six years before. Several of the contributors to the earlier venture, including Rossetti, also supported its offshoot. Neither, however, gained popular favour, and after a year's struggling existence *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* also came to an untimely end. At present both are eagerly sought for by collectors and fetch high prices at antiquarian sales. So changeable is the fate of books.

In 1859 Morris married, after having the year before brought out his first volume of verse entitled *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*. The book fell dead from the press, and it was not till it was republished 25 years later that the world recognised in it some of the freshest and most individual efforts of its author, whose literary position was by that time established beyond cavil. That position the poet owed in the first instance to two works published in rapid succession, *The Life and Death of Jason*, and *The Earthly Paradise*, the latter a collection of tales in verse filling four stout volumes. His remaining original works are *Love is enough*, a "morality" in the mediæval sense of the word, and *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung*, his longest and, in the opinion of some, his most perfect epic. In addition to these should be mentioned the translations from the old Norse undertaken in conjunction with Mr. Magnusson the well-known Icelandic scholar, and comprising *The Story of Grettir the Strong* (1869), *The Volsunga Saga, with certain songs from the Elder Edda* (1870), and *Three Northern Love Stories* (1875); and finally a metrical rendering of *The Æneids of Virgil*.

For a critical discussion or a detailed analysis of Morris's work this is not the place. It must be sufficient to indicate briefly the ideas which underlie that work and give it its literary *cachet*. Two main currents, derivable perhaps from a common source but running in different directions can be easily discerned. The subjects of his tales are almost without exception derived either from Greek myth or from mediæval folklore. After all that has been said and written of the gulf that divides the classic from the romantic feeling—"*Barbaren und Hellenen*", as Heine puts it, such a conjunction might appear incongruous. But the connecting link has here been found in the poet's mind. He looks upon his classical subject-matter through a mediæval atmosphere, in other words

he writes about Venus and Cupid and Psyche and Medea as a poet of Chaucer's age might have done, barring of course the differences of language, although in this respect also it may be noted that the archaisms of expression affected by the modern poet appear indifferently in the Greek and the mediæval tales. The phenomenon is by no means unique in literature. Let the reader compare Chapman's Homer with Pope's, or let him open Morris's *Jason* where the bells of Colchis "melodiously begin to ring", and the meaning of the afore-mentioned "mediæval atmosphere" will at once be as palpable to him as it was to Keats when, reading Chapman's rude verse, after Pope's polished stanzas, he felt

like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken.

It was the romantic chord of Keats's nature, that chord which vibrates in *La belle Dame sans Merci*, which was harmoniously struck and made the great master of form overlook the formal imperfection of the earlier poet. To the same element such stories as *Jason*, or *The Love of Alcestis* and the *Bellerophon* in *The Earthly Paradise* owe their charm.

Morris's position towards mediæval subjects did not at first essentially differ from that of other poets of similar tendency. In his first volume English and French knights and damsels figure prominently, and the beautiful and frail wife of King Arthur is the heroine of the chief poem and has given her name to the book. But in the interval which elapsed between that volume and the *Earthly Paradise* a considerable change had come over the poet's dream. By the aid of Mr. Magnusson he had become acquainted with the treasure of northern folklore hidden in the Icelandic sagas, the two Eddas, the story of the Volsungs (of which a masterly translation is due to the two friends), the Laxdæla saga and other tales of more or less remote antiquity.

In the *Earthly Paradise* the double current of the poet's fancy above alluded to is most strikingly apparent. The very framework in which the various tales are set seems to have been designed with that view. Guided probably by a vague tradition of a pre-Columbian discovery of America by the Vikings, the prologue relates how during a terrible pestilence certain mariners leave their northern home in search of the land where old age and death are not and where life is rounded by unbroken pleasure. Sailing west they come to a fair country. They gaze on southern sunshine and virgin forest and fertile champaign, but death meets them at every step, and happiness is farthest from their grasp when the people worship them as gods and sacrifice at their shrine. Escaping from this golden thraldom they regain their ship, and after many dangers and privations are driven by the wind to an island inhabited by descendants of the ancient Greeks, who have preserved their old worship and their old freedom. Here the weary wanderers of the main are hospitably received, and here they resolve to dwell in peace, forgetful of their vain search for the earthly paradise. At the beginning and the middle of every month the elders of the people and their guests meet together to while away the time with song and friendly converse. The islanders relate the traditions of their Grecian home, the mariners relate the sagas of the North, and Laurence, a Swabian priest who had joined the Norsemen in their quest, contributes the legends of Tannhäuser and of the ring given to Venus by the Roman youth. Here then there is full scope for the quaint beauty of romantic classicism and for the weird glamour of northern myth. Without encroaching upon the field of criticism proper the writer may state that, in his opinion, amongst the classic tales none is more graceful and finished than "The Golden Apples", and amongst the northern none more grandly developed and more epical in the strict sense of the word than *The Lovers of Gudrun* based upon the Icelandic Laxdæla saga. The latter, unfortunately, cannot find a place in this volume for reasons of space.

Every student of old northern literature is aware that amongst its remains none are more interesting as literary monuments, none more characteristic of the people from which they sprang than the two Eddas and the Volsunga Saga. Next to the Siege of Troy and the Arthurian legends perhaps no story or agglomeration of stories has left so many and so important traces in international fiction as the tale of Sigurd or Siegfried and his race, the heroic god-born Volsungs. Considering indeed the political insignificance and remoteness in which that story took its earliest surviving form this enormous success—if the modern term may be applied—seems at first singularly out of proportion. But it must be remembered that Iceland was little more than the storehouse of these old traditions which were the common property of the Teuto-Scandinavian race long before the Norsemen set foot on the northern isle. Of the two modern versions of the tale which are most thoroughly inspired by the ancient myth one, that of Wagner in his tetralogy *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, is dramatic in form, the other, Morris's *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung*, bears all the characteristics of the epic. To this difference of artistic aim, the difference of shape which the tale takes in the hands of the two poets may be traced. In one point however they agree. Both Wagner and Morris go back to the old Icelandic sources in preference to the mediæval German version of the tale embodied in the *Nibelungenlied*. From this the German poet borrows little more than the localization of his drama on the banks of the river Rhine, the English poet scarcely anything but his metre—the *Langzeile* or long-line with six hightoned, and any number of unaccentuated syllables.

The ordinary modern reader taking up the Volsunga Saga or either of the Eddas without preparation would probably see in them little more than a confused accumulation of impossible adventures and deeds of prowess with an admixture of incest, fratricide and other horrors. But on looking closer one discovers a certain plan in this entanglement, a plan much obscured by the unbridled fancy of the old narrators, and hardly realised by themselves, but which, if properly sifted, amounts to what we should call a moral or idea. To "point this moral," to consistently

develop this idea, is the task of the modern poet courageous enough to grapple with such a subject. Two ways are open to him. Either he may wholly abandon the sequence of the old tale, and group its *disjecta membra* round a leading idea as a centre, or else he may adhere to the order and essence of the legend as originally told, only emphasising such points as are essential to the significance of the story, and omitting or throwing into comparative shade those incidents which by their nature betray themselves to be arbitrary additions of later date. Wagner has chosen the former way, Morris the latter. This fact, and the divergent requirements of the drama and the epic, sufficiently account for their difference of treatment. The leading idea in both cases remains the same; it is the fatal curse which attaches to the gold or, which is the same in a moral sense, to the desire for gold—*auri sacra fames*.

At first sight the tale of Sigurd, Fafnir's bane, seems to have little connection with this idea. It is briefly this. Sigurd, the son of Sigmund the Volsung, is brought up at the court of King Elf, the second husband of his mother, after Sigmund has been slain in battle. With a sword, fashioned from the shards of his father's weapon, he slays Fafnir, a huge worm or dragon, and possesses himself of the treasure watched by the monster, including a ring and the "helm of aweing," the latter in the *Nibelungenlied*, converted into the "Tarnkappe", a magic cap which makes the bearer invisible and endows him with supernatural strength. Tasting of the blood of the dragon, he understands the language of birds, and an eagle tells him of a beautiful maiden lying asleep on a rock called Hindfell, surrounded by a wall of wavering fire. Through it Sigurd rides and awakes Brynhild the sword maiden, or Valkyrie, from her magic slumber. Love naturally follows. The pair live together on Hindfell for a season and Brynhild teaches the youth the runes of her wisdom, a conception of woman's refining and civilising mission frequently met with in old Germanic tales. When Sigurd leaves her to seek new adventures they plight the troth of eternal love, and

> Then he set the ring on her finger, and once if ne'er again
> They kissed and clung together, and their hearts were full and fain.

From Brynhild's rock Sigurd journeys to a realm "south of the Rhine" where dwell the kingly brothers, Gunnar, Hogni, and Guttorm, the Niblungs, together with their sister Gudrun, "the fairest of maidens", and their mother Grimhild, "a wise wife" and a fierce-hearted woman, as the Volsunga Saga alternately describes her. It is through a love-philter brewed by her that Sigurd forgets the vows exchanged with Brynhild, and becomes enamoured of Gudrun, whom he soon after weds. So powerful is the charm that the very name of his former love has been wiped from Sigurd's memory, and he willingly undertakes the task to woo and win Brynhild for his brother Gunnar. For that purpose he, by means of his magic cap, assumes Gunnar's semblance, and after having once more crossed the wall of wavering flame compels Brynhild to become his bride. But, faithful to his promise, he places a drawn sword between himself and the maid "as they lie on one bed together." On parting from her he receives back from Brynhild his own ring given to her at Hindfell in the days of their bliss. Sigurd then returns to Gunnar and resumes his own form, and all return home, the King leading his unwilling bride in triumph.

The subsequent events are the outgrowth of the tragic guilt thus incurred. Sigurd reveals the secret of Brynhild's wooing to his wife, and allows her to take possession of the fatal ring, which she during a quarrel shows to Gunnar's wife. Brynhild thus informed of the fraud practised on her, thinks of vengeance, and incites her husband and his brothers to kill Sigurd. The deed is done while Sigurd lies asleep in his chamber with Gudrun, or, according to the more poetic version of the German epic, while he bends over a brook in the forest to quench his thirst after a day's hunting. But as soon as her beloved foe is killed the old passion never quenched rises up again in Brynhild's heart. To be united with her lover in death she pierces her breast with a sword, and one pyre consumes both.

With this climax Wagner very properly concludes his drama. But the epic poet likes to follow the course of events to their ultimate consequences, and Morris, in accordance with the Volsunga Saga, proceeds to relate how, after many years of mournful widowhood, Gudrun is married to Atli, a mighty king, the brother of Brynhild. Eager to become possessed of Sigurd's treasure he invites the Niblungs, its actual owners, to his country, and there the kingly brothers and all their followers are killed by base treachery and after the most heroic resistance. They refuse sternly to ransom their lives by a discovery of the hoard which previous to their departure they have hidden at the bottom of a lake, and which thus is irrecoverably lost to mankind. Gudrun has incited her husband to the deed and has looked on calmly while her kinsmen were slain one after the other. But when all are dead and the murder of Sigurd has been revenged, the feeling of blood relationship so powerful among Northern nations is reawakened in her. While Atli and his earls are asleep she sets fire to the kingly hall, and her wretched husband falls by her own hand. It is characteristic of the Icelandic epic that after all these fates and horrors Gudrun lives for a number of years and is yet again married to a third husband. But to this length even Morris refuses to accompany the tale. In accordance with the Volsunga Saga his Gudrun throws herself into the sea; but the waves do not carry her "to the burg of king Imakr, a mighty king and lord of many folk."

All this is very grand and weird, the reader will say, but where is the moral, the ideal essence of which these events are but the earthly reflex? To this essence we gradually ascend by inquiring into the mythological sources of the tale, by asking who is Sigurd, whence does he come, on what mission is he sent and by whom? also what is the significance of the treasure watched by a dragon and coveted by all mankind? This treasure we then shall find and the curse attaching to it ever since it was robbed from Andvari, the water-elf, is the keynote of the whole story. The curse

proves fatal to all its successive owners from Andvari himself and Fafnir, who, for its sake, kills his father, down to Sigurd and Brynhild and the Niblung brothers. Nay, Odin himself, the supreme God, becomes subject to the curse of the gold through having once coveted it, and we dimly discern that the ultimate doom of the Aesir, the Ragnarök, or dusk of the Gods, of which the Voluspa speaks, is intimately connected with the same baneful influence. It further becomes evident that Sigurd the Volsung, the descendant of Odin, is destined to wrest the treasure and the power derived from it from the Niblungs, the dark or cloudy people who threaten the bright godworld of Valhall with destruction. And this leads us back to a still earlier stage of the myth in which Sigurd himself becomes the symbol of the celestial luminary conquering night and misty darkness, an idea repeatedly hinted at by Morris and splendidly illustrated by Wagner, when Siegfried appears on the stage illumined by the first rays of the rising sun. In the work of the German poet all this is brought out with a distinctness of which only dramatic genius of the highest order is capable. With an astounding grasp of detail and with a continuity of thought rarely equalled, Wagner has remoulded the confused and complex argument of the old tale, omitting what seemed unnecessary, and placing in juxtaposition incidents organically connected but separated by the obtuseness of later sagamen.

Morris, as has been said before, proceeds on a different principle. His first object is to tell a tale, and to tell it as nearly as possible in the spirit and according to the letter of the old Sagas. In this he has succeeded in a manner at once indicative of his high poetic gifts and of a deep sympathy with the spirit of the Northern Myth, which breathes in every line and in every turn of his phraseology. To compare the peculiar tinge of his language with the ordinary archaisms and euphonisms of literary poets would be mistaking a field flower for its counterpart in a milliner's shop window. It is true that he also hints at the larger philosophic and moral issues of the tale. But when he refers to the end of the gods brought about by their own guilt or to the redeeming mission of Sigurd, it is done in the mysterious, not to say half conscious manner of the saga itself, and the effect is such as from his own point of view he intended it and could not but intend it to be.

Between the publication of *The Defence of Guenevere* and that of Jason ten years elapsed. During most of this time the poet was employed in artistic pursuits. In 1861 he started in conjunction with a number of friends the business of decorator and artistic designer which still bears his name. Growing from very modest beginnings this enterprise was destined to work an entire change in the external aspect of English homes. It soon extended its activity to every branch of art-workmanship. D. G. Rossetti, Madox Brown, and Burne Jones drew cartoons for the stained glass windows to be seen in many of our churches and colleges. Morris himself designed wall-papers and the patterns of carpets. The latter are woven on hand-looms in his factory at Merton Abbey, which stands on the banks of the river Wandle surrounded by orchards, and looks as like a medieval workshop as the modern dresses of the workgirls will allow. Another member of the firm, Philip Webb, was the first modern architect to build houses of red brick in the style vaguely and not quite correctly described as "Queen Anne." At present these houses count by thousands in London and a whole village of them has been built at Turnham Green. The members of the firm did not confine their attention to any particular style or age or country. Wherever beautiful things could be found they collected them and made them popular. Old china English, and foreign, Japanese fans and screens, Venetian glass and German pottery were equally welcome to them and through them to the public generally. It may be said that the "aesthetic" fashion as it came to be called will like other fashions die out, and that people in the course of time will grow tired of "living up to" their furniture and dresses. At the same time the idea thus insisted upon that beauty is an essential and necessary ingredient of practical modern English life is not likely to be without beneficial and permanent effect.

It was as artistic worker and employer of skilled labour that Morris imbibed that profound disgust with our social condition which induced him to adopt the principles of extreme socialism. For a long time his views had tended in that direction, and at the end of 1884 he joined the Socialist League, a body professing the doctrines of international revolutionary socialism. He is the editor of its official organ, the *Commonweal*, which contains many contributions from his pen both in prose and verse. That the poet has not been entirely sunk in the politician, that longing for beauty is at least the partial cause of this desire for change at any price, is however proved by such a sentiment as, "Beauty, which is what is meant by *art*, using the word in its widest sense, is, I contend, no mere accident of human life which people can take or have as they choose, but a positive necessity of life, if we are to live as nature meant us to, that is unless we are content to be less than men," or by such a vision of a future earthly paradise as is expressed in the following lines:

> Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice in the deeds of his hand,
> Nor yet come home in the even, too faint and weary to stand,
> . . . . . .
> For that which the worker winneth shall then be his indeed,
> Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that sowed no seed.
> . . . . . .
> Then all *mine* and *thine* shall be *ours*, and no more shall any man crave
> For riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave.

One may admire the pathetic beauty of such lines, without sharing the poet's hope, that their import will ever be realised, in a world peopled by men and not by angels. History teaches and personal experience confirms that art enjoyment and art creation of the highest type must be

confined to the few, and it is to be feared that social democracy, whatever it may do for the physical welfare of the many, will care little about beauty, either in nature or in art. The *Demos* will never admire Rossetti's pictures or Keats's poetry, and the first thing the much-vaunted peasant proprietors, or peasant communes would do would be to cut down our ancient trees, level every hedgerow and turn parks and commons into potato plots or it may be turnip fields. One may feel certain of all this and yet admire the author of *The Earthly Paradise*, "the idle singer of an empty day" when he preaches universal brotherhood in the crossways of Hammersmith, and wrestles with policemen, or wrangles with obtuse magistrates about the freedom of speech. Conviction thus upheld at the cost of worldly advantage and personal convenience and taste must command respect even from those who cannot share it.

FRANCIS HUEFFER.

CONTENTS.

FROM

"THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE AND OTHER POEMS."

THE DEFENCE OF GUENEVERE.

But, knowing now that they would have her
speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her
brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her
cheek,

As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel ought but shame,
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned
so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last and
said:
"O knights and lords, it seems but little skill
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

"God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right such great lords—
still

"Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

"The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well:
Suppose a hush should come, then some one
speak:

"'One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth for ever, which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

"'Of your own strength and mightiness; here,
see!'
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

"A great God's angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and
hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies

"Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God's commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

"And one of these strange choosing cloths was
blue,
Wavy and long, and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

"'After a shivering half-hour you said,
'God help! heaven's colour, the blue;' and he said, 'hell.'
Perhaps you then would roll upon your bed,

"And cry to all good men that loved you well,
'Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known;'
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

"Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie."

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

"It chanced upon a day Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur's Court; at Christmas-time
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

"'Son of King Ban of Benwick,' seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O'er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme.

"Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea

"And in the Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down—Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

"However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

"To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

"Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold my judges, then the cloths were brought:
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

"Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur's great name and his little love,
Must I give up for ever then, I thought,

"That which I deemed would ever round me
move
Glorifying all things; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

"Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and
good?
I love God now a little, if this cord

"Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven.
So day by day it grew, as if one should

"Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and
even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping there was some small leaven

"Of stretched hands catching small stones by the
way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

"Back, with the hair like sea-weed; yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'ercast,

"In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

"From out my memory; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh
sting:

"I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

"I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

"Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made me
glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

"A little thing just then had made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; If I had

"Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darken'd fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite
through,

"There, see you, where the soft still light yet
lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

"And startling green drawn upward by the sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind
run

"With faintest half-heard breathing sound—why
there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;
But shortly listen—In that garden fair

"Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the kiss

Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring
day,
I scarce dare talk of the remember'd bliss,

"When both our mouths went wandering in one
way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far away.

"Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before—and now, so nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

"Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinn'd this way, straight her conscience
sears;

"And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps,—
Gauwaine be friends now, speak me lovingly.

"Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your
mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,

"Buried in some place far down in the south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head sever'd in that awful drouth

"Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell blow,
I pray your pity! let me not scream out
For ever after, when the shrill winds blow

"Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout
For ever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle-rout

"Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!
Ah! God of mercy how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

"So—let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men
know
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one day,

"One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde*, for so
All good knights held it after, saw—
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage; though

"You, Gauwaine, held his word without a flaw,
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my bed—
Whose blood then pray you? is there any law

"To make a queen say why some spots of red
Lie on her coverlet? or will you say,
'Your hands are white, lady, as when you wed,

"'Where did you bleed?' and must I stammer out
—'Nay',
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there lay

"'A knife-point last night:' so must I defend
The honour of the lady Guenevere?
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

"This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce

When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

"Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
His side sink in? as my knight cried and said,
'Slayer of unarm'd men, here is a chance!

"'Setter of traps, I pray you guard your head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

"'For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.'

"He struck his hands together o'er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and grovell'd at his feet,
And groan'd at being slain so young—'at least.'

"My knight said, 'Rise you, sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-arm'd will I fight,
My left side all uncover'd!' then I weet,

"Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave's face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

"Along the lists look to my stake and pen
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

"The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

"And fast leapt caitiff's sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it, and swung it; that was all the fight.

"Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wonder'd how the fire, while I should stand,

"And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went:
Which things were only warnings of the woe

"That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

"With all this wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes,
Wept all away the grey, may bring some sword

"To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

"Yea also at my full heart's strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go
up
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

"The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously colour'd gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

"And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses: will you dare
When you have looked a little on my brow,

"To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
When you can see my face with no lie there

"For ever? am I not a gracious proof—
'But in your chamber Launcelot was found'—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

"When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
'O true as steel come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

"'Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

"'The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in everything, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

"'If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight:

"'For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

"'So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

"'Just for one night.' Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said 'Come?' there was one less than three

"In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

"I looked at Launcelot's face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

"And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o'er my head
And made me dizzier; till within a while

"My maids were all about me, and my head
On Launcelot's breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said —

"By God! I will not tell you more to-day,
Judge any way you will—what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

"How Launcelot still'd their bawling, the mad fit
That caught up Gauwaine—all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happen'd these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!

"All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear tears."
She would not speak another word, but stood
Turn'd sideways; listening, like a man who hears

His brother's trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foe's lances. She lean'd eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good
need.

A GOOD KNIGHT IN PRISON.

Sir Guy, *being in the court of a Pagan castle*.

This castle where I dwell, it stands
A long way off from Christian lands,
A long way off my lady's hands,
A long way off the aspen trees,
And murmur of the lime-tree bees.

But down the Valley of the Rose
My lady often hawking goes,
Heavy of cheer; oft turns behind,
Leaning towards the western wind,
Because it bringeth to her mind
Sad whisperings of happy times,
The face of him who sings these rhymes.

King Guilbert rides beside her there,
Bends low and calls her very fair,
And strives, by pulling down his hair,
To hide from my dear lady's ken
The grisly gash I gave him, when
I cut him down at Camelot;
However he strives, he hides it not,
That tourney will not be forgot,
Besides, it is King Guilbert's lot,
Whatever he says she answers not.
Now tell me, you that are in love,
From the king's son to the wood-dove,
Which is the better, he or I?

For this king means that I should die
In this lone Pagan castle, where
The flowers droop in the bad air
On the September evening.

Look, now I take mine ease and sing,
Counting as but a little thing
The foolish spite of a bad king.

For these vile things that hem me in,
These Pagan beasts who live in sin,
The sickly flowers pale and wan,
The grim blue-bearded castellan,
The stanchions half worn-out with rust,
Whereto their banner vile they trust—
Why, all these things I hold them just
Like dragons in a missal book,
Wherein, whenever we may look,
We see no horror, yea, delight
We have, the colours are so bright;
Likewise we note the specks of white,
And the great plates of burnish'd gold.

Just so this Pagan castle old,
And everything I can see there,
Sick-pining in the marshland air,
I note; I will go over now,
Like one who paints with knitted brow,

The flowers and all things one by one,
From the snail on the wall to the setting sun.

Four great walls, and a little one
That leads down to the barbican,
Which walls with many spears they man,
When news comes to the castellan
Of Launcelot being in the land.

And as I sit here, close at hand
Four spikes of sad sick sunflowers stand,
The castellan with a long wand
Cuts down their leaves as he goes by,
Ponderingly, with screw'd-up eye,
And fingers twisted in his beard—
Nay, was it a knight's shout I heard?
I have a hope makes me afeard:
It cannot be, but if some dream
Just for a minute made me deem
I saw among the flowers there
My lady's face with long red hair,
Pale, ivory-colour'd dear face come,
As I was wont to see her some
Fading September afternoon,
And kiss me, saying nothing, soon
To leave me by myself again;
Could I get this by longing: vain!

The castellan is gone: I see
On one broad yellow flower a bee
Drunk with much honey—
Christ! again,
Some distant knight's voice brings me pain,
I thought I had forgot to feel,
I never heard the blissful steel
These ten years past; year after year,
Through all my hopeless sojourn here,
No Christian pennon has been near;
Laus Deo! the dragging wind draws on
Over the marches, battle won,
Knights' shouts, and axes hammering,
Yea, quicker now the dint and ring
Of flying hoofs; ah, castellan,
When they come back count man for man,
Say whom you miss.

The Pagans, *from the battlements*.

Mahmoud to aid!
Why flee ye so like men dismay'd?

The Pagans, *from without*.

Nay, haste! for here is Launcelot,
Who follows quick upon us, hot
And shouting with his men-at-arms.

Sir Guy.

Also the Pagans raise alarms,
And ring the bells for fear; at last
My prison walls will be well past.

Sir Launcelot, *from outside*.

Ho! in the name of the Trinity,
Let down the drawbridge quick to me,
And open doors, that I may see
Guy the good knight.

The Pagans, *from the battlements*.

Nay, Launcelot,

With mere big words ye win us not.

Sir Launcelot.

Bid Miles bring up la perriere,
And archers clear the vile walls there,
Bring back the notches to the ear,
Shoot well together! God to aid!
These miscreants shall be well paid.

Hurrah! all goes together; Miles
Is good to win my lady's smiles
For his good shooting—Launcelot!
On knights a-pace! this game is hot!

Sir Guy *sayeth afterwards*.

I said, I go to meet her now,
And saying so, I felt a blow
From some clench'd hand across my brow,
And fell down on the sunflowers
Just as a hammering smote my ears,
After which this I felt in sooth;
My bare hands throttling without ruth
The hairy-throated castellan;
Then a grim fight with those that ran
To slay me, while I shouted, "God
For the Lady Mary!" deep I trod
That evening in my own red blood;
Nevertheless so stiff I stood,
That when the knights burst the old wood
Of the castle-doors, I was not dead.

I kiss the Lady Mary's head,
Her lips, and her hair golden red,
Because to-day we have been wed.

SHAMEFUL DEATH.

There were four of us about that bed;
The mass-priest knelt at the side,
I and his mother stood at the head,
Over his feet lay the bride;
We were quite sure that he was dead,
Though his eyes were open wide.

He did not die in the night,
He did not die in the day,
But in the morning twilight
His spirit pass'd away,
When neither sun nor moon was bright,
And the trees were merely grey.

He was not slain with the sword,
Knight's axe, or the knightly spear,
Yet spoke he never a word
After he came in here;
I cut away the cord
From the neck of my brother dear.

He did not strike one blow,
For the recreants came behind,
In a place where the hornbeams grow,
A path right hard to find,
For the hornbeam boughs swing so,
That the twilight makes it blind.

They lighted a great torch then,
    When his arms were pinion'd fast,
Sir John the knight of the Fen,
    Sir Guy of the Dolorous Blast,
With knights threescore and ten,
    Hung brave Lord Hugh at last.

I am threescore and ten,
    And my hair is all turn'd grey,
But I met Sir John of the Fen
    Long ago on a summer day,
And am glad to think of the moment when
    I took his life away.

I am threescore and ten,
    And my strength is mostly pass'd,
But long ago I and my men,
    When the sky was overcast,
And the smoke roll'd over the reeds of the fen,
    Slew Guy of the Dolorous Blast.

And now, knights all of you,
    I pray you pray for Sir Hugh,
A good knight and a true,
    And for Alice, his wife, pray too.

THE EVE OF CRECY.

Gold on her head, and gold on her feet,
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet;—
    Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Margaret's maids are fair to see,
Freshly dress'd and pleasantly;
Margaret's hair falls down to her knee;—
    Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
I would kiss the place where the gold hems
    meet,
And the golden girdle round my sweet—
    Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Ah me! I have never touch'd her hand;
When the arriere-ban goes through the land,
Six basnets under my pennon stand;—
    Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And many an one grins under his hood:
"Sir Lambert de Bois, with all his men good,
Has neither food nor firewood;"—
    Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
And the golden girdle of my sweet,
And thereabouts where the gold hems meet;—
    Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Yet even now it is good to think,
While my few poor varlets grumble and drink
In my desolate hall where the fires sink;—
    Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Of Margaret sitting glorious there,
In glory of gold and glory of hair,
And glory of glorious face most fair;—

Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Likewise to-night I make good cheer,
Because this battle draweth near:
For what have I to lose or fear?—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

For, look you, my horse is good to prance
A right fair measure in this war-dance,
Before the eyes of Philip of France;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And sometime it may hap, perdie,
While my new towers stand up three and three,
And my hall gets painted fair to see—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.—

That folks may say: "Times change, by the rood,
For Lambert, banneret of the wood,
Has heaps of food and firewood;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite;—

"And wonderful eyes, too, under the hood
Of a damsel of right noble blood:"
St. Ives, for Lambert of the wood!—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

THE HAYSTACK IN THE FLOODS.

Had she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,
The stirrup touching either shoe,
She rode astride as troopers do;
With kirtle kilted to her knee,
To which the mud splash'd wretchedly;
And the wet dripp'd from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face.

By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place
Far off from her; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the road cross'd; and sometimes, when
There rose a murmuring from his men,
Had to turn back with promises;
Ah me! she had but little ease;
And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobb'd, made giddy in the head

By the swift riding; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold
The wet reins; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe
Against the stirrup: all for this,
To part at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they near'd that old soak'd hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three

Red running lions dismally
Grinn'd from his pennon, under which
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.

So then,
While Robert turn'd round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes; while Robert said:
"Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one,
At Poictiers where we made them run
So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer,
The Gascon frontier is so near,
Nought after this."

But, "O," she said,
"My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past!"

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,
"St. George for Marny!" cheerily;
And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas! no man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilt, some one cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.

Then they went along
To Godmar; who said: "Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off—
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now."

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and—"No,"
She said, and turn'd her head away,
As there were nothing else to say,
And everything were settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
"Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands:
What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair wilful body, while
Your knight lies dead?"

A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:
"You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help—ah!" she said,
"Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest."

"Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane! though I love you well,"
Said Godmar, "would I fail to tell
All that I know." "Foul lies," she said.
"Eh? lies, my Jehane? by God's head,
At Paris folks would deem them true!
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you,
'Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!'—
Eh—gag me, Robert!—sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet;
An end that few men would forget
That saw it—So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!"

So, scarce awake
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face
Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to the twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
And strangely childlike came, and said:
"I will not." Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.

For Robert—both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep but gloomily
He seem'd to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor grey lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.

With a start
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moan'd as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turn'd again and said:
"So, Jehane, the first fitte is read!
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!"
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.
This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

RIDING TOGETHER.

For many, many days together
The wind blew steady from the East;
For many days hot grew the weather,
About the time of our Lady's Feast.

For many days we rode together,
Yet met we neither friend nor foe;
Hotter and clearer grew the weather,
Steadily did the East wind blow.

We saw the trees in the hot, bright weather,
Clear-cut, with shadows very black,
As freely we rode on together
With helms unlaced and bridles slack.

And often as we rode together,
We, looking down the green-bank'd stream,
Saw flowers in the sunny weather,
And saw the bubble-making bream.

And in the night lay down together,
And hung above our heads the rood,
Or watch'd night-long in the dewy weather,
The while the moon did watch the wood.

Our spears stood bright and thick together,
Straight out the banners stream'd behind,
As we gallop'd on in the sunny weather,
With faces turn'd towards the wind.

Down sank our threescore spears together,
As thick we saw the Pagans ride;
His eager face in the clear fresh weather,
Shone out that last time by my side.

Up the sweep of the bridge we dash'd together,
It rock'd to the crash of the meeting spears,
Down rain'd the buds of the dear spring
weather,
The elm-tree flowers fell like tears.

There, as we roll'd and writhed together,
I threw my arms above my head,
For close by my side, in the lovely weather,
I saw him reel and fall back dead.

I and the slayer met together,
He waited the death-stroke there in his
place,
With thoughts of death, in the lovely weather,
Gapingly mazed at my madden'd face.

Madly I fought as we fought together;
In vain: the little Christian band
The pagans drowned, as in stormy weather,
The river drowns low-lying land.

They bound my blood-stain'd hands together,
They bound his corpse to nod by my side:
Then on we rode, in the bright-March weather,
With clash of cymbals did we ride.

We ride no more, no more together;
My prison-bars are thick and strong,
I take no heed of any weather,
The sweet Saints grant I live not long.

SUMMER DAWN.

Pray but one prayer for me 'twixt thy closed lips,
Think but one thought of me up in the stars.
The summer night waneth, the morning light slips,
Faint and grey 'twixt the leaves of the aspen, betwixt the cloud-bars,
That are patiently waiting there for the dawn:
Patient and colourless, though Heaven's gold
Waits to float through them along with the sun.
Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold
The uneasy wind rises; the roses are dun;
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn.
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.

FROM

"THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON."

BOOK XIV.

The Sirens—The Garden of the Hesperides —The Heroes do Sacrifice at Malea.

Across the open sea they drew their wake
For three long days, and when the fourth 'gan break
Their eyes beheld the fair Trinacrian shore,
And there-along they coasted two days more.
Then first Medea warned them to take heed,
Lest they should end all memory of their deed
Where dwell the Sirens on the yellow sand,
And folk should think some tangled poisonous land
Had buried them, or some tumultuous sea
O'er their white bones was tossing angrily;
Or that some muddy river, far from Greece,
Drove seaward o'er the ringlets of the Fleece.
But when the Minyæ hearkened to this word,
With many a thought their wearied hearts were stirred,
And longing for the near-gained Grecian land,
Where in a little while their feet should stand;
Yet none the less like to a happy dream,
Now, when they neared it, did their own home seem,
And like a dream the glory of their quest,
And therewithal some thought of present rest
Stole over them, and they were fain to sigh,
Hearkening the sighing restless wind go by.
But hard on even of the second day,
As o'er the gentle waves they took their way,
The orange-scented land-breeze seemed to bear
Some other sounds unto the listening ear
Than all day long they had been hearkening,
The land-born signs of many a well-known thing.

Thereat Medea trembled, for she knew
That nigh the dreadful sands at last they drew,
For certainly the Sirens' song she heard,
Though yet her ear could shape it to no word,
And by their faces could the queen behold
How sweet it was, although no tale it told,
To those worn toilers o'er the bitter sea.
Now, as they sped along, they presently,
Rounding a headland, reached a little bay
Walled from the sea by splintered cliffs and grey,
Capped by the thymy hills' green wind-beat head,
Where 'mid the whin the burrowing rabbits fed.
And 'neath the cliff they saw a belt of sand,
'Twixt Nereus' pasture and the high scarped land,
Whereon, yet far off, could their eyes behold
White bodies moving, crowned and girt with gold,
Wherefrom it seemed that lovely music welled.
So when all this the grey-eyed queen beheld,
She said: "O Jason, I have made thee wise
In this and other things; turn then thine eyes
Seaward, and note the ripple of the sea,
Where there is hope as well as fear for thee.
Nor look upon the death that lurketh there
'Neath the grey cliff, though sweet it seems and fair;
For thou art young upon this day to die.
Take then the helm, and gazing steadily
Upon the road to Greece, make strong thine hand,
And steer us toward the lion-haunted land,
And thou, O Thracian! if thou e'er hast moved
Men's hearts with stories of the Gods who loved,
And men who suffered, move them on this day,
Taking the deadly love of death away,
That even now is stealing over them,
While still they gaze upon the ocean's hem,
Where their undoing is if they but knew."

But while she spake, still nigher Argo drew
Unto the yellow edges of the shore,
And little help she had of ashen oar,
For as her shielded side rolled through the sea,
Silent with glittering eyes the Minyæ
Gazed o'er the surge, for they were nigh enow
To see the gusty wind of evening blow
Long locks of hair across those bodies white,
With golden spray hiding some dear delight;
Yea, nigh enow to see their red lips smile,
Wherefrom all song had ceased now for a while,
As though they deemed the prey was in the net,
And they no more had need a bait to set,
But their own bodies, fair beyond man's thought,
Under the grey cliff, hidden not of aught
But of such mist of tears as in the eyes
Of those seafaring men might chance to rise.
A moment Jason gazed, then through the waist
Ran swiftly, and with trembling hands made haste
To trim the sail, then to the tiller ran,
And thrust aside the skilled Milesian man,
Who with half-open mouth, and dreamy eyes,
Stood steering Argo to that land of lies;
But as he staggered forward, Jason's hand
Hard on the tiller steered away from land,
And as her head a little now fell off
Unto the wide sea, did he shout this scoff
To Thracian Orpheus: "Minstrel, shall we die,
Because thou hast forgotten utterly
What things she taught thee whom men call divine?

Or will thy measures but lead folk to wine,
And scented beds, and not to noble deeds?
Or will they fail as fail the shepherd's reeds
Before the trumpet, when these sea-witches
Pipe shrilly to the washing of the seas?
I am a man, and these but beasts, but thou
Giving these souls, that all were men ere now,
Shalt be a very God and not a man!"
So spake he; but his fingers Orpheus ran
Over the strings, and sighing turned away
From that fair ending of the sunny bay;
But as his well-skilled hands were preluding
What his heart swelled with, they began to sing
With pleading voices from the yellow sands,
Clustered together, with appealing hands
Reached out to Argo as the great sail drew,
While o'er their white limbs sharp the spray-shower flew,
Since they spared not to set white feet among
The cold waves heedless of their honied song.
Sweetly they sang, and still the answer came
Piercing and clear from him, as bursts the flame
From out the furnace in the moonless night;
Yet, as their words are no more known aright
Through lapse of many ages, and no man
Can any more across the waters wan
Behold those singing women of the sea,
Once more I pray you all to pardon me,
If with my feeble voice and harsh I sing
From what dim memories yet may chance to cling
About men's hearts, of lovely things once sung
Beside the sea, while yet the world was young.

The Sirens.

O happy seafarers are ye,
And surely all your ills are past,
And toil upon the land and sea,
Since ye are brought to us at last.

To you the fashion of the world,
Wide lands laid waste, fair cities burned,
And plagues, and kings from kingdoms hurled,
Are nought, since hither ye have turned.

For as upon this beach we stand,
And o'er our heads the sea-fowl flit,
Our eyes behold a glorious land,
And soon shall ye be kings of it.

Orpheus.

A little more, a little more,
O carriers of the Golden Fleece,
A little labour with the oar,
Before we reach the land of Greece.

E'en now perchance faint rumours reach
Men's ears of this our victory,
And draw them down unto the beach
To gaze across the empty sea.

But since the longed-for day is nigh,
And scarce a God could stay us now,
Why do ye hang your heads and sigh,
Hindering for nought our eager prow?

The Sirens.

Ah, had ye chanced to reach the home
On which your fond desires were set,
Into what troubles had ye come?
Short love and joy and long regret.

But now, but now, when ye have lain
    Asleep with us a little while
Beneath the washing of the main,
    How calm shall be your waking smile!

For ye shall smile to think of life
    That knows no troublous change or fear,
No unavailing bitter strife,
    That ere its time brings trouble near.

Orpheus.

Is there some murmur in your ears,
    That all that we have done is nought,
And nothing ends our cares and fears,
    Till the last fear on us is brought?

The Sirens.

Alas! and will ye stop your ears,
    In vain desire to do aught,
And wish to live 'mid cares and fears,
    Until the last fear makes you nought?

Orpheus.

Is not the May-time now on earth,
    When close against the city wall
The folk are singing in their mirth,
    While on their heads the May-flowers fall?

The Sirens.

Yes, May is come, and its sweet breath
    Shall well-nigh make you weep to-day,
And pensive with swift-coming death,
    Shall ye be satiate of the May.

Orpheus.

Shall not July bring fresh delight,
    As underneath green trees ye sit,
And o'er some damsel's body white
    The noontide shadows change and flit?

The Sirens.

No new delight July shall bring
    But ancient fear and fresh desire,
And, spite of every lovely thing,
    Of July surely shall ye tire.

Orpheus.

And now, when August comes on thee,
    And 'mid the golden sea of corn
The merry reapers thou mayst see,
    Wilt thou still think the earth forlorn?

The Sirens.

Set flowers upon thy short-lived head,
    And in thine heart forgetfulness
Of man's hard toil, and scanty bread,
    And weary of those days no less.

Orpheus.

Or wilt thou climb the sunny hill,
    In the October afternoon,
To watch the purple earth's blood fill

The grey vat to the maiden's tune?

The Sirens.

When thou beginnest to grow old,
Bring back remembrance of thy bliss
With that the shining cup doth hold,
And weary helplessly of this.

Orpheus.

Or pleasureless shall we pass by
The long cold night and leaden day,
That song, and tale, and minstrelsy
Shall make as merry as the May?

The Sirens.

List then, to-night, to some old tale
Until the tears o'erflow thine eyes;
But what shall all these things avail,
When sad to-morrow comes and dies?

Orpheus.

And when the world is born again,
And with some fair love, side by side,
Thou wanderest 'twixt the sun and rain,
In that fresh love-begetting tide;

Then, when the world is born again,
And the sweet year before thee lies,
Shall thy heart think of coming pain,
Or vex itself with memories?

The Sirens.

Ah! then the world is born again
With burning love unsatisfied,
And new desires fond and vain,
And weary days from tide to tide.

Ah! when the world is born again,
A little day is soon gone by,
When thou, unmoved by sun or rain,
Within a cold straight house shalt lie.

Therewith they ceased awhile, as languidly
The head of Argo fell off toward the sea,
And through the water she began to go,
For from the land a fitful wind did blow,
That, dallying with the many-coloured sail,
Would sometimes swell it out and sometimes
fail,
As nigh the east side of the bay they drew;
Then o'er the waves again the music flew.

The Sirens.

Think not of pleasure, short and vain.
Wherewith, 'mid days of toil and pain,
With sick and sinking hearts ye strive
To cheat yourselves that ye may live
With cold death ever close at hand;
Think rather of a peaceful land,
The changeless land where ye may be
Roofed over by the changeful sea.

Orpheus.

And is the fair town nothing then,
The coming of the wandering men
With that long talked of thing and strange,

And news of how the kingdoms change;
The pointed hands, and wondering
At doers of a desperate thing?
Push on, for surely this shall be
Across a narrow strip of sea.

The Sirens.

Alas! poor souls and timorous,
Will ye draw nigh to gaze at us
And see if we are fair indeed,
For such as we shall be your meed,
There, where our hearts would have you go.
And where can the earth-dwellers show
In any land such loveliness
As that wherewith your eyes we bless,
O wanderers of the Minyæ,
Worn toilers over land and sea?

Orpheus.

Fair as the lightning thwart the sky,
As sun-dyed snow upon the high
Untrodden heaps of threatening stone
The eagle looks upon alone,
O fair as the doomed victim's wreath,
O fair as deadly sleep and death,
What will ye with them, earthly men,
To mate your three-score years and ten?
Toil rather, suffer and be free,
Betwixt the green earth and the sea.

The Sirens.

If ye be bold with us to go,
Things such as happy dreams may show
Shall your once heavy eyes behold
About our palaces of gold;
Where waters 'neath the waters run,
And from o'erhead a harmless sun
Gleams through the woods of chrysolite.
There gardens fairer to the sight
Than those of the Phæacian king
Shall ye behold; and, wondering,
Gaze on the sea-born fruit and flowers,
And thornless and unchanging bowers,
Whereof the May-time knoweth nought.
So to the pillared house being brought,
Poor souls, ye shall not be alone,
For o'er the floors of pale blue stone
All day such feet as ours shall pass,
And, 'twixt the glimmering walls of glass,
Such bodies garlanded with gold,
So faint, so fair, shall ye behold,
And clean forget the treachery
Of changing earth and tumbling sea.

Orpheus.

O the sweet valley of deep grass,
Where-through the summer stream doth pass,
In chain of shallow, and still pool,
From misty morn to evening cool;
Where the black ivy creeps and twines
O'er the dark-armed, red-trunkèd pines,
Whence clattering the pigeon flits,
Or, brooding o'er her thin eggs, sits,
And every hollow of the hills
With echoing song the mavis fills.
There by the stream, all unafraid,
Shall stand the happy shepherd maid,
Alone in first of sunlit hours;
Behind her, on the dewy flowers,

Her homespun woollen raiment lies,
And her white limbs and sweet grey eyes
Shine from the calm green pool and deep,
While round about the swallows sweep,
Not silent; and would God that we,
Like them, were landed from the sea.

The Sirens.

Shall we not rise with you at night,
Up through the shimmering green twilight,
That maketh there our changeless day,
Then going through the moonlight grey,
Shall we not sit upon these sands,
To think upon the troublous lands
Long left behind, where once ye were,
When every day brought change and fear?
There, with white arms about you twined,
And shuddering somewhat at the wind
That ye rejoiced erewhile to meet,
Be happy, while old stories sweet,
Half understood, float round your ears,
And fill your eyes with happy tears.
Ah! while we sing unto you there,
As now we sing, with yellow hair
Blown round about these pearly limbs,
While underneath the grey sky swims
The light shell-sailor of the waves,
And to our song, from sea-filled caves
Booms out an echoing harmony,
Shall ye not love the peaceful sea?

Orpheus.

Nigh the vine-covered hillocks green,
In days agone, have I not seen
The brown-clad maidens amorous,
Below the long rose-trellised house,
Dance to the querulous pipe and shrill,
When the grey shadow of the hill
Was lengthening at the end of day?
Not shadowy nor pale were they,
But limbed like those who 'twixt the trees,
Follow the swift of Goddesses.
Sunburnt they are somewhat, indeed,
To where the rough brown woollen weed
Is drawn across their bosoms sweet,
Or cast from off their dancing feet;
But yet the stars, the moonlight grey,
The water wan, the dawn of day,
Can see their bodies fair and white
As Hers, who once, for man's delight,
Before the world grew hard and old,
Came o'er the bitter sea and cold;
And surely those that met me there,
Her handmaidens and subjects were;
And shame-faced, half-repressed desire
Had lit their glorious eyes with fire,
That maddens eager hearts of men.
O would that I were with them when
The new-risen moon is gathering light,
And yellow from the homestead white
The windows gleam; but verily
This waits us o'er a little sea.

The Sirens.

Come to the land where none grows old,
And none is rash or over-bold,
Nor any noise there is nor war,
Nor rumour from wild lands afar,
Nor plagues, nor birth and death of kings;
No vain desire of unknown things
Shall vex you there, no hope or fear

Of that which never draweth near;
But in that lovely land and still
Ye may remember what ye will,
And what ye will, forget for aye.
So while the kingdoms pass away,
Ye sea-beat hardened toilers erst,
Unresting, for vain fame athirst,
Shall be at peace for evermore,
With hearts fulfilled of Godlike lore,
And calm, unwavering Godlike love,
No lapse of time can turn or move.
There, ages after your fair Fleece
Is clean forgotten, yea, and Greece
Is no more counted glorious,
Alone with us, alone with us,
Alone with us, dwell happily,
Beneath our trembling roof of sea.

Orpheus.

Ah! do ye weary of the strife
And long to change this eager life
For shadowy and dull hopelessness,
Thinking indeed to gain no less
Than far from this grey light to lie,
And there to die and not to die,
To be as if ye ne'er had been,
Yet keep your memory fresh and green,
To have no thought of good or ill,
Yet feed your fill or pleasure still?
O idle dream! Ah, verily
If it shall happen unto me
That I have thought of anything,
When o'er my bones the sea-fowl sing,
And I lie dead, how shall I pine
For those fresh joys that once were mine,
On this green fount of joy and mirth,
The ever young and glorious earth;
Then, helpless, shall I call to mind
Thoughts of the sweet flower-scented wind,
The dew, the gentle rain at night,
The wonder-working snow and white.
The song of birds, the water's fall,
The sun that maketh bliss of all;
Yea, this our toil and victory,
The tyrannous and conquered sea.

The Sirens.

Ah, will ye go, and whither then
Will ye go from us, soon to die,
To fill your three-score years and ten,
With many an unnamed misery?

And this the wretchedest of all,
That when upon your lonely eyes
The last faint heaviness shall fall
Ye shall bethink you of our cries.

Come back, nor grown old, seek in vain
To hear us sing across the sea.
Come back, come back, come back again,
Come back, O fearful Minyæ!

Orpheus.

Ah, once again, ah, once again,
The black prow plunges through the sea,
Nor yet shall all your toil be vain,
Nor yet forgot, O Minyæ.

In such wise sang the Thracian, in such wise
Out gushed the Sirens' deadly melodies;
But long before the mingled song was done,

Back to the oars the Minyæ, one by one,
Slunk silently; though many an one sighed sore,
As his strong fingers met the wood once more,
And from his breast the toilsome breathing
came.
But as they laboured, some for very shame
Hung down their heads, and yet amongst them
some
Gazed at the place whence that sweet song had
come;
But round the oars and Argo's shielded side
The sea grew white, and she began to glide
Swift through the waters of that deadly bay;
But when a long wake now behind her lay,
And still the whistle of the wind increased,
Past shroud and mast, and all the song had
ceased,
Butes rose up, the fair Athenian man,
And with wild eyes betwixt the rowers ran
Unto the poop and leapt into the sea;
Then all men rested on their oars, but he
Rose to the top, and towards the shore swam
fast;
While all eyes watched him, who had well-nigh
past
The place where sand and water 'gan to meet
In wreaths and ripples round the ivory feet,
When sun-burnt swimmer, snow-white glancing
limb,
And yellow sand unto their eyes grew dim,
Nor did they see their fellow any more.
But when they once again beheld the shore
The wind sung o'er the empty beach and bare,
And by the cliff uprose into the air
A delicate and glittering little cloud,
That seemed some many-coloured sun to shroud;
But as the rugged cliff it drew above
The wondering Minyæ beheld it move
Westward, toward Lilybæum and the sun.
Then once more was their seaward course
begun,
And soon those deadly sands were far astern,
Nor ever after could the heroes learn
If Butes lived or died; but old tales tell
That while the tumbling waves he breasted well,
Venus beheld him, as unseen she drew
From sunny Cyprus to the headland blue
Of Lilybæum, where her temple is;
She, with a mind his sun-burnt brows to kiss,
E'en as his feet were dropping nigh the beach,
And ere his hand the deadly hands could reach,
Stooped, as the merlin stoops upon the dove,
And snatched him thence to be awhile her love,
Betwixt the golden pillars of her shrine,
That those who pass the Ægades see shine
From high-raised Lilybæum o'er the sea.

But far away the sea-beat Minyæ
Cast forth the foam, as through the growing
night
They laboured ever, having small delight
In life all empty of that promised bliss,
In love that scarce can give a dying kiss,
In pleasure ending sweet songs with a wail,
In fame that little can dead men avail,
In vain toil struggling with the fateful stream,
In hope, the promise of a morning dream.
Yet as night died, and the cold sea and grey
Seemed running with them toward the dawn of
day,
Needs must they once again forget their death,
Needs must they, being alive and drawing
breath,
As men who of no other life can know
In their own minds again immortal grow.

But toward the south a little now they bent,
And for a while o'er landless sea they went,
But on the third day made another land
At dawn of day, and thitherward did stand;
And since the wind blew lightly from the shore,
Somewhat abeam, they feared not with the oar
To push across the shallowing sea and green,
That washed a land the fairest they had seen,
Whose shell-strewn beach at highest of the tide
'Twixt sea and flowery shore was nowise wide,
And drawn a little backward from the sea
There stood a marble wall wrought cunningly,
Rosy and white, set thick with images,
And over-topped with heavy-fruited trees,
Which by the shore ran, as the bay did bend,
And to their eyes had neither gap nor end;
Nor any gate: and looking over this,
They saw a place not made for earthly bliss,
Or eyes of dying men, for growing there
The yellow apple and the painted pear,
And well-filled golden cups of oranges
Hung amid groves of pointed cypress trees;
On grassy slopes the twining vine-boughs grew,
And hoary olives 'twixt far mountains blue,
And many-coloured flowers, like as a cloud
The rugged southern cliffs did softly shroud;
And many a green-necked bird sung to his mate
Within the slim-leaved, thorny pomegranate,
That flung its unstrung rubies on the grass,
And slowly o'er the place the wind did pass
Heavy with many odours that it bore
From thymy hills down to the sea-beat shore,
Because no flower there is, that all the year,
From spring to autumn, beareth otherwhere,
But there it flourished; nor the fruit alone
From 'twixt the green leaves and the boughs
outshone,
For there each tree was ever flowering.
Nor was there lacking many a living thing
Changed of its nature; for the roebuck there
Walked fearless with the tiger; and the bear
Rolled sleepily upon the fruit-strawn grass,
Letting the conies o'er his rough hide pass,
With blinking eyes, that meant no treachery.
Careless the partridge passed the red fox by;
Untouched the serpent left the thrushes brown,
And as a picture was the lion's frown.
But in the midst there was a grassy space,
Raised somewhat over all the flowery place,
On marble terrace-walls wrought like a dream;
And round about it ran a clear blue stream,
Bridged o'er with marble steps, and midmost
there
Grew a green tree, whose smooth grey boughs
did bear
Such fruit as never man elsewhere had seen,
For 'twixt the sunlight and the shadow green
Shone out fair apples of red gleaming gold.
Moreover round the tree, in many a fold,
Lay coiled a dragon, glittering little less
Than that which his eternal watchfulness
Was set to guard; nor yet was he alone,
For from the daisied grass about him shone
Gold raiment wrapping round two damsels fair,
And one upon the steps combed out her hair,
And with shut eyes sung low as in a dream;
And one stood naked in the cold blue stream,
While on the bank her golden raiment lay;
But on that noontide of the quivering day,
She only, hearing the seafarers' shout,
Her lovely golden head had turned about,
And seen their white sail flapping o'er the wall,
And as she turned had let her tresses fall,
Which the thin water rippling round her knee
Bore outward from her toward the restless sea.

Not long she stood, but looking seaward yet,
From out the water made good haste to get,
And catching up her raiment hastily,
Ran up the marble stair, and 'gan to cry:
"Wake, O my sisters, wake, for now are come
The thieves of Æa to our peaceful home."
Then at her voice they gat them to their feet,
And when her raiment all her body sweet
Once more had hidden, joining hand to hand,
About the sacred apples did they stand,
While coiled the dragon closer to the tree,
And raised his head above them threateningly.

Meanwhile, from Argo many a sea-beat face
Gazed longingly upon that lovely place,
And some their eager hands already laid
Upon the gangway. Then Medea said:—
"Get back unto the oars, O Minyæ,
Nor loiter here, for what have such as we
To do herein, where, 'mid undying trees,
Undying watch the wise Hesperides,
And where the while they watch, scarce can a
God
Set foot upon the fruit-besprinkled sod
That no snow ever covers? therefore haste,
Nor yet in wondering your fair lives waste;
For these are as the Gods, nor think of us,
Nor to their eyes can aught be glorious
That son of man can do; would God that I
Could see far off the misty headland lie,
Where we the guilt of blood shall wash away,
For I grow weary of the dashing spray,
And ceaseless roll of interwoven seas,
And fain were sitting 'neath the whispering trees
In homely places, where the children play,
Who change like me, grow old, and die some
day."
She ceased, and little soothly did they
grieve,
For all its loveliness, that land to leave,
For now some God had chilled their hardihead,
And in their hearts had set a sacred dread,
They knew not why; but on their oars they hung,
A little longer as the sisters sung.

"O ye, who to this place have strayed,
That never for man's eyes was made,
Depart in haste, as ye have come,
And bear back to your sea-beat home
This memory of the age of gold,
And for your eyes, grown over-bold,
Your hearts shall pay in sorrowing,
For want of many a half-seen thing.

"Lo, such as is this garden green,
In days past, all the world has been,
And what we know all people knew,
Save this, that unto worse all grew.
"But since the golden age is gone,
This little place is left alone,
Unchanged, unchanging, watched of us,
The daughters of wise Hesperus.
"Surely the heavenly Messenger
Full oft is fain to enter here,
And yet without must he abide;
Nor longeth less the dark king's bride
To set red lips unto that fruit
That erst made nought her mother's suit.
Here would Diana rest awhile,
Forgetful of her woodland guile,
Among these beasts that fear her nought.
Nor is it less in Pallas' thought,
Beneath our trees to ponder o'er
The wide, unfathomed sea of lore;
And oft-kissed Citheræa, no less

Weary of love, full fain would press
These flowers with soft unsandalled feet.

"But unto us our rest is sweet,
Neither shall any man or God
Or lovely Goddess touch the sod
Where-under old times buried lie,
Before the world knew misery.
Nor will we have a slave or king,
Nor yet will we learn anything
But that we know, that makes us glad;
While oft the very Gods are sad
With knowing what the Fates shall do.
"Neither from us shall wisdom go
To fill the hungering hearts of men,
Lest to them threescore years and ten
Come but to seem a little day,
Once given, and taken soon away.
Nay, rather let them find their life
Bitter and sweet, fulfilled of strife,
Restless with hope, vain with regret,
Trembling with fear, most strangely set
'Twixt memory and forgetfulness;
So more shall joy be, troubles less,
And surely when all this is past,
They shall not want their rest at last.
"Let earth and heaven go on their way,
While still we watch from day to day,
In this green place left all alone,
A remnant of the days long gone."

There in the wind they hung, as word by word
The clear-voiced singers silently they heard;
But when the air was barren of their song,
Anigh the shore they durst not linger long,
So northward turned forewearied Argo's head,
And dipping oars, from that fair country sped,
Fulfilled of new desires and pensive thought,
Which that day's life unto their hearts had brought.
Then hard they toiled upon the bitter sea,
And in two days they did not fail to be
In sight of land, a headland high and blue
Which straight Milesian Erginus knew
To be the fateful place which now they sought,
Stormy Malea, so thitherward they brought
The groaning ship, and, casting anchor, lay
Beneath that headland's lee, within a bay,
Wherefrom the more part landed, and their feet
Once more the happy soil of Greece did meet.
Therewith they failèd not to bring ashore
Rich robes of price and of fair arms good store,
And gold and silver, that they there might buy
What yet they lacked for their solemnity;
Then, while upon the highest point of land
Some built an altar, Jason, with a band
Of all the chiefest of the Minyæ,
Turned inland from the murmur of the sea.
Not far they went ere by a little stream
Down in a valley they could see the gleam
Of brazen pillars and fair-gilded vanes,
And, dropping down by dank dark-wooded lanes
From off the hill-side, reached a house at last
Where in and out men-slaves and women passed,
And guests were streaming fast into the hall,
Where now the oaken boards were laid for all.
With these the Minyæ went, and soon they were
Within a pillared hall both great and fair,
Where folk already sat beside the board,
And on the dais was an ancient lord.
But when these saw the fearless Minyæ
Glittering in arms, they sprang up hastily,
And each man turned about unto the wall

To seize his spear or staff: then through the hall
Jason cried out: "Laconians, fear ye not,
Nor leave the flesh-meat while it reeketh hot
For dread of us, for we are men as ye,
And I am Jason of the Minyæ,
And come from Æa to the land of Greece,
And in my ship bear back the Golden Fleece,
And a fair Colchian queen to fill my bed.
And now we pray to share your wine and bread,
And other things we need, and at our hands
That ye will take fair things of many lands."
"Sirs," said the ancient lord, "be welcome here,
Come up and sit by me, and make such cheer
As here ye can: glad am I that to me
The first of Grecian men from off the sea
Ye now are come."
Therewith the great hall rang
With joyful shouts, and as, with clash and clang
Of well-wrought arms, up to the dais they went,
All eyes upon the Minyæ were bent,
Nor could they have enough of wondering
At this or that sea-tossed victorious king.
So with the strangers there they held high feast,
And afterwards the slaves drove many a beast
Down to the shore, and carried back again
Great store of precious things in pack and wain;
Wrought gold and silver, gems, full many a bale
Of scarlet cloth, and fine silk, fit to veil
The perfect limbs of dreaded Goddesses;
Spices fresh-gathered from the outland trees,
And arms well-wrought, and precious scarce-known wine,
And carven images well-nigh divine.
So when all folk with these were satisfied,
Back went the Minyæ to the water-side,
And with them that old lord, fain to behold
Victorious Argo and the Fleece of Gold.
And so aboard amid the oars he lay
Throughout the night, and at the dawn of day
Did all men land, nor spared that day to wear
The best of all they had of gold-wrought gear,
And every one, being crowned with olive grey,
Up to the headland did they take their way,
Where now already stood the crownèd priests
About the altars by the gilt-horned beasts.
There, as the fair sun rose, did Jason break
Over the altar the thin barley-cake,
And cast the salt abroad, and there were slain
The milk-white bulls, and there red wine did rain
On to the fire from out the ancient jar,
And high rose up the red flame, seen afar
From many another headland of that shore:
But over all its crackling and its roar
Uprose from time to time a joyous song,
That on the summer morning lay for long,
The mighty voices of the Minyæ
Exulting o'er the tossing conquered sea,
That far below thrust on by tide and wind
The crumbling bases of the headland mined.

FROM

"THE EARTHLY PARADISE."

AN APOLOGY.

Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

But rather, when aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die
—
—Remember me a little then I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.

The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,
These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let me sing of names remembered,
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

Folk say, a wizard to a northern king
At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show,
That through one window men beheld the spring,
And through another saw the summer glow,
And through a third the fruited vines a-row,
While still, unheard, but in its wonted way,
Piped the drear wind of that December day.

So with this Earthly Paradise it is,
If ye will read aright, and pardon me,
Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
Where tossed about all hearts of men must be:
Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,
Not the poor singer of an empty day.

FROM

PROLOGUE—THE WANDERERS.

ARGUMENT.

Certain gentlemen and mariners of Norway, having considered all that they had heard of the Earthly Paradise, set sail to find it, and after many troubles and the lapse of many years came old men to some Western land, of which they had never before heard: there they died, when they had dwelt there certain years, much honoured of the strange people.

Forget six counties overhung with smoke,

Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke,
Forget the spreading of the hideous town;
Think rather of the pack-horse on the down,
And dream of London, small, and white, and
clean,
The clear Thames bordered by its gardens
green;
Think, that below bridge the green lapping
waves
Smite some few keels that bear Levantine
staves,
Cut from the yew wood on the burnt-up hill,
And pointed jars that Greek hands toiled to fill,
And treasured scanty spice from some far sea,
Florence gold cloth, and Ypres napery,
And cloth of Bruges, and hogsheads of Guienne;
While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey
Chaucer's pen
Moves over bills of lading—mid such times
Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes.

A nameless city in a distant sea,
White as the changing walls of faërie,
Thronged with much people clad in ancient
guise
I now am fain to set before your eyes;
There, leave the clear green water and the
quays,
And pass betwixt its marble palaces,
Until ye come unto the chiefest square;
A bubbling conduit is set midmost there,
And round about it now the maidens throng,
With jest and laughter, and sweet broken song,
Making but light of labour new begun
While in their vessels gleams the morning sun.
On one side of the square a temple stands,
Wherein the gods worshipped in ancient lands
Still have their altars, a great market-place
Upon two other sides fills all the space,
And thence the busy hum of men comes forth;
But on the cold side looking toward the north
A pillared council-house may you behold,
Within whose porch are images of gold,
Gods of the nations who dwelt anciently
About the borders of the Grecian sea.

Pass now between them, push the brazen
door,
And standing on the polished marble floor
Leave all the noises of the square behind;
Most calm that reverent chamber shall ye find,
Silent at first, but for the noise you made
When on the brazen door your hand you laid
To shut it after you—but now behold
The city rulers on their thrones of gold,
Clad in most fair attire, and in their hands
Long carven silver-banded ebony wands;
Then from the daïs drop your eyes and see
Soldiers and peasants standing reverently
Before those elders, round a little band
Who bear such arms as guard the English land,
But battered, rent, and rusted sore, and they,
The men themselves, are shrivelled, bent, and
grey;
And as they lean with pain upon their spears
Their brows seem furrowed deep with more than
years;
For sorrow dulls their heavy sunken eyes,
Bent are they less with time than miseries.

Pondering on them the city grey-beards gaze
Through kindly eyes, midst thoughts of other
days,
And pity for poor souls, and vague regret
For all the things that might have happened yet,

Until, their wonder gathering to a head,
The wisest man, who long that land has led,
Breaks the deep silence, unto whom again
A wanderer answers. Slowly as in pain,
And with a hollow voice as from a tomb
At first he tells the story of his doom,
But as it grows and once more hopes and fears,
Both measureless, are ringing round his ears,
His eyes grow bright, his seeming days
decrease,
For grief once told brings somewhat back of
peace.

The Elder of the City.

From what unheard-of world, in what
strange keel,
Have ye come hither to our commonweal?
No barbarous race, as these our peasants say,
But learned in memories of a long-past day,
Speaking, some few at least, the ancient tongue
That through the lapse of ages still has clung
To us, the seed of the Ionian race.
Speak out and fear not; if ye need a place
Wherein to pass the end of life away,
That shall ye gain from us from this same day,
Unless the enemies of God ye are;
We fear not you and yours to bear us war,
And scarce can think that ye will try again
Across the perils of the shifting plain
To seek your own land whereso that may be:
For folk of ours bearing the memory
Of our old land, in days past oft have striven
To reach it, unto none of whom was given
To come again and tell us of the tale,
Therefore our ships are now content to sail,
About these happy islands that we know.

The Wanderer.

Masters, I have to tell a tale of woe,
A tale of folly and of wasted life,
Hope against hope, the bitter dregs of strife,
Ending, where all things end, in death at last:
So if I tell the story of the past,
Let it be worth some little rest, I pray,
A little slumber ere the end of day.

No wonder if the Grecian tongue I know,
Since at Byzantium many a year ago
My father bore the twibil valiantly;
There did he marry, and get me, and die,
And I went back to Norway to my kin,
Long ere this beard ye see did first begin
To shade my mouth, but nathless not before
Among the Greeks I gathered some small lore,
And standing midst the Væringers, still heard
From this or that man many a wondrous word;
For ye shall know that though we worshipped
God,
And heard mass duly, still of Swithiod
The Greater, Odin and his house of gold,
The noble stories ceased not to be told;
These moved me more than words of mine can
say
E'en while at Micklegarth my folks did stay;
But when I reached one dying autumn-tide
My uncle's dwelling near the forest side,
And saw the land so scanty and so bare,
And all the hard things men contend with there,
A little and unworthy land it seemed,
And yet the more of Asagard I dreamed,

And worthier seemed the ancient faith of praise.

But now, but now—when one of all those days
Like Lazarus' finger on my heart should be
Breaking the fiery fixed eternity,
But for one moment—could I see once more
The grey-roofed sea-port sloping towards the shore,
Or note the brown boats standing in from sea,
Or the great dromond swinging from the quay,
Or in the beech-woods watch the screaming jay
Shoot up betwixt the tall trunks, smooth and grey—
Yea, could I see the days before distress
When very longing was but happiness.

Within our house there was a Breton squire
Well learned, who fail'd not to fan the fire
That evermore unholpen burned in me
Strange lands and things beyond belief to see;
Much lore of many lands this Breton knew;
And for one tale I told, he told me two.
He, counting Asagard a new-told thing,
Yet spoke of gardens ever blossoming
Across the western sea where none grew old,
E'en as the books at Micklegarth had told,
And said moreover that an English knight
Had had the Earthly Paradise in sight,
And heard the songs of those that dwelt therein.
But entered not, being hindered by his sin.
Shortly, so much of this and that he said
That in my heart the sharp barb entered,
And like real life would empty stories seem,
And life from day to day an empty dream.

Another man there was, a Swabian priest,
Who knew the maladies of man and beast,
And what things helped them; he the stone still sought
Whereby base metal into gold is brought,
And strove to gain the precious draught, whereby
Men live midst mortal men yet never die;
Tales of the Kaiser Redbeard could he tell
Who neither went to Heaven nor yet to Hell,
When from that fight upon the Asian plain
He vanished, but still lives to come again
Men know not how or when; but I listening
Unto this tale thought it a certain thing
That in some hidden vale of Swithiod
Across the golden pavement still he trod.

But while our longing for such things so grew,
And ever more and more we deemed them true,
Upon the land a pestilence there fell
Unheard of yet in any chronicle,
And, as the people died full fast of it,
With these two men it chanced me once to sit,
This learned squire whose name was Nicholas,
And Swabian Laurence, as our manner was;
For could we help it scarcely did we part
From dawn to dusk: so heavy, sad at heart,
We from the castle-yard beheld the bay
Upon that ne'er-to-be-forgotten day,
Little we said amidst that dreary mood,
And certes nought that we could say was good.

It was a bright September afternoon,
The parched-up beech-trees would be yellowing soon
The yellow flowers grown deeper with the sun
Were letting fall their petals one by one;
No wind there was, a haze was gathering o'er

The furthest bound of the faint yellow shore;
And in the oily waters of the bay
Scarce moving aught some fisher-cobles lay,
And all seemed peace; and had been peace
indeed
But that we young men of our life had need,
And to our listening ears a sound was borne
That made the sunlight wretched and forlorn—
—The heavy tolling of the minster bell—
And nigher yet a tinkling sound did tell
That through the streets they bore our Saviour
Christ
By dying lips in anguish to be kissed.

At last spoke Nicholas, "How long shall we
Abide here, looking forth into the sea
Expecting when our turn shall come to die?
Fair fellows, will ye come with me and try
Now at our worst that long-desired quest,
Now—when our worst is death, and life our
best."
"Nay, but thou know'st," I said, "that I but
wait
The coming of some man, the turn of fate,
To make this voyage—but I die meanwhile,
For I am poor, though my blood be not vile,
Nor yet for all his lore doth Laurence hold
Within his crucibles aught like to gold;
And what hast thou, whose father driven forth
By Charles of Blois, found shelter in the North?
But little riches as I needs must deem."
"Well," said he, "things are better than they
seem,
For 'neath my bed an iron chest I have
That holdeth things I have made shift to save
E'en for this end; moreover, hark to this,
In the next firth a fair long ship there is
Well victualled, ready even now for sea,
And I may say it 'longeth unto me;
Since Marcus Erling, late its owner, lies
Dead at the end of many miseries,
And little Kirstin, as thou well mayst know,
Would be content throughout the world to go
If I but took her hand, and now still more
Hath heart to leave this poor death-stricken
shore.
Therefore my gold shall buy us Bordeaux swords
And Bordeaux wine as we go oceanwards.
"What say ye, will ye go with me to-night,
Setting your faces to undreamed delight,
Turning your backs unto this troublous hell,
Or is the time too short to say farewell?"

"Not so," I said, "rather would I depart
Now while thou speakest, never has my heart
Been set on anything within this land."
Then said the Swabian, "Let us now take
hand
And swear to follow evermore this quest
Till death or life have set our hearts at rest."

So with joined hands we swore, and
Nicholas said,
"To-night, fair friends, be ye apparelled
To leave this land, bring all the arms ye can
And such men as ye trust, my own good man
Guards the small postern looking towards St.
Bride,
And good it were ye should not be espied,
Since mayhap freely ye should not go hence,
Thou Rolf in special, for this pestilence
Makes all men hard and cruel, nor are they
Willing that folk should 'scape if they must stay:
Be wise; I bid you for a while farewell,
Leave ye this stronghold when St. Peter's bell

Strikes midnight, all will surely then be still,
And I will bide you at King Tryggve's hill
Outside the city gates."
Each went his way
Therewith, and I the remnant of that day
Gained for the quest three men that I deemed
true,
And did such other things as I must do,
And still was ever listening for the chime
Half maddened by the lazy lapse of time,
Yea, scarce I thought indeed that I should live
Till the great tower the joyful sound should give
That set us free: and so the hours went past,
Till startled by the echoing clang at last
That told of midnight, armed from head to heel
Down to the open postern did I steal,
Bearing small wealth—this sword that yet hangs
here
Worn thin and narrow with so many a year,
My father's axe that from Byzantium,
With some few gems my pouch yet held, had
come,
Nought else that shone with silver or with gold.
But by the postern gate could I behold
Laurence the priest all armed as if for war,
From off the town-wall, having some small store
Of arms and furs and raiment: then once more
I turned, and saw the autumn moonlight fall
Upon the new-built bastions of the wall,
Strange with black shadow and grey flood of
light,
And further off I saw the lead shine bright
On tower and turret-roof against the sky,
And looking down I saw the old town lie
Black in the shade of the o'er-hanging hill,
Stricken with death, and dreary, but all still
Until it reached the water of the bay,
That in the dead night smote against the quay
Not all unheard, though there was little wind.
But as I turned to leave the place behind,
The wind's light sound, the slowly falling swell,
Were hushed at once by that shrill-tinkling bell,
That in that stillness jarring on mine ears,
With sudden jangle checked the rising tears,
And now the freshness of the open sea
Seemed ease and joy and very life to me.
So greeting my new mates with little sound,
We made good haste to reach King Tryggve's
mound,
And there the Breton Nicholas beheld,
Who by the hand fair Kirstin Erling held,
And round about them twenty men there stood,
Of whom the more part on the holy rood
Were sworn till death to follow up the quest,
And Kirstin was the mistress of the rest.
Again betwixt us was there little speech,
But swiftly did we set on toward the beach,
And coming there our keel, the Fighting Man,
We boarded, and the long oars out we ran,
And swept from out the firth, and sped so well
That scarcely could we hear St. Peter's bell
Toll one, although the light wind blew from land;
Then hoisting sail southward we 'gan to stand,
And much I joyed beneath the moon to see
The lessening land that might have been to me
A kindly giver of wife, child, and friend,
And happy life, or at the worser end
A quiet grave till doomsday rend the earth.

Night passed, day dawned, and we grew full of
mirth
As with the ever-rising morning wind
Still further lay our threatened death behind,
Or so we thought: some eighty men we were,
Of whom but fifty knew the shipman's gear,

The rest were uplanders; midst such of these
As knew not of our quest, with promises
Went Nicholas dealing florins round about,
With still a fresh tale for each new man's doubt,
Till all were fairly won or seemed to be
To that strange desperate voyage o'er the sea.

OGIER THE DANE.

ARGUMENT.

When Ogier was born, six fay ladies came to the cradle where he lay, and gave him various gifts, as to be brave and happy and the like; but the sixth gave him to be her love when he should have lived long in the world: so Ogier grew up and became the greatest of knights, and at last, after many years, fell into the hands of that fay, and with her, as the story tells, he lives now, though he returned once to the world, as is shown in the process of this tale.

Within some Danish city by the sea,
Whose name, changed now, is all unknown to
me,
Great mourning was there one fair summer eve,
Because the angels, bidden to receive
The fair Queen's lovely soul in Paradise,
Had done their bidding, and in royal guise
Her helpless body, once the prize of love,
Unable now for fear or hope to move,
Lay underneath the golden canopy;
And bowed down by unkingly misery
The King sat by it, and not far away,
Within the chamber a fair man-child lay,
His mother's bane, the king that was to be,
Not witting yet of any royalty,
Harmless and loved, although so new to life.

Calm the June evening was, no sign of strife
The clear sky showed, no storm grew round the
sun,
Unhappy that his day of bliss was done;
Dumb was the sea, and if the beech-wood
stirred,
'Twas with the nestling of the grey-winged bird
Midst its thick leaves; and though the
nightingale
Her ancient, hapless sorrow must bewail,
No more of woe there seemed in her song
Than such as doth to lovers' words belong,
Because their love is still unsatisfied.
But to the King, on that sweet eventide,
No earth there seemed, no heaven when earth
was gone;
No help, no God! but lonely pain alone;
And he, midst unreal shadows, seemed to sit
Himself the very heart and soul of it.
But round the cradle of the new-born child
The nurses now the weary time beguiled
With stories of the just departed Queen;
And how, amid the heathen folk first seen,
She had been won to love and godliness;
And as they spoke, e'en midst his dull distress,
An eager whisper now and then would smite
Upon the King's ear, of some past delight,
Some once familiar name, and he would raise
His weary head, and on the speaker gaze
Like one about to speak, but soon again
Would drop his head and be alone with pain,
Nor think of these; who, silent in their turn,
Would sit and watch the waxen tapers burn

Amidst the dusk of the quick-gathering night,
Until beneath the high stars' glimmering light,
The fresh earth lay in colourless repose.
So passed the night, and now and then one rose
From out her place to do what might avail
To still the new-born infant's fretful wail;
Or through the softly-opened door there came
Some nurse new waked, who, whispering low the name
Of her whose turn was come, would take her place;
Then toward the King would turn about her face
And to her fellows whisper of the day,
And tell again of her just past away.

So passed the night, the moon arose and grew,
From off the sea a little west-wind blew,
Rustling the garden-leaves like sudden rain;
And ere the moon had 'gun to fall again
The wind grew cold, a change was in the sky,
And in deep silence did the dawn draw nigh;
Then from her place a nurse arose to light
Fresh hallowed lights, for, dying with the night,
The tapers round about the dead Queen were;
But the King raised his head and 'gan to stare
Upon her, as her sweeping gown did glide
About the floor, that in the stillness cried
Beneath her careful feet; and now as she
Had lit the second candle carefully,
And on its silver spike another one
Was setting, through her body did there run
A sudden tremor, and the hand was stayed
That on the dainty painted wax was laid;
Her eyelids fell down and she seemed to sleep,
And o'er the staring King began to creep
Sweet slumber too; the bitter lines of woe
That drew his weary face did softer grow,
His eyelids dropped, his arms fell to his side;
And moveless in their places did abide
The nursing women, held by some strong spell,
E'en as they were, and utter silence fell
Upon the mournful, glimmering chamber fair.
But now light footsteps coming up the stair,
Smote on the deadly stillness, and the sound
Of silken dresses trailing o'er the ground;
And heavenly odours through the chamber passed,
Unlike the scents that rose and lily cast
Upon the freshness of the dying night;
Then nigher drew the sound of footsteps light
Until the door swung open noiselessly—
A mass of sunlit flowers there seemed to be
Within the doorway, and but pale and wan
The flame showed now that serveth mortal man,
As one by one six seeming ladies passed
Into the room, and o'er its sorrow cast
That thoughtless sense of joy bewildering,
That kisses youthful hearts amidst of spring;
Crowned were they, in such glorious raiment clad,
As yet no merchant of the world has had
Within his coffers; yet those crowns seemed fair
Only because they kissed their odorous hair,
And all that flowery raiment was but blessed
By those fair bodies that its splendour pressed.
Now to the cradle from that glorious band,
A woman passed, and laid a tender hand
Upon the babe, and gently drew aside
The swathings soft that did his body hide;
And, seeing him so fair and great, she smiled,
And stooped, and kissed him, saying, "O noble child,
Have thou a gift from Gloriande this day;

For to the time when life shall pass away
From this dear heart, no fear of death or shame,
No weariness of good shall foul thy name."
So saying, to her sisters she returned;
And one came forth, upon whose brow there burned
A crown of rubies, and whose heaving breast
With happy rings a golden hauberk pressed;
She took the babe, and somewhat frowning said,
"This gift I give, that till thy limbs are laid
At rest for ever, to thine honoured life
There never shall be lacking war and strife,
That thou a long-enduring name mayst win,
And by thy deeds, good pardon for thy sin."
With that another, who, unseen, meanwhile
Had drawn anigh, said with a joyous smile,
"And this forgotten gift to thee I give,
That while amidst the turmoil thou dost live,
Still shalt thou win the game, and unto thee
Defeat and shame but idle words shall be."
Then back they turned, and therewithal, the fourth
Said, "Take this gift for what it may be worth
For that is mine to give; lo, thou shalt be
Gentle of speech, and in all courtesy
The first of men: a little gift this is,
After these promises of fame and bliss."
Then toward the babe the fifth fair woman went;
Grey-eyed she was, and simple, with eyes bent
Down on the floor, parted her red lips were,
And o'er her sweet face marvellously fair
Oft would the colour spread full suddenly;
Clad in a dainty gown and thin was she,
For some green summer of the fay-land dight,
Tripping she went, and laid her fingers light
Upon the child, and said, "O little one,
As long as thou shalt look upon the sun
Shall women long for thee; take heed to this
And give them what thou canst of love and bliss."
Then, blushing for her words, therefrom she past,
And by the cradle stood the sixth and last,
The fairest of them all; awhile she gazed
Down on the child, and then her hand she raised,
And made the one side of her bosom bare;
"Ogier," she said, "if this be foul or fair
Thou know'st not now, but when thine earthly life
Is drunk out to the dregs, and war and strife
Have yielded thee whatever joy they may,
Thine head upon this bosom shalt thou lay;
And then, despite of knowledge or of God,
Will we be glad upon the flowery sod
Within the happy country where I dwell:
Ogier, my love that is to be, farewell!"

She turned, and even as they came they passed
From out the place, and reached the gate at last
That oped before their feet, and speedily
They gained the edges of the murmuring sea,
And as they stood in silence, gazing there
Out to the west, they vanished into air,
I know not how, nor whereto they returned.

But mixed with twilight in the chamber burned
The flickering candles, and those dreary folk,
Unlike to sleepers, from their trance awoke,
But nought of what had happed meanwhile they knew.
Through the half-opened casements now there

blew
A sweet fresh air, that of the flowers and sea
Mingled together, smelt deliciously,
And from the unseen sun the spreading light
Began to make the fair June blossoms bright,
And midst their weary woe uprose the sun,
And thus has Ogier's noble life begun.

Hope is our life, when first our life grows clear;
Hope and delight, scarce crossed by lines of
fear,
Yet the day comes when fain we would not hope,
But forasmuch as we with life must cope,
Struggling with this and that, and who knows
why?
Hope will not give us up to certainty,
But still must bide with us: and with this man,
Whose life amid such promises began
Great things she wrought; but now the time has
come
When he no more on earth may have his home.
Great things he suffered, great delights he
had,
Unto great kings he gave good deeds for bad;
He ruled o'er kingdoms where his name no more
Is had in memory, and on many a shore
He left his sweat and blood to win a name
Passing the bounds of earthly creatures' fame.
A love he won and lost, a well-loved son
Whose little day of promise soon was done:
A tender wife he had, that he must leave
Before his heart her love could well receive;
Those promised gifts, that on his careless head
In those first hours of his fair life were shed
He took unwitting, and unwitting spent,
Nor gave himself to grief and discontent
Because he saw the end a-drawing nigh.
Where is he now? in what land must he die,
To leave an empty name to us on earth?
A tale half true, to cast across our mirth
Some pensive thoughts of life that might have
been;
Where is he now, that all this life has seen?

Behold, another eve I bid you see
Than that calm eve of his nativity;
The sun is setting in the west, the sky
Is clear and hard, and no clouds come anigh
The golden orb, but further off they lie,
Steel-grey and black with edges red as blood,
And underneath them is the weltering flood
Of some huge sea, whose tumbling hills, as they
Turn restless sides about, are black or grey,
Or green, or glittering with the golden flame;
The wind has fallen now, but still the same
The mighty army moves, as if to drown
This lone, bare rock, whose shear scarped sides
of brown
Cast off the weight of waves in clouds of spray.
Alas! what ships upon an evil day
Bent over to the wind in this ill sea?
What navy, whose rent bones lie wretchedly
Beneath these cliffs? a mighty one it was,
A fearful storm to bring such things to pass.

This is the loadstone rock; no armament
Of warring nations, in their madness bent
Their course this way; no merchant wittingly
Has steered his keel unto this luckless sea;
Upon no shipman's card its name is writ,
Though worn-out mariners will speak of it
Within the ingle on the winter's night,

When all within is warm and safe and bright,
And the wind howls without: but 'gainst their will
Are some folk driven here, and then all skill
Against this evil rock is vain and nought,
And unto death the shipmen soon are brought;
For then the keel, as by a giant's hand,
Is drawn unto that mockery of a land,
And presently unto its sides doth cleave;
When if they 'scape swift death, yet none may leave
The narrow limits of that barren isle,
And thus are slain by famine in a while
Mocked, as they say, by night with images
Of noble castles among groves of trees,
By day with sounds of merry minstrelsy.

The sun sinks now below this hopeless sea,
The clouds are gone, and all the sky is bright;
The moon is rising o'er the growing night,
And by its light may ye behold the bones
Of generations of these luckless ones
Scattered about the rock; but nigh the sea
Sits one alive, who uncomplainingly
Awaits his death. White-haired is he and old,
Arrayed in royal raiment, bright with gold,
But tarnished with the waves and rough salt air;
Huge is he, of a noble face and fair,
As for an ancient man, though toil and eld
Furrow the cheeks that ladies once beheld
With melting hearts—Nay, listen, for he speaks!
"God, thou hast made me strong! nigh seven weeks
Have passed since from the wreck we haled our store,
And five long days well told, have now passed o'er
Since my last fellow died, with my last bread
Between his teeth, and yet I am not dead.
Yea, but for this I had been strong enow
In some last bloody field my sword to show.
What matter? soon will all be past and done,
Where'er I died I must have died alone:
Yet, Caraheu, a good death had it been
Dying, thy face above me to have seen,
And heard my banner flapping in the wind,
Then, though my memory had not left thy mind,
Yet hope and fear would not have vexed thee more
When thou hadst known that everything was o'er;
But now thou waitest, still expecting me,
Whose sail shall never speck thy bright blue sea.
"And thou, Clarice, the merchants thou mayst call,
To tell thee tales within thy pictured hall,
But never shall they tell true tales of me:
Whatever sails the Kentish hills may see
Swept by the flood-tide toward thy well-walled town,
No more on my sails shall they look adown.
"Get thee another leader, Charlemaine,
For thou shalt look to see my shield in vain,
When in the fair fields of the Frankish land,
Thick as the corn they tread, the heathen stand.
"What matter? ye shall learn to live your lives;
Husbands and children, other friends and wives,
Shall wipe the tablets of your memory clean,
And all shall be as I had never been.

"And now, O God, am I alone with Thee;
A little thing indeed it seems to be
To give this life up, since it needs must go
Some time or other; now at last I know

How foolishly men play upon the earth,
When unto them a year of life seems worth
Honour and friends, and these vague hopes and sweet
That like real things my dying heart do greet,
Unreal while living on the earth I trod,
And but myself I knew no other god.
Behold, I thank Thee that Thou sweet'nest thus
This end, that I had thought most piteous,
If of another I had heard it told."

What man is this, who weak and worn and old,
Gives up his life within that dreadful isle,
And on the fearful coming death can smile?
Alas! this man, so battered and outworn,
Is none but he, who, on that summer morn,
Received such promises of glorious life:
Ogier the Dane this is, to whom all strife
Was but as wine to stir awhile the blood,
To whom all life, however hard, was good:
This is the man, unmatched of heart and limb,
Ogier the Dane, whose sight has waxed not dim
For all the years that he on earth has dwelt;
Ogier the Dane, that never fear has felt,
Since he knew good from ill; Ogier the Dane,
The heathen's dread, the evil-doer's bane.

Bright had the moon grown as his words were done,
And no more was there memory of the sun
Within the west, and he grew drowsy now,
And somewhat smoother was his wrinkled brow
As thought died out beneath the hand of sleep,
And o'er his soul forgetfulness did creep,
Hiding the image of swift-coming death;
Until as peacefully he drew his breath
As on that day, past for a hundred years,
When, midst the nurse's quickly-falling tears,
He fell asleep to his first lullaby.
The night changed as he slept, white clouds and high
Began about the lonely moon to close;
And from the dark west a new wind arose,
And with the sound of heavy-falling waves
Mingled its pipe about the loadstone caves;
But when the twinkling stars were hid away,
And a faint light and broad, like dawn of day,
The moon upon that dreary country shed,
Ogier awoke, and lifting up his head
And smiling, muttered, "Nay, no more again;
Rather some pleasure new, some other pain,
Unthought of both, some other form of strife;"
For he had waked from dreams of his old life,
And through St. Omer's archer-guarded gate
Once more had seemed to pass, and saw the state
Of that triumphant king; and still, though all
Seemed changed, and folk by other names did call
Faces he knew of old, yet none the less
He seemed the same, and, midst that mightiness,
Felt his own power, and grew the more athirst
For coming glory, as of old, when first
He stood before the face of Charlemaine,
A helpless hostage with all life to gain.
But now, awake, his worn face once more sank
Between his hands, and, murmuring not, he drank
The draught of death that must that thirst allay.

But while he sat and waited for the day
A sudden light across the bare rock streamed,
Which at the first he noted not, but deemed
The moon her fleecy veil had broken through;
But ruddier indeed this new light grew
Than were the moon's grey beams, and, therewithal,
Soft far-off music on his ears did fall;
Yet moved he not, but murmured, "This is death,
An easy thing like this to yield my breath,
Awake, yet dreaming, with no sounds of fear,
No dreadful sights to tell me it is near;
Yea, God, I thank Thee!" but with that last word
It seemed to him that he his own name heard
Whispered, as though the wind had borne it past;
With that he gat unto his feet at last,
But still awhile he stood, with sunken head,
And in a low and trembling voice he said,
"Lord, I am ready, whither shall I go?
I pray Thee unto me some token show."
And, as he said this, round about he turned,
And in the east beheld a light that burned
As bright as day; then, though his flesh might fear
The coming change that he believed so near,
Yet did his soul rejoice, for now he thought
Unto the very heaven to be brought:
And though he felt alive, deemed it might be
That he in sleep had died full easily.
Then toward that light did he begin to go,
And still those strains he heard, far off and low,
That grew no louder; still that bright light streamed
Over the rocks, yet nothing brighter seemed,
But like the light of some unseen bright flame
Shone round about, until at last he came
Unto the dreary islet's other shore,
And then the minstrelsy he heard no more,
And softer seemed the strange light unto him;
But yet or ever it had grown quite dim,
Beneath its waning light could he behold
A mighty palace set about with gold,
Above green meads and groves of summer trees
Far-off across the welter of the seas;
But, as he gazed, it faded from his sight,
And the grey hidden moon's diffused soft light,
Which soothly was but darkness to him now,
His sea-girt island prison did but show.
But o'er the sea he still gazed wistfully,
And said, "Alas! and when will this go by
And leave my soul in peace? must I still dream
Of life that once so dear a thing did seem,
That, when I wake, death may the bitterer be?
Here will I sit until he come to me,
And hide mine eyes and think upon my sin,
That so a little calm I yet may win
Before I stand within the awful place."
Then down he sat and covered up his face,
Yet therewithal his trouble could not hide,
Nor waiting thus for death could he abide,
For, though he knew it not, the yearning pain
Of hope of life had touched his soul again—
If he could live awhile, if he could live!
The mighty being, who once was wont to give
The gift of life to many a trembling man;
Who did his own will since his life began;
Who feared not aught, but strong and great and free
Still cast aside the thought of what might be;
Must all this then be lost, and with no will,
Powerless and blind, must he some fate fulfil,
Nor know what he is doing any more?

Soon he arose and paced along the shore,
And gazed out seaward for the blessed light;
But nought he saw except the old sad sight,
The ceaseless tumbling of the billows grey,
The white upspringing of the spurts of spray
Amidst that mass of timbers, the rent bones
Of the sea-houses of the hapless ones
Once cast like him upon this deadly isle.
He stopped his pacing in a little while,
And clenched his mighty hands, and set his teeth,
And gazing at the ruin underneath,
He swung from off the bare cliff's jagged brow,
And on some slippery ledge he wavered now,
Without a hand-hold, and now stoutly clung
With hands alone, and o'er the welter hung,
Not caring aught if thus his life should end;
But safely midst all this did he descend
The dreadful cliff, and since no beach was there,
But from the depths the rock rose stark and bare,
Nor crumbled aught beneath the hammering sea,
Upon the wrecks he stood unsteadily.

But now, amid the clamour of the waves,
And washing to-and-fro of beams and staves,
Dizzy with hunger, dreamy with distress,
And all those days of fear and loneliness,
The ocean's tumult seemed the battle's roar,
His heart grew hot, as when in days of yore
He heard the cymbals clash amid the crowd
Of dusky faces; now he shouted loud,
And from crushed beam to beam began to leap,
And yet his footing somehow did he keep
Amidst their tossing, and indeed the sea
Was somewhat sunk upon the island's lee.
So quickly on from wreck to wreck he passed,
And reached the outer line of wrecks at last,
And there a moment stood unsteadily,
Amid the drift of spray that hurried by,
And drew Courtain his sword from out its sheath,
And poised himself to meet the coming death,
Still looking out to sea; but as he gazed,
And once or twice his doubtful feet he raised
To take the final plunge, that heavenly strain
Over the washing waves he heard again,
And from the dimness something bright he saw
Across the waste of waters towards him draw;
And hidden now, now raised aloft, at last
Unto his very feet a boat was cast,
Gilded inside and out, and well arrayed
With cushions soft; far fitter to have weighed
From some sweet garden on the shallow Seine,
Or in a reach of green Thames to have lain,
Than struggle with that huge confusèd sea;
But Ogier gazed upon it doubtfully
One moment, and then, sheathing Courtain, said,
"What tales are these about the newly dead
The heathen told? what matter, let all pass;
This moment as one dead indeed I was,
And this must be what I have got to do,
I yet perchance may light on something new
Before I die; though yet perchance this keel
Unto the wondrous mass of charmed steel
Is drawn as others." With that word he leapt
Into the boat, and o'er the cushions crept
From stem to stern, but found no rudder there,
Nor any oars, nor were the cushions fair
Made wet by any dashing of the sea.
Now while he pondered how these things could be,
The boat began to move therefrom at last,

But over him a drowsiness was cast,
And as o'er tumbling hills the skiff did pass,
He clean forgot his death and where he was.

At last he woke up to a sunny day,
And, looking round, saw that his shallop lay
Moored at the edge of some fair tideless sea
Unto an overhanging thick-leaved tree,
Where in the green waves did the low bank dip
Its fresh and green grass-covered daisied lip;
But Ogier looking thence no more could see
That sad abode of death and misery,
Nor aught but wide and empty ocean, grey
With gathering haze, for now it neared midday;
Then from the golden cushions did he rise,
And wondering still if this were Paradise
He stepped ashore, but drew Courtain his sword
And muttered therewithal a holy word.
Fair was the place, as though amidst of May,
Nor did the brown birds fear the sunny day,
For with their quivering song the air was sweet;
Thick grew the field-flowers underneath his feet,
And on his head the blossoms down did rain,
Yet mid these fair things slowly and with pain
He 'gan to go, yea, even when his foot
First touched the flowery sod, to his heart's root
A coldness seemed to strike, and now each limb
Was growing stiff, his eyes waxed bleared and
dim,
And all his stored-up memory 'gan to fail,
Nor yet would his once mighty heart avail
For lamentations o'er his changed lot;
Yet urged by some desire, he knew not what,
Along a little path 'twixt hedges sweet,
Drawn sword in hand, he dragged his faltering
feet,
For what then seemed to him a weary way,
Whereon his steps he needs must often stay
And lean upon the mighty well-worn sword
That in those hands, grown old, for king or lord
Had small respect in glorious days long past.

But still he crept along, and at the last
Came to a gilded wicket, and through this
Entered a garden fit for utmost bliss,
If that might last which needs must soon go by:
There 'gainst a tree he leaned, and with a sigh
He said, "O God, a sinner I have been,
And good it is that I these things have seen
Before I meet what Thou hast set apart
To cleanse the earthly folly from my heart;
But who within this garden now can dwell
Wherein guilt first upon the world befell?"
A little further yet he staggered on,
Till to a fountain-side at last he won,
O'er which two white-thorns their sweet
blossoms shed,
There he sank down, and laid his weary head
Beside the mossy roots, and in a while
He slept, and dreamed himself within the isle;
That splashing fount the weary sea did seem,
And in his dream the fair place but a dream;
But when again to feebleness he woke
Upon his ears that heavenly music broke,
Not faint or far as in the isle it was,
But e'en as though the minstrels now did pass
Anigh his resting-place; then fallen in doubt,
E'en as he might, he rose and gazed about,
Leaning against the hawthorn stem with pain;
And yet his straining gaze was but in vain,
Death stole so fast upon him, and no more
Could he behold the blossoms as before,
No more the trees seemed rooted to the ground,
A heavy mist seemed gathering all around,
And in its heart some bright thing seemed to be,

And round his head there breathed deliciously
Sweet odours, and that music never ceased.
But as the weight of Death's strong hand
increased
Again he sank adown, and Courtain's noise
Within the scabbard seemed a farewell voice
Sent from the world he loved so well of old,
And all his life was as a story told,
And as he thought thereof he 'gan to smile
E'en as a child asleep, but in a while
It was as though he slept, and sleeping
dreamed,
For in his half-closed eyes a glory gleamed,
As though from some sweet face and golden
hair,
And on his breast were laid soft hands and fair,
And a sweet voice was ringing in his ears,
Broken as if with flow of joyous tears;
"Ogier, sweet friend, hast thou not tarried
long?
Alas! thine hundred years of strife and wrong!"
Then he found voice to say, "Alas! dear Lord,
Too long, too long; and yet one little word
Right many a year agone had brought me here."
Then to his face that face was drawn anear,
He felt his head raised up and gently laid
On some kind knee, again the sweet voice said,
"Nay, Ogier, nay, not yet, not yet, dear friend!
Who knoweth when our linked life shall end,
Since thou art come unto mine arms at last,
And all the turmoil of the world is past?
Why do I linger ere I see thy face
As I desired it in that mourning place
So many years ago—so many years,
Thou knewest not thy love and all her fears?"
"Alas!" he said, "what mockery is this
That thou wilt speak to me of earthly bliss?
No longer can I think upon the earth,
Have I not done with all its grief and mirth?
Yes, I was Ogier once, but if my love
Should come once more my dying heart to move,
Then must she come from 'neath the milk-white
walls
Whereon to-day the hawthorn blossom falls
Outside St. Omer's—art thou she? her name
I could remember once mid death and fame
Is clean forgotten now; but yesterday,
Meseems, our son, upon her bosom lay:
Baldwin the fair—what hast thou done with him
Since Charlot slew him? Ah, mine eyes wax dim;
Woman, forbear! wilt thou not let me die?
Did I forget thee in the days gone by?
Then let me die, that we may meet again!"

He tried to move from her, but all in vain,
For life had well-nigh left him, but withal
He felt a kiss upon his forehead fall,
And could not speak; he felt slim fingers fair
Move to his mighty sword-worn hand, and there
Set on some ring, and still he could not speak,
And once more sleep weighed down his eyelids
weak.

But, ah! what land was this he woke unto?
What joy was this that filled his heart anew?
Had he then gained the very Paradise?
Trembling, he durst not at the first arise,
Although no more he felt the pain of eld,
Nor durst he raise his eyes that now beheld
Beside him the white flowers and blades of
grass;
He durst not speak, lest he some monster was.

But while he lay and hoped, that gentle voice
Once more he heard; "Yea, thou mayst well rejoice!
Thou livest still, my sweet, thou livest still,
Apart from every earthly fear and ill;
Wilt thou not love me, who have wrought thee this,
That I like thee may live in double bliss?"
Then Ogier rose up, nowise like to one
Whose span of earthly life is nigh outrun,
But as he might have risen in old days
To see the spears cleave the fresh morning haze;
But, looking round, he saw no change there was
In the fair place wherethrough he first did pass,
Though all, grown clear and joyous to his eyes,
Now looked no worse than very Paradise;
Behind him were the thorns, the fountain fair
Still sent its glittering stream forth into air,
And by its basin a fair woman stood,
And as their eyes met his renewèd blood
Rushed to his face; with unused thoughts and sweet
And hurrying hopes, his heart began to beat.
The fairest of all creatures did she seem;
So fresh and delicate you well might deem
That scarce for eighteen summers had she blessed
The happy, longing world; yet, for the rest,
Within her glorious eyes such wisdom dwelt
A child before her had the wise man felt,
And with the pleasure of a thousand years
Her lips were fashioned to move joy or tears
Among the longing folk where she might dwell,
To give at last the kiss unspeakable.
In such wise was she clad as folk may be,
Who, for no shame of their humanity,
For no sad changes of the imperfect year,
Rather for added beauty, raiment wear;
For, as the heat-foretelling grey-blue haze
Veils the green flowery morn of late May-days,
Her raiment veiled her; where the bands did meet
That bound the sandals to her dainty feet,
Gems gleamed; a fresh rose-wreath embraced her head,
And on her breast there lay a ruby red.
So with a supplicating look she turned
To meet the flame that in his own eyes burned,
And held out both her white arms lovingly,
As though to greet him as he drew anigh.
Stammering he said, "Who art thou? how am I
So cured of all my evils suddenly,
That certainly I felt no mightier, when,
Amid the backward rush of beaten men,
About me drooped the axe-torn Oriflamme?
Alas! I fear that in some dream I am."
"Ogier," she said, "draw near, perchance it is
That such a name God gives unto our bliss;
I know not, but if thou art such an one
As I must deem, all days beneath the sun
That thou hast had, shall be but dreams indeed
To those that I have given thee at thy need.
For many years ago beside the sea
When thou wert born, I plighted troth with thee:
Come near then, and make mirrors of mine eyes,
That thou mayest see what these my mysteries
Have wrought in thee; surely but thirty years,
Passed amidst joy, thy new born body bears,
Nor while thou art with me, and on this shore
Art still full-fed of love, shalt thou seem more.
Nay, love, come nigher, and let me take thine hand,
The hope and fear of many a warring land,

And I will show thee wherein lies the spell,
Whereby this happy change upon thee fell."

Like a shy youth before some royal love,
Close up to that fair woman did he move,
And their hands met; yet to his changed voice
He dared not trust; nay, scarcely could rejoice
E'en when her balmy breath he 'gan to feel,
And felt strange sweetness o'er his spirit steal
As her light raiment, driven by the wind,
Swept round him, and, bewildered and half-
blind,
His lips the treasure of her lips did press,
And round him clung her perfect loveliness.
For one sweet moment thus they stood, and
then
She drew herself from out his arms again,
And panting, lovelier for her love, did stand
Apart awhile, then took her lover's hand,
And, in a trembling voice, made haste to say,—
"O Ogier, when thou earnest here to-day,
I feared indeed, that in my sport with fate,
I might have seen thee e'en one day too late,
Before this ring thy finger should embrace;
Behold it, love, and thy keen eyes may trace
Faint figures wrought upon the ruddy gold;
My father dying gave it me, nor told
The manner of its making, but I know
That it can make thee e'en as thou art now
Despite the laws of God—shrink not from me
Because I give an impious gift to thee—
Has not God made me also, who do this?
But I, who longed to share with thee my bliss,
Am of the fays, and live their changeless life,
And, like the gods of old, I see the strife
That moves the world, unmoved if so I will;
For we the fruit, that teaches good and ill,
Have never touched like you of Adam's race;
And while thou dwellest with me in this place
Thus shalt thou be—ah, and thou deem'st,
indeed,
That thou shalt gain thereby no happy meed
Reft of the world's joys? nor canst understand
How thou art come into a happy land?—
Love, in thy world the priests of heaven still
sing,
And tell thee of it many a joyous thing;
But think'st thou, bearing the world's joy and
pain,
Thou couldst live there? nay, nay, but born again
Thus wouldst be happy with the angels' bliss;
And so with us no otherwise it is,
Nor hast thou cast thine old life quite away
Even as yet, though that shall be to-day.
"But for the love and country thou hast won,
Know thou, that thou art come to Avallon,
That is both thine and mine; and as for me,
Morgan le Fay men call me commonly
Within the world, but fairer names than this
I have for thee and me, 'twixt kiss and kiss."

Ah, what was this? and was it all in vain,
That she had brought him here this life to gain?
For, ere her speech was done, like one turned
blind
He watched the kisses of the wandering wind
Within her raiment, or as some one sees
The very best of well-wrought images
When he is blind with grief, did he behold
The wandering tresses of her locks of gold
Upon her shoulders; and no more he pressed
The hand that in his own hand lay at rest:
His eyes, grown dull with changing memories,
Could make no answer to her glorious eyes:
Cold waxed his heart, and weary and distraught,

With many a cast-by, hateful, dreary thought,
Unfinished in the old days; and withal
He needs must think of what might chance to fall
In this life new-begun; and good and bad
Tormented him, because as yet he had
A worldly heart within his frame made new,
And to the deeds that he was wont to do
Did his desires still turn. But she a while
Stood gazing at him with a doubtful smile,
And let his hand fall down; but suddenly
Sounded sweet music from some close nearby,
And then she spoke again: "Come, love, with me,
That thou thy new life and delights mayst see."
And gently with that word she led him thence,
And though upon him now there fell a sense
Of dreamy and unreal bewilderment,
As hand in hand through that green place they went,
Yet therewithal a strain of tender love
A little yet his restless heart did move.

So through the whispering trees they came at last
To where a wondrous house a shadow cast
Across the flowers, and o'er the daisied grass
Before it, crowds of lovely folk did pass,
Playing about in carelessness and mirth,
Unshadowed by the doubtful deeds of earth;
And from the midst a band of fair girls came,
With flowers and music, greeting him by name,
And praising him; but ever like a dream
He could not break, did all to Ogier seem,
And he his old world did the more desire,
For in his heart still burned unquenched the fire,
That through the world of old so bright did burn:
Yet was he fain that kindness to return,
And from the depth of his full heart he sighed.
Then toward the house the lovely Queen did guide
His listless steps, and seemed to take no thought
Of knitted brow or wandering eyes distraught,
But still with kind love lighting up her face
She led him through the door of that fair place,
While round about them did the damsels press;
And he was moved by all that loveliness
As one might be, who, lying half asleep
In the May morning, notes the light wind sweep
Over the tulip-beds: no more to him
Were gleaming eyes, red lips, and bodies slim,
Amidst that dream, although the first surprise
Of hurried love wherewith the Queen's sweet eyes
Had smitten him, still in his heart did stir.

And so at last he came, led on by her
Into a hall wherein a fair throne was,
And hand in hand thereto the twain did pass;
And there she bade him sit, and when alone
He took his place upon the double throne,
She cast herself before him on her knees,
Embracing his, and greatly did increase
The shame and love that vexed his troubled heart:
But now a line of girls the crowd did part,
Lovelier than all, and Ogier could behold
One in their midst who bore a crown of gold
Within her slender hands and delicate;
She, drawing nigh, beside the throne did wait
Until the Queen arose and took the crown,
Who then to Ogier's lips did stoop adown
And kissed him, and said, "Ogier, what were worth
Thy miserable days of strife on earth,
That on their ashes still thine eyes are turned?"

Then, as she spoke these words, his changed heart burned
With sudden memories, and thereto had he
Made answer, but she raised up suddenly
The crown she held and set it on his head,
"Ogier," she cried, "those troublous days are dead;
Thou wert dead with them also, but for me;
Turn unto her who wrought these things for thee!"
Then, as he felt her touch, a mighty wave
Of love swept o'er his soul, as though the grave
Did really hold his body; from his seat
He rose to cast himself before her feet;
But she clung round him, and in close embrace
The twain were locked amidst that thronging place.

Thenceforth new life indeed has Ogier won,
And in the happy land of Avallon
Quick glide the years o'er his unchanging head;
There saw he many men the world thought dead,
Living like him in sweet forgetfulness
Of all the troubles that did once oppress
Their vainly-struggling lives—ah, how can I
Tell of their joy as though I had been nigh?
Suffice it that no fear of death they knew,
That there no talk there was of false or true,
Of right or wrong, for traitors came not there;
That everything was bright and soft and fair,
And yet they wearied not for any change,
Nor unto them did constancy seem strange.
Love knew they, but its pain they never had,
But with each other's joy were they made glad;
Nor were their lives wasted by hidden fire,
Nor knew they of the unfulfilled desire
That turns to ashes all the joys of earth,
Nor knew they yearning love amidst the dearth
Of kind and loving hearts to spend it on,
Nor dreamed or discontent when all was won;
Nor need they struggle after wealth and fame;
Still was the calm flow of their lives the same,
And yet, I say, they wearied not of it—
So did the promised days by Ogier flit.

THINK that a hundred years have now passed by,
Since ye beheld Ogier lie down to die
Beside the fountain; think that now ye are
In France, made dangerous with wasting war;
In Paris, where about each guarded gate,
Gathered in knots, the anxious people wait,
And press around each new-come man to learn
If Harfleur now the pagan wasters burn,
Or if the Rouen folk can keep their chain,
Or Pont de l'Arche unburnt still guards the Seine?
Or if 'tis true that Andelys succour wants?
That Vernon's folk are fleeing east to Mantes?
When will they come? or rather is it true
That a great band the Constable o'erthrew
Upon the marshes of the lower Seine,
And that their long ships, turning back again,
Caught by the high-raised waters of the bore
Were driven here and there and cast ashore?
Such questions did they ask, and, as fresh men
Came hurrying in, they asked them o'er again,
And from scared folk, or fools, or ignorant,
Still got new lies, or tidings very scant.

But now amidst these men at last came one,
A little ere the setting of the sun,
With two stout men behind him, armed right

well,
Who ever as they rode on, sooth to tell,
With doubtful eyes upon their master stared,
Or looked about like troubled men and scared.
And he they served was noteworthy indeed;
Of ancient fashion were his arms and weed,
Rich past the wont of men in those sad times;
His face was bronzed, as though by burning climes,
But lovely as the image of a god
Carved in the days before on earth Christ trod;
But solemn were his eyes, and grey as glass,
And like to ruddy gold his fine hair was:
A mighty man he was, and taller far
Than those who on that day must bear the war
The pagans waged: he by the warders stayed
Scarce looked on them, but straight their words obeyed
And showed his pass; then, asked about his name
And from what city of the world he came,
Said, that men called him now the Ancient Knight,
That he was come midst the king's men to fight
From St. Omer's; and as he spoke, he gazed
Down on the thronging street as one amazed,
And answered no more to the questioning
Of frightened folk of this or that sad thing;
But, ere he passed on, turned about at last
And on the wondering guard a strange look cast,
And said, "St. Mary! do such men as ye
Fight with the wasters from across the sea?
Then, certes, are ye lost, however good
Your hearts may be; not such were those who stood
Beside the Hammer-bearer years agone."
So said he, and as his fair armour shone
With beauty of a time long passed away,
So with the music of another day
His deep voice thrilled the awe-struck, listening folk.

Yet from the crowd a mocking voice outbroke,
That cried, "Be merry, masters, fear ye nought,
Surely good succour to our side is brought;
For here is Charlemaine come off his tomb
To save his faithful city from its doom."
"Yea," said another, "this is certain news,
Surely ye know how all the carvers use
To carve the dead man's image at the best,
That guards the place where he may lie at rest;
Wherefore this living image looks indeed,
Spite of his ancient tongue and marvellous weed,
To have but thirty summers."
At the name
Of Charlemaine, he turned to whence there came
The mocking voice, and somewhat knit his brow,
And seemed as he would speak, but scarce knew how;
So with a half-sigh soon sank back again
Into his dream, and shook his well-wrought rein,
And silently went on upon his way.

And this was Ogier: on what evil day
Has he then stumbled, that he needs must come,
Midst war and ravage, to the ancient home
Of his desires? did he grow weary then,
And wish to strive once more with foolish men
For worthless things? or is fair Avallon
Sunk in the sea, and all that glory gone?
Nay, thus it happed—One day she came to him

And said, "Ogier, thy name is waxen dim
Upon the world that thou rememberest not;
The heathen men are thick on many a spot
Thine eyes have seen, and which I love
therefore;
And God will give His wonted help no more.
Wilt thou, then, help? canst thou have any mind
To give thy banner once more to the wind?
Since greater glory thou shalt win for this
Than erst thou gatheredst ere thou cam'st to
bliss:
For men are dwindled both in heart and frame,
Nor holds the fair land any such a name
As thine, when thou wert living midst thy peers:
The world is worser for these hundred years."
From his calm eyes there gleamed a little
fire,
And in his voice was something of desire,
To see the land where he was used to be,
As now he answered: "Nay, choose thou for me,
Thou art the wisest; it is more than well
Within this peaceful place with thee to dwell:
Nor ill perchance in that old land to die,
If, dying, I keep not the memory
Of this fair life of ours." "Nay, nay," said she,
"As to thy dying, that shall never be,
Whiles that thou keep'st my ring—and now,
behold,
I take from thee thy charmed crown of gold,
And thou wilt be the Ogier that thou wast
Ere on the loadstone rock thy ship was cast:
Yet thou shalt have thy youthful body still,
And I will guard thy life from every ill."

So was it done, and Ogier, armed right well,
Sleeping, was borne away by some strong spell,
And set upon the Flemish coast; and thence
Turned to St. Omer's, with a doubtful sense
Of being in some wild dream, the while he knew
That great delight forgotten was his due,
That all which there might hap was of small
worth.
So on he went, and sometimes unto mirth
Did his attire move the country-folk,
But oftener when strange speeches from him
broke
Concerning men and things for long years dead,
He filled the listeners with great awe and dread;
For in such wild times as these people were
Are men soon moved to wonder and to fear.

Now through the streets of Paris did he ride,
And at a certain hostel did abide
Throughout that night, and ere he went next day
He saw a book that on a table lay,
And opening it 'gan read in lazy mood:
But long before it in that place he stood,
Noting nought else; for it did chronicle
The deeds of men of old he knew right well,
When they were living in the flesh with him:
Yea, his own deeds he saw, grown strange and
dim
Already, and true stories mixed with lies,
Until, with many thronging memories
Of those old days, his heart was so oppressed,
He 'gan to wish that he might lie at rest,
Forgetting all things: for indeed by this
Little remembrance had he of the bliss
That wrapped his soul in peaceful Avallon.

But his changed life he needs must carry on;
For ye shall know the Queen was gathering men
To send unto the good King, who as then
In Rouen lay, beset by many a band
Of those who carried terror through the land,

And still by messengers for help he prayed:
Therefore a mighty muster was being made,
Of weak and strong, and brave and timorous,
Before the Queen anigh her royal house.
So thither on this morn did Ogier turn,
Some certain news about the war to learn;
And when he came at last into the square,
And saw the ancient palace great and fair
Rise up before him as in other days,
And in the merry morn the bright sun's rays
Glittering on gathering helms and moving spears,
He 'gan to feel as in the long-past years,
And his heart stirred within him. Now the Queen
Came from within, right royally beseen,
And took her seat beneath a canopy,
With lords and captains of the war anigh;
And as she came a mighty shout arose,
And round about began the knights to close,
Their oath of fealty there to swear anew,
And learn what service they had got to do.
But so it was, that some their shouts must stay
To gaze at Ogier as he took his way
Through the thronged place; and quickly too he gat
Unto the place whereas the Lady sat,
For men gave place unto him, fearing him:
For not alone was he most huge of limb,
And dangerous, but something in his face,
As his calm eyes looked o'er the crowded place,
Struck men with awe; and in the ancient days,
When men might hope alive on gods to gaze,
They would have thought, "The gods yet love our town
And from the heavens have sent a great one down."
Withal unto the throne he came so near,
That he the Queen's sweet measured voice could hear;
And swiftly now within him wrought the change
That first he felt amid those faces strange;
And his heart burned to taste the hurrying life
With such desires, such changing sweetness rife.
And yet, indeed, how should he live alone,
Who in the old past days such friends had known?
Then he began to think of Caraheu,
Of Bellicent the fair, and once more knew
The bitter pain of rent and ended love.
But while with hope and vain regret he strove,
He found none 'twixt him and the Queen's high seat,
And, stepping forth, he knelt before her feet
And took her hand to swear, as was the way
Of doing fealty in that ancient day,
And raised his eyes to hers; as fair was she
As any woman of the world might be
Full-limbed and tall, dark haired, from her deep eyes,
The snare of fools, the ruin of the wise,
Love looked unchecked; and now her dainty hand,
The well-knit holder of the golden wand,
Trembled in his, she cast her eyes adown,
And her sweet brow was knitted to a frown,
As he, the taker of such oaths of yore,
Now unto her all due obedience swore,
Yet gave himself no name; and now the Queen,
Awed by his voice as other folk had been,
Yet felt a trembling hope within her rise
Too sweet to think of, and with love's surprise
Her cheek grew pale; she said, "Thy style and name
Thou tellest not, nor what land of thy fame

Is glad; for, certes, some land must be glad,
That in its bounds her house thy mother had."
"Lady," he said, "from what far land I come
I well might tell thee, but another home
Have I long dwelt in, and its name have I
Forgotten now, forgotten utterly
Who were my fellows, and what deeds they did;
Therefore, indeed, shall my first name be hid
And my first country; call me on this day
The Ancient Knight, and let me go my way."
He rose withal, for she her fingers fair
Had drawn aback, and on him 'gan to stare
As one afeard; for something terrible
Was in his speech, and that she knew right well,
Who 'gan to love him, and to fear that she,
Shut out by some strange deadly mystery,
Should never gain from him an equal love;
Yet, as from her high seat he 'gan to move,
She said, "O Ancient Knight, come presently,
When we have done this muster, unto me,
And thou shalt have thy charge and due
command
For freeing from our foes this wretched land!"
Then Ogier made his reverence and went,
And somewhat could perceive of her intent;
For in his heart life grew, and love with life
Grew, and therewith, 'twixt love and fame, was
strife.
But, as he slowly gat him from the square,
Gazing at all the people gathered there,
A squire of the Queen's behind him came,
And breathless, called him by his new-coined
name,
And bade him turn because the Queen now
bade,
Since by the muster long she might be stayed,
That to the palace he should bring him straight,
Midst sport and play her coming back to wait;
Then Ogier turned, nought loath, and with him
went,
And to a postern-gate his steps he bent,
That Ogier knew right well in days of old;
Worn was it now, and the bright hues and gold
Upon the shields above, with lapse of days,
Were faded much: but now did Ogier gaze
Upon the garden where he walked of yore,
Holding the hands that he should see no more;
For all was changed except the palace fair,
That Charlemaine's own eyes had seen built
there
Ere Ogier knew him; there the squire did lead
The Ancient Knight, who still took little heed
Of all the things that by the way he said,
For all his thoughts were on the days long dead.
There in the painted hall he sat again,
And 'neath the pictured eyes of Charlemaine
He ate and drank, and felt it like a dream;
And midst his growing longings yet might deem
That he from sleep should wake up presently
In some fair city on the Syrian sea,
Or on the brown rocks of the loadstone isle.
But fain to be alone, within a while
He gat him to the garden, and there passed
By wondering squires and damsels, till at last,
Far from the merry folk who needs must play,
If on the world were coming its last day,
He sat him down, and through his mind there
ran
Faint thoughts of that day, when, outworn and
wan,
He lay down by the fountain-side to die.
But when he strove to gain clear memory
Of what had happed since on the isle he lay
Waiting for death, a hopeless castaway,
Thought failing him, would rather bring again

His life among the peers of Charlemaine,
And vex his soul with hapless memories;
Until at last, worn out by thought of these,
And hopeless striving to find what was true,
And pondering on the deeds he had to do
Ere he returned, whereto he could not tell,
Sweet sleep upon his wearied spirit fell.
And on the afternoon of that fair day,
Forgetting all, beneath the trees he lay.

Meanwhile the Queen, affairs of state being done,
Went through the gardens with one dame alone
Seeking for Ogier, whom at last she found
Laid sleeping on the daisy-sprinkled ground,
Dreaming, I know not what, of other days.
Then on him for a while the Queen did gaze,
Drawing sweet poison from the lovely sight,
Then to her fellow turned, "The ancient Knight—
What means he by this word of his?" she said;
"He were well mated with some lovely maid
Just pondering on the late-heard name of love."
"Softly, my lady, he begins to move,"
Her fellow said, a woman old and grey;
"Look now, his arms are of another day;
None know him or his deeds; thy squire just said
He asked about the state of men long dead;
I fear what he may be; look, seest thou not
That ring that on one finger he has got,
Where figures strange upon the gold are wrought:
God grant that he from hell has not been brought
For our confusion, in this doleful war,
Who surely in enough of trouble are
Without such help;" then the Queen turned aside
Awhile, her drawn and troubled face to hide,
For lurking dread this speech within her stirred;
But yet she said, "Thou sayest a foolish word,
This man is come against our enemies
To fight for us." Then down upon her knees
Fell the old woman by the sleeping knight,
And from his hand she drew with fingers light
The wondrous ring, and scarce again could rise
Ere 'neath the trembling Queen's bewildered eyes
The change began; his golden hair turned white,
His smooth cheek wrinkled, and his breathing light
Was turned to troublous struggling for his breath,
And on his shrunk lips lay the hand of death;
And, scarce less pale than he, the trembling Queen
Stood thinking on the beauty she had seen
And longed for but a little while ago,
Yet with her terror still her love did grow,
And she began to weep as though she saw
Her beauty e'en to such an ending draw.
And 'neath her tears waking he oped his eyes,
And strove to speak, but nought but gasping sighs
His lips could utter; then he tried to reach
His hand to them, as though he would beseech
The gift of what was his: but all the while
The crone gazed on them with an evil smile,
Then holding toward the Queen that wondrous ring,
She said, "Why weep'st thou? having this fair thing,
Thou, losing nought the beauty that thou hast,
May'st watch the vainly struggling world go past,
Thyself unchanged." The Queen put forth her hand

And took the ring, and there awhile did stand
And strove to think of it, but still in her
Such all-absorbing longings love did stir,
So young she was, of death she could not think,
Or what a cup eld gives to man to drink;
Yet on her finger had she set the ring
When now the life that hitherto did cling
To Ogier's heart seemed fading quite away,
And scarcely breathing with shut eyes he lay.
Then, kneeling down, she murmured piteously,
"Ah, wilt thou love me if I give it thee,
And thou grow'st young again? what should I do
If with the eyes thou thus shalt gain anew
Thou shouldst look scorn on me?" But with that word
The hedge behind her, by the west wind stirred,
Cast fear into her heart of some one nigh,
And therewith on his finger hastily
She set the ring, then rose and stood apart
A little way, and in her doubtful heart
With love and fear was mixed desire of life.
But standing so, a look with great scorn rife
The elder woman, turning, cast on her,
Pointing to Ogier, who began to stir;
She looked, and all she erst saw now did seem
To have been nothing but a hideous dream,
As fair and young he rose from off the ground
And cast a dazed and puzzled look around,
Like one just waked from sleep in some strange place;
But soon his grave eyes rested on her face,
And turned yet graver seeing her so pale,
And that her eyes were pregnant with some tale
Of love and fear; she 'neath his eyes the while
Forced her pale lips to semblance of a smile,
And said, "O Ancient Knight, thou sleepest then?
While through this poor land range the heathen men,
Unmet of any but my King and Lord:
Nay, let us see the deeds of thine old sword."
"Queen," said he, "bid me then unto this work,
And certes I behind no wall would lurk,
Nor send for succour, while a scanty folk
Still followed after me to break the yoke:
I pray thee grace for sleeping, and were fain
That I might rather never sleep again
Than have such wretched dreams as I e'en now
Have waked from."
Lovelier she seemed to grow
Unto him as he spoke; fresh colour came
Into her face, as though for some sweet shame,
While she with tearful eyes beheld him so,
That somewhat even must his burnt cheek glow,
His heart beat faster. But again she said,
"Nay, will dreams burden such a mighty head?
Then may I too have pardon for a dream:
Last night in sleep I saw thee, who didst seem
To be the King of France; and thou and I
Were sitting at some great festivity
Within the many-peopled gold-hung place."
The blush of shame was gone as on his face
She gazed, and saw him read her meaning clear
And knew that no cold words she had to fear,
But rather that for softer speech he yearned.
Therefore, with love alone her smooth cheek burned;
Her parted lips were hungry for his kiss,
She trembled at the near approaching bliss;
Nathless, she checked her love a little while,
Because she felt the old dame's curious smile
Upon her, and she said, "O Ancient Knight,
If I then read my last night's dream aright,
Thou art come here our very help to be,
Perchance to give my husband back to me;

Come then, if thou this land art fain to save,
And show the wisdom thou must surely have
Unto my council; I will give thee then
What charge I may among my valiant men;
And certes thou wilt do so well herein,
That, ere long, something greater shalt thou win:
Come, then, deliverer of my throne and land,
And let me touch for once thy mighty hand
With these weak fingers."
As she spoke, she met
His eager hand, and all things did forget
But for one moment, for too wise were they
To cast the coming years of joy away;
Then with her other hand her gown she raised
And led him thence, and o'er her shoulder gazed
At her old follower with a doubtful smile,
As though to say, "Be wise, I know thy guile!"
But slowly she behind the lovers walked,
Muttering, "So be it! thou shalt not be balked
Of thy desire; be merry! I am wise,
Nor will I rob thee of thy Paradise
For any other than myself; and thou
May'st even happen to have had enow
Of this new love, before I get the ring,
And I may work for thee no evil thing."

Now ye shall know that the old chronicle,
Wherein I read all this, doth duly tell
Of all the gallant deeds that Ogier did,
There may ye read them; nor let me be chid
If I therefore say little of these things,
Because the thought of Avallon still clings
Unto my heart, and scarcely can I bear
To think of that long, dragging useless year,
Through which, with dulled and glimmering memory,
Ogier was grown content to live and die
Like other men; but this I have to say,
That in the council chamber on that day
The Old Knight showed his wisdom well enow,
While fainter still with love the Queen did grow
Hearing his words, beholding his grey eyes
Flashing with fire of warlike memories;
Yea, at the last he seemed so wise indeed
That she could give him now the charge, to lead
One wing of the great army that set out
From Paris' gates, midst many a wavering shout
Midst trembling prayers, and unchecked wails and tears,
And slender hopes and unresisted fears.

Now ere he went, upon his bed he lay,
Newly awakened at the dawn of day,
Gathering perplexed thoughts of many a thing,
When, midst the carol that the birds did sing
Unto the coming of the hopeful sun,
He heard a sudden lovesome song begun
'Twixt two young voices in the garden green,
That seemed indeed the farewell of the Queen.

SONG.

HÆC.

In the white-flowered hawthorn brake,
Love, be merry for my sake;
Twine the blossoms in my hair,
Kiss me where I am most fair—
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

ILLE.

Nay, the garlanded gold hair
Hides thee where thou art most fair;
Hides the rose-tinged hills of snow—
Ah, sweet love, I have thee now!
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

HÆC.

Shall we weep for a dead day,
Or set Sorrow in our way?
Hidden by my golden hair,
Wilt thou weep that sweet days wear?
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

ILLE.

Weep, O Love, the days that flit,
Now, while I can feel thy breath;
Then may I remember it
Sad and old, and near my death.
Kiss me, love! for who knoweth
What thing cometh after death?

Soothed by the pleasure that the music brought
And sweet desire, and vague and dreamy thought
Of happiness it seemed to promise him,
He lay and listened till his eyes grew dim,
And o'er him 'gan forgetfulness to creep
Till in the growing light he lay asleep,
Nor woke until the clanging trumpet-blast
Had summoned him all thought away to cast:
Yet one more joy of love indeed he had
Ere with the battle's noise he was made glad;
For, as on that May morning forth they rode
And passed before the Queen's most fair abode,
There at a window was she waiting them
In fair attire with gold in every hem,
And as the ancient Knight beneath her passed
A wreath of flowering white-thorn down she cast,
And looked farewell to him, and forth he set
Thinking of all the pleasure he should get
From love and war, forgetting Avallon
And all that lovely life so lightly won;
Yea, now indeed the earthly life o'erpast
Ere on the loadstone rock his ship was cast
Was waxing dim, nor yet at all he learned
To 'scape the fire that erst his heart had burned.
And he forgat his deeds, forgat his fame,
Forgat the letters of his ancient name
As one waked fully shall forget a dream,
That once to him a wondrous tale did seem.

Now I, though writing here no chronicle
E'en as I said, must nathless shortly tell
That, ere the army Rouen's gates could gain
By a broad arrow had the King been slain,
And helpless now the wretched country lay
Beneath the yoke, until the glorious day
When Ogier fell at last upon the foe,
And scattered them as helplessly as though
They had been beaten men without a name:
So when to Paris town once more he came
Few folk the memory of the King did keep
Within their hearts, and if the folk did weep
At his returning, 'twas for joy indeed
That such a man had risen at their need
To work for them so great deliverance,
And loud they called on him for King of France.

But if the Queen's heart were the more a-flame
For all that she had heard of his great fame,
I know not; rather with some hidden dread
Of coming fate, she heard her lord was dead,
And her false dream seemed coming true at last,
For the clear sky of love seemed overcast
With clouds of God's great judgments, and the fear
Of hate and final parting drawing near.
So now when he before her throne did stand
Amidst the throng as saviour of the land,
And she her eyes to his kind eyes did raise,
And there before all her own love must praise;
Then did she fall a-weeping, and folk said,
"See, how she sorrows for the newly dead!
Amidst our joy she needs must think of him;
Let be, full surely shall her grief wax dim
And she shall wed again."
So passed the year,
While Ogier set himself the land to clear
Of broken remnants of the heathen men,
And at the last, when May-time came again,
Must he be crowned King of the twice-saved land,
And at the altar take the fair Queen's hand
And wed her for his own. And now by this
Had he forgotten clean the woe and bliss
Of his old life, and still was he made glad
As other men; and hopes and fears he had
As others, and bethought him not at all
Of what strange days upon him yet should fall
When he should live and these again be dead.

Now drew the time round when he should be wed,
And in his palace on his bed he lay
Upon the dawning of the very day:
'Twixt sleep and waking was he, and could hear
E'en at that hour, through the bright morn and clear,
The hammering of the folk who toiled to make
Some well-wrought stages for the pageant's sake,
Though hardly yet the sparrows had begun
To twitter o'er the coming of the sun,
Nor through the palace did a creature move.
There in the sweet entanglement of love
Midst languid thoughts of greater bliss he lay,
Remembering no more of that other day
Than the hot noon remembereth of the night,
Than summer thinketh of the winter white.
In that sweet hour he heard a voice that cried,
"Ogier, Ogier!" then, opening his eyes wide,
And rising on his elbow, gazed around,
And strange to him and empty was the sound
Of his own name; "Whom callest thou?" he said.
"For I, the man who lies upon this bed,
Am Charles of France, and shall be King to-day,
But in a year that now is past away
The Ancient Knight they called me: who is this,
Thou callest Ogier, then, what deeds are his?
And who art thou?" But at that word a sigh,
As of one grieved, came from some place anigh
His bed-side, and a soft voice spake again,
"This Ogier once was great amongst great men;
To Italy a helpless hostage led;
He saved the King when the false Lombard fled,
Bore forth the Oriflamme and gained the day;
Charlot he brought back, whom men led away,
And fought a day-long fight with Caraheu.
The ravager of Rome his right hand slew;
Nor did he fear the might of Charlemaine,

Who for a dreary year beset in vain
His lonely castle; yet at last caught then,
And shut in hold, needs must he come again
To give an unhoped great deliverance
Unto the burdened helpless land of France:
Denmark he gained thereafter, and he wore
The crown of England drawn from trouble sore;
At Tyre then he reigned, and Babylon
With mighty deeds he from the foemen won;
And when scarce aught could give him greater fame,
He left the world still thinking on his name.
"These things did Ogier, and these things didst thou,
Nor will I call thee by a new name now
Since I have spoken words of love to thee—
Ogier, Ogier, dost thou remember me,
E'en if thou hast no thought of that past time
Before thou earnest to our happy clime?"

As this was said, his mazed eyes saw indeed
A lovely woman clad in dainty weed
Beside his bed, and many a thought was stirred
Within his heart by that last plaintive word,
Though nought he said, but waited what should come.
"Love," said she, "I am here to bring thee home;
Well hast thou done all that thou cam'st to do,
And if thou bidest here, for something new
Will folk begin to cry, and all thy fame
Shall then avail thee but for greater blame;
Thy love shall cease to love thee, and the earth
Thou lovest now shall be of little worth
While still thou keepest life, abhorring it.
Behold, in men's lives that so quickly flit
Thus is it, how then shall it be with thee,
Who some faint image of eternity
Hast gained through me?—alas, thou heedest not!
On all these changing things thine heart is hot—
Take then this gift that I have brought from far,
And then may'st thou remember what we are;
The lover and the loved from long ago."
He trembled, and more memory seemed to grow
Within his heart as he beheld her stand,
Holding a glittering crown in her right hand:
"Ogier," she said, "arise and do on thee
The emblems of thy worldly sovereignity,
For we must pass o'er many a sea this morn."
He rose, and in the glittering tunic worn
By Charlemaine he clad himself, and took
The ivory hand, that Charlemaine once shook
Over the people's head in days of old;
Then on his feet he set the shoes of gold,
And o'er his shoulders threw the mantle fair,
And set the gold crown on his golden hair:
Then on the royal chair he sat him down,
As though he deemed the elders of the town
Should come to audience; and in all he seemed
To do these things e'en as a man who dreamed.

And now adown the Seine the golden sun
Shone out, as toward him drew that lovely one
And took from off his head the royal crown,
And, smiling, on the pillow laid it down
And said, "Lie there, O crown of Charlemaine,
Worn by a mighty man, and worn in vain,
Because he died, and all the things he did
Were changed before his face by earth was hid;
A better crown I have for my love's head,
Whereby he yet shall live, when all are dead
His hand has helped." Then on his head she set
The wondrous crown, and said, "Forget, forget!
Forget these weary things, for thou hast much

Of happiness to think of."
At that touch
He rose, a happy light gleamed in his eyes;
And smitten by the rush of memories,
He stammered out, "O love! how came we here?
What do we in this land of Death and Fear?
Have I not been from thee a weary while?
Let us return—I dreamed about the isle;
I dreamed of other years of strife and pain,
Of new years full of struggles long and vain."
She took him by the hand and said, "Come, love,
I am not changed;" and therewith did they move
Unto the door, and through the sleeping place
Swiftly they went, and still was Ogier's face
Turned on her beauty, and no thought was his
Except the dear returning of his bliss.
But at the threshold of the palace-gate
That opened to them, she awhile did wait,
And turned her eyes unto the rippling Seine
And said, "O love, behold it once again!"
He turned, and gazed upon the city grey
Smit by the gold of that sweet morn of May;
He heard faint noises as of wakening folk
As on their heads his day of glory broke;
He heard the changing rush of the swift stream
Against the bridge-piers. All was grown a dream.
His work was over, his reward was come,
Why should he loiter longer from his home?

A little while she watched him silently,
Then beckoned him to follow with a sigh,
And, raising up the raiment from her feet,
Across the threshold stepped into the street;
One moment on the twain the low sun shone,
And then the place was void, and they were gone
How I know not; but this I know indeed,
That in whatso great trouble or sore need
The land of France since that fair day has been,
No more the sword of Ogier has she seen.

Such was the tale he told of Avallon,
E'en such an one as in days past had won
His youthful heart to think upon the quest;
But to those old hearts nigh in reach of rest,
Not much to be desired now it seemed—
Perchance the heart that of such things had dreamed
Had found no words in this death-laden tongue
We speak on earth, wherewith they might be sung;
Perchance the changing years that changed his heart
E'en in the words of that old tale had part,
Changing its sweet to bitter, to despair
The foolish hope that once had glittered there—
Or think, that in some bay of that far home
They then had sat, and watched the green waves come
Up to their feet with many promises;
Or the light wind midst blossom-laden trees,
In the sweet Spring had weighted many a word
Of no worth now, and many a hope had stirred
Long dead for ever.
Howsoe'er that be
Among strange folk they now sat quietly,
As though that tale with them had nought to do,
As though its hopes and fears were something new.
But though, indeed, the outworn, dwindled band
Had no tears left for that once longed-for land,

The very wind must moan for their decay,
And from the sky, grown dull, and low, and grey,
Cold tears must fall upon the lonely field,
That such fair golden hopes erewhile did yield;
And on the blackening woods, wherein the doves
Sat silent now, forgetful of their loves.
Yet, since a little life at least was left,
They were not yet of every joy bereft,
For long ago was past the agony,
Midst which they found that they indeed must die;
And now well-nigh as much their pain was past
As though death's veil already had been cast
Over their heads—so, midst some little mirth,
They watched the dark night hide the gloomy earth.

THE GOLDEN APPLES.

This tale tells of the voyage of a ship of Tyre, that, against the will of the shipmen, bore Hercules to an unknown land of the West, that he might accomplish a task laid on him by the Fates.

As many as the leaves fall from the tree,
From the world's life the years are fallen away
Since King Eurystheus sat in majesty
In fair Mycenæ; midmost of whose day
It once befell that in a quiet bay
A ship of Tyre was swinging nigh the shore,
Her folk for sailing handling rope and oar.

Fresh was the summer morn, a soft wind stole
Down from the sheep-browsed slopes the cliffs that crowned,
And ruffled lightly the long gleaming roll
Of the peaceful sea, and bore along the sound
Of shepherd-folk and sheep and questing hound,
For in the first dip of the hillside there
Lay bosomed 'mid its trees a homestead fair.

Amid regrets for last night, when the moon,
Risen on the soft dusk, shone on maidens' feet
Brushing the gold-heart lilies to the tune
Of pipes complaining, o'er the grass down-beat
That mixed with dewy flowers its odour sweet,
The shipmen laboured, till the sail unfurled
Swung round the prow to meet another world.

But ere the anchor had come home, a shout
Rang from the strand, as though the ship were hailed.
Whereat the master bade them stay, in doubt
That they without some needful thing had sailed;
When, lo! from where the cliff's steep grey sides failed
Into a ragged stony slip, came twain
Who seemed in haste the ready keel to gain.

Soon they drew nigh, and he who first came down
Unto the surf was a man huge of limb,
Grey-eyed, with crisp-curled hair 'twixt black and brown,
Who had a lion's skin cast over him,
So wrought with gold that the fell showed but dim
Betwixt the threads, and in his hand he bore

A mighty club with bands of steel done o'er.

Panting there followed him a grey old man,
Bearing a long staff, clad in gown of blue,
Feeble of aspect, hollow-cheeked and wan,
Who when unto his fellow's side he drew,
Said faintly: "Now, do that which thou shouldst do;
This is the ship." Then in the other's eye
A smile gleamed, and he spake out merrily:

"Masters, folk tell me that ye make for Tyre,
And after that still nearer to the sun;
And since Fate bids me look to die by fire,
Fain am I, ere my worldly day be done,
To know what from earth's hottest can be won;
And this old man, my kinsman, would with me.
How say ye, will ye bear us o'er the sea?"

"What is thy name?" the master said: "And know
That we are merchants, and for nought give nought;
What wilt thou pay?—thou seem'st full rich, I trow."
The old man muttered, stooped adown and caught
At something in the sand: "E'en so I thought,"
The younger said, "when I set out from home—
As to my name, perchance in days to come

"Thou shalt know that—but have heed, take this toy,
And call me the Strong Man." And as he spake
The master's deep-brown eyes 'gan gleam with joy,
For from his arm a huge ring did he take,
And cast it on the deck, where it did break
A water-jar, and in the wet shards lay
Golden, and gleaming like the end of day.

But the old man held out a withered hand,
Wherein there shone two pearls most great and fair,
And said, "If any nigher I might stand,
Then might'st thou see the things I give thee here—
And for a name—a many names I bear,
But call me Shepherd of the Shore this tide,
And for more knowledge with a good will bide."

From one to the other turned the master's eyes;
The Strong Man laughed as at some hidden jest,
And wild doubts in the shipman's heart did rise;
But thinking on the thing, he deemed it best
To bid them come aboard, and take such rest
As they might have of the untrusty sea,
'Mid men who trusty fellows still should be.

Then no more words the Strong Man made, but straight
Caught up the elder in his arms, and so,
Making no whit of all that added weight,
Strode to the ship, right through the breakers low,
And catching at the rope that they did throw
Out toward his hand, swung up into the ship;
Then did the master let the hawser slip.

The shapely prow cleft the wet mead and green,
And wondering drew the shipmen round to gaze
Upon those limbs, the mightiest ever seen;
And many deemed it no light thing to face

The splendour of his eyen, though they did blaze
With no wrath now, no hate for them to dread,
As seaward 'twixt the summer isles they sped.

Freshened the wind, but ever fair it blew
Unto the south-east; but as failed the land,
Unto the plunging prow the Strong Man drew,
And silent, gazing with wide eyes did stand,
As though his heart found rest; but 'mid the band
Of shipmen in the stern the old man sat,
Telling them tales that no man there forgat.

As one who had beheld, he told them there
Of the sweet singer, whom, for his song's sake,
The dolphins back from choking death did bear;
How in the mid sea did the vine outbreak
O'er that ill bark when Bacchus 'gan to wake;
How anigh Cyprus, ruddy with the rose
The cold sea grew as any June-loved close;

While on the flowery shore all things alive
Grew faint with sense of birth of some delight,
And the nymphs waited trembling there, to give
Glad welcome to the glory of that sight:
He paused then, ere he told how, wild and white,
Rose ocean, breaking o'er a race accurst,
A world once good, now come unto its worst.

And then he smiled, and said, "And yet ye won,
Ye men, and tremble not on days like these,
Nor think with what a mind Prometheus' son
Beheld the last of the torn reeling trees
From high Parnassus: slipping through the seas
Ye never think, ye men-folk, how ye seem
From down below through the green waters' gleam."

Dusk was it now when these last words he said,
And little of his visage might they see,
But o'er their hearts stole vague and troublous dread,
They knew not why; yet ever quietly
They sailed that night; nor might a morning be
Fairer than was the next morn; and they went
Along their due course after their intent.

The fourth day, about sunrise, from the mast
The watch cried out he saw Phoenician land;
Whereat the Strong Man on the elder cast
A look askance, and he straight took his stand
Anigh the prow, and gazed beneath his hand
Upon the low sun and the scarce-seen shore,
Till cloud-flecks rose, and gathered and drew o'er.

The morn grown cold; then small rain 'gan to fall,
And all the wind dropped dead, and hearts of men
Sank, and their bark seemed helpless now and small;
Then suddenly the wind 'gan moan again;
Sails flapped, and ropes beat wild about; and then
Down came the great east wind; and the ship ran
Straining, heeled o'er, through seas all changed and wan.

Westward, scarce knowing night from day, they drave

Through sea and sky grown one; the Strong Man wrought
With mighty hands, and seemed a god to save;
But on the prow, heeding all weather nought,
The elder stood, nor any prop he sought,
But swayed to the ship's wallowing, as on wings
He there were set above the wrack of things.

And westward still they drave; and if they saw
Land upon either side, as on they sped,
'Twas but as faces in a dream may draw
Anigh, and fade, and leave nought in their stead;
And in the shipmen's hearts grew heavy dread
To sick despair; they deemed they should drive on
Till the world's edge and empty space were won.

But 'neath the Strong Man's eyes e'en as they might
They toiled on still; and he sang to the wind,
And spread his arms to meet the waters white,
As o'er the deck they tumbled, making blind
The brine-drenched shipmen; nor with eye unkind
He gazed up at the lightning; nor would frown
When o'er the wet waste Jove's bolt rattled down.

And they, who at the last had come to think
Their guests were very gods, with all their fear
Feared nought belike that their good ship would sink
Amid the storm; but rather looked to hear
The last moan of the wind that them should bear
Into the windless stream of ocean grey,
Where they should float till dead was every day.

Yet their fear mocked them; for the storm 'gan die
About the tenth day, though unto the west
They drave on still; soon fair and quietly
The morn would break: and though amid their rest
Nought but long evil wandering seemed the best
That they might hope for; still, despite their dread,
Sweet was the quiet sea and goodlihead

Of the bright sun at last come back again;
And as the days passed, less and less fear grew,
If without cause, till faded all their pain;
And they 'gan turn unto their guests anew,
Yet durst ask nought of what that evil drew
Upon their heads; or of returning speak.
Happy they felt, but listless, spent, and weak.

And now as at the first the elder was,
And sat and told them tales of yore agone;
But ever the Strong Man up and down would pass
About the deck, or on the prow alone
Would stand and stare out westward; and still on
Through a fair summer sea they went, nor thought
Of what would come when these days turned to nought.

And now when twenty days were well passed o'er
They made a new land; cloudy mountains high
Rose from the sea at first; then a green shore
Spread fair below them: as they drew anigh
No sloping, stony strand could they espy,

And no surf breaking; the green sea and wide
Wherethrough they slipped was driven by no tide.

Dark fell ere they might set their eager feet
Upon the shore; but night-long their ship lay
As in a deep stream, by the blossoms sweet
That flecked the grass whence flowers ne'er passed away.
But when the cloud-barred east brought back the day,
And turned the western mountain-tops to gold,
Fresh fear the shipmen in their bark did hold.

For as a dream seemed all; too fair for those
Who needs must die; moreover they could see,
A furlong off, 'twixt apple-tree and rose,
A brazen wall that gleamed out wondrously
In the young sun, and seemed right long to be;
And memory of all marvels lay upon
Their shrinking hearts now this sweet place was won.

But when unto the nameless guests they turned,
Who stood together nigh the plank shot out
Shoreward, within the Strong Man's eyes there burned
A wild light, as the other one in doubt
He eyed a moment; then with a great shout
Leaped into the blossomed grass; the echoes rolled
Back from the hills, harsh still and over-bold.

Slowly the old man followed him, and still
The crew held back: they knew now they were brought
Over the sea the purpose to fulfil
Of these strange men; and in their hearts they thought,
"Perchance we yet shall live, if, meddling nought
With dreams, we bide here till these twain come back;
But prying eyes the fire-blast seldom lack."

Yet 'mongst them were two fellows bold and young,
Who, looking each upon the other's face,
Their hearts to meet the unknown danger strung,
And went ashore, and at a gentle pace
Followed the strangers, who unto the place
Where the wall gleamed had turned; peace and desire
Mingled together in their hearts, as nigher

They drew unto that wall, and dulled their fear:
Fair wrought it was, as though with bricks of brass;
And images upon its face there were,
Stories of things a long while come to pass:
Nor that alone—as looking in a glass
Its maker knew the tales of what should be,
And wrought them there for bird and beast to see.

So on they went; the many birds sang sweet
Through all that blossomed thicket from above,
And unknown flowers bent down before their feet;
The very air, cleft by the grey-winged dove,
Throbbed with sweet scent, and smote their souls with love.
Slowly they went till those twain stayed before

A strangely-wrought and iron-covered door.

They stayed, too, till o'er noise of wind, and bird,
And falling flower, there rang a mighty shout
As the Strong Man his steel-bound club upreared,
And drave it 'gainst the hammered iron stout,
Where 'neath his blows flew bolt and rivet out,
Till shattered on the ground the great door lay,
And into the guarded place bright poured the day.

The Strong Man entered, but his fellow stayed,
Leaning against a tree-trunk as they deemed.
They faltered now, and yet all things being weighed
Went on again; and thought they must have dreamed
Of the old man, for now the sunlight streamed
Full on the tree he had been leaning on,
And him they saw not go, yet was he gone:

Only a slim green lizard flitted there
Amidst the dry leaves; him they noted nought,
But trembling, through the doorway 'gan to peer,
And still of strange and dreadful saw not aught,
Only a garden fair beyond all thought.
And there, 'twixt sun and shade, the Strong Man went
On some long-sought-for end belike intent.

They 'gan to follow down a narrow way
Of green-sward that the lilies trembled o'er,
And whereon thick the scattered rose-leaves lay;
But a great wonder weighed upon them sore,
And well they thought they should return no more,
Yet scarce a pain that seemed; they looked to meet
Before they died things strange and fair and sweet.

So still to right and left the Strong Man thrust
The blossomed boughs, and passed on steadily,
As though his hardy heart he well did trust,
Till in a while he gave a joyous cry,
And hastened on, as though the end drew nigh;
And women's voices then they deemed they heard,
Mixed with a noise that made desire afeard.

Yet through sweet scents and sounds on did they bear
Their panting hearts, till the path ended now
In a wide space of green, a streamlet clear
From out a marble basin there did flow,
And close by that a slim-trunked tree did grow,
And on a bough low o'er the water cold
There hung three apples of red-gleaming gold.

About the tree, new risen e'en now to meet
The shining presence of that mighty one,
Three damsels stood, naked from head to feet
Save for the glory of their hair, where sun
And shadow flickered, while the wind did run
Through the grey leaves o'erhead, and shook the grass
Where nigh their feet the wandering bee did pass.

But 'midst their delicate limbs and all

around
The tree-roots, gleaming blue black could they
see
The spires of a great serpent, that, enwound
About the smooth bole, looked forth
threateningly,
With glittering eyes and raised crest, o'er the
three
Fair heads fresh crowned, and hissed above the
speech
Wherewith they murmured softly each to each.

Now the Strong Man amid the green space
stayed,
And leaning on his club, with eager eyes
But brow yet smooth, in voice yet friendly said:
"O daughters of old Hesperus the Wise,
Well have ye held your guard here; but time
tries
The very will of gods, and to my hand
Must give this day the gold fruit of your land."

Then spake the first maid—sweet as the
west wind
Amidst of summer noon her sweet voice was:
"Ah, me! what knows this place of changing
mind
Of men or gods; here shall long ages pass,
And clean forget thy feet upon the grass,
Thy hapless bones amid the fruitful mould;
Look at thy death envenomed swift and cold!"

Hiding new flowers, the dull coils, as she
spake,
Moved near her limbs: but then the second one,
In such a voice as when the morn doth wake
To song of birds, said, "When the world foredone
Has moaned its last, still shall we dwell alone
Beneath this bough, and have no tales to tell
Of things deemed great that on the earth befell."

Then spake the third, in voice as of the flute
That wakes the maiden to her wedding morn:
"If any god should gain our golden fruit,
Its curse would make his deathless life forlorn.
Lament thou, then, that ever thou wert born;
Yet all things, changed by joy or loss or pain,
To what they were shall change and change
again."

"So be it," he said, "the Fates that drive me
on
Shall slay me or shall save; blessing or curse
That followeth after when the thing is won
Shall make my work no better now nor worse;
And if it be that the world's heart must nurse
Hatred against me, how then shall I choose
To leave or take?—let your dread servant loose!"

E'en therewith, like a pillar of black smoke,
Swift, shifting ever, drave the worm at him;
In deadly silence now that nothing broke,
Its folds were writhing round him trunk and
limb,
Until his glittering gear was nought but dim
E'en in that sunshine, while his head and side
And breast the fork-tongued, pointed muzzle
tried.

Closer the coils drew, quicker all about
The forked tongue darted, and yet stiff he stood,
E'en as an oak that sees the straw flare out
And lick its ancient bole for little good:
Until the godlike fury of his mood
Burst from his heart in one great shattering cry,

And rattling down the loosened coils did lie;

And from the torn throat and crushed
dreadful head
Forth flowed a stream of blood along the grass;
Bright in the sun he stood above the dead,
Panting with fury; yet as ever was
The wont of him, soon did his anger pass,
And with a happy smile at last he turned
To where the apples o'er the water burned.

Silent and moveless ever stood the three;
No change came o'er their faces, as his hand
Was stretched aloft unto the sacred tree;
Nor shrank they aught aback, though he did
stand
So close that tresses of their bright hair, fanned
By the sweet garden breeze, lay light on him,
And his gold fell brushed by them breast and
limb.

He drew adown the wind-stirred bough, and
took
The apples thence; then let it spring away,
And from his brow the dark hair backward
shook,
And said: "O sweet, O fair, and shall this day
A curse upon my life henceforward lay—
This day alone? Methinks of coming life
Somewhat I know, with all its loss and strife.

"But this I know, at least: the world shall
wend
Upon its way, and, gathering joy and grief
And deeds done, bear them with it to the end;
So shall it, though I lie as last year's leaf
Lies 'neath a summer tree, at least receive
My life gone by, and store it, with the gain
That men alive call striving, wrong, and pain.

"So for my part I rather bless than curse,
And bless this fateful land; good be with it;
Nor for this deadly thing's death is it worse,
Nor for the lack of gold; still shall ye sit
Watching the swallow o'er the daisies flit;
Still shall your wandering limbs ere day is done
Make dawn desired by the sinking sun.

"And now, behold! in memory of all this
Take ye this girdle that shall waste and fade
As fadeth not your fairness and your bliss,
That when hereafter 'mid the blossoms laid
Ye talk of days and men now nothing made,
Ye may remember how the Theban man,
The son of Jove, came o'er the waters wan."

Their faces changed not aught for all they
heard;
As though all things now fully told out were,
They gazed upon him without any word:
Ah! craving kindness, hope, or loving care,
Their fairness scarcely could have made more
fair,
As with the apples folded in his fell
He went, to do more deeds for folk to tell.

Now as the girdle on the ground was cast
Those fellows turned and hurried toward the
door,
And as across its broken leaves they passed
The old man saw they not, e'en as before;
But an unearthed blind mole bewildered sore
Was wandering there in fruitless, aimless wise,
That got small heed from their full-sated eyes.

Swift gat they to their anxious folk; nor had
More time than just to say, "Be of good cheer,
For in our own land may we yet be glad,"
When they beheld the guests a-drawing near;
And much bewildered the two fellows were
To see the old man, and must even deem
That they should see things stranger than a dream.

But when they were aboard the elder cried,
"Up sails, my masters, fair now is the wind;
Nor good it is too long here to abide,
Lest what ye may not loose your souls should bind."
And as he spake, the tall trees left behind
Stirred with the rising land-wind, and the crew,
Joyous thereat, the hawsers shipward drew.

Swift sped the ship, and glad at heart were all,
And the Strong Man was merry with the rest,
And from the elder's lips no word did fall
That did not seem to promise all the best;
Yet with a certain awe were men oppressed,
And felt as if their inmost hearts were bare,
And each man's secret babbled through the air.

Still oft the old man sat with them and told
Tales of past time, as on the outward way;
And now would they the face of him behold
And deem it changed; the years that on him lay
Seemed to grow nought, and no more wan and grey
He looked, but ever glorious, wise and strong,
As though no lapse of time for him were long.

At last, when six days through the kindly sea
Their keel had slipped, he said: "Come hearken now,
For so it is that things fare wondrously
E'en in these days; and I a tale can show
That, told by you unto your sons shall grow
A marvel of the days that are to come:
Take heed and tell it when ye reach your home.

"Yet living in the world a man there is
Men call the Theban King Amphitryon's son,
Although perchance a greater sire was his;
But certainly his lips have hung upon
Alcmena's breasts: great deeds this man hath won
Already, for his name is Hercules,
And e'en ye Asian folk have heard of these.

"Now ere the moon, this eve in his last wane,
Was born, this Hercules, the fated thrall
Of King Eurystheus, was straight bid to gain
Gifts from a land whereon no foot doth fall
Of mortal man, beyond the misty wall
Of unknown waters; pensively he went
Along the sea on his hard life intent.

"And at the dawn he came into a bay
Where the sea, ebbed far down, left wastes of sand,
Walled from the green earth by great cliffs and grey;
Then he looked up, and wondering there did stand,
For strange things lay in slumber on the strand;
Strange counterparts of what the firm earth hath
Lay scattered all about his weary path:

"Sea-lions and sea-horses and sea-kine,
Sea-boars, sea-men strange-skinned, of
wondrous hair;
And in their midst a man who seemed divine
For changeless eld, and round him women fair,
Clad in the sea-webs glassy green and clear
With gems on head and girdle, limb and breast,
Such as earth knoweth not among her best.

"A moment at the fair and wondrous sight
He stared, then, since the heart in him was
good,
He went about with careful steps and light
Till o'er the sleeping sea-god now he stood;
And if the white-foot maids had stirred his blood
As he passed by, now other thoughts had place
Within his heart when he beheld that face.

"For Nereus now he knew, who knows all
things;
And to himself he said, 'If I prevail,
Better than by some god-wrought eagle-wings
Shall I be holpen;' then he cried out: 'Hail,
O Nereus! lord of shifting hill and dale!
Arise and wrestle; I am Hercules!
Not soon now shalt thou meet the ridgy seas.'

"And mightily he cast himself on him;
And Nereus cried out shrilly; and straightway
That sleeping crowd, fair maid with half-hid
limb,
Strange man and green-haired beast, made no
delay,
But glided down into the billows grey,
And, by the lovely sea embraced, were gone,
While they two wrestled on the sea strand lone.

"Soon found the sea-god that his bodily
might
Was nought in dealing with Jove's dear one
there;
And soon he 'gan to use his magic sleight:
Into a lithe leopard, and a hugging bear
He turned him; then the smallest fowl of air
The straining arms of Hercules must hold,
And then a mud-born wriggling eel and cold.

"Then as the firm hands mastered this, forth
brake
A sudden rush of waters all around,
Blinding and choking: then a thin green snake
With golden eyes; then o'er the shell-strewn
ground
Forth stole a fly the least that may be found;
Then earth and heaven seemed wrapped in one
huge flame,
But from the midst thereof a voice there came:

"'Kinsman and stout-heart, thou hast won
the day,
Nor to my grief: what wouldst thou have of me?'
And therewith to an old man small and grey
Faded the roaring flame, who wearily
Sat down upon the sand and said, 'Let be!
I know thy tale; worthy of help thou art;
Come now, a short way hence will there depart

"'A ship of Tyre for the warm southern seas,
Come we a-board; according to my will
Her way shall be.' Then up rose Hercules,
Merry of face, though hot and panting still;
But the fair summer day his heart did fill
With all delight; and so forth went the twain,
And found those men desirous of all gain.

"Ah, for these gainful men—somewhat
indeed
Their sails are rent, their bark beat; kin and
friend
Are wearying for them; yet a friend in need
They yet shall gain, if at their journey's end,
Upon the last ness where the wild goats wend
To lick the salt-washed stones, a house they
raise
Bedight with gold in kindly Nereus' praise."

Breathless they waited for these latest
words,
That like the soft wind of the gathering night
Were grown to be: about the mast flew birds
Making their moan, hovering long-winged and
white;
And now before their straining anxious sight
The old man faded out into the air,
And from his place flew forth a sea-mew fair.

Then to the Mighty Man, Alcmena's son,
With yearning hearts they turned till he should
speak,
And he spake softly: "Nought ill have ye done
In helping me to find what I did seek:
The world made better by me knows if weak
My hand and heart are: but now, light the fire
Upon the prow and worship the grey sire."

So did they; and such gifts as there they had
Gave unto Nereus; yea, and sooth to say,
Amid the tumult of their hearts made glad,
Had honoured Hercules in e'en such way;
But he laughed out amid them, and said, "Nay,
Not yet the end is come; nor have I yet
Bowed down before vain longing and regret.

"It may be—who shall tell, when I go back
There whence I came, and looking down behold
The place that my once eager heart shall lack,
And all my dead desires a-lying cold,
But I may have the might then to enfold
The hopes of brave men in my heart?—but long
Life lies before first with its change and wrong."

So fair along the watery ways they sped
In happy wise, nor failed of their return;
Nor failed in ancient Tyre the ways to tread,
Teaching their tale to whomsoever would learn,
Nor failed at last the flesh of beasts to burn
In Nereus' house, turned toward the bright day's
end
On the last ness, round which the wild goats
wend.

L'ENVOI.

Here are we for the last time face to face,
Thou and I, Book, before I bid thee speed
Upon thy perilous journey to that place
For which I have done on thee pilgrim's weed,
Striving to get thee all things for thy need—
—I love thee, whatso time or men may say
Of the poor singer of an empty day.

Good reason why I love thee, e'en if thou

Be mocked or clean forgot as time wears on;
For ever as thy fashioning did grow,
Kind word and praise because of thee I won
From those without whom were my world all
gone,
My hope fallen dead, my singing cast away,
And I set soothly in an empty day.

I love thee; yet this last time must it be,
That thou must hold thy peace and I must speak,
Lest if thou babble I begin to see
Thy gear too thin, thy limbs and heart too weak,
To find the land thou goest forth to seek—
—Though what harm if thou die upon the way,
Thou idle singer of an empty day?

But though this land desired thou never
reach,
Yet folk who know it mayst thou meet or death;
Therefore a word unto thee would I teach
To answer these, who, noting thy weak breath,
Thy wandering eyes, thy heart of little faith,
May make thy fond desire a sport and play,
Mocking the singer of an empty day.

That land's name, say'st thou? and the road
thereto?
Nay, Book, thou mockest, saying thou know'st it
not;
Surely no book of verse I ever knew
But ever was the heart within him hot
To gain the Land of Matters Unforgot—
—There, now we both laugh—as the whole world
may,
At us poor singers of an empty day.

Nay, let it pass, and hearken! Hast thou
heard
That therein I believe I have a friend,
Of whom for love I may not be afeard?
It is to him indeed I bid thee wend;
Yea, he perchance may meet thee ere thou end,
Dying so far off from the hedge of bay,
Thou idle singer of an empty day!

Well, think of him, I bid thee, on the road,
And if it hap that midst of thy defeat,
Fainting beneath thy follies' heavy load,
My Master, Geoffrey Chaucer, thou do meet,
Then shalt thou win a space of rest full sweet;
Then be thou bold, and speak the words I say,
The idle singer of an empty day!

"O Master, O thou great of heart and
tongue,
Thou well mayst ask me why I wander here,
In raiment rent of stories oft besung!
But of thy gentleness draw thou anear,
And then the heart of one who held thee dear
Mayst thou behold! So near as that I lay
Unto the singer of an empty day.

"For this he ever said, who sent me forth
To seek a place amid thy company;
That howsoever little was my worth,
Yet was he worth e'en just so much as I;
He said that rhyme hath little skill to lie:
Nor feigned to cast his worser part away
In idle singing for an empty day.

"I have beheld him tremble oft enough
At things he could not choose but trust to me,
Although he knew the world was wise and
rough:
And never did he fail to let me see

His love,—his folly and faithlessness, may be;
And still in turn I gave him voice to pray
Such prayers as cling about an empty day.

"Thou, keen-eyed, reading me, mayst read
him through,
For surely little is there left behind;
No power great deeds unnameable to do;
No knowledge for which words he may not find,
No love of things as vague as autumn wind—
—Earth of the earth lies hidden by my clay,
The idle singer of an empty day!

"Children we twain are, saith he, late made
wise
In love, but in all else most childish still,
And seeking still the pleasure of our eyes,
And what our ears with sweetest sounds may
fill;
Not fearing Love, lest these things he should
kill;
Howe'er his pain by pleasure doth he lay,
Making a strange tale of an empty day.

"Death have we hated, knowing not what it
meant;
Life have we loved, through green leaf and
through sere,
Though still the less we knew of its intent:
The Earth and Heaven through countless year
on year,
Slow changing, were to us but curtains fair,
Hung round about a little room, where play
Weeping and laughter of man's empty day.

"O Master, if thine heart could love us yet,
Spite of things left undone, and wrongly done,
Some place in loving hearts then should we get,
For thou, sweet-souled, didst never stand alone,
But knew'st the joy and woe of many an one—
—By lovers dead, who live through thee we pray,
Help thou us singers of an empty day!"

Fearest thou, Book, what answer thou mayst
gain
Lest he should scorn thee, and thereof thou die?
Nay, it shall not be.—Thou mayst toil in vain,
And never draw the House of Fame anigh;
Yet he and his shall know whereof we cry,
Shall call it not ill done to strive to lay
The ghosts that crowd about life's empty day.

Then let the others go! and if indeed
In some old garden thou and I have wrought,
And made fresh flowers spring up from hoarded
seed,
And fragrance of old days and deeds have
brought
Back to folk weary; all was not for nought.
—No little part it was for me to play—
The idle singer of an empty day.

FROM "LOVE IS ENOUGH."

INTERLUDES.

1.

Love is enough; though the World be a-waning
And the woods have no voice but the voice of complaining,
Though the sky be too dark for dim eyes to discover
The gold-cups and daisies fair blooming thereunder,
Though the hills be held shadows, and the sea a dark wonder,
And this day draw a veil over all deeds, passed over,
Yet their hands shall not tremble, their feet shall not falter;
The void shall not weary, the fear shall not alter
These lips and these eyes of the loved and the lover.

2.

Love is enough: it grew up without heeding
In the days when ye knew not its name nor its measure,
And its leaflets untrodden by the light feet of pleasure
Had no boast of the blossom, no sign of the seeding,
As the morning and evening passed over its treasure.

And what do ye say then?—that Spring long departed
Has brought forth no child to the softness and showers;
—That we slept and we dreamed through the Summer of flowers;
We dreamed of the Winter, and waking dead-hearted
Found Winter upon us and waste of dull hours.

Nay, Spring was o'er happy and knew not the reason,
And Summer dreamed sadly, for she thought all was ended
In her fulness of wealth that might not be amended;
But this is the harvest and the garnering season,
And the leaf and the blossom in the ripe fruit are blended.

It sprang without sowing, it grew without heeding,
Ye knew not its name and ye knew not its measure,
Ye noted it not mid your hope and your pleasure;
There was pain in its blossom, despair in its seeding,
But daylong your bosom now nurseth its treasure.

3.

Love is enough: draw near and behold me
Ye who pass by the way to your rest and your laughter,
And are full of the hope of the dawn coming

after
For the strong of the world have bought me and sold me
And my house is all wasted from threshold to rafter.
—Pass by me, and hearken, and think of me not!

Cry out and come near; for my ears may not hearken,
And my eyes are grown dim as the eyes of the dying.
Is this the grey rack o'er the sun's face a-flying?
Or is it your faces his brightness that darken?
Comes a wind from the sea, or is it your sighing?
—Pass by me and hearken, and pity me not!

Ye know not how void is your hope and your living:
Depart with your helping lest yet ye undo me!
Ye know not that at nightfall she draweth near to me,
There is soft speech between us and words of forgiving
Till in dead of the midnight her kisses thrill through me.
—Pass by me and hearken, and waken me not!

Wherewith will ye buy it, ye rich who behold me?
Draw out from your coffers your rest and your laughter,
And the fair gilded hope of the dawn coming after!
Nay this I sell not,—though ye bought me and sold me,—
For your house stored with such things from threshold to rafter.
—Pass by me, I hearken, and think of you not!

4.

Love is enough: ho ye who seek saving,
Go no further; come hither; there have been who have found it,
And these know the House of Fulfilment of Craving;
These know the Cup with the roses around it;
These know the World's Wound and the balm that hath bound it:
Cry out, the World heedeth not, "Love, lead us home!"

He leadeth, He hearkeneth, He cometh to you-ward;
Set your faces as steel to the fears that assemble
Round his goad for the faint, and his scourge for the froward:
Lo! his lips, how with tales of last kisses they tremble!
Lo! his eyes of all sorrow that may not dissemble!
Cry out, for he heedeth, "O Love, lead us home!"

O hearken the words of his voice of compassion:
"Come cling round about me, ye faithful who sicken
Of the weary unrest and the world's passing fashion!
As the rain in mid-morning your troubles shall thicken,
But surely within you some Godhead doth quicken,
As ye cry to me heeding, and leading you home.

"Come—pain ye shall have, and be blind to the ending!
Come—fear ye shall have, mid the sky's overcasting!
Come—change ye shall have, for far are ye wending!
Come—no crown ye shall have for your thirst and your fasting,
But the kissed lips of Love and fair life everlasting!
Cry out, for one heedeth, who leadeth you home!"

Is he gone? was he with us?—ho ye who seek saving,
Go no further; come hither; for have we not found it?
Here is the House of Fulfilment of Craving;
Here is the Cup with the roses around it;
The World's Wound well healed, and the balm that hath bound it:
Cry out! for he heedeth, fair Love that led home.

FROM

"THE STORY OF SIGURD THE VOLSUNG."

BOOK II.

R E G I N.

Now this is the first book of the life and death of Sigurd the Volsung, and therein is told of the birth of him, and of his dealings with Regin the master of masters, and of his deeds in the waste places of the earth.

Of the birth of Sigurd the son of Sigmund.

PEACE lay on the land of the Helper and the house of Elf his son;
There merry men went bedward when their tide of toil was done,
And glad was the dawn's awakening, and the noontide fair and glad:
There no great store had the franklin, and enough the hireling had;
And a child might go unguarded the length and breadth of the land
With a purse of gold at his girdle and gold rings on his hand.
'Twas a country of cunning craftsmen, and many a thing they wrought,
That the lands of storm desired, and the homes of warfare sought.
But men deemed it o'er-well warded by more

than its stems of fight,
And told how its earth-born watchers yet lived of plenteous might.
So hidden was that country, and few men sailed its sea,
And none came o'er its mountains of men-folk's company.
But fair-fruited, many-peopled, it lies a goodly strip,
'Twixt the mountains cloudy-headed and the sea-flood's surging lip,
And a perilous flood is its ocean, and its mountains, who shall tell
What things in their dales deserted and their wind-swept heaths may dwell.
Now a man of the Kings, called Gripir, in this land of peace abode:
The son of the Helper's father, though never lay his load
In the womb of the mother of Kings that the Helper's brethren bore;
But of Giant kin was his mother, of the folk that are seen no more;
Though whiles as ye ride some fell-road across the heath there comes
The voice of their lone lamenting o'er their changed and conquered homes.
A long way off from the sea-strand and beneath the mountains' feet
Is the high-built hall of Gripir, where the waste and the tillage meet;
A noble and plentiful house, that a little men-folk fear,
But beloved of the crag-dwelling eagles and the kin of the woodland deer.
A man of few words was Gripir, but he knew of all deeds that had been,
And times there came upon him, when the deeds to be were seen:
No sword had he held in his hand since his father fell to field,
And against the life of the slayer he bore undinted shield:
Yet no fear in his heart abided, nor desired he aught at all,
But he noted the deeds that had been, and looked for what should befall.

Again, in the house of the Helper there dwelt a certain man
Beardless and low of stature, of visage pinched and wan:
So exceeding old was Regin, that no son of man could tell
In what year of the days passed over he came to that land to dwell;
But the youth of King Elf had he fostered, and the Helper's youth thereto,
Yes and his father's father's: the lore of all men he knew,
And was deft in every cunning, save the dealings of the sword:
So sweet was his tongue-speech fashioned, that men trowed his every word;
His hand with the harp-strings blended was the mingler of delight
With the latter days of sorrow; all tales he told aright;
The Master of the Masters in the smithying craft was he;
And he dealt with the wind and the weather and the stilling of the sea;
Nor might any learn him leech-craft, for before that race was made,
And that man-folk's generation, all their life-days

had he weighed.

In this land abideth Hiordis amid all people's
praise
Till cometh the time appointed: in the fulness of
the days
Through the dark and the dusk she travailed, till
at last in the dawning hour
Have the deeds of the Volsungs blossomed, and
born their latest flower;
In the bed there lieth a man child, and his eyes
look straight on the sun,
And lo, the hope of the people, and the days of a
king are begun.

Men say of the serving-women, when they cried
on the joy of the morn,
When they handled the linen raiment, and
washed the king new-born,
When they bore him back unto Hiordis, and the
weary and happy breast,
And bade her be glad to behold it, how the best
was sprung from the best,
Yet they shrank in their rejoicing before the eyes
of the child,
So bright and dreadful were they; yea though
the spring morn smiled,
And a thousand birds were singing round the
fair familiar home,
And still as on other mornings they saw folk go
and come,
Yet the hour seemed awful to them, and the
hearts within them burned
As though of fateful matters their souls were
newly learned.

But Hiordis looked on the Volsung, on her grief
and her fond desire,
And the hope of her heart was quickened, and
her joy was a living fire;
And she said: "Now one of the earthly on the
eyes of my child hath gazed
Nor shrunk before their glory, nor stayed her
love amazed:
I behold thee as Sigmund beholdeth,—and I was
the home of thine heart—
Woe's me for the day when thou wert not, and
the hour when we shall part!"

Then she held him a little season on her weary
and happy breast
And she told him of Sigmund and Volsung and
the best sprung forth from the best:
She spake to the new-born baby as one who
might understand,
And told him of Sigmund's battle, and the dead
by the sea-flood's strand,
And of all the wars passed over, and the light
with darkness blent.

So she spake, and the sun rose higher, and her
speech at last was spent,
And she gave him back to the women to bear
forth to the people's kings,
That they too may rejoice in her glory and her
day of happy things.

But there sat the Helper of Men with King Elf
and Earls in the hall,
And they spake of the deeds that had been, and
told of the times to befall,
And they hearkened and heard sweet voices and
the sound of harps draw nigh,
Till their hearts were exceeding merry and they
knew not wherefore or why:

Then, lo, in the hall white raiment, as thither the damsels came,
And amid the hands of the foremost was the woven gold aflame.

"O daughters of earls," said the Helper, "what tidings then do ye bear?
Is it grief in the merry morning, or joy or wonder or fear?"

Quoth the first: "It is grief for the foemen that the Masters of God-home would grieve."

Said the next: "'Tis a wonder of wonders, that the hearkening world shall believe."

"A fear of all fears," said the third, "for the sword is uplifted on men."

"A joy of all joys," said the fourth, "once come, it comes not again!"

"Lo, son," said the ancient Helper, "glad sit the earls and the lords!
Lookst thou not for a token of tidings to follow such-like words?"

Saith King Elf: "Great words of women! or great hath our dwelling become."

Said the women: "Words shall be greater, when all folk shall praise our home."

"What then hath betid," said King Elf, "do the high Gods stand in our gate?"

"Nay," said they, "else were we silent, and they should be telling of fate."

"Is the bidding come," said the Helper, "that we wend the Gods to see?"

"Many summers and winters," they said, "ye shall live on the earth, it may be."

Said a young man: "Will ye be telling that all we shall die no more?"

"Nay," they answered, "nay, who knoweth but the change may be hard at the door?"

"Come ships from the sea," said an elder, "with all gifts of the Eastland gold?"

"Was there less than enough," said the women, "when last our treasure was told?"

"Speak then," said the ancient Helper, "let the worst and the best be said."

Quoth they: "'Tis the Queen of the Isle-folk, she is weary-sick on her bed."

Said King Elf: "Yet ye come rejoicing; what more lieth under the tongue?"

They said: "The earth is weary; but the tender blade hath sprung,
That shall wax till beneath its branches fair bloom the meadows green;
For the Gods and they that were mighty were glad erewhile with the Queen."

Said King Elf: "How say ye, women? Of a King new-born do ye tell

By a God of the Heavens begotten in our fathers'
house to dwell?"

"By a God of the Earth," they answered; "but
greater yet is the son,
Though long were the days of Sigmund, and
great are the deeds he hath done."

Then she with the golden burden to the kingly
high-seat stepped
And away from the new-born baby the purple
cloths she swept,
And cried: "O King of the people, long mayst
thou live in bliss,
As our hearts to-day are happy! Queen Hiordis
sends thee this,
And she saith that the world shall call it by the
name that thou shalt name;
Now the gift to thee is given, and to thee is
brought the fame."

Then e'en as a man astonied King Elf the
Volsung took,
While his feast-hall's ancient timbers with the
cry of the earl-folk shook;
For the eyes of the child gleamed on him till he
was as one who sees
The very Gods arising mid their carven images:
To his ears there came a murmur of far seas
beneath the wind
And the tramp of fierce-eyed warriors through
the outland forest blind;
The sound of hosts of battle, cries round the
hoisted shield,
Low talk of the gathered wise-ones in the Goth-
folk's holy field:
So the thought in a little moment through King
Elf the Mighty ran
Of the years and their building and burden, and
toil of the sons of man,
The joy of folk and their sorrow, and the hope of
deeds to do:
With the love of many peoples was the wise king
smitten through,
As he hung o'er the new-born Volsung: but at
last he raised his head,
And looked forth kind o'er his people, and spake
aloud and said:

"O Sigmund King of Battle; O man of many days,
Whom I saw mid the shields of the fallen and the
dead men's silent praise,
Lo, how hath the dark tide perished and the
dawn of day begun!
And now, O mighty Sigmund, wherewith shall
we name thy son?"

But there rose up a man most ancient, and he
cried: "Hail Dawn of the Day!
How many things shalt thou quicken, how many
shalt thou slay!
How many things shalt thou waken, how many
lull to sleep!
How many things shalt thou scatter, how many
gather and keep!
O me, how thy love shall cherish, how thine hate
shall wither and burn!
How the hope shall be sped from thy right hand,
nor the fear to thy left return!
O thy deeds that men shall sing of! O thy deeds
that the Gods shall see!
O SIGURD, Son of the Volsungs, O Victory yet to

be!"

Men heard the name and they knew it, and they caught it up in the air,
And it went abroad by the windows and the doors of the feast-hall fair,
It went through street and market; o'er meadow and acre it went,
And over the wind-stirred forest and the dearth of the sea-beat bent,
And over the sea-flood's welter, till the folk of the fishers heard,
And the hearts of the isle-abiders on the sun-scorched rocks were stirred.

But the Queen in her golden chamber, the name she hearkened and knew;
And she heard the flock of the women, as back to the chamber they drew,
And the name of Sigurd entered, and the body of Sigurd was come,
And it was as if Sigmund were living and she still in her lovely home;
Of all folk of the world was she well, and a soul fulfilled of rest
As alone in the chamber she wakened and Sigurd cherished her breast.

But men feast in the merry noontide, and glad is the April green
That a Volsung looks on the sunlight and the night and the darkness have been.
Earls think of marvellous stories, and along the golden strings
Flit words of banded brethren and names of war-fain Kings:
All the days of the deeds of Sigmund who was born so long ago;
All deeds of the glorious Signy, and her tarrying-tide of woe;
Men tell of the years of Volsung, and how long agone it was
That he changed his life in battle, and brought the tale to pass:
Then goeth the word of the Giants, and the world seems waxen old
For the dimness of King Rerir and the tale of his warfare told:
Yet unhushed are the singers' voices, nor yet the harp-strings cease
While yet is left a rumour of the mirk-wood's broken peace,
And of Sigi the very ancient, and the unnamed Sons of God,
Of the days when the Lords of Heaven full oft the world-ways trod.

So stilleth the wind in the even and the sun sinks down in the sea,
And men abide the morrow and the Victory yet to be.

Sigurd getteth to him the horse that is called Greyfell.

Now waxeth the son of Sigmund in might and goodliness,
And soft the days win over, and all men his beauty bless.
But amidst the summer season was the Isle-queen Hiordis wed
To King Elf the son of the Helper, and fair their life-days sped.
Peace lay on the land for ever, and the fields gave good increase,

And there was Sigurd waxing mid the plenty and the peace.

Now hath the child grown greater, and is keen and eager of wit
And full of understanding, and oft hath the joy to sit
Amid talk of weighty matters when the wise men meet for speech;
And joyous he is moreover and blithe and kind with each.
But Regin the wise craftsmaster heedeth the youngling well,
And before the Kings he cometh, and saith such words to tell.

"I have fostered thy youth, King Elf, and thine O Helper of men,
And ye wot that such a master no king shall see again;
And now would I foster Sigurd; for, though he be none of thy blood,
Mine heart of his days that shall be speaketh abundant good."

Then spake the Helper of men-folk: "Yea, do herein thy will:
For thou art the Master of Masters, and hast learned me all my skill:
But think how bright is this youngling, and thy guile from him withhold;
For this craft of thine hath shown me that thy heart is grim and cold,
Though three men's lives thrice over thy wisdom might not learn;
And I love this son of Sigmund, and mine heart to him doth yearn."

Then Regin laughed, and answered: "I doled out cunning to thee;
But nought with him will I measure: yet no cold-heart shall he be,
Nor grim, nor evil-natured: for whate'er my will might frame,
Gone forth is the word of the Norns, that abideth ever the same.
And now, despite my cunning, how deem ye I shall die?"

And they said he would live as he listed, and at last in peace should lie
When he listed to live no longer; so mighty and wise he was.
But again he laughed and answered: "One day it shall come to pass,
That a beardless youth shall slay me: I know the fateful doom;
But nought may I withstand it, as it heaves up dim through the gloom."

So is Sigurd now with Regin, and he learns him many things;
Yea, all save the craft of battle, that men learned the sons of kings:
The smithying sword and war-coat; the carving runes aright;
The tongues of many countries, and soft speech for men's delight;
The dealing with the harp-strings, and the winding ways of song.
So wise of heart waxed Sigurd, and of body wondrous strong:
And he chased the deer of the forest, and many a wood-wolf slew,
And many a bull of the mountains: and the

desert dales he knew,
And the heaths that the wind sweeps over; and seaward would he fare,
Far out from the outer skerries, and alone the sea-wights dare.

On a day he sat with Regin amidst the unfashioned gold,
And the silver grey from the furnace; and Regin spake and told
Sweet tales of the days that have been, and the Kings of the bold and wise;
Till the lad's heart swelled with longing and lit his sunbright eyes.

Then Regin looked upon him: "Thou too shalt one day ride
As the Volsung Kings went faring through the noble world and wide.
For this land is nought and narrow, and Kings of the carles are these,
And their earls are acre-biders, and their hearts are dull with peace."

But Sigurd knit his brows, and in wrathful wise he said:
"Ill words of those thou speakest that my youth have cherished,
And the friends that have made me merry, and the land that is fair and good."

Then Regin laughed and answered: "Nay, well I see by thy mood
That wide wilt thou ride in the world like thy kin of the earlier days:
And wilt thou be wroth with thy master that he longs for thy winning the praise?
And now if the sooth thou sayest, that these King-folk cherish thee well,
Then let them give thee a gift whereof the world shall tell:
Yea hearken to this my counsel, and crave for a battle-steed."

Yet wroth was the lad and answered: "I have many a horse to my need,
And all that the heart desireth, and what wouldst thou wish me more?"

Then Regin answered and said: "Thy kin of the Kings of yore
Were the noblest men of men-folk; and their hearts would never rest
Whatso of good they had gotten, if their hands held not the best.
Now do thou after my counsel, and crave of thy fosterers here
That thou choose of the horses of Gripir whichso thine heart holds dear."

He spake and his harp was with him, and he smote the strings full sweet,
And sang of the host of the Valkyrs, how they ride the battle to meet,
And the dew from the dear manes drippeth as they ride in the first of the sun,
And the tree-boughs open to meet it when the wind of the dawning is done:
And the deep dales drink its sweetness and spring into blossoming grass,
And the earth groweth fruitful of men, and bringeth their glory to pass.

Then the wrath ran off from Sigurd, and he left the smithying stead

While the song yet rang in the doorway: and that eve to the Kings he said:
"Will ye do so much for mine asking as to give me a horse to my will?
For belike the days shall come, that shall all my heart fulfill,
And teach me the deeds of a king."
Then answered King Elf and spake:
"The stalls of the Kings are before thee to set aside or to take,
And nought we begrudge thee the best."
Yet answered Sigurd again;
For his heart of the mountains aloft and the windy drift was fain:
"Fair seats for the knees of Kings! but now do I ask for a gift
Such as all the world shall be praising, the best of the strong and the swift.
Ye shall give me a token for Gripir, and bid him to let me choose
From out of the noble stud-beasts that run in his meadow loose.
But if overmuch I have asked you, forget this prayer of mine,
And deem the word unspoken, and get ye to the wine."

Then smiled King Elf, and answered: "A long way wilt thou ride,
To where unpeace and troubles and the griefs of the soul abide,
Yea unto the death at the last: yet surely shalt thou win
The praise of many a people: so have thy way herein.
Forsooth no more may we hold thee than the hazel copse may hold
The sun of the early dawning, that turneth it all unto gold."

Then sweetly Sigurd thanked them; and through the night he lay
Mid dreams of many a matter till the dawn was on the way;
Then he shook the sleep from off him, and that dwelling of Kings he left
And wended his ways unto Gripir. On a crag from the mountain reft
Was the house of the old King builded; and a mighty house it was,
Though few were the sons of men that over its threshold would pass:
But the wild ernes cried about it, and the vultures toward it flew,
And the winds from the heart of the mountains searched every chamber through,
And about were meads wide-spreading; and many a beast thereon,
Yea some that are men-folk's terror, their sport and pasture won.
So into the hall went Sigurd; and amidst was Gripir set
In a chair of the sea-beast's tooth; and his sweeping beard nigh met
The floor that was green as the ocean, and his gown was of mountain-gold
And the kingly staff in his hand was knobbed with the crystal cold.

Now the first of the twain spake Gripir: "Hail King with the eyen bright!
Nought needest thou show the token, for I know of thy life and thy light.
And no need to tell of thy message; it was

wafted here on the wind,
That thou wouldst be coming to-day a horse in my meadow to find:
And strong must he be for the bearing of those deeds of thine that shall be.
Now choose thou of all the way-wearers that are running loose in my lea,
And be glad as thine heart will have thee and the fate that leadeth thee on,
And I bid thee again come hither when the sword of worth is won,
And thy loins are girt for thy going on the road that before thee lies;
For a glimmering over its darkness is come before mine eyes."

Then again gat Sigurd outward, and adown the steep he ran
And unto the horse-fed meadow: but lo, a grey-clad man,
One-eyed and seeming-ancient, there met him by the way:
And he spake: "Thou hastest, Sigurd; yet tarry till I say
A word that shall well bestead thee: for I know of these mountains well
And all the lea of Gripir, and the beasts that thereon dwell."

"Wouldst thou have red gold for thy tidings? art thou Gripir's horse-herd then?
Nay sure, for thy face is shining like battle-eager men
My master Regin tells of: and I love thy cloud-grey gown
And thy visage gleams above it like a thing my dreams have known."

"Nay whiles have I heeded the horse-kind," then spake that elder of days,
"And sooth do the sages say, when the beasts of my breeding they praise.
There is one thereof in the meadow, and, wouldst thou cull him out,
Thou shalt follow an elder's counsel, who hath brought strange things about,
Who hath known thy father aforetime, and other kings of thy kin."

So Sigurd said, "I am ready; and what is the deed to win?"

He said: "We shall drive the horses adown to the water-side,
That cometh forth from the mountains, and note what next shall betide."

Then the twain sped on together, and they drave the horses on
Till they came to a rushing river a water wide and wan;
And the white mews hovered o'er it; but none might hear their cry
For the rush and the rattle of waters, as the downlong flood swept by.
So the whole herd took the river and strove the stream to stem,
And many a brave steed was there; but the flood o'ermastered them:
And some, it swept them down-ward, and some won back to bank,
Some, caught by the net of the eddies, in the swirling hubbub sank;
But one of all swam over, and they saw his mane of grey

Toss over the flowery meadows, a bright thing
far away:
Wide then he wheeled about them, then took the
stream again
And with the waves' white horses mingled his
cloudy mane.

Then spake the elder of days: "Hearken now,
Sigurd, and hear;
Time was when I gave thy father a gift thou
shalt yet deem dear,
And this horse is a gift of my giving:—heed
nought where thou mayst ride:
For I have seen thy fathers in a shining house
abide,
And on earth they thought of its threshold, and
the gifts I had to give;
Nor prayed for a little longer, and a little longer
to live."

Then forth he strode to the mountains, and fain
was Sigurd now
To ask him many a matter: but dim did his
bright shape grow,
As a man from the litten doorway fades into the
dusk of night;
And the sun in the high-noon shone, and the
world was exceeding bright.

So Sigurd turned to the river and stood by the
wave-wet strand,
And the grey horse swims to his feet and lightly
leaps aland,
And the youngling looks upon him, and deems
none beside him good.
And indeed, as tells the story, he was come of
Sleipnir's blood,
The tireless horse of Odin: cloud-grey he was of
hue,
And it seemed as Sigurd backed him that
Sigmund's son he knew,
So glad he went beneath him. Then the
youngling's song arose
As he brushed through the noon-tide blossoms
of Gripir's mighty close,
Then he singeth the song of Greyfell, the horse
that Odin gave,
Who swam through the sweeping river, and back
through the toppling wave.

Regin telleth Sigurd of his kindred, and of the Gold that was accursed from ancient days.

Now yet the days pass over, and more than
words may tell
Grows Sigurd strong and lovely, and all children
love him well.
But oft he looks on the mountains and many a
time is fain
To know of what lies beyond them, and learn of
the wide world's gain.
And he saith: "I dwell in a land that is ruled by
none of my blood;
And my mother's sons are waxing, and fair kings
shall they be and good;
And their servant or their betrayer—not one of
these will I be.
Yet needs must I wait for a little till Odin calls
for me."

Now again it happed on a day that he sat in
Regin's hall
And hearkened many tidings of what had
chanced to fall,

And of kings that sought their kingdoms o'er
many a waste and wild,
And at last saith the crafty master:
"Thou art King Sigmund's child:
Wilt thou wait till these kings of the carles shall
die in a little land,
Or wilt thou serve their sons and carry the cup
to their hand;
Or abide in vain for the day that never shall
come about,
When their banners shall dance in the wind and
shake to the war-gods' shout?"

Then Sigurd answered and said: "Nought such
do I look to be.
But thou, a deedless man, too much thou eggest
me:
And these folk are good and trusty, and the land
is lovely and sweet,
And in rest and in peace it lieth as the floor of
Odin's feet:
Yet I know that the world is wide, and filled with
deeds unwrought;
And for e'en such work was I fashioned, lest the
song-craft come to nought,
When the harps of God-home tinkle, and the
Gods are at stretch to hearken;
Lest the hosts of the Gods be scanty when their
day hath begun to darken,
When the bonds of the Wolf wax thin, and Loki
fretteth his chain.
And sure for the house of my fathers full oft my
heart is fain,
And meseemeth I hear them talking of the day
when I shall come,
And of all the burden of deeds, that my hand
shall bear them home.
And so when the deed is ready, nowise the man
shall lack:
But the wary foot is the surest, and the hasty oft
turns back."

Then answered Regin the guileful: "The deed is
ready to hand,
Yet holding my peace is the best, for well thou
lovest the land;
And thou lovest thy life moreover, and the peace
of thy youthful days,
And why should the full-fed feaster his hand to
the rye-bread raise?
Yet they say that Sigmund begat thee and he
looked to fashion a man.
Fear nought; he lieth quiet in his mound by the
sea-waves wan."

So shone the eyes of Sigurd, that the shield
against him hung
Cast back their light as the sunbeams; but his
voice to the roof-tree rung:
"Tell me, thou Master of Masters, what deed is
the deed I shall do?
Nor mock thou the son of Sigmund lest the day
of his birth thou rue."

Then answered the Master of Sleight: "The deed
is the righting of wrong,
And the quelling a bale and a sorrow that the
world hath endured o'erlong,
And the winning a treasure untold, that shall
make thee more than the kings;
Thereof is the Helm of Aweing, the wonder of
earthly things,
And thereof is its very fellow, the War-coat all of
gold,
That has not its like in the heavens, nor has

earth of its fellow told."

Then answered Sigurd the Volsung: "How long
hereof hast thou known?
And what unto thee is this treasure, that thou
seemest to give as thine own?"

"Alas!" quoth the smithying master, "it is mine,
yet none of mine
Since my heart herein avails not, and my hand is
frail and fine—
It is long since I first came hither to seek a man
for my need;
For I saw by a glimmering light that hence
would spring the deed,
And many a deed of the world: but the
generations passed,
And the first of the days was as near to the end
that I sought as the last;
Till I looked on thine eyes in the cradle: and now
I deem through thee,
That the end of my days of waiting, and the end
of my woes shall be."

Then Sigurd awhile was silent; but at last he
answered and said:
"Thou shalt have thy will and the treasure, and
shalt take the curse on thine head
If a curse the gold enwrappeth: but the deed will
I surely do,
For to-day the dreams of my childhood have
bloomed in my heart anew:
And I long to look on the world and the glory of
the earth
And to deal in the dealings of men, and garner
the harvest of worth.
But tell me, thou Master of Masters, where lieth
this measureless wealth;
Is it guarded by swords of the earl-folk, or kept
by cunning and stealth?
Is it over the main sea's darkness, or beyond the
mountain wall?
Or e'en in these peaceful acres anigh to the
hands of all?"

Then Regin answered sweetly: "Hereof must a
tale be told:
Bide sitting, thou son of Sigmund, on the heap of
unwrought gold,
And hearken of wondrous matters, and of things
unheard, unsaid,
And deeds of my beholding ere the first of Kings
was made.

"And first ye shall know of a sooth, that I never
was born of the race
Which the masters of God-home have made to
cover the fair earth's face;
But I come of the Dwarfs departed; and fair was
the earth whileome
Ere the short-lived thralls of the Gods amidst its
dales were come:—
And how were we worse than the Gods, though
maybe we lived not as long?
Yet no weight of memory maimed us; nor aught
we knew of wrong.
What felt our souls of shaming, what knew our
hearts of love?
We did and undid at pleasure, and repented
nought thereof.
—Yea we were exceeding mighty—bear with me
yet, my son;
For whiles can I scarcely think it that our days
are wholly done.
And trust not thy life in my hands in the day

when most I seem
Like the Dwarfs that are long departed, and
most of my kindred I dream.

"So as we dwelt came tidings that the Gods
amongst us were,
And the people come from Asgard: then rose up
hope and fear,
And strange shapes of things went flitting
betwixt the night and the eve,
And our sons waxed wild and wrathful, and our
daughters learned to grieve.
Then we fell to the working of metal, and the
deeps of the earth would know,
And we dealt with venom and leechcraft, and we
fashioned spear and bow,
And we set the ribs to the oak-keel, and looked
on the landless sea;
And the world began to be such-like as the Gods
would have it to be.
In the womb of the woeful Earth had they
quickened the grief and the gold.

"It was Reidmar the Ancient begat me; and now
was he waxen old,
And a covetous man and a king; and he bade,
and I built him a hall,
And a golden glorious house; and thereto his
sons did he call,
And he bade them be evil and wise, that his will
through them might be wrought.
Then he gave unto Fafnir my brother the soul
that feareth nought,
And the brow of the hardened iron, and the hand
that may never fail,
And the greedy heart of a king, and the ear that
hears no wail.

"But next unto Otter my brother he gave the
snare and the net
And the longing to wend through the wild-wood,
and wade the highways wet:
And the foot that never resteth, while aught be
left alive
That hath cunning to match man's cunning or
might with his might to strive.

"And to me, the least and the youngest, what gift
for the slaying of ease?
Save the grief that remembers the past, and the
fear that the future sees;
And the hammer and fashioning-iron, and the
living coal of fire;
And the craft that createth a semblance, and
fails of the heart's desire;
And the toil that each dawning quickens and the
task that is never done,
And the heart that longeth ever, nor will look to
the deed that is won.

"Thus gave my father the gifts that might never
be taken again;
Far worse were we now than the Gods, and but
little better than men.
But yet of our ancient might one thing had we
left us still:
We had craft to change our semblance, and
could shift us at our will
Into bodies of the beast-kind, or fowl, or fishes
cold;
For belike no fixed semblance we had in the
days of old,
Till the Gods were waxen busy, and all things
their form must take
That knew of good and evil, and longed to

gather and make.

"So dwelt we, brethren and father; and Fafnir my brother fared
As the scourge and compeller of all things, and left no wrong undared;
But for me, I toiled and I toiled; and fair grew my father's house;
But writhen and foul were the hands that had made it glorious;
And the love of women left me, and the fame of sword and shield:
And the sun and the winds of heaven, and the fowl and the grass of the field
Were grown as the tools of my smithy; and all the world I knew,
And the glories that lie beyond it, and whitherward all things drew;
And myself a little fragment amidst it all I saw,
Grim, cold-heart, and unmighty as the tempest-driven straw.
—Let be.—For Otter my brother saw seldom field or fold,
And he oftenest used that custom, whereof e'en now I told,
And would shift his shape with the wood-beasts and the things of land and sea;
And he knew what joy their hearts had, and what they longed to be,
And their dim-eyed understanding, and his wood-craft waxed so great,
That he seemed the king of the creatures and their very mortal fate.

"Now as the years won over three folk of the heavenly halls
Grew aweary of sleepless sloth, and the day that nought befalls;
And they fain would look on the earth, and their latest handiwork,
And turn the fine gold over, lest a flaw therein should lurk.
And the three were the heart-wise Odin, the Father of the Slain,
And Loki, the World's Begrudger, who maketh all labour vain,
And Hænir, the Utter-Blameless, who wrought the hope of man,
And his heart and inmost yearnings, when first the work began;—
—The God that was aforetime, and hereafter yet shall be
When the new light yet undreamed of shall shine o'er earth and sea.

"Thus about the world they wended and deemed it fair and good,
And they loved their life-days dearly: so came they to the wood,
And the lea without a shepherd and the dwellings of the deer,
And unto a mighty water that ran from a fathomless mere.
Now that flood my brother Otter had haunted many a day
For its plenteous fruit of fishes; and there on the bank he lay
As the Gods came wandering thither; and he slept, and in his dreams
He saw the downlong river, and its fishy-peopled streams,
And the swift smooth heads of its forces, and its

swirling wells and deep,
Where hang the poisèd fishes, and their watch in the rock-halls keep.
And so, as he thought of it all, and its deeds and its wanderings,
Whereby it ran to the sea down the road of scaly things,
His body was changed with his thought, as yet was the wont of our kind,
And he grew but an Otter indeed; and his eyes were sleeping and blind
The while he devoured the prey, a golden red-flecked trout.
Then passed by Odin and Hænir, nor cumbered their souls with doubt;
But Loki lingered a little, and guile in his heart arose,
And he saw through the shape of the Otter, and beheld a chief of his foes,
A king of the free and the careless: so he called up his baleful might,
And gathered his godhead together, and tore a shard outright
From the rock-wall of the river, and across its green wells cast;
And roaring over the waters that bolt of evil passed,
And smote my brother Otter that his heart's life fled away,
And bore his man's shape with it, and beast-like there he lay,
Stark dead on the sun-lit blossoms: but the Evil God rejoiced,
And because of the sound of his singing the wild grew many-voiced.

"Then the three Gods waded the river, and no word Hænir spake,
For his thoughts were set on God-home, and the day that is ever awake.
But Odin laughed in his wrath, and murmured: 'Ah, how long,
Till the iron shall ring on the anvil for the shackles of thy wrong!'

"Then Loki takes up the quarry, and is e'en as a man again;
And the three wend on through the wild-wood till they come to a grassy plain
Beneath the untrodden mountains; and lo! a noble house,
And a hall with great craft fashioned, and made full glorious;
But night on the earth was falling; so scantly might they see
The wealth of its smooth-wrought stonework and its world of imagery:
Then Loki bade turn thither since day was at an end,
And into that noble dwelling the lords of God-home wend;
And the porch was fair and mighty, and so smooth-wrought was its gold,
That the mirrored stars of heaven therein might ye behold:
But the hall, what words shall tell it, how fair it rose aloft,
And the marvels of its windows, and its golden hangings soft,
And the forest of its pillars! and each like the wave's heart shone
And the mirrored boughs of the garden were dancing fair thereon.
—Long years agone was it builded, and where are its wonders now?

"Now the men of God-home marvelled, and
gazed through the golden glow,
And a man like a covetous king amidst of the
hall they saw;
And his chair was the tooth of the whale,
wrought smooth with never a flaw;
And his gown was the sea-born purple, and he
bore a crown on his head,
But never a sword was before him: kind-seeming
words he said,
And bade rest to the weary feet that had worn
the wild so long.
So they sat, and were men by seeming; and
there rose up music and song,
And they ate and drank and were merry: but
amidst the glee of the cup
They felt themselves tangled and caught, as
when the net cometh up
Before the folk of the 'firth, and the main sea
lieth far off;
And the laughter of lips they hearkened, and
that hall-abider's scoff,
As his face and his mocking eyes anigh to their
faces drew,
And their godhead was caught in the net, and no
shift of creation they knew
To escape from their man-like bodies; so great
that day was the Earth.

"Then spake the hall-abider: 'Where then is thy
guileful mirth,
And thy hall-glee gone, O Loki? Come, Hænir,
fashion now
My heart for love and for hope, that the fear in
my body may grow,
That I may grieve and be sorry, that the ruth
may arise in me,
As thou dealtst with the first of men-folk, when a
master-smith thou wouldst be.
And thou, Allfather Odin, hast thou come on a
bastard brood?
Or hadst thou belike a brother, thy twin for evil
and good,
That waked amidst thy slumber, and slumbered
midst thy work?
Nay, Wise-one, art thou silent as a child amidst
the mirk?
Ah, I know ye are called the Gods, and are
mighty men at home,
But now with a guilt on your heads to no feeble
folk are ye come,
To a folk that need you nothing: time was when
we knew you not:
Yet e'en then fresh was the winter, and the
summer sun was hot,
And the wood-meats stayed our hunger, and the
water quenched our thirst,
Ere the good and the evil wedded and begat the
best and the worst.
And how if to-day I undo it, that work of your
fashioning,
If the web of the world run backward, and the
high heavens lack a King?
—Woe's me! for your ancient mastery shall help
you at your need:
If ye fill up the gulf of my longing and my empty
heart of greed,
And slake the flame ye have quickened, then
may ye go your ways
And get ye back to your kingship and the driving
on of the days
To the day of the gathered war-hosts, and the
tide of your Fateful Gloom.
Now nought may ye gainsay it that my mouth

must speak the doom,
For ye wot well I am Reidmar, and that there ye lie red-hand
From the slaughtering of my offspring, and the spoiling of my land;
For his death of my wold hath bereft me and every highway wet.
—Nay, Loki, naught avails it, well-fashioned is the net.
Come forth, my son, my war-god, and show the Gods their work,
And thou who mightst learn e'en Loki, if need were to lie or lurk!'

"And there was I, I Regin, the smithier of the snare,
And high up Fafnir towered with the brow that knew no fear,
With the wrathful and pitiless heart that was born of my father's will,
And the greed that the Gods had fashioned the fate of the earth to fulfill.

"Then spake the Father of Men: 'We have wrought thee wrong indeed,
And, wouldst thou amend it with wrong, thine errand must we speed;
For I know of thine heart's desire, and the gold thou shalt nowise lack,
—Nor all the works of the gold. But best were thy word drawn back,
If indeed the doom of the Norns be not utterly now gone forth.'

"Then Reidmar laughed and answered: 'So much is thy word of worth!
And they call thee Odin for this, and stretch forth hands in vain,
And pray for the gifts of a God who giveth and taketh again!
It was better in times past over, when we prayed for nought at all,
When no love taught us beseeching, and we had no troth to recall.
Ye have changed the world, and it bindeth with the right and the wrong ye have made,
Nor may ye be Gods henceforward save the rightful ransom be paid.
But perchance ye are weary of kingship, and will deal no more with the earth?
Then curse the world, and depart, and sit in your changeless mirth;
And there shall be no more kings, and battle and murder shall fail,
And the world shall laugh and long not, nor weep, nor fashion the tale.'

"So spake Reidmar the Wise; but the wrath burned through his word,
And wasted his heart of wisdom; and there was Fafnir the Lord,
And there was Regin the Wright, and they raged at their father's back:
And all these cried out together with the voice of the sea-storm's wrack;
'O hearken, Gods of the Goths! ye shall die, and we shall be Gods,
And rule your men belovèd with bitter-heavy rods,
And make them beasts beneath us, save to-day ye do our will,
And pay us the ransom of blood, and our hearts with the gold fulfill.'

"But Odin spake in answer, and his voice was

awful and cold:
'Give righteous doom, O Reidmar! say what ye will of the Gold!'

"Then Reidmar laughed in his heart, and his wrath and his wisdom fled,
And nought but his greed abided; and he spake from his throne and said:

"'Now hearken the doom I shall speak! Ye stranger-folk shall be free
When ye give me the Flame of the Waters, the gathered Gold of the Sea,
That Andvari hideth rejoicing in the wan realm pale as the grave;
And the Master of Sleight shall fetch it, and the hand that never gave,
And the heart that begrudgeth for ever shall gather and give and rue.
—Lo! this is the doom of the wise, and no doom shall be spoken anew.'

"Then Odin spake: 'It is well; the Curser shall seek for the curse;
And the Greedy shall cherish the evil—and the seed of the Great they shall nurse.'

"No word spake Reidmar the great, for the eyes of his heart were turned
To the edge of the outer desert, so sore for the gold he yearned.
But Loki I loosed from the toils, and he goeth his ways abroad;
And the heart of Odin he knoweth, and where he shall seek the Hoard.

"There is a desert of dread in the uttermost part of the world,
Where over a wall of mountains is a mighty water hurled,
Whose hidden head none knoweth, nor where it meeteth the sea;
And that force is the Force of Andvari, and an Elf of the Dark is he.
In the cloud and the desert he dwelleth amid that land alone;
And his work is the storing of treasure within his house of stone.
Time was when he knew of wisdom, and had many a tale to tell
Of the days before the Dwarf-age, and of what in that world befell:
And he knew of the stars and the sun, and the worlds that come and go
On the nether rim of heaven, and whence the wind doth blow,
And how the sea hangs balanced betwixt the curving lands,
And how all drew together for the first Gods' fashioning hands.
But now is all gone from him, save the craft of gathering gold,
And he heedeth nought of the summer, nor knoweth the winter cold,
Nor looks to the sun nor the snowfall, nor ever dreams of the sea,
Nor hath heard of the making of men-folk, nor of where the high Gods be:
But ever he gripeth and gathereth, and he toileth hour by hour
Nor knoweth the noon from the midnight as he looks on his stony bower,
And saith: 'It is short, it is narrow for all I shall gather and get;
For the world is but newly fashioned, and long

shall its years be yet.'

"There Loki fareth, and seeth in a land of
nothing good,
Far off o'er the empty desert, the reek of the
falling flood
Go up to the floor of heaven, and thither turn his
feet
As he weaveth the unseen meshes and the snare
of strong deceit;
So he cometh his ways to the water, where the
glittering foam-bow glows,
And the huge flood leaps the rock-wall and a
green arch over it throws.
There under the roof of water he treads the
quivering floor,
And the hush of the desert is felt amid the
water's roar,
And the bleak sun lighteth the wave-vault, and
tells of the fruitless plain,
And the showers that nourish nothing, and the
summer come in vain.

"There did the great Guile-master his toils and
his tangles set,
And as wide as was the water, so wide was
woven the net;
And as dim as the Elf's remembrance did the
meshes of it show;
And he had no thought of sorrow, nor spared to
come and go
On his errands of griping and getting till he felt
himself tangled and caught:
Then back to his blinded soul was his ancient
wisdom brought,
And he saw his fall and his ruin, as a man by the
lightning's flame
Sees the garth all flooded by foemen; and again
he remembered his name;
And e'en as a book well written the tale of the
Gods he knew,
And the tale of the making of men, and much of
the deeds they should do.

"But Loki took his man-shape, and laughed aloud
and cried:
'What fish of the ends of the earth is so strong
and so feeble-eyed,
That he draweth the pouch of my net on his road
to the dwelling of Hell?
What Elf that hath heard the gold growing, but
hath heard not the light winds tell
That the Gods with the world have been dealing
and have fashioned men for the earth?
Where is he that hath ridden the cloud-horse
and measured the ocean's girth,
But seen nought of the building of God-home nor
the forging of the sword:
Where then is the maker of nothing, the earless
and eyeless lord?
In the pouch of my net he lieth, with his head on
the threshold of Hell!'

"Then the Elf lamented, and said: 'Thou knowst
of my name full well:
Andvari begotten of Oinn, whom the Dwarf-kind
called the Wise,
By the worst of the Gods is taken, the forge and
the father of lies.'

"Said Loki: 'How of the Elf-kind, do they love
their latter life,
When their weal is all departed, and they lie
alow in the strife?'

"Then Andvari groaned and answered: 'I know
what thou wouldst have,
The wealth mine own hands gathered, the gold
that no man gave.'

"'Come forth,' said Loki, 'and give it, and dwell
in peace henceforth—
Or die in the toils if thou listest, if thy life be
nothing worth.'

"Full sore the Elf lamented, but he came before
the God
And the twain went into the rock-house and on
fine gold they trod,
And the walls shone bright, and brighter than
the sun of the upper air.
How great was that treasure of treasures: and
the Helm of Dread was there;
The world but in dreams had seen it; and there
was the hauberk of gold;
None other is in the heavens, nor has earth of its
fellow told.

"Then Loki bade the Elf-king bring all to the
upper day,
And he dight himself with his Godhead to bear
the treasure away:
So there in the dim grey desert, before the God
of Guile,
Great heaps of the hid-world's treasure the
weary Elf must pile,
And Loki looked on laughing: but, when it all
was done,
And the Elf was hurrying homeward, his finger
gleamed in the sun:
Then Loki cried: 'Thou art guileful: thou hast not
learned the tale
Of the wisdom that Gods have gotten and their
might of all avail.
Hither to me! that I learn thee of a many things
to come;
Or despite of all wilt thou journey to the dead
man's deedless home.
Come hither again to thy master, and give the
ring to me;
For meseems it is Loki's portion, and the Bale of
Men shall it be.'

"Then the Elf drew off the gold-ring and stood
with empty hand
E'en where the flood fell over 'twixt the water
and the land,
And he gazed on the great Guile-master, and
huge and grim he grew;
And his anguish swelled within him, and the
word of the Norns he knew;
How that gold was the seed of gold to the wise
and the shapers of things,
The hoarders of hidden treasure, and the unseen
glory of rings;
But the seed of woe to the world and the foolish
wasters of men,
And grief to the generations that die and spring
again:
Then he cried:
'There farest thou, Loki, and
might I load thee worse
Than with what thine ill heart beareth, then
shouldst thou bear my curse:
But for men a curse thou bearest: entangled in
my gold,
Amid my woe abideth another woe untold.
Two brethren and a father, eight kings my grief
shall slay;
And the hearts of queens shall be broken, and

their eyes shall loathe the day.
Lo, how the wilderness blossoms! Lo, how the lonely lands
Are waving with the harvest that fell from my gathering hands!'

"But Loki laughed in silence, and swift in Godhead went,
To the golden hall of Reidmar and the house of our content.
But when that world of treasure was laid within our hall
'Twas as if the sun were minded to live 'twixt wall and wall,
And all we stood by and panted. Then Odin spake and said:

"'O Kings, O folk of the Dwarf-kind, lo, the ransom duly paid!
Will ye have this sun of the ocean, and reap the fruitful field,
And garner up the harvest that earth therefrom shall yield?'

"So he spake; but a little season nought answered Reidmar the wise
But turned his face from the Treasure, and peered with eager eyes
Endlong the hall and athwart it, as a man may chase about
A ray of the sun of the morning that a naked sword throws out;
And lo! from Loki's right-hand came the flash of the fruitful ring,
And at last spake Reidmar scowling:
'Ye wait for my yea-saying
That your feet may go free on the earth, and the fear of my toils may be done;
That then ye may say in your laughter: The fools of the time agone!
The purblind eyes of the Dwarf-kind! they have gotten the garnered sheaf
And have let their Masters depart with the Seed of Gold and of Grief:
O Loki, friend of Allfather, cast down Andvari's Ring,
Or the world shall yet turn backward and the high heavens lack a king.'

"Then Loki drew off the Elf-ring and cast it down on the heap,
And forth as the gold met gold did the light of its glory leap:
But he spake: 'It rejoiceth my heart that no whit of all ye shall lack,
Lest the curse of the Elf-king cleave not, and ye 'scape the utter wrack.'

"Then laughed and answered Reidmar: 'I shall have it while I live,
And that shall be long, meseemeth: for who is there may strive
With my sword, the war-wise Fafnir, and my shield that is Regin the Smith?
But if indeed I should die, then let men-folk deal therewith,
And ride to the golden glitter through evil deeds and good.
I will have my heart's desire, and do as the high Gods would.'

"Then I loosed the Gods from their shackles, and great they grew on the floor
And into the night they gat them; but Odin turned by the door,

And we looked not, little we heeded, for we
grudged his mastery;
Then he spake, and his voice was waxen as the
voice of the winter sea:

"'O Kings, O folk of the Dwarfs, why then will ye
covet and rue?
I have seen your fathers' fathers and the dust
wherefrom they grew;
But who hath heard of my father or the land
where first I sprung?
Who knoweth my day of repentance, or the year
when I was young?
Who hath learned the names of the Wise-one or
measured out his will?
Who hath gone before to teach him, and the
doom of days fulfill?
Lo, I look on the Curse of the Gold, and wrong
amended by wrong,
And love by love confounded, and the strong
abased by the strong;
And I order it all and amend it, and the deeds
that are done I see,
And none other beholdeth or knoweth; and who
shall be wise unto me?
For myself to myself I offered, that all wisdom I
might know,
And fruitful I waxed of works, and good and fair
did they grow;
And I knew, and I wrought and fore-ordered;
and evil sat by my side,
And myself by myself hath been doomed, and I
look for the fateful tide;
And I deal with the generations, and the men
mine hand hath made,
And myself by myself shall be grieved, lest the
world and its fashioning fade.'

"They went and the Gold abided: but the words
Allfather spake,
I call them back full often for that golden even's
sake,
Yet little that hour I heard them, save as wind
across the lea;
For the gold shone up on Reidmar and on
Fafnir's face and on me.
And sore I loved that treasure: so I wrapped my
heart in guile,
And sleeked my tongue with sweetness, and set
my face in a smile,
And I bade my father keep it, the more part of
the gold,
Yet give good store to Fafnir for his goodly help
and bold,
And deal me a little handful for my smithying-
help that day.
But no little I desired, though for little I might
pray;
And prayed I for much or for little, he answered
me no more
Than the shepherd answers the wood-wolf who
howls at the yule-tide door:
But good he ever deemed it to sit on his ivory
throne,
And stare on the red rings' glory, and deem he
was ever alone:
And never a word spake Fafnir, but his eyes
waxed red and grim
As he looked upon our father, and noted the
ways of him.

"The night waned into the morning, and still
above the Hoard
Sat Reidmar clad in purple; but Fafnir took his
sword,

And I took my smithying-hammer, and apart in the world we went;
But I came aback in the even, and my heart was heavy and spent;
And I longed, but fear was upon me and I durst not go to the Gold;
So I lay in the house of my toil mid the things I had fashioned of old;
And methought as I lay in my bed 'twixt waking and slumber of night
That I heard the tinkling metal and beheld the hall alight,
But I slept and dreamed of the Gods, and the things that never have slept,
Till I woke to a cry and a clashing and forth from the bed I leapt,
And there by the heaped-up Elf-gold my brother Fafnir stood,
And there at his feet lay Reidmar and reddened the Treasure with blood;
And e'en as I looked on his eyen they glazed and whitened with death,
And forth on the torch-litten hall he shed his latest breath.

"But I looked on Fafnir and trembled for he wore the Helm of Dread,
And his sword was bare in his hand, and the sword and the hand were red
With the blood of our father Reidmar, and his body was wrapped in gold,
With the ruddy-gleaming mailcoat of whose fellow hath nought been told,
And it seemed as I looked upon him that he grew beneath mine eyes:
And then in the mid-hall's silence did his dreadful voice arise:

"'I have slain my father Reidmar, that I alone might keep
The Gold of the darksome places, the Candle of the Deep.
I am such as the Gods have made me, lest the Dwarf-kind people the earth,
Or mingle their ancient wisdom with its short-lived latest birth.
I shall dwell alone henceforward, and the Gold and its waxing curse,
I shall brood on them both together, let my life grow better or worse.
And I am a King henceforward and long shall be my life,
And the Gold shall grow with my longing, for I shall hide it from strife,
And hoard up the Ring of Andvari in the house thine hand hath built.
O thou, wilt thou tarry and tarry, till I cast thy blood on the guilt?
Lo, I am a King for ever, and alone on the Gold shall I dwell
And do no deed to repent of and leave no tale to tell.'

"More awful grew his visage as he spake the word of dread
And no more durst I behold him, but with heart a-cold I fled;
I fled from the glorious house my hands had made so fair,
As poor as the new-born baby with nought of raiment or gear:
I fled from the heaps of gold, and my goods were the eager will,
And the heart that remembereth all, and the hand that may never be still.

"Then unto this land I came, and that was long ago
As men-folk count the years; and I taught them to reap and to sow,
And a famous man I became: but that generation died,
And they said that Frey had taught them, and a God my name did hide.
Then I taught them the craft of metals, and the sailing of the sea,
And the taming of the horse-kind, and the yoke-beasts' husbandry,
And the building up of houses; and that race of men went by,
And they said that Thor had taught them; and a smithying-carle was I.
Then I gave their maidens the needle and I bade them hold the rock,
And the shuttle-race gaped for them as they sat at the weaving-stock.
But by then these were waxen crones to sit dim-eyed by the door,
It was Freyia had come among them to teach the weaving-lore.

"Then I taught them the tales of old, and fair songs fashioned and true,
And their speech grew into music of measured time and due,
And they smote the harp to my bidding, and the land grew soft and sweet:
But ere the grass of their grave-mounds rose up above my feet,
It was Bragi had made them sweet-mouthed, and I was the wandering scald;
Yet green did my cunning flourish by whatso name I was called,
And I grew the master of masters—Think thou how strange it is
That the sword in the hands of a stripling shall one day end all this!

"Yet oft mid all my wisdom did I long for my brother's part,
And Fafnir's mighty kingship weighed heavy on my heart
When the Kings of the earthly kingdoms would give me golden gifts
From out of their scanty treasures, due pay for my cunning shifts.
And once—didst thou number the years thou wouldst think it long ago—
I wandered away to the country from whence our stem did grow.
There methought the fells grown greater, but waste did the meadows lie
And the house was rent and ragged and open to the sky.
But lo, when I came to the doorway, great silence brooded there,
Nor bat nor owl would haunt it, nor the wood-wolves drew anear.
Then I went to the pillared hall-stead, and lo, huge heaps of gold,
And to and fro amidst them a mighty Serpent rolled:
Then my heart grew chill with terror, for I thought on the wont of our race,
And I, who had lost their cunning, was a man in a deadly place,
A feeble man and a swordless in the lone destroyer's fold;
For I knew that the Worm was Fafnir, the Wallower on the Gold.

"So I gathered my strength and fled, and hid my shame again
Mid the foolish sons of men-folk; and the more my hope was vain,
The more I longed for the Treasure, and deliv'rance from the yoke:
And yet passed the generations, and I dwelt with the short-lived folk.

"Long years, and long years after the tale of men-folk told
How up on the Glittering Heath was the house and the dwelling of gold,
And within that house was the Serpent, and the Lord of the Fearful Face:
Then I wondered sore of the desert; for I thought of the golden place
My hands of old had builded; for I knew by many a sign
That the Fearful Face was my brother, that the blood
of the Worm was mine.

"This was ages long ago, and yet in that desert he dwells,
Betwixt him and men death lieth, and no man of his semblance tells;
But the tale of the great Gold-wallower is never the more outworn.
Then came thy kin, O Sigurd, and thy father's father was born,
And I fell to the dreaming of dreams, and I saw thine eyes therein,
And I looked and beheld thy glory and all that thy sword should win;
And I thought that thou shouldst be he, who should bring my heart its rest,
That of all the gifts of the Kings thy sword should give me the best.

"Ah, I fell to the dreaming of dreams; and oft the gold I saw,
And the golden-fashioned Hauberk, clean-wrought without a flaw,
And the Helm that aweth the world; and I knew of Fafnir's heart
That his wisdom was greater than mine, because he had held him apart,
Nor spilt on the sons of men-folk our knowledge of ancient days,
Nor bartered one whit for their love, nor craved for the people's praise.

"And some day I shall have it all, his gold and his craft and his heart
And the gathered and garnered wisdom he guards in the mountains apart.
And then when my hand is upon it, my hand shall be as the spring
To thaw his winter away and the fruitful tide to bring.
It shall grow, it shall grow into summer, and I shall be he that wrought,
And my deeds shall be remembered, and my name that once was nought;
Yea I shall be Frey, and Thor, and Freyia, and Bragi in one:
Yea the God of all that is,—and no deed in the wide world done,
But the deed that my heart would fashion: and the songs of the freed from the yoke
Shall bear to my house in the heavens the love and the longing of folk;
And there shall be no more dying, and the sea

shall be as the land,
And the world for ever and ever shall be young
beneath my hand."

Then his eyelids fell, and he slumbered, and it
seemed as Sigurd gazed
That the flames leapt up in the stithy and about
the Master blazed,
And his hand in the harp-strings wandered and
the sweetness from them poured.
Then unto his feet leapt Sigurd and drew his
stripling's sword,
And he cried: "Awake, O Master, for, lo, the day
goes by,
And this too is an ancient story, that the sons of
men-folk die,
And all save fame departeth. Awake! for the day
grows late,
And deeds by the door are passing, nor the
Norns will have them wait."

Then Regin groaned and wakened, sad-eyed and
heavy-browed,
And weary and worn was he waxen, as a man by
a burden bowed:
And he spake: "Hast thou hearkened, Sigurd,
wilt thou help a man that is old
To avenge him for his father? Wilt thou win that
Treasure of Gold
And be more than the Kings of the earth? Wilt
thou rid the earth of a wrong
And heal the woe and the sorrow my heart hath
endured o'erlong?"

Then Sigurd looked upon him with steadfast
eyes and clear,
And Regin drooped and trembled as he stood the
doom to hear:
But the bright child spake as aforetime, and
answered the Master and said:
"Thou shalt have thy will, and the Treasure, and
take the curse on thine head."

Of the forging of the Sword that is called The Wrath of Sigurd.

Now again came Sigurd to Regin, and said:
"Thou hast taught me a task
Whereof none knoweth the ending: and a gift at
thine hands I ask."

Then answered Regin the Master: "The world
must be wide indeed
If my hand may not reach across it for aught
thine heart may need."

"Yea wide is the world," said Sigurd, "and soon
spoken is thy word;
But this gift thou shalt nought gainsay me: for I
bid thee forge me a sword."

Then spake the Master of Masters, and his voice
was sweet and soft,
"Look forth abroad, O Sigurd, and note in the
heavens aloft
How the dim white moon of the daylight hangs
round as the Goth-God's shield:
Now for thee first rang mine anvil when she
walked the heavenly field
A slim and lovely lady, and the old moon lay on
her arm:
Lo, here is a sword I have wrought thee with
many a spell and charm
And all the craft of the Dwarf-kind; be glad
thereof and sure;

Mid many a storm of battle full well shall it
endure."

Then Sigurd looked on the slayer, and never a
word would speak:
Gemmed were the hilts and golden, and the
blade was blue and bleak,
And runes of the Dwarf-kind's cunning each side
the trench were scored:
But soft and sweet spake Regin: "How likest
thou the sword?"

Then Sigurd laughed and answered: "The work
is proved by the deed;
See now if this be a traitor to fail me in my
need."

Then Regin trembled and shrank, so bright his
eyes outshone
As he turned about to the anvil, and smote the
sword thereon;
But the shards fell shivering earthward, and
Sigurd's heart grew wroth
As the steel-flakes tinkled about him: "Lo, there
the right-hand's troth!
Lo, there the golden glitter, and the word that
soon is spilt."
And down amongst the ashes he cast the
glittering hilt,
And turned his back on Regin and strode out
through the door
And for many a day of spring-tide came back
again no more.
But at last he came to the stithy and again took
up the word:
"What hast thou done, O Master, in the forging
of the sword?"

Then sweetly Regin answered: "Hard task-
master art thou,
But lo, a blade of battle that shall surely please
thee now!
Two moons are clean departed since thou
lookedst toward the sky
And sawest the dim white circle amid the cloud-
flecks lie;
And night and day have I laboured; and the
cunning of old days
Hath surely left my right-hand if this sword thou
shalt not praise."

And indeed the hilts gleamed glorious with many
a dear-bought stone,
And down the fallow edges the light of battle
shone;
Yet Sigurd's eyes shone brighter, nor yet might
Regin face
Those eyes of the heart of the Volsungs; but
trembled in his place
As Sigurd cried: "O Regin, thy kin of the days of
old
Were an evil and treacherous folk, and they lied
and murdered for gold;
And now if thou wouldst bewray me, of the
ancient curse beware,
And set thy face as the flint the bale and the
shame to bear:
For he that would win to the heavens, and be as
the Gods on high
Must tremble nought at the road, and the place
where men-folk die."

White leaps the blade in his hand and gleams in
the gear of the wall,
And he smites, and the oft-smitten edges on the

beaten anvil fall:
But the life of the sword departed, and dull and broken it lay
On the ashes and flaked-off iron, and no word did Sigurd say,
But strode off through the door of the stithy and went to the Hall of Kings,
And was merry and blithe that even mid all imaginings.

But when the morrow was come he went to his mother and spake:
"The shards, the shards of the sword, that thou gleanedst for my sake
In the night on the field of slaughter, in the tide when my father fell,
Hast thou kept them through sorrow and joyance? hast thou warded them trusty and well?
Where hast thou laid them, my mother?"
Then she looked upon him and said:
"Art thou wroth, O Sigurd my son, that such eyes are in thine head?
And wilt thou be wroth with thy mother? do I withstand thee at all?"

"Nay," said he, "nought am I wrathful, but the days rise up like a wall
Betwixt my soul and the deeds, and I strive to rend them through.
And why wilt thou fear mine eyen? as the sword lies baleful and blue
E'en 'twixt the lips of lovers, when they swear their troth thereon,
So keen are the eyes ye have fashioned, ye folk of the days agone;
For therein is the light of battle, though whiles it lieth asleep.
Now give me the sword, my mother, that Sigmund gave thee to keep."

She said: "I shall give it thee gladly, for fain shall I be of thy praise
When thou knowest my careful keeping of that hope of the earlier days."

So she took his hand in her hand, and they went their ways, they twain,
Till they came to the treasure of queen-folk, the guarded chamber of gain:
They were all alone with its riches, and she turned the key in the gold,
And lifted the sea-born purple, and the silken web unrolled,
And lo, 'twixt her hands and her bosom the shards of Sigmund's sword;
No rust-fleck stained its edges, and the gems of the ocean's hoard
Were as bright in the hilts and glorious, as when in the Volsungs' hall
It shone in the eyes of the earl-folk and flashed from the shielded wall.

But Sigurd smiled upon it, and he said: "O Mother of Kings,
Well hast thou warded the war-glaive for a mirror of many things,
And a hope of much fulfilment: well hast thou given to me
The message of my fathers, and the word of things to be:
Trusty hath been thy warding, but its hour is over now:
These shards shall be knit together, and shall

hear the war-wind blow.
They shall shine through the rain of Odin, as the sun come back to the world,
When the heaviest bolt of the thunder amidst the storm is hurled:
They shall shake the thrones of Kings, and shear the walls of war,
And undo the knot of treason when the world is darkening o'er.
They have shone in the dusk and the night-tide, they shall shine in the dawn and the day;
They have gathered the storm together, they shall chase the clouds away;
They have sheared red gold asunder, they shall gleam o'er the garnered gold;
They have ended many a story, they shall fashion a tale to be told:
They have lived in the wrack of the people; they shall live in the glory of folk:
They have stricken the Gods in battle, for the Gods shall they strike the stroke."

Then she felt his hands about her as he took the fateful sword,
And he kissed her soft and sweetly; but she answered never a word:
So great and fair was he waxen, so glorious was his face,
So young, as the deathless Gods are, that long in the golden place
She stood when he was departed: as some for-travailed one
Comes over the dark fell-ridges on the birth-tide of the sun,
And his gathering sleep falls from him mid the glory and the blaze;
And he sees the world grow merry and looks on the lightened ways,
While the ruddy streaks are melting in the day-flood broad and white;
Then the morn-dusk he forgetteth, and the moon-lit waste of night,
And the hall whence he departed with its yellow candles' flare:
So stood the Isle-king's daughter in that treasure-chamber fair.

But swift on his ways went Sigurd, and to Regin's house he came,
Where the Master stood in the doorway and behind him leapt the flame,
And dark he looked and little: no more his speech was sweet,
No words on his lip were gathered the Volsung child to greet,
Till he took the sword from Sigurd and the shards of the days of old;
Then he spake:
"Will nothing serve thee save this blue steel and cold,
The bane of thy father's father, the fate of all his kin,
The baleful blade I fashioned, the Wrath that the Gods would win?"

Then answered the eye-bright Sigurd: "If thou thy craft wilt do
Nought save these battle-gleanings shall be my helper true:
And what if thou begrudgest, and my battle-

blade be dull,
Yet the hand of the Norns is lifted and the cup is over-full.
Repentst thou ne'er so sorely that thy kin must lie alow,
How much soe'er thou longest the world to overthrow,
And, doubting the gold and the wisdom, wouldst even now appease
Blind hate and eyeless murder, and win the world with these;
O'er-late is the time for repenting the word thy lips have said:
Thou shalt have the Gold and the wisdom and take its curse on thine head.
I say that thy lips have spoken, and no more with thee it lies
To do the deed or leave it: since thou hast shown mine eyes
The world that was aforetime, I see the world to be;
And woe to the tangling thicket, or the wall that hindereth me!
And short is the space I will tarry; for how if the Worm should die
Ere the first of my strokes be stricken? Wilt thou get to thy mastery
And knit these shards together that once in the Branstock stood?
But if not and a smith's hands fail me, a king's hand yet shall be good;
And the Norns have doomed thy brother. And yet I deem this sword
Is the slayer of the Serpent, and the scatterer of the Hoard."

Great waxed the gloom of Regin, and he said: "Thou sayest sooth
For none may turn him backward: the sword of a very youth
Shall one day end my cunning, as the Gods my joyance slew,
When nought thereof they were deeming, and another thing would do.
But this sword shall slay the Serpent; and do another deed,
And many an one thereafter till it fail thee in thy need.
But as fair and great as thou standest, yet get thee from mine house,
For in me too might ariseth, and the place is perilous
With the craft that was aforetime, and shall never be again,
When the hands that have taught thee cunning have failed from the world of men.
Thou art wroth; but thy wrath must slumber till fate its blossom bear;
Not thus were the eyes of Odin when I held him in the snare.
Depart! lest the end overtake us ere thy work and mine be done,
But come again in the night-tide and the slumber of the sun,
When the sharded moon of April hangs round in the undark May."

Hither and thither a while did the heart of Sigurd sway
For he feared no craft of the Dwarf-kind, nor heeded the ways of Fate,
But his hand wrought e'en as his heart would: and now was he weary with hate
Of the hatred and scorn of the Gods, and the greed of gold and of gain,

And the weaponless hands of the stripling of the wrath and the rending were fain,
But there stood Regin the Master, and his eyes were on Sigurd's eyes,
Though nought belike they beheld him, and his brow was sad and wise;
And the greed died out of his visage and he stood like an image of old.

So the Norns drew Sigurd away, and the tide was an even of gold,
And sweet in the April even were the fowl-kind singing their best;
And the light of life smote Sigurd, and the joy that knows no rest,
And the fond unnamed desire, and the hope of hidden things;
And he wended fair and lovely to the house of the feasting Kings.

But now when the moon was at full and the undark May begun,
Went Sigurd unto Regin mid the slumber of the sun,
And amidst the fire-hall's pavement the King of the Dwarf-kind stood
Like an image of deeds departed and days that once were good;
And he seemed but faint and weary, and his eyes were dim and dazed
As they met the glory of Sigurd where the fitful candles blazed.
Then he spake:
"Hail, Son of the Volsungs, the corner-stone is laid,
I have toiled and thou hast desired, and, lo, the fateful blade!"

Then Sigurd saw it lying on the ashes slaked and pale
Like the sun and the lightning mingled mid the even's cloudy bale;
For ruddy and great were the hilts, and the edges fine and wan,
And all adown to the blood-point a very flame there ran
That swallowed the runes of wisdom wherewith its sides were scored.
No sound did Sigurd utter as he stooped adown for his sword,
But it seemed as his lips were moving with speech of strong desire.
White leapt the blade o'er his head, and he stood in the ring of its fire
As hither and thither it played, till it fell on the anvil's strength,
And he cried aloud in his glory, and held out the sword full length,
As one who would show it the world; for the edges were dulled no whit,
And the anvil was cleft to the pavement with the dreadful dint of it.

But Regin cried to his harp-strings: "Before the days of men
I smithied the Wrath of Sigurd, and now is it smithied again:
And my hand alone hath done it, and my heart alone hath dared
To bid that man to the mountain, and behold his glory bared.
Ah, if the son of Sigmund might wot of the thing I would,
Then how were the ages bettered, and the world all waxen good!

Then how were the past forgotten and the weary
days of yore,
And the hope of man that dieth and the waste
that never bore!
How should this one live through the winter and
know of all increase!
How should that one spring to the sunlight and
bear the blossom of peace!
No more should the long-lived wisdom o'er the
waste of the wilderness stray;
Nor the clear-eyed hero hasten to the deedless
ending of day.
And what if the hearts of the Volsungs for this
deed of deeds were born,
How then were their life-days evil and the end of
their lives forlorn?"

There stood Sigurd the Volsung, and heard how
the harp-strings rang,
But of other things they told him than the hope
that the Master sang;
And his world lay far away from the Dwarf-king's
eyeless realm
And the road that leadeth nowhere, and the ship
without a helm:
But he spake: "How oft shall I say it, that I shall
work thy will?
If my father hath made me mighty, thine heart
shall I fulfill
With the wisdom and gold thou wouldest, before
I wend on my ways;
For now hast thou failed me nought, and the
sword is the wonder of days."

No word for a while spake Regin; but he hung
his head adown
As a man that pondereth sorely, and his voice
once more was grown
As the voice of the smithying-master as he
spake: "This Wrath of thine
Hath cleft the hard and the heavy; it shall shear
the soft and the fine:
Come forth to the night and prove it."
So they twain went forth abroad,
And the moon lay white on the river and lit the
sleepless ford,
And down to its pools they wended, and the
stream was swift and full;
Then Regin cast against it a lock of fine-spun
wool,
And it whirled about on the eddy till it met the
edges bared,
And as clean as the careless water the laboured
fleece was sheared.

Then Regin spake: "It is good, what the
smithying-carle hath wrought:
Now the work of the King beginneth, and the
end that my soul hath sought.
Thou shalt toil and I shall desire, and the deed
shall be surely done:
For thy Wrath is alive and awake and the story
of bale is begun."

Therewith was the Wrath of Sigurd laid soft in a
golden sheath
And the peace-strings knit around it; for that
blade was fain of death;
And 'tis ill to show such edges to the broad blue
light of day,
Or to let the hall-glare light them, if ye list not
play the play.

Of Gripir's Foretelling.

Now Sigurd backeth Greyfell on the first of the
morrow morn,
And he rideth fair and softly through the acres
of the corn;
The Wrath to his side is girded, but hid are the
edges blue,
As he wendeth his ways to the mountains, and
rideth the horse-mead through.
His wide grey eyes are happy, and his voice is
sweet and soft,
As amid the mead-lark's singing he casteth song
aloft:
Lo, lo, the horse and the rider! So once maybe it
was,
When over the Earth unpeopled the youngest
God would pass;
But never again meseemeth shall such a sight
betide,
Till over a world unwrongful new-born shall
Baldur ride.

So he comes to that ness of the mountains, and
Gripir's garden steep,
That bravely Greyfell breasteth, and adown by
the door doth he leap
And his war-gear rattleth upon him; there is
none to ask or forbid
As he wendeth the house clear-lighted, where no
mote of the dust is hid,
Though the sunlight hath not entered: the walls
are clear and bright,
For they cast back each to other the golden
Sigurd's light;
Through the echoing ways of the house bright-
eyed he wendeth along,
And the mountain-wind is with him, and the
hovering eagles' song;
But no sound of the children of men may the
ears of the Volsung hear,
And no sign of their ways in the world, or their
will, or their hope or their fear.

So he comes to the hall of Gripir, and gleaming-
green is it built
As the house of under-ocean where the wealth of
the greedy is spilt;
Gleaming and green as the sea, and rich as its
rock-strewn floor,
And fresh as the autumn morning when the
burning of summer is o'er.
There he looks and beholdeth the high-seat, and
he sees it strangely wrought,
Of the tooth of the sea-beast fashioned ere the
Dwarf-kind came to nought;
And he looks, and thereon is Gripir, the King
exceeding old,
With the sword of his fathers girded, and his
raiment wrought of gold;
With the ivory rod in his right-hand, with his left
on the crystal laid,
That is round as the world of men-folk, and after
its image made,
And clear is it wrought to the eyen that may
read therein of Fate
Though little indeed be its sea, and its earth not
wondrous great.

There Sigurd stands in the hall, on the sheathed
Wrath doth he lean,
All his golden light is mirrored in the gleaming
floor and green;
But the smile in his face upriseth as he looks on
the ancient King,
And their glad eyes meet and their laughter, and
sweet is the welcoming:

And Gripir saith: "Hail Sigurd! for my bidding
hast thou done,
And here in the mountain-dwelling are two
Kings of men alone."

But Sigurd spake: "Hail father! I am girt with
the fateful sword
And my face is set to the highway, and I come
for thy latest word."

Said Gripir: "What wouldst thou hearken ere we
sit and drink the wine?"

"Thy word and the Norns'," said Sigurd, "but
never a word of mine."

"What sights wouldst thou see," said Gripir, "ere
mine hand shall take thine hand?"

"As the Gods would I see," said Sigurd, "though
Death light up the land."

"What hope wouldst thou hope, O Sigurd, ere we
kiss, we twain, and depart?"

"Thy hope and the Gods'," said Sigurd, "though
the grief lie hard on my heart."

Nought answered the ancient wise-one, and not
a whit had he stirred
Since the clash of Sigurd's raiment in his
mountain-hall he heard;
But the ball that imaged the earth was set in his
hand grown old;
And belike it was to his vision, as the wide-
world's ocean rolled,
And the forests waved with the wind, and the
corn was gay with the lark,
And the gold in its nether places grew up in the
dusk and the dark,
And its children built and departed, and its King-
folk conquered and went,
As over the crystal image his all-wise face was
bent:
For all his desire was dead, and he lived as a
God shall live,
Who the prayers of the world hath forgotten,
and to whom no hand may give.

But there stood the mighty Volsung, and leaned
on the hidden Wrath;
As the earliest sun's uprising o'er the sea-plain
draws a path
Whereby men sail to the Eastward and the dawn
of another day,
So the image of King Sigurd on the gleaming
pavement lay.

Then great in the hall fair-pillared the voice of
Gripir arose,
And it ran through the glimmering house-ways,
and forth to the sunny close;
There mid the birds' rejoicing went the voice of
an o'er-wise King
Like a wind of midmost winter come back to talk
with spring.

But the voice cried: "Sigurd, Sigurd! O great, O
early born!
O hope of the Kings first fashioned! O blossom
of the morn!
Short day and long remembrance, fair summer
of the North!
One day shall the worn world wonder how first
thou wentest forth!

"Arise, O Sigurd, Sigurd! in the night arise and
go,
Thou shalt smite when the day-dawn glimmers
through the folds of God-home's foe:

"There the child in the noon-tide smiteth; the
young King rendeth apart,
The old guile by the guile encompassed, the
heart made wise by the heart.

"Bind the red rings, O Sigurd; bind up to cast
abroad!
That the earth may laugh before thee rejoiced
by the Waters' Hoard.

"Ride on, O Sigurd, Sigurd! for God's word goes
forth on the wind,
And he speaketh not twice over; nor shall they
loose that bind:
But the Day and the Day shall loosen, and the
Day shall awake and arise,
And the Day shall rejoice with the Dawning, and
the wise heart learn of the wise.

"O fair, O fearless, O mighty, how green are the
garths of Kings,
How soft are the ways before thee to the heart
of their war-farings!

"How green are the garths of King-folk, how fair
is the lily and rose
In the house of the Cloudy People, 'neath the
towers of kings and foes!

"Smite now, smite now in the noontide! ride on
through the hosts of men!
Lest the dear remembrance perish, and today
come not again.

"Is it day?—But the house is darkling—But the
hand would gather and hold,
And the lips have kissed the cloud-wreath, and a
cloud the arms enfold.

"In the dusk hath the Sower arisen; in the dark
hath he cast the seed,
And the ear is the sorrow of Odin and the wrong,
and the nameless need!

"Ah the hand hath gathered and garnered, and
empty is the hand,
Though the day be full and fruitful mid the drift
of the Cloudy Land!

"Look, look on the drift of the clouds, how the
day and the even doth grow
As the long-forgotten dawning that was a while
ago!

"Dawn, dawn, O mighty of men! and why wilt
thou never awake,
When the holy field of the Goth-folk cries out for
thy love and thy sake?

"Dawn, now; but the house is silent, and dark is
the purple blood
On the breast of the Queen fair-fashioned; and it
riseth up as a flood
Round the posts of the door belovèd; and a deed
there lieth therein:
The last of the deeds of Sigurd; the worst of the
Cloudy Kin—
The slayer slain by the slain within the door and
without.

—O dawn as the eve of the birth-day! O dark
world cumbered with doubt!

"Shall it never be day any more, nor the sun's
uprising and growth?
Shall the kings of earth lie sleeping and the war-
dukes wander in sloth
Through the last of the winter twilight? is the
word of the wise-ones said
Till the five-fold winter be ended and the
trumpet waken the dead?

"Short day and long remembrance! great glory
for the earth!
O deeds of the Day triumphant! O word of
Sigurd's worth!
It is done, and who shall undo it of all who were
ever alive?
May the Gods or the high Gods' masters 'gainst
the tale of the righteous strive,
And the deeds to follow after, and all their deeds
increase,
Till the uttermost field is foughten, and Baldur
riseth in peace!

"Cry out, O waste, before him! O rocks of the
wilderness, cry!
For to-morn shalt thou see the glory, and the
man not made to die!
Cry out, O upper heavens! O clouds beneath the
lift
For the golden King shall be riding high-headed
midst the drift:
The mountain waits and the fire; there waiteth
the heart of the wise
Till the earthly toil is accomplished, and again
shall the fire arise;
And none shall be nigh in the ending and none
by his heart shall be laid,
Save the world that he cherished and quickened,
and the Day that he wakened and made."

So died the voice of Gripir from amidst the
sunny close,
And the sound of hastening eagles from the
mountain's feet arose,
But the hall was silent a little, for still stood
Sigmund's son,
And he heard the words and remembered, and
knew them one by one.
Then he turned on the ancient Gripir with eyes
that knew no guile
And smiled on the wise of King-folk as the first
of men might smile
On the God that hath fashioned him happy; and
he spake:
"Hast thou spoken and known
How there standeth a child before thee and a
stripling scarcely grown?
Or hast thou told of the Volsungs, and the
gathered heart of these,
And their still unquenched desire for garnering
fame's increase?
E'en so do I hearken thy words: for I wot how
they deem it long
Till a man from their seed be arisen to deal with
the cumber and wrong.
Bid me therefore to sit by thy side, for behold I
wend on my way,
And the gates swing to behind me, and each day
of mine is a day
With deeds in the eve and the morning, nor
deeds shall the noontide lack;
To the right and the left none calleth, and no
voice crieth aback."

"Come, kin of the Gods," said Gripir, "come up and sit by my side
That we twain may be glad as the fearless, and they that have nothing to hide:
I have wrought out my will and abide it, and I sit ungrieved and alone,
I look upon men and I help not; to me are the deeds long done
As those of to-day and to-morrow: for these and for those am I glad;
But the Gods and men are the framers, and the days of my life I have had."

Then Sigurd came unto Gripir, and he kissed the wise-one's face,
And they sat in the high-seat together, the child and the elder of days;
And they drank of the wine of King-folk, and were joyful each of each,
And spake for a while of matters that are meet for King-folk's speech;
The deeds of men that have been and Kin of the Kings of the earth;
And Gripir told of the outlands, and the mid-world's billowy girth,
And tales of the upper heaven were mingled with his talk,
And the halls where the Sea-Queen's kindred o'er the gem-strewn pavement walk,
And the innermost parts of the earth, where they lie, the green and the blue,
And the red and the glittering gem-stones that of old the Dwarf-kind knew.

Long Sigurd sat and marvelled at the mouth that might not lie,
And the eyes no God had blinded, and the lone heart raised on high,
Then he rose from the gleaming high-seat, and the rings of battle rang
And the sheathèd Wrath was hearkening and a song of war it sang,
But Sigurd spake unto Gripir:
"Long and lovely are thy days,
And thy years fulfilled of wisdom, and thy feet on the unhid ways,
And the guileless heart of the great that knoweth not anger nor pain:
So once hath a man been fashioned and shall not be again.
But for me hath been foaled the war-horse, the grey steed swift as the cloud,
And for me were the edges smithied, and the Wrath cries out aloud;
And a voice hath called from the darkness, and I ride to the Glittering Heath;
To smite on the door of Destruction, and waken the warder of Death."

So they kissed, the wise and the wise, and the child from the elder turned;
And again in the glimmering house-ways the golden Sigurd burned;
He stood outside in the sunlight, and tarried never a deal,
But leapt on the cloudy Greyfell with the clank of gold and steel,
And he rode through the sinking day to the walls of the kingly stead,
And came to Regin's dwelling when the wind was fallen dead,
And the great sun just departing: then blood-red grew the west,
And the fowl flew home from the sea-mead, and

all things sank to rest.

Sigurd rideth to the Glittering Heath.

Again on the morrow morning doth Sigurd the Volsung ride,
And Regin, the Master of Masters, is faring by his side,
And they leave the dwelling of kings and ride the summer land,
Until at the eve of the day the hills are on either hand:
Then they wend up higher and higher, and over the heaths they fare
Till the moon shines broad on the midnight, and they sleep 'neath the heavens bare;
And they waken and look behind them, and lo, the dawning of day
And the little land of the Helper and its valley far away;
But the mountains rise before them, a wall exceeding great.

Then spake the Master of Masters: "We have come to the garth and the gate:
There is youth and rest behind thee and many a thing to do,
There is many a fond desire, and each day born anew;
And the land of the Volsungs to conquer, and many a people's praise:
And for me there is rest it maybe, and the peaceful end of days.
We have come to the garth and the gate; to the hall-door now shall we win,
Shall we go to look on the high-seat and see what sitteth therein?"

"Yea and what else?" said Sigurd, "was thy tale but mockeries
And have I been drifted hither on a wind of empty lies?"

"It was sooth, it was sooth," said Regin, "and more might I have told
Had I heart and space to remember the deeds of the days of old."

And he hung down his head as he spake it, and was silent a little space;
And when it was lifted again there was fear in the Dwarf-king's face.
And he said: "Thou knowest my thought, and wise-hearted art thou grown:
It were well if thine eyes were blinder, and we each were faring alone,
And I with my eld and my wisdom, and thou with thy youth and thy might;
Yet whiles I dream I have wrought thee, a beam of the morning bright,
A fatherless motherless glory, to work out my desire;
Then high my hope ariseth, and my heart is all afire
For the world I behold from afar, and the day that yet shall be;
Then I wake and all things I remember and a youth of the Kings I see—
—The child of the Wood-abider, the seed of a conquered King,
The sword that the Gods have fashioned, the fate that men shall sing:—
Ah might the world run backward to the days of the Dwarfs of old,

When I hewed out the pillars of crystal, and
smoothed the walls of gold!"

Nought answered the Son of Sigmund; nay he
heard him nought at all,
Save as though the wind were speaking in the
bights of the mountain-hall:
But he leapt aback of Greyfell, and the glorious
sun rose up,
And the heavens glowed above him like the bowl
of Baldur's cup,
And a golden man was he waxen; as the heart of
the sun he seemed,
While over the feet of the mountains like blood
the new light streamed;
Then Sigurd cried to Greyfell and swift for the
pass he rode
And Regin followed after as a man bowed down
by a load.

Day-long they fared through the mountains, and
that highway's fashioner
Forsooth was a fearful craftsman, and his hands
the waters were,
And the heaped-up ice was his mattock, and the
fire-blast was his man,
And never a whit he heeded though his walls
were waste and wan,
And the guest-halls of that wayside great heaps
of the ashes spent.
But, each as a man alone, through the sun-
bright day they went,
And they rode till the moon rose upward, and
the stars were small and fair,
Then they slept on the long-slaked ashes
beneath the heavens bare;
And the cold dawn came and they wakened, and
the King of the Dwarf-kind seemed
As a thing of that wan land fashioned; but
Sigurd glowed and gleamed
Amid the shadowless twilight by Greyfell's
cloudy flank,
As a little space they abided while the latest
star-world shrank;
On the backward road looked Regin and heard
how Sigurd drew
The girths of Greyfell's saddle, and the voice of
his sword he knew
And he feared to look on the Volsung, as thus he
fell to speak:

"I have seen the Dwarf-folk mighty, I have seen
the God-folk weak;
And now, though our might be minished, yet
have we gifts to give.
When men desire and conquer, most sweet is
their life to live;
When men are young and lovely there is many a
thing to do,
And sweet is their fond desire and the dawn that
springs anew."

"This gift," said the Son of Sigmund, "the Norns
shall give me yet,
And no blossom slain by the sunshine while the
leaves with dew are wet."

Then Regin turned and beheld him: "Thou shalt
deem it hard and strange,
When the hand hath encompassed it all, and yet
thy life must change.
Ah, long were the lives of men-folk, if betwixt
the Gods and them
Were mighty warders watching mid the earth's
and the heaven's hem!

Is there any man so mighty he would cast this
gift away,—
The heart's desire accomplished, and life so long
a day,
That the dawn should be forgotten ere the even
was begun?"

Then Sigurd laughed and answered: "Fare forth,
O glorious sun;
Bright end from bright beginning, and the mid-
way good to tell,
And death, and deeds accomplished, and all
remembered well!
Shall the day go past and leave us, and we be
left with night,
To tread the endless circle, and strive in vain to
smite?
But thou—wilt thou still look backward? thou
sayst I know thy thought:
Thou hast whetted the sword for the slaying, it
shall turn aside for nought.
Fear not! with the Gold and the wisdom thou
shalt deem thee God alone,
And mayst do and undo at pleasure, nor be
bound by right nor wrong:
And then, if no God I be waxen, I shall be the
weak with the strong."

And his war-gear clanged and tinkled as he leapt
to the saddle-stead:
And the sun rose up at their backs and the grey
world changed to red.
And away to the west went Sigurd by the glory
wreathed about,
But little and black was Regin as a fire that dieth
out.
Day-long they rode the mountains by the crags
exceeding old,
And the ash that the first of the Dwarf-kind
found dull and quenched and cold.
Then the moon in the mid-sky swam, and the
stars were fair and pale,
And beneath the naked heaven they slept in an
ash-grey dale;
And again at the dawn-dusk's ending they stood
upon their feet,
And Sigurd donned his war-gear nor his eyes
would Regin meet.

A clear streak widened in heaven low down
above the earth;
And above it lay the cloud-flecks, and the sun,
anigh its birth,
Unseen, their hosts was staining with the very
hue of blood,
And ruddy by Greyfell's shoulder the Son of
Sigmund stood.

Then spake the Master of Masters: "What is
thine hope this morn
That thou dightest thee, O Sigurd, to ride this
world forlorn?"

"What needeth hope," said Sigurd, "when the
heart of the Volsungs turns
To the light of the Glittering Heath, and the
house where the Waster burns?
I shall slay the Foe of the Gods, as thou badst
me a while agone,
And then with the Gold and its wisdom shalt
thou be left alone."

"O Child," said the King of the Dwarf-kind,
"when the day at last comes round
For the dread and the Dusk of the Gods, and the

kin of the Wolf is unbound,
When thy sword shall hew the fire, and the wildfire beateth thy shield,
Shalt thou praise the wages of hope and the Gods that pitched the field?"

"O Foe of the Gods," said Sigurd, "wouldst thou hide the evil thing,
And the curse that is greater than thou, lest death end thy labouring,
Lest the night should come upon thee amidst thy toil for nought?
It is me, it is me that thou fearest, if indeed I know thy thought;
Yea me, who would utterly light the face of all good and ill,
If not with the fruitful beams that the summer shall fulfill,
Then at least with the world a-blazing, and the glare of the grinded sword."

And he sprang aloft to the saddle as he spake the latest word,
And the Wrath sang loud in the sheath as it ne'er had sung before,
And the cloudy flecks were scattered like flames on the heaven's floor,
And all was kindled at once, and that trench of the mountains grey
Was filled with the living light as the low sun lit the way:
But Regin turned from the glory with blinded eyes and dazed,
And lo, on the cloudy war-steed how another light there blazed,
And a great voice came from amidst it:
"O Regin, in good sooth,
I have hearkened not nor heeded the words of thy fear and thy ruth:
Thou hast told thy tale and thy longing, and thereto I hearkened well:—
Let it lead thee up to heaven, let it lead thee down to hell,
The deed shall be done to-morrow: thou shalt have that measureless Gold,
And devour the garnered wisdom that blessed thy realm of old,
That hath lain unspent and begrudged in the very heart of hate:
With the blood and the might of thy brother thine hunger shalt thou sate;
And this deed shall be mine and thine; but take heed for what followeth then!
Let each do after his kind! I shall do the deeds of men;
I shall harvest the field of their sowing, in the bed of their strewing shall sleep;
To them shall I give my life-days, to the Gods my glory to keep.
But thou with the wealth and the wisdom that the best of the Gods might praise,
If thou shalt indeed excel them and become the hope of the days,
Then me in turn hast thou conquered, and I shall be in turn
Thy fashioned brand of the battle through good and evil to burn,
Or the flame that sleeps in thy stithy for the gathered winds to blow,
When thou listest to do and undo and thine uttermost cunning to show.
But indeed I wot full surely that thou shalt follow thy kind;
And for all that cometh after, the Norns shall loose and bind."

Then his bridle-reins rang sweetly, and the warding-walls of death,
And Regin drew up to him, and the Wrath sang loud in the sheath,
And forth from that trench in the mountains by the westward way they ride;
And little and black goes Regin by the golden Volsung's side;
But no more his head is drooping, for he seeth the Elf-king's Gold;
The garnered might and the wisdom e'en now his eyes behold.

So up and up they journeyed, and ever as they went
About the cold-slaked forges, o'er many a cloud-swept bent,
Betwixt the walls of blackness, by shores of the fishless meres,
And the fathomless desert waters, did Regin cast his fears,
And wrap him in desire; and all alone he seemed
As a God to his heirship wending, and forgotten and undreamed
Was all the tale of Sigurd, and the folk he had toiled among,
And the Volsungs, Odin's children, and the men-folk fair and young.

So on they ride to the westward, and huge were the mountains grown
And the floor of heaven was mingled with that tossing world of stone:
And they rode till the noon was forgotten and the sun was waxen low,
And they tarried not, though he perished, and the world grew dark below.
Then they rode a mighty desert, a glimmering place and wide,
And into a narrow pass high-walled on either side
By the blackness of the mountains, and barred aback and in face
By the empty night of the shadow; a windless silent place:
But the white moon shone o'erhead mid the small sharp stars and pale,
And each as a man alone they rode on the highway of bale.

So ever they wended upward, and the midnight hour was o'er,
And the stars grew pale and paler, and failed from the heaven's floor,
And the moon was a long while dead, but there was the promise of day,
No change came over the darkness, no streak of the dawning grey;
No sound of the wind's uprising adown the night there ran:
It was blind as the Gaping Gulf ere the first of the worlds began.

Then athwart and athwart rode Sigurd and sought the walls of the pass,
But found no wall before him; and the road rang hard as brass
Beneath the hoofs of Greyfell, as up and up he trod:

—Was it the daylight of Hell, or the night of the doorways of God?

But lo, at the last a glimmer, and a light from the west there came,
And another and another, like points of far-off flame;
And they grew and brightened and gathered; and whiles together they ran
Like the moonwake over the waters; and whiles they were scant and wan,
Some greater and some lesser, like the boats of fishers laid
About the sea of midnight; and a dusky dawn they made,
A faint and glimmering twilight: So Sigurd strains his eyes,
And he sees how a land deserted all round about him lies
More changeless than mid-ocean, as fruitless as its floor:
Then the heart leaps up within him, for he knows that his journey is o'er,
And there he draweth bridle on the first of the Glittering Heath:
And the Wrath is waxen merry and sings in the golden sheath
As he leaps adown from Greyfell, and stands upon his feet,
And wends his ways through the twilight the Foe of the Gods to meet.

Sigurd slayeth Fafnir the Serpent.

Nought Sigurd seeth of Regin, and nought he heeds of him,
As in watchful might and glory he strides the desert dim,
And behind him paceth Greyfell; but he deems the time o'erlong
Till he meet the great gold-warden, the over-lord of wrong.

So he wendeth midst the silence through the measureless desert place,
And beholds the countless glitter with wise and steadfast face,
Till him-seems in a little season that the flames grow somewhat wan,
And a grey thing glimmers before him, and becomes a mighty man,
One-eyed and ancient-seeming, in cloud-grey raiment clad;
A friendly man and glorious, and of visage smiling-glad:
Then content in Sigurd groweth because of his majesty,
And he heareth him speak in the desert as the wind of the winter sea:

"Hail Sigurd! Give me thy greeting ere thy ways alone thou wend!"

Said Sigurd: "Hail! I greet thee, my friend and my fathers' friend."

"Now whither away," said the elder, "with the Steed and the ancient Sword?"

"To the greedy house," said Sigurd, "and the King of the Heavy Hoard."

"Wilt thou smite, O Sigurd, Sigurd?" said the ancient mighty-one.

"Yea, yea, I shall smite," said the Volsung, "save the Gods have slain the sun."

"What wise wilt thou smite," said the elder, "lest the dark devour thy day?"

"Thou hast praised the sword," said the child, "and the sword shall find a way."

"Be learned of me," said the Wise-one, "for I was the first of thy folk."

Said the child: "I shall do thy bidding, and for thee shall I strike the stroke."

Spake the Wise-one: "Thus shalt thou do when thou wendest hence alone:
Thou shalt find a path in the desert, and a road in the world of stone;
It is smooth and deep and hollow, but the rain hath riven it not,
And the wild wind hath not worn it, for it is but Fafnir's slot,
Whereby he wends to the water and the fathomless pool of old,
When his heart in the dawn is weary, and he loathes the Ancient Gold:
There think of the great and the fathers, and bare the whetted Wrath,
And dig a pit in the highway, and a grave in the Serpent's path:
Lie thou therein, O Sigurd, and thine hope from the glooming hide,
And be as the dead for a season, and the living light abide!
And so shall thine heart avail thee, and thy mighty fateful hand,
And the Light that lay in the Branstock, the well belovèd brand."

Said the child: "I shall do thy bidding, and for thee shall I strike the stroke;
For I love thee, friend of my fathers, Wise Heart of the holy folk."

So spake the Son of Sigmund, and beheld no man anear,
And again was the night the midnight, and the twinkling flames shone clear
In the hush of the Glittering Heath; and alone went Sigmund's son
Till he came to the road of Fafnir, and the highway worn by one,
By the drift of the rain unfurrowed, by the windy years unrent,
And forth from the dark it came, and into the dark it went.

Great then was the heart of Sigurd, for there in the midmost he stayed,
And thought of the ancient fathers, and bared the bright blue blade,
That shone as a fleck of the day-light, and the night was all around.
Fair then was the Son of Sigmund as he toiled and laboured the ground;
Great, mighty he was in his working, and the Glittering Heath he clave,
And the sword shone blue before him as he dug the pit and the grave:
There he hid his hope from the night-tide and lay like one of the dead,
And wise and wary he bided; and the heavens hung over his head.

Now the night wanes over Sigurd, and the ruddy rings he sees,
And his war-gear's fair adornment, and the God-folk's images;
But a voice in the desert ariseth, a sound in the waste has birth,
A changing tinkle and clatter, as of gold dragged over the earth:
O'er Sigurd widens the day-light, and the sound is drawing close,
And speedier than the trample of speedy feet it goes;
But ever deemeth Sigurd that the sun brings back the day,
For the grave grows lighter and lighter and heaven o'erhead is grey.

But now, how the rattling waxeth till he may not heed nor hark!
And the day and the heavens are hidden, and o'er Sigurd rolls the dark,
As the flood of a pitchy river, and heavy-thick is the air
With the venom of hate long hoarded, and lies once fashioned fair:
Then a wan face comes from the darkness, and is wrought in manlike wise,
And the lips are writhed with laughter and bleared are the blinded eyes;
And it wandereth hither and thither, and searcheth through the grave
And departeth, leaving nothing, save the dark, rolled wave on wave
O'er the golden head of Sigurd and the edges of the sword,
And the world weighs heavy on Sigurd, and the weary curse of the Hoard:
Him-seemed the grave grew straiter, and his hope of life grew chill,
And his heart by the Worm was enfolded, and the bonds of the Ancient Ill.

Then was Sigurd stirred by his glory, and he strove with the swaddling of Death;
He turned in the pit on the highway, and the grave of the Glittering Heath;
He laughed and smote with the laughter and thrust up over his head,
And smote the venom asunder, and clave the heart of Dread;
Then he leapt from the pit and the grave, and the rushing river of blood,
And fulfilled with the joy of the War-God on the face of earth he stood
With red sword high uplifted, with wrathful glittering eyes;
And he laughed at the heavens above him for he saw the sun arise,
And Sigurd gleamed on the desert, and shone in the new-born light,
And the wind in his raiment wavered, and all the world was bright.

But there was the ancient Fafnir, and the Face of Terror lay
On the huddled folds of the Serpent, that were black and ashen-grey
In the desert lit by the sun; and those twain looked each on each,
And forth from the Face of Terror went a sound of dreadful speech:

"Child, child, who art thou that hast smitten? bright child, of whence is thy birth?"

"I am called the Wild-thing Glorious, and alone I
wend on the earth."

"Fierce child, and who was thy father?—Thou
hast cleft the heart of the Foe!"

"Am I like to the sons of men-folk, that my father
I should know?"

"Wert thou born of a nameless wonder? shall the
lies to my death-day cling?"

"How lieth Sigurd the Volsung, and the Son of
Sigmund the King?"

"O bitter father of Sigurd!—thou hast cleft mine
heart atwain!"

"I arose, and I wondered and wended, and I
smote, and I smote not in vain."

"What master hath taught thee of murder?—
Thou hast wasted Fafnir's day."

"I, Sigurd, knew and desired, and the bright
sword learned the way."

"Thee, thee shall the rattling Gold and the red
rings bring to the bane."

"Yet mine hand shall cast them abroad, and the
earth shall gather again."

"I see thee great in thine anger, and the Norns
thou heedest not."

"O Fafnir, speak of the Norns and the wisdom
unforgot!"

"Let the death-doomed flee from the ocean, him
the wind and the weather shall drown."

"O Fafnir, tell of the Norns ere thy life thou
layest adown!"

"O manifold is their kindred, and who shall tell
them all?
There are they that rule o'er men-folk and the
stars that rise and fall:
—I knew of the folk of the Dwarfs, and I knew
their Norns of old;
And I fought, and I fell in the morning, and I die
afar from the gold:
—I have seen the Gods of heaven, and their
Norns withal I know:
They love and withhold their helping, they hate
and refrain the blow;
They curse and they may not sunder, they bless
and they shall not blend;
They have fashioned the good and the evil; they
abide the change and the end."

"O Fafnir, what of the Isle, and what hast thou
known of its name,
Where the Gods shall mingle edges with Surt
and the Sons of Flame?"

"O child, O Strong Compeller? Unshapen is its
hight;
There the fallow blades shall be shaken and the
Dark and the Day shall smite,
When the Bridge of the Gods is broken, and
their white steeds swim the sea,
And the uttermost field is stricken, last strife of

thee and me."

"What then shall endure, O Fafnir, the tale of
the battle to tell?"

"I am blind, O Strong Compeller, in the bonds of
Death and Hell.
But thee shall the rattling Gold and the red rings
bring unto bane."

"Yet the rings mine hand shall scatter, and the
earth shall gather again."

"Woe, woe! in the days passed over I bore the
Helm of Dread,
I reared the Face of Terror, and the hoarded
hate of the Dead:
I overcame and was mighty; I was wise and
cherished my heart
In the waste where no man wandered, and the
high house builded apart:
Till I met thine hand, O Sigurd, and thy might
ordained from of old;
And I fought and fell in the morning, and I die
far off from the Gold."

Then Sigurd leaned on his sword, and a dreadful
voice went by
Like the wail of a God departing and the War-
God's misery;
And strong words of ancient wisdom went by on
the desert wind,
The words that mar and fashion, the words that
loose and bind;
And sounds of a strange lamenting, and such
strange things bewailed,
That words to tell their meaning the tongue of
man hath failed.

Then all sank into silence, and the Son of
Sigmund stood
On the torn and furrowed desert by the pool of
Fafnir's blood,
And the Serpent lay before him, dead, chilly,
dull, and grey;
And over the Glittering Heath fair shone the sun
and the day,
And a light wind followed the sun and breathed
o'er the fateful place,
As fresh as it furrows the sea-plain or bows the
acres' face.

Sigurd slayeth Regin the Master of Masters on the Glittering Heath.

There standeth Sigurd the Volsung, and leaneth
on his sword,
And beside him now is Greyfell and looks on his
golden lord,
And the world is awake and living; and whither
now shall they wend,
Who have come to the Glittering Heath, and
wrought that deed to its end?
For hither comes Regin the Master from the
skirts of the field of death,
And he shadeth his eyes from the sunlight as
afoot he goeth and saith:
"Ah, let me live for a while! for a while and all
shall be well,
When passed is the house of murder and I creep
from the prison of hell."

Afoot he went o'er the desert, and he came unto
Sigurd and stared
At the golden gear of the man, and the Wrath

yet bloody and bared,
And the light locks raised by the wind, and the eyes beginning to smile,
And the lovely lips of the Volsung, and the brow that knew no guile;
And he murmured under his breath while his eyes grew white with wrath:

"O who art thou, and wherefore, and why art thou in the path?"
Then he turned to the ash-grey Serpent, and grovelled low on the ground,
And he drank of that pool of the blood where the stones of the wild were drowned,
And long he lapped as a dog; but when he arose again,
Lo, a flock of the mountain-eagles that drew to the feastful plain;
And he turned and looked on Sigurd, as bright in the sun he stood,
A stripling fair and slender, and wiped the Wrath of the blood.

But Regin cried: "O Dwarf-kind, O many-shifting folk,
O shapes of might and wonder, am I too freed from the yoke,
That binds my soul to my body a withered thing forlorn,
While the short-lived fools of man-folk so fair and oft are born?
Now swift in the air shall I be, and young in the concourse of kings,
If my heart shall come to desire the gain of earthly things."

And he looked and saw how Sigurd was sheathing the Flame of War,
And the eagles screamed in the wind, but their voice came faint from afar:
Then he scowled, and crouched and darkened, and came to Sigurd and spake:
"O child, thou hast slain my brother, and the Wrath is alive and awake."

"Thou sayest sooth," said Sigurd, "thy deed and mine is done:
But now our ways shall sunder, for here, meseemeth, the sun
Hath but little of deeds to do, and no love to win aback."

Then Regin crouched before him, and he spake: "Fare on to the wrack!
Fare on to the murder of men, and the deeds of thy kindred of old!
And surely of thee as of them shall the tale be speedily told.
Thou hast slain thy Master's brother, and what wouldst thou say thereto,
Were the judges met for the judging and the doom-ring hallowed due?"

Then Sigurd spake as aforetime: "Thy deed and mine it was,
And now our ways shall sunder, and into the world will I pass."

But Regin darkened before him, and exceeding grim was he grown,
And he spake: "Thou hast slain my brother, and wherewith wilt thou atone?"

"Stand up, O Master," said Sigurd, "O Singer of ancient days,

And take the wealth I have won thee, ere we
wend on the sundering ways.
I have toiled and thou hast desired, and the
Treasure is surely anear,
And thou hast wisdom to find it, and I have slain
thy fear."

But Regin crouched and darkened: "Thou hast
slain my brother," he said.

"Take thou the Gold," quoth Sigurd, "for the
ransom of my head!"

Then Regin crouched and darkened, and over
the earth he hung;
And he said: "Thou hast slain my brother, and
the Gods are yet but young."

Bright Sigurd towered above him, and the Wrath
cried out in the sheath,
And Regin writhed against it as the adder turns
on death;
And he spake: "Thou hast slain my brother, and
to-day shalt thou be my thrall:
Yea a King shall be my cook-boy and this heath
my cooking-hall."

Then he crept to the ash-grey coils where the
life of his brother had lain,
And he drew a glaive from his side and smote
the smitten and slain,
And tore the heart from Fafnir, while the eagles
cried o'erhead,
And sharp and shrill was their voice o'er the
entrails of the dead.

Then Regin spake to Sigurd: "Of this slaying wilt
thou be free?
Then gather thou fire together and roast the
heart for me,
That I may eat it and live, and be thy master and
more;
For therein was might and wisdom, and the
grudged and hoarded lore:—
—Or else, depart on thy ways afraid from the
Glittering Heath."

Then he fell abackward and slept, nor set his
sword in the sheath,
But his hand was red on the hilts and blue were
the edges bared,
Ash-grey was his visage waxen, and with open
eyes he stared
On the height of heaven above him, and a fearful
thing he seemed,
As his soul went wide in the world, and of rule
and kingship he dreamed.

But Sigurd took the Heart, and wood on the
waste he found,
The wood that grew and died, as it crept on the
niggard ground,
And grew and died again, and lay like whitened
bones;
And the ernes cried over his head, as he builded
his hearth of stones,
And kindled the fire for cooking, and sat and
sang o'er the roast
The song of his fathers of old, and the Wolflings'
gathering host:
So there on the Glittering Heath rose up the
little flame,
And the dry sticks crackled amidst it, and alow
the eagles came,
And seven they were by tale, and they pitched

all round about
The cooking-fire of Sigurd, and sent their song-speech out:
But nought he knoweth its wisdom, or the word that they would speak:
And hot grew the Heart of Fafnir and sang amid the reek.

Then Sigurd looketh on Regin, and he deemeth it overlong
That he dighteth the dear-bought morsel, and the might for the Master of wrong,
So he reacheth his hand to the roast to see if the cooking be o'er;
But the blood and the fat seethed from it and scalded his finger sore,
And he set his hand to his mouth to quench the fleshly smart,
And he tasted the flesh of the Serpent and the blood of Fafnir's Heart:
Then there came a change upon him, for the speech of fowl he knew,
And wise in the ways of the beast-kind as the Dwarfs of old he grew;
And he knitted his brows and hearkened, and wrath in his heart arose;
For he felt beset of evil in a world of many foes.
But the hilt of the Wrath he handled, and Regin's heart he saw,
And how that the Foe of the Gods the net of death would draw;
And his bright eyes flashed and sparkled, and his mouth grew set and stern
As he hearkened the voice of the eagles, and their song began to learn.

For the first cried out in the desert: "O mighty Sigmund's son,
How long wilt thou sit and tarry now the dear-bought roast is done?"

And the second: "Volsung, arise! for the horns blow up to the hall,
And dight are the purple hangings, and the King to the feasting should fall."

And the third: "How great is the feast if the eater eat aright
The Heart of the wisdom of old and the after-world's delight!"

And the fourth: "Yea what of Regin? shall he scatter wrack o'er the world?
Shall the father be slain by the son, and the brother 'gainst brother be hurled?"

And the fifth: "He hath taught a stripling the gifts of a God to give:
He hath reared up a King for the slaying, that he alone might live."

And the sixth: "He shall waken mighty as a God that scorneth a truth;
He hath drunk of the blood of the Serpent, and drowned all hope and ruth."

And the seventh: "Arise, O Sigurd, lest the hour be overlate!
For the sun in the mid-noon shineth, and swift is the hand of Fate:
Arise! lest the world run backward and the blind heart have its will,
And once again be tangled the sundered good and ill;
Lest love and hatred perish, lest the world

forget its tale,
And the Gods sit deedless, dreaming, in the high-walled heavenly vale."

Then swift ariseth Sigurd, and the Wrath in his hand is bare,
And he looketh, and Regin sleepeth, and his eyes wide-open glare;
But his lips smile false in his dreaming, and his hand is on the sword;
For he dreams himself the Master and the new world's fashioning-lord.
And his dream hath forgotten Sigurd, and the King's life lies in the pit;
He is nought; Death gnaweth upon him, while the Dwarfs in mastery sit.

But lo, how the eyes of Sigurd the heart of the guileful behold,
And great is Allfather Odin, and upriseth the Curse of the Gold,
And the Branstock bloometh to heaven from the ancient wondrous root;
The summer hath shone on its blossoms, and Sigurd's Wrath is the fruit:
Dread then he cried in the desert: "Guile-master, lo thy deed!
Hast thou nurst my life for destruction, and my death to serve thy need?
Hast thou kept me here for the net and the death that tame things die?
Hast thou feared me overmuch, thou Foe of the Gods on high?
Lest the sword thine hand was wielding should turn about and cleave
The tangled web of nothing thou hadst wearied thyself to weave.
Lo here the sword and the stroke! judge the Norns betwixt us twain!
But for me, I will live and die not, nor shall all my hope be vain."
Then his second stroke struck Sigurd, for the Wrath flashed thin and white,
And 'twixt head and trunk of Regin fierce ran the fateful light;
And there lay brother by brother a faded thing and wan.
But Sigurd cried in the desert: "So far have I wended on!
Dead are the foes of God-home that would blend the good and the ill;
And the World shall yet be famous, and the Gods shall have their will.
Nor shall I be dead and forgotten, while the earth grows worse and worse,
With the blind heart king o'er the people, and binding curse with curse."

How Sigurd took to him the Treasure of the Elf Andvari.

Now Sigurd eats of the heart that once in the Dwarf-king lay,
The hoard of the wisdom begrudged, the might of the earlier day.
Then wise of heart was he waxen, but longing in him grew
To sow the seed he had gotten, and till the field he knew.
So he leapeth aback of Greyfell, and rideth the desert bare,
And the hollow slot of Fafnir, that led to the Serpent's lair.
Then long he rode adown it, and the ernes flew overhead,

And tidings great and glorious of that Treasure
of old they said.
So far o'er the waste he wended, and when the
night was come
He saw the earth-old dwelling, the dread Gold-
wallower's home:
On the skirts of the Heath it was builded by a
tumbled stony bent;
High went that house to the heavens, down
'neath the earth it went,
Of unwrought iron fashioned for the heart of a
greedy king:
'Twas a mountain, blind without, and within was
its plenishing
But the Hoard of Andvari the ancient, and the
sleeping Curse unseen,
The Gold of the Gods that spared not and the
greedy that have been.
Through the door strode Sigurd the Volsung,
and the grey moon and the sword
Fell in on the tawny gold-heaps of the ancient
hapless Hoard:
Gold gear of hosts unburied, and the coin of
cities dead,
Great spoil of the ages of battle, lay there on the
Serpent's bed:
Huge blocks from mid-earth quarried, where
none but the Dwarfs have mined,
Wide sands of the golden rivers no foot of man
may find
Lay 'neath the spoils of the mighty and the
ruddy rings of yore:
But amidst was the Helm of Aweing that the
Fear of earth-folk bore,
And there gleamed a wonder beside it, the
Hauberk all of gold,
Whose like is not in the heavens nor has earth of
its fellow told:
There Sigurd seeth moreover Andvari's Ring of
Gain,
The hope of Loki's finger, the Ransom's utmost
grain;
For it shone on the midmost gold-heap like the
first star set in the sky
In the yellow space of even when moon-rise
draweth anigh.
Then laughed the Son of Sigmund, and stooped
to the golden land,
And gathered that first of the harvest and set it
on his hand;
And he did on the Helm of Aweing, and the
Hauberk all of gold,
Whose like is not in the heavens nor has earth of
its fellow told:
Then he praised the day of the Volsungs amid
the yellow light,
And he set his hand to the labour and put forth
his kingly might;
He dragged forth gold to the moon, on the
desert's face he laid
The innermost earth's adornment, and rings for
the nameless made;
He toiled and loaded Greyfell, and the cloudy
war-steed shone
And the gear of Sigurd rattled in the flood of
moonlight wan;
There he toiled and loaded Greyfell, and the
Volsung's armour rang
Mid the yellow bed of the Serpent: but without
the eagles sang:

"Bind the red rings, O Sigurd! let the gold shine

free and clear!
For what hath the Son of the Volsungs the
ancient Curse to fear?"

"Bind the red rings, O Sigurd! for thy tale is well
begun,
And the world shall be good and gladdened by
the Gold lit up by the sun."

"Bind the red rings, O Sigurd, and gladden all
thine heart!
For the world shall make thee merry ere thou
and she depart."

"Bind the red rings, O Sigurd! for the ways go
green below,
Go green to the dwelling of Kings, and the halls
that the Queen-folk know."

"Bind the red rings, O Sigurd! for what is there
bides by the way,
Save the joy of folk to awaken, and the dawn of
the merry day?"

"Bind the red rings, O Sigurd! for the strife
awaits thine hand,
And a plenteous war-field's reaping, and the
praise of many a land."

"Bind the red rings, O Sigurd! But how shall
store-house hold
That glory of thy winning and the tidings to be
told?"

Now the moon was dead, and the star-worlds
were great on the heavenly plain,
When the steed was fully laden; then Sigurd
taketh the rein
And turns to the ruined rock-wall that the lair
was built beneath,
For there he deemed was the gate and the door
of the Glittering Heath,
But not a whit moved Greyfell for aught that the
King might do;
Then Sigurd pondered a while, till the heart of
the beast he knew,
And clad in all his war-gear he leaped to the
saddle-stead,
And with pride and mirth neighed Greyfell and
tossed aloft his head,
And sprang unspurred o'er the waste, and light
and swift he went,
And breasted the broken rampart, the stony
tumbled bent;
And over the brow he clomb, and there beyond
was the world,
A place of many mountains and great crags
together hurled.
So down to the west he wendeth, and goeth
swift and light,
And the stars are beginning to wane, and the
day is mingled with night;
For full fain was the sun to arise and look on the
Gold set free,
And the Dwarf-wrought rings of the Treasure
and the gifts from the floor of the sea.

How Sigurd awoke Brynhild upon Hindfell.

By long roads rideth Sigurd amidst that world of
stone,
And somewhat south he turneth; for he would
not be alone,
But longs for the dwellings of man-folk, and the

kingly people's speech,
And the days of the glee and the joyance, where men laugh each to each.
But still the desert endureth, and afar must Greyfell fare
From the wrack of the Glittering Heath, and Fafnir's golden lair.
Long Sigurd rideth the waste, when, lo, on a morning of day
From out of the tangled crag-walls, amidst the cloud-land grey
Comes up a mighty mountain, and it is as though there burns
A torch amidst of its cloud-wreath; so thither Sigurd turns,
For he deems indeed from its topmost to look on the best of the earth;
And Greyfell neigheth beneath him, and his heart is full of mirth.

So he rideth higher and higher, and the light grows great and strange,
And forth from the clouds it flickers, till at noon they gather and change,
And settle thick on the mountain, and hide its head from sight;
But the winds in a while are awakened, and day bettereth ere the night,
And, lifted a measureless mass o'er the desert crag-walls high,
Cloudless the mountain riseth against the sunset sky,
The sea of the sun grown golden, as it ebbs from the day's desire;
And the light that afar was a torch is grown a river of fire,
And the mountain is black above it, and below is it dark and dun;
And there is the head of Hindfell as an island in the sun.

Night falls, but yet rides Sigurd, and hath no thought of rest,
For he longs to climb that rock-world and behold the earth at its best;
But now mid the maze of the foot-hills he seeth the light no more,
And the stars are lovely and gleaming on the lightless heavenly floor.
So up and up he wendeth till the night is wearing thin;
And he rideth a rift of the mountain, and all is dark therein,
Till the stars are dimmed by dawning and the wakening world is cold;
Then afar in the upper rock-wall a breach doth he behold,
And a flood of light poured inward the doubtful dawning blinds:
So swift he rideth thither and the mouth of the breach he finds,
And sitteth awhile on Greyfell on the marvellous thing to gaze:
For lo, the side of Hindfell enwrapped by the fervent blaze,
And nought 'twixt earth and heaven save a world of flickering flame,
And a hurrying shifting tangle, where the dark rents went and came.

Great groweth the heart of Sigurd with uttermost desire,

And he crieth kind to Greyfell, and they hasten
up, and nigher,
Till he draweth rein in the dawning on the face
of Hindfell's steep:
But who shall heed the dawning where the
tongues of that wildfire leap?
For they weave a wavering wall, that driveth
over the heaven
The wind that is born within it; nor ever aside is
it driven
By the mightiest wind of the waste, and the rain-
flood amidst it is nought;
And no wayfarer's door and no window the hand
of its builder hath wrought.
But thereon is the Volsung smiling as its breath
uplifteth his hair,
And his eyes shine bright with its image, and his
mail gleams white and fair,
And his war-helm pictures the heavens and the
waning stars behind:
But his neck is Greyfell stretching to snuff at the
flame-wall blind,
And his cloudy flank upheaveth, and tinkleth the
knitted mail,
And the gold of the uttermost waters is waxen
wan and pale.

Now Sigurd turns in his saddle, and the hilt of
the Wrath he shifts,
And draws a girth the tighter; then the gathered
reins he lifts,
And crieth aloud to Greyfell, and rides at the
wildfire's heart;
But the white wall wavers before him and the
flame-flood rusheth apart,
And high o'er his head it riseth, and wide and
wild is its roar
As it beareth the mighty tidings to the very
heavenly floor:
But he rideth through its roaring as the warrior
rides the rye,
When it bows with the wind of the summer and
the hid spears draw anigh;
The white flame licks his raiment and sweeps
through Greyfell's mane,
And bathes both hands of Sigurd and the hilts of
Fafnir's bane,
And winds about his war-helm and mingles with
his hair,
But nought his raiment dusketh or dims his
glittering gear;
Then it fails and fades and darkens till all seems
left behind,
And dawn and the blaze is swallowed in mid-
mirk stark and blind.

But forth a little further and a little further on
And all is calm about him, and he sees the
scorched earth wan
Beneath a glimmering twilight, and he turns his
conquering eyes,
And a ring of pale slaked ashes on the side of
Hindfell lies;
And the world of the waste is beyond it; and all
is hushed and grey,
And the new-risen moon is a-paleing, and the
stars grow faint with day.
Then Sigurd looked before him and a Shield-
burg there he saw,
A wall of the tiles of Odin wrought clear without
a flaw,
The gold by the silver gleaming, and the ruddy

by the white;
And the blazonings of their glory were done upon them bright,
As of dear things wrought for the war-lords new come to Odin's hall.
Piled high aloft to the heavens uprose that battle-wall,
And far o'er the topmost shield-rim for a banner of fame there hung
A glorious golden buckler; and against the staff it rung
As the earliest wind of dawning uprose on Hindfell's face
And the light from the yellowing east beamed soft on the shielded place.

But the Wrath cried out in answer as Sigurd leapt adown
To the wasted soil of the desert by that rampart of renown;
He looked but little beneath it, and the dwelling of God it seemed,
As against its gleaming silence the eager Sigurd gleamed:
He draweth not sword from scabbard, as the wall he wendeth around,
And it is but the wind and Sigurd that wakeneth any sound:
But, lo, to the gate he cometh, and the doors are open wide,
And no warder the way withstandeth, and no earls by the threshold abide;
So he stands awhile and marvels; then the baleful light of the Wrath
Gleams bare in his ready hand as he wendeth the inward path:
For he doubteth some guile of the Gods, or perchance some Dwarf-king's snare,
Or a mock of the Giant people that shall fade in the morning air:
But he getteth him in and gazeth; and a wall doth he behold,
And the ruddy set by the white, and the silver by the gold;
But within the garth that it girdeth no work of man is set,
But the utmost head of Hindfell ariseth higher yet;
And below in the very midmost is a Giant-fashioned mound,
Piled high as the rims of the Shield-burg above the level ground;
And there, on that mound of the Giants, o'er the wilderness forlorn,
A pale grey image lieth, and gleameth in the morn.

So there was Sigurd alone; and he went from the shielded door,
And aloft in the desert of wonder the Light of the Branstock he bore;
And he set his face to the earth-mound, and beheld the image wan,
And the dawn was growing about it; and, lo, the shape of a man
Set forth to the eyeless desert on the tower-top of the world,
High over the cloud-wrought castle whence the windy bolts are hurled.

Now he comes to the mound and climbs it, and will see if the man be dead;

Some King of the days forgotten laid there with
crownèd head,
Or the frame of a God, it may be, that in heaven
hath changed his life,
Or some glorious heart belovèd, God-rapt from
the earthly strife:
Now over the body he standeth, and seeth it
shapen fair,
And clad from head to foot-sole in pale grey-
glittering gear,
In a hauberk wrought as straitly as though to
the flesh it were grown:
But a great helm hideth the head and is girt with
a glittering crown.

So thereby he stoopeth and kneeleth, for he
deems it were good indeed
If the breath of life abide there and the speech
to help at need;
And as sweet as the summer wind from a garden
under the sun
Cometh forth on the topmost Hindfell the breath
of that sleeping-one.
Then he saith he will look on the face, if it bear
him love or hate,
Or the bonds for his life's constraining, or the
sundering doom of fate.
So he draweth the helm from the head, and, lo,
the brow snow-white,
And the smooth unfurrowed cheeks, and the
wise lips breathing light;
And the face of a woman it is, and the fairest
that ever was born,
Shown forth to the empty heavens and the
desert world forlorn:
But he looketh, and loveth her sore, and he
longeth her spirit to move,
And awaken her heart to the world, that she may
behold him and love.
And he toucheth her breast and her hands, and
he loveth her passing sore;
And he saith: "Awake! I am Sigurd;" but she
moveth never the more.

Then he looked on his bare bright blade, and he
said: "Thou—what wilt thou do?
For indeed as I came by the war-garth thy voice
of desire I knew."
Bright burnt the pale blue edges for the sunrise
drew anear,
And the rims of the Shield-burg glittered, and
the east was exceeding clear:
So the eager edges he setteth to the Dwarf-
wrought battle-coat
Where the hammered ring-knit collar
constraineth the woman's throat;
But the sharp Wrath biteth and rendeth, and
before it fail the rings,
And, lo, the gleam of the linen, and the light of
golden things:
Then he driveth the blue steel onward, and
through the skirt, and out,
Till nought but the rippling linen is wrapping
her about;
Then he deems her breath comes quicker and
her breast begins to heave,
So he turns about the War-Flame and rends
down either sleeve,
Till her arms lie white in her raiment, and a
river of sun-bright hair
Flows free o'er bosom and shoulder and floods
the desert bare.

Then a flush cometh over her visage and a sigh
upheaveth her breast,

And her eyelids quiver and open, and she
wakeneth into rest;
Wide-eyed on the dawning she gazeth, too glad
to change or smile,
And but little moveth her body, nor speaketh she
yet for a while;
And yet kneels Sigurd moveless her wakening
speech to heed,
While soft the waves of the daylight o'er the
starless heavens speed,
And the gleaming rims of the Shield-burg yet
bright and brighter grow,
And the thin moon hangeth her horns dead-
white in the golden glow.
Then she turned and gazed on Sigurd, and her
eyes met the Volsung's eyes.
And mighty and measureless now did the tide of
his love arise,
For their longing had met and mingled, and he
knew of her heart that she loved,
As she spake unto nothing but him and her lips
with the speech-flood moved:

"O, what is the thing so mighty that my weary
sleep hath torn,
And rent the fallow bondage, and the wan woe
over-worn?"

He said: "The hand of Sigurd and the Sword of
Sigmund's son,
And the heart that the Volsungs fashioned this
deed for thee have done."

But she said: "Where then is Odin that laid me
here alow?
Long lasteth the grief of the world, and man-
folk's tangled woe!"

"He dwelleth above," said Sigurd, "but I on the
earth abide,
And I came from the Glittering Heath the waves
of thy fire to ride."

But therewith the sun rose upward and
lightened all the earth,
And the light flashed up to the heavens from the
rims of the glorious girth;
But they twain arose together, and with both her
palms outspread,
And bathed in the light returning, she cried
aloud and said:

"All hail O Day and thy Sons, and thy kin of the
coloured things!
Hail, following Night, and thy Daughter that
leadeth thy wavering wings!
Look down with unangry eyes on us to-day alive,
And give us the hearts victorious, and the gain
for which we strive!
All hail, ye Lords of God-home, and ye Queens of
the House of Gold!
Hail thou dear Earth that bearest, and thou
Wealth of field and fold!
Give us, your noble children, the glory of
wisdom and speech,
And the hearts and the hands of healing, and the
mouths and hands that teach!"

Then they turned and were knit together; and
oft and o'er again
They craved, and kissed rejoicing, and their
hearts were full and fain.

Then Sigurd looketh upon her, and the words
from his heart arise:

"Thou art the fairest of earth, and the wisest of
the wise;
O who art thou that lovest? I am Sigurd, e'en as
I told;
I have slain the Foe of the Gods, and gotten the
Ancient Gold;
And great were the gain of thy love, and the gift
of mine earthly days,
If we twain should never sunder as we wend on
the changing ways.
O who art thou that lovest, thou fairest of all
things born?
And what meaneth thy sleep and thy slumber in
the wilderness forlorn?"

She said: "I am she that loveth: I was born of the
earthly folk,
But of old Allfather took me from the Kings and
their wedding yoke:
And he called me the Victory-Wafter, and I went
and came as he would,
And I chose the slain for his war-host, and the
days were glorious and good,
Till the thoughts of my heart overcame me, and
the pride of my wisdom and speech,
And I scorned the earth-folk's Framer and the
Lord of the world I must teach:
For the death-doomed I caught from the sword,
and the fated life I slew,
And I deemed that my deeds were goodly, and
that long I should do and undo.
But Allfather came against me and the God in
his wrath arose;
And he cried: 'Thou hast thought in thy folly that
the Gods have friends and foes,
That they wake, and the world wends onward,
that they sleep, and the world slips back,
That they laugh, and the world's weal waxeth,
that they frown and fashion the wrack:
Thou hast cast up the curse against me; it shall
fall aback on thine head;
Go back to the sons of repentance, with the
children of sorrow wed!
For the Gods are great unholpen, and their grief
is seldom seen,
And the wrong that they will and must be is soon
as it hath not been.'

"Yet I thought: 'Shall I wed in the world, shall I
gather grief on the earth?
Then the fearless heart shall I wed, and bring
the best to birth,
And fashion such tales for the telling, that Earth
shall be holpen at least,
If the Gods think scorn of its fairness, as they sit
at the changeless feast.'

"Then somewhat smiled Allfather; and he spake:
'So let it be!
The doom thereof abideth; the doom of me and
thee.
Yet long shall the time pass over ere thy waking-
day be born:
Fare forth, and forget and be weary 'neath the
Sting of the Sleepful Thorn!'

"So I came to the head of Hindfell and the ruddy
shields and white,
And the wall of the wildfire wavering around the
isle of night;
And there the Sleep-thorn pierced me, and the
slumber on me fell,
And the night of nameless sorrows that hath no
tale to tell.
Now I am she that loveth; and the day is nigh at

hand
When I, who have ridden the sea-realm and the regions of the land,
And dwelt in the measureless mountains and the forge of stormy days,
Shall dwell in the house of my fathers and the land of the people's praise;
And there shall hand meet hand, and heart by heart shall beat,
And the lying-down shall be joyous, and the morn's uprising sweet.
Lo now, I look on thine heart and behold of thine inmost will,
That thou of the days wouldst hearken that our portion shall fulfill;
But O, be wise of man-folk, and the hope of thine heart refrain!
As oft in the battle's beginning ye vex the steed with the rein,
Lest at last in its latter ending, when the sword hath hushed the horn,
His limbs should be weary and fail, and his might be over-worn.
O be wise, lest thy love constrain me, and my vision wax o'er-clear,
And thou ask of the thing that thou shouldst not, and the thing that thou wouldst not hear.

"Know thou, most mighty of men, that the Norns shall order all,
And yet without thine helping shall no whit of their will befall;
Be wise! 'tis a marvel of words, and a mock for the fool and the blind;
But I saw it writ in the heavens, and its fashioning there did I find:
And the night of the Norns and their slumber, and the tide when the world runs back,
And the way of the sun is tangled, it is wrought of the dastard's lack.
But the day when the fair earth blossoms, and the sun is bright above,
Of the daring deeds is it fashioned and the eager hearts of love.

"Be wise, and cherish thine hope in the freshness of the days,
And scatter its seed from thine hand in the field of the people's praise;
Then fair shall it fall in the furrow, and some the earth shall speed,
And the sons of men shall marvel at the blossom of the deed:
But some the earth shall speed not; nay rather, the wind of the heaven
Shall waft it away from thy longing—and a gift to the Gods hast thou given,
And a tree for the roof and the wall in the house of the hope that shall be,
Though it seemeth our very sorrow, and the grief of thee and me.

"Strive not with the fools of man-folk: for belike thou shalt overcome;
And what then is the gain of thine hunting when thou bearest the quarry home?
Or else shall the fool overcome thee, and what deed thereof shall grow?
Nay, strive with the wise man rather, and increase thy woe and his woe;
Yet thereof a gain hast thou gotten; and the half of thine heart hast thou won

If thou mayst prevail against him, and his deeds
are the deeds thou hast done:
Yea, and if thou fall before him, in him shalt
thou live again,
And thy deeds in his hand shall blossom, and his
heart of thine heart shall be fain.

"When thou hearest the fool rejoicing, and he
saith, 'It is over and past,
And the wrong was better than right, and hate
turns into love at the last,
And we strove for nothing at all, and the Gods
are fallen asleep;
For so good is the world a growing that the evil
good shall reap:'
Then loosen thy sword in the scabbard and
settle the helm on thine head,
For men betrayed are mighty, and great are the
wrongfully dead.

"Wilt thou do the deed and repent it? thou hadst
better never been born:
Wilt thou do the deed and exalt it? then thy fame
shall be outworn:
Thou shalt do the deed and abide it, and sit on
thy throne on high,
And look on to-day and to-morrow as those that
never die.

"Love thou the Gods—and withstand them, lest
thy fame should fail in the end,
And thou be but their thrall and their bondsman,
who wert born for their very friend:
For few things from the Gods are hidden, and
the hearts of men they know,
And how that none rejoiceth to quail and crouch
alow.

"I have spoken the words, belovèd, to thy
matchless glory and worth;
But thy heart to my heart hath been speaking,
though my tongue hath set it forth:
For I am she that loveth, and I know what thou
wouldst teach
From the heart of thine unlearned wisdom, and I
needs must speak thy speech."

Then words were weary and silent, but oft and
o'er again
They craved and kissed rejoicing, and their
hearts were full and fain.

Then spake the Son of Sigmund: "Fairest, and
most of worth,
Hast thou seen the ways of man-folk and the
regions of the earth?
Then speak yet more of wisdom; for most meet
meseems it is
That my soul to thy soul be shapen, and that I
should know thy bliss."

So she took his right hand meekly, nor any word
would say,
Not e'en of love or praising, his longing to delay;
And they sat on the side of Hindfell, and their
fain eyes looked and loved,
As she told of the hidden matters whereby the
world is moved:
And she told of the framing of all things, and the
houses of the heaven;
And she told of the star-worlds' courses, and
how the winds be driven;
And she told of the Norns and their names, and
the fate that abideth the earth;
And she told of the ways of King-folk in their

anger and their mirth;
And she spake of the love of women, and told of the flame that burns,
And the fall of mighty houses, and the friend that falters and turns,
And the lurking blinded vengeance, and the wrong that amendeth wrong,
And the hand that repenteth its stroke, and the grief that endureth for long;
And how man shall bear and forbear, and be master of all that is;
And how man shall measure it all, the wrath, and the grief, and the bliss.

"I saw the body of Wisdom, and of shifting guise was she wrought,
And I stretched out my hands to hold her, and a mote of the dust they caught;
And I prayed her to come for my teaching, and she came in the midnight dream—
And I woke and might not remember, nor betwixt her tangle deem:
She spake, and how might I hearken; I heard, and how might I know;
I knew, and how might I fashion, or her hidden glory show?
All things I have told thee of Wisdom are but fleeting images
Of her hosts that abide in the Heavens, and her light that Allfather sees:
Yet wise is the sower that sows, and wise is the reaper that reaps,
And wise is the smith in his smiting, and wise is the warder that keeps:
And wise shalt thou be to deliver, and I shall be wise to desire;
—And lo, the tale that is told, and the sword and the wakening fire!
Lo now, I am she that loveth, and hark how Greyfell neighs,
And Fafnir's Bed is gleaming, and green go the downward ways.
The road to the children of men and the deeds that thou shalt do
In the joy of thy life-days' morning, when thine hope is fashioned anew.
Come now, O Bane of the Serpent, for now is the high-noon come,
And the sun hangeth over Hindfell and looks on the earth-folk's home;
But the soul is so great within thee, and so glorious are thine eyes,
And me so love constraineth, and mine heart that was called the wise,
That we twain may see men's dwellings and the house where we shall dwell,
And the place of our life's beginning, where the tale shall be to tell."

So they climb the burg of Hindfell, and hand in hand they fare,
Till all about and above them is nought but the sunlit air,
And there close they cling together rejoicing in their mirth;
For far away beneath them lie the kingdoms of the earth,
And the garths of men-folk's dwellings and the streams that water them,
And the rich and plenteous acres, and the silver ocean's hem,
And the woodland wastes and the mountains, and all that holdeth all;
The house and the ship and the island, the loom and the mine and the stall,

The beds of bane and healing, the crafts that slay and save,
The temple of God and the Doom-ring, the cradle and the grave.

Then spake the Victory-Wafter: "O King of the Earthly Age,
As a God thou beholdest the treasure and the joy of thine heritage,
And where on the wings of his hope is the spirit of Sigurd borne?
Yet I bid thee hover awhile as a lark alow on the corn;
Yet I bid thee look on the land 'twixt the wood and the silver sea
In the bight of the swirling river, and the house that cherished me!
There dwelleth mine earthly sister and the king that she hath wed;
There morn by morn aforetime I woke on the golden bed;
There eve by eve I tarried mid the speech and the lays of kings;
There noon by noon I wandered and plucked the blossoming things;
The little land of Lymdale by the swirling river's side,
Where Brynhild once was I called in the days ere my father died;
The little land of Lymdale 'twixt the woodland and the sea,
Where on thee mine eyes shall brighten and thine eyes shall beam on me."

"I shall seek thee there," said Sigurd, "when the day-spring is begun,
Ere we wend the world together in the season of the sun."

"I shall bide thee there," said Brynhild, "till the fullness of the days,
And the time for the glory appointed, and the springing-tide of praise."

From his hand then draweth Sigurd Andvari's ancient Gold;
There is nought but the sky above them as the ring together they hold,
The shapen ancient token, that hath no change nor end,
No change, and no beginning, no flaw for God to mend:
Then Sigurd cries: "O Brynhild, now hearken while I swear,
That the sun shall die in the heavens and the day no more be fair,
If I seek not love in Lymdale and the house that fostered thee,
And the land where thou awakedst 'twixt the woodland and the sea!"

And she cried: "O Sigurd, Sigurd, now hearken while I swear
That the day shall die for ever and the sun to blackness wear,
Ere I forget thee, Sigurd, as I lie 'twixt wood and sea
In the little land of Lymdale and the house that fostered me!"

Then he set the ring on her finger and once, if ne'er again,
They kissed and clung together, and their hearts were full and fain.

So the day grew old about them and the joy of
their desire,
And eve and the sunset came, and faint grew the
sunset fire,
And the shadowless death of the day was sweet
in the golden tide;
But the stars shone forth on the world, and the
twilight changed and died;
And sure if the first of man-folk had been born to
that starry night,
And had heard no tale of the sunrise, he had
never longed for the light:
But Earth longed amidst her slumber, as 'neath
the night she lay,
And fresh and all abundant abode the deeds of
Day.

THE END.

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"Last of the Cavaliers," Author of—
Last of the Cavaliers 2 v.
The Gain of a Loss 2 v.

Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands from 1848 to 1861, 1 v.
More Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands from 1862 to 1882, 1 v.

Holme Lee:
vide Miss Parr.

S. Le Fanu:
Uncle Silas 2 v.
Guy Deverell 2 v.

Mark Lemon:
Wait for the End 2 v.
Loved at Last 2 v.
Falkner Lyle 2 v.
Leyton Hall 2 v.
Golden Fetters 2 v.

Charles Lever:
The O'Donoghue 1 v.
The Knight of Gwynne 3 v.
Arthur O'Leary 2 v.
The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer 2 v.
Charles O'Malley 3 v.
Tom Burke of "Ours" 3 v.
Jack Hinton 2 v.
The Daltons 4 v.
The Dodd Family abroad 3 v.
The Martins of Cro' Martin 3 v.
The Fortunes of Glencore 2 v.
Roland Cashel 3 v.
Davenport Dunn 3 v.
Con Cregan 2 v.
One of Them 2 v.
Maurice Tiernay 2 v.
Sir Jasper Carew 2 v.
Barrington 2 v.
A Day's Ride: a Life's Romance 2 v.
Luttrell of Arran 2 v.
Tony Butler 2 v.
Sir Brook Fossbrooke 2 v.
The Bramleighs of Bishop's Folly 2 v.
A Rent in a Cloud 1 v.
That Boy of Norcott's 1 v.
St. Patrick's Eve; Paul Gosslett's Confessions 1 v.
Lord Kilgobbin 2 v.

G. H. Lewes:
Ranthorpe 1 v.
Physiology of Common Life 2 v.
On Actors and the Art of Acting 1 v.

E. Lynn Linton:
Joshua Davidson 1 v.
Patricia Kemball 2 v.
The Atonement of Leam Dundas 2 v.
The World well Lost 2 v.
Under which Lord? 2 v.
With a Silken Thread etc. 1 v.
Todhunters' at Loanin' Head etc. 1 v.
"My Love!" 2 v.
The Girl of the Period, etc. 1 v.
Ione 2 v.

Laurence W. M. Lockhart:
Mine is Thine 2 v.

Longfellow:
Poetical Works (w. portrait) 3 v.
The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri 3 v.
The New-England Tragedies 1 v.
The Divine Tragedy 1 v.
Three Books of Song 1 v.
The Masque of Pandora 1 v.

M. Lonsdale:
Sister Dora 1 v.

A Lost Battle 2 v.

Lutfullah:
Autobiography of Lutfullah, by Eastwick 1 v.

Lord Lytton:
vide Bulwer.

Robert Lord Lytton (Owen Meredith):
Poems 2 v.
Fables in Song 2 v.

Lord Macaulay:
History of England (w. portrait) 10 v.
Critical and Historical Essays 5 v.
Lays of Ancient Rome 1 v.
Speeches 2 v.
Biographical Essays 1 v.
William Pitt, Atterbury 1 v.
(See also Trevelyan).

Justin M^{c}Carthy:
Waterdale Neighbours 2 v.
Lady Disdain 2 v.
Miss Misanthrope 2 v.
A History of our own Times 5 v.
Donna Quixote 2 v.
A short History of our own Times 2 v.
A History of the Four Georges vol. 1.

George MacDonald:
Alec Forbes of Howglen 2 v.
Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood 2 v.
David Elginbrod 2 v.
The Vicar's Daughter 2 v.
Malcolm 2 v.
St. George and St. Michael 2 v.
The Marquis of Lossie 2 v.
Sir Gibbie 2 v.
Mary Marston 2 v.
The Gifts of the Child Christ, etc. 1 v.
The Princess and Curdie 1 v.

Mrs. Mackarness:
Sunbeam Stories 1 v.
A Peerless Wife 2 v.
A Mingled Yarn 2 v.

Charles McKnight:
Old Fort Duquesne 2 v.

Norman Macleod:
The old Lieutenant and his Son 1 v.

Mrs. Macquoid:
Patty 2 v.
Miriam's Marriage 2 v.
Pictures across the Channel 2 v.
Too Soon 1 v.
My Story 2 v.
Diane 2 v.
Beside the River 2 v.
A Faithful Lover 2 v.

"Mademoiselle Mori," Author of—
Mademoiselle Mori 2 v.
Denise 1 v.
Madame Fontenoy 1 v.
On the Edge of the Storm 1 v.
The Atelier du Lys 2 v.
In the Olden Time 2 v.

Lord Mahon:
vide Stanhope.

E. S. Maine:
Scarscliff Rocks 2 v.

Lucas Malet:
Colonel Enderby's Wife 2 v.

Lord Malmesbury:
Memoirs of an Ex-Minister 3 v.

R. Blachford Mansfield:
The Log of the Water Lily 1 v.

Mark Twain:
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer 1 v.
The Innocents Abroad; or, the New Pilgrims' Progress 2 v.
A Tramp Abroad 2 v.
"Roughing it" 1 v.
The Innocents at Home 1 v.
The Prince and the Pauper 2 v.
The Stolen White Elephant, etc. 1 v.
Life on the Mississippi 2 v.
Sketches 1 v.
Huckleberry Finn 2 v.

Marmorne 1 v.

Capt. Marryat:
Jacob Faithful (w. portrait) 1 v.
Percival Keene 1 v.
Peter Simple 1 v.
Japhet 1 v.
Monsieur Violet 1 v.
The Settlers 1 v.
The Mission 1 v.
The Privateer's-Man 1 v.
The Children of the New-Forest 1 v.
Valerie 1 v.
Mr. Midshipman Easy 1 v.
The King's Own 1 v.

Florence Marryat:
Love's Conflict 2 v.

For Ever and Ever 2 v.
The Confessions of Gerald Estcourt 2 v.
Nelly Brooke 2 v.
Véronique 2 v.
Petronel 2 v.
Her Lord and Master 2 v.
The Prey of the Gods 1 v.
Life of Captain Marryat 1 v.
Mad Dumaresq 2 v.
No Intentions 2 v.
Fighting the Air 2 v.
A Star and a Heart 1 v.
The Poison of Asps 1 v.
A Lucky Disappointment 1 v.
My own Child 2 v.
Her Father's Name 2 v.
A Harvest of Wild Oats 2 v.
A Little Stepson 1 v.
Written in Fire 2 v.
Her World against a Lie 2 v.
A Broken Blossom 2 v.
The Root of all Evil 2 v.
The Fair-haired Alda 2 v.
With Cupid's Eyes 2 v.
My Sister the Actress 2 v.
Phyllida 2 v.
How They Loved Him 2 v.
Facing the Footlights (w. portrait) 2 v.
A Moment of Madness 1 v.
The Ghost of Charlotte Cray, etc. 1 v.
Peeress and Player 2 v.
Under the Lilies and Roses 2 v.
The Heart of Jane Warner 2 v.
The Heir Presumptive 2 v.

Mrs. Marsh:
Ravenscliffe 2 v.
Emilia Wyndham 2 v.
Castle Avon 2 v. Aubrey 2 v.
The Heiress of Haughton 2 v.
Evelyn Marston 2 v.
The Rose of Ashurst 2 v.

Emma Marshall:
Mrs. Mainwaring's Journal 1 v.
Benvenuta 1 v.
Lady Alice 1 v.
Dayspring 1 v.
Life's Aftermath 1 v.
In the East Country 1 v.

H. Mathers:
"Cherry Ripe!" 2 v.
"Land o' the Leal" 1 v.
My Lady Green Sleeves 2 v.
As he comes up the Stair, etc. 1 v.
Sam's Sweetheart 2 v.
Eyre's Acquittal 2 v.
Found Out 1 v.
Murder or Manslaughter? 1 v.

"Mehalah," Author of—
Mehalah 1 v.
John Herring 2 v.

Whyte Melville:
Kate Coventry 1 v.
Holmby House 2 v.
Digby Grand 1 v.
Good for Nothing 2 v.
The Queen's Maries 2 v.
The Gladiators 2 v.
The Brookes of Bridlemere 2 v.
Cerise 2 v.
The Interpreter 2 v.

The White Rose 2 v.
M. or N. 1 v.
Contraband; or A Losing Hazard 1 v.
Sarchedon 2 v.
Uncle John 2 v.
Katerfelto 1 v.
Sister Louise 1 v.
Rosine 1 v.
Roy's Wife 2 v.
Black but Comely 2 v.
Riding Recollections 1 v.

George Meredith:
The Ordeal of Feverel 2 v.
Beauchamp's Career 2 v.
The Tragic Comedians 1 v.

Owen Meredith:
vide Robert Lord Lytton.

Milton:
Poetical Works 1 v.

"Miss Molly," Author of—
Geraldine Hawthorne 1 v.

"Molly Bawn," Author of—
Molly Bawn 2 v.
Mrs. Geoffrey 2 v.
Faith and Unfaith 2 v.
Portia 2 v.
Loÿs, Lord Berresford, etc. 1 v.
Her First Appearance, etc. 1 v.
Phyllis 2 v.
Rossmoyne 2 v.
Doris 2 v.
A Maiden all Forlorn, etc. 1 v.
A Passive Crime 1 v.

Miss Florence Montgomery:
Misunderstood 1 v.
Thrown Together 2 v.
Thwarted 1 v.
Wild Mike 1 v.
Seaforth 2 v.
The Blue Veil 1 v.

Moore:
Poetical Works (w. portrait) 5 v.

Lady Morgan's Memoirs 3 v.

Henry Morley:
Of English Literature in the Reign of Victoria. With Facsimiles of the Signatures of Authors in the Tauchnitz Edition [v. 2000].

E. C. Grenville: Murray:
The Member for Paris 2 v.
Young Brown 2 v.
The Boudoir Cabal 3 v.
French Pictures in English Chalk (1st Series) 2 v.
The Russians of To-day 1 v.
French Pictures in English Chalk (2nd Series) 2 v.
Strange Tales 1 v.
That Artful Vicar 2 v.
Six Months in the Ranks 1 v.
People I have met 1 v.

"My little Lady," Author of—
vide E. Frances Poynter.

New Testament [v. 1000].

Mrs. Newby:
Common Sense 2 v.

Dr. J. H. Newman:
Callista 1 v.

"Nina Balatka," Author of—
vide Anthony Trollope.

"No Church," Author of—
No Church 2 v.
Owen:—a Waif 2 v.

Lady Augusta Noel:
From Generation to Generation 1 v.

Hon. Mrs. Norton:
Stuart of Dunleath 2 v.
Lost and Saved 2 v.
Old Sir Douglas 2 v.

Novels and Tales
vide Household Words.

Not Easily Jealous 2 v.

L. Oliphant:
Altiora Peto 2 v.

Mrs. Oliphant:
Passages in the Life of Mrs. Margaret Maitland of Sunnyside 1 v.
The Last of the Mortimers 2 v.
Agnes 2 v.
Madonna Mary 2 v.
The Minister's Wife 2 v.
The Rector, and the Doctor's Family 1 v.
Salem Chapel 2 v.
The Perpetual Curate 2 v.
Miss Marjoribanks 2 v.
Ombra 2 v.
Memoir of Count de Montalembert 2 v.
May 2 v.
Innocent 2 v.
For Love and Life 2 v.
A Rose in June 1 v.
The Story of Valentine and his Brother 2 v.
Whiteladies 2 v.
The Curate in Charge 1 v.
Phoebe, Junior 2 v.
Mrs. Arthur 2 v.
Carità 2 v.
Young Musgrave 2 v.
The Primrose Path 2 v.
Within the Precincts 3 v.
The greatest Heiress in England 2 v.
He that will not when he may 2 v.
Harry Joscelyn 2 v.
In Trust 2 v.
It was a Lover and his Lass 3 v.
The Ladies Lindores 3 v.
Hester 3 v.
The Wizard's Son 3 v.

Ossian:
Poems 1 v.

Ouida:
Idalia 2 v.
Tricotrin 2 v.
Puck 2 v.
Chandos 2 v.
Strathmore 2 v.
Under two Flags 2 v.
Folle-Farine 2 v.
A Leaf in the Storm; A Dog of Flanders and other Stories 1 v.
Cecil Castlemaine's Gage 1 v.
Madame la Marquise 1 v.

Pascarèl 2 v.
Held in Bondage 2 v.
Two little Wooden Shoes 1 v.
Signa (w. portrait) 3 v.
In a Winter City 1 v.
Ariadnê 2 v.
Friendship 2 v.
Moths 3 v.
Pipistrello 1 v.
A Village Commune 2 v.
In Maremma 3 v.
Bimbi 1 v.
Wanda 3 v.
Frescoes, etc. 1 v.
Princess Napraxine 3 v.
A Rainy June (60 Pf.). Othmar 3 v.

Miss Parr (Holme Lee):
Basil Godfrey's Caprice 2 v.
For Richer, for Poorer 2 v.
The Beautiful Miss Barrington 2 v.
Her Title of Honour 1 v.
Echoes of a Famous Year 1 v.
Katherine's Trial 1 v.
Bessie Fairfax 2 v.
Ben Milner's Wooing 1 v.
Straightforward 2 v.
Mrs. Denys of Cote 2 v.
A Poor Squire 1 v.

Mrs. Parr:
Dorothy Fox 1 v.
The Prescotts of Pamphillon 2 v.
Gosau Smithy 1 v.
Robin 2 v.

"Paul Ferroll," Author of—
Paul Ferroll 1 v.
Year after Year 1 v.
Why Paul Ferroll killed his Wife 1 v.

James Payn:
Found Dead 1 v.
Gwendoline's Harvest 1 v.
Like Father, like Son 2 v.
Not Wooed, but Won 2 v.
Cecil's Tryst 1 v.
A Woman's Vengeance 2 v.
Murphy's Master 1 v.
In the Heart of a Hill 1 v.
At Her Mercy 2 v.
The Best of Husbands 2 v.
Walter's Word 2 v.
Halves 2 v.
Fallen Fortunes 2 v.
What He cost Her 2 v.
By Proxy 2 v.
Less Black than we're Painted 2 v.
Under one Roof 2 v.
High Spirits 1 v.
High Spirits (Second Series) 1 v.
A Confidential Agent 2 v.
From Exile 2 v.
A Grape from a Thorn 2 v.
Some Private Views 1 v.
For Cash Only 2 v.
Kit: A Memory 2 v.
The Canon's Ward 2 v.
Some Literary Recollections 1 v.
The Talk of the Town 1 v.
The Luck of the Darrells 2 v.

Miss Fr. M. Peard:
One Year 2 v.
The Rose-Garden 1 v.

Unawares 1 v.
Thorpe Regis 1 v.
A Winter Story 1 v.
A Madrigal 1 v.
Cartouche 1 v.
Mother Molly 1 v.
Schloss and Town 2 v.
Contradictions 2 v.
Near Neighbours 1 v.

Bishop Percy:
Reliques of Ancient English Poetry 3 v.

E. A. Poe:
Poems and Essays. Edited with a new Memoir by John H. Ingram 1 v.
Tales. Edited by John H. Ingram 1 v.

Pope:
Select Poetical Works (w. portrait) 1 v.

E. Frances Poynter:
My little Lady 2 v.
Ersilia 2 v.
Among the Hills 1 v.
Madame de Presnel 1 v.

Mrs. Campbell Praed:
Zéro 1 v.
Affinities 1 v.

Mrs. E. Prentiss:
Stepping Heavenward 1 v.

The Prince Consort's Speeches and Addresses 1 v.

Horace N. Pym:
vide C. Fox.

W. F. Rae:
Westward by Rail 1 v.

Charles Reade:
"It is never too late to mend" 2 v.
"Love me little love me long" 1 v.
The Cloister and the Hearth 2 v.
Hard Cash 3 v.
Put Yourself in his Place 2 v.
A Terrible Temptation 2 v.
Peg Woffington 1 v.
Christie Johnstone 1 v.
A Simpleton 2 v.
The Wandering Heir 1 v.
A Woman-Hater 2 v.
Readiana 1 v.
Singleheart and Doubleface 1 v.

"Recommended to Mercy," Author of—
Recommended to Mercy 2 v.
Zoe's 'Brand' 2 v.

James Rice:
vide W. Besant.

Alfred Bate Richards:
So very Human 3 v.

Richardson:
Clarissa Harlowe 4 v.

Mrs. Riddell (F. G. Trafford):
George Geith of Fen Court 2 v.
Maxwell Drewitt 2 v.
The Race for Wealth 2 v.
Far above Rubies 2 v.
The Earl's Promise 2 v.

Mortomley's Estate 2 v.

Rev. W. Robertson:
Sermons 4 v.

Charles H. Ross:
The Pretty Widow 1 v.
A London Romance 2 v.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti:
Poems 1 v.
Ballads and Sonnets 1 v.

J. Ruffini:
Lavinia 2 v.
Doctor Antonio 1 v.
Lorenzo Benoni 1 v.
Vincenzo 2 v.
A Quiet Nook 1 v.
The Paragreens on a Visit to Paris 1 v.
Carlino and other Stories 1 v.

W. Clark Russell:
A Sailor's Sweetheart 2 v.
The "Lady Maud" 2 v.
A Sea Queen 2 v.

G. A. Sala:
The Seven Sons of Mammon 2 v.

John Saunders:
Israel Mort, Overman 2 v.
The Shipowner's Daughter 2 v.
A Noble Wife 2 v.

Katherine Saunders:
Joan Merryweather and other Tales 1 v.
Gideon's Rock 1 v.
The High Mills 2 v.
Sebastian 1 v.

Sir Walter Scott:
Waverley (w. portrait) 1 v.
The Antiquary 1 v.
Ivanhoe 1 v.
Kenilworth 1 v.
Quentin Durward 1 v.
Old Mortality 1 v.
Guy Mannering 1 v.
Rob Roy 1 v.
The Pirate 1 v.
The Fortunes of Nigel 1 v.
The Black Dwarf;
A Legend of Montrose 1 v.
The Bride of Lammermoor 1 v.
The Heart of Mid-Lothian 2 v.
The Monastery 1 v.
The Abbot 1 v.
Peveril of the Peak 2 v.
The Poetical Works 2 v.
Woodstock 1 v.
The Fair Maid of Perth 1 v.
Anne of Geierstein 1 v.

Professor Seeley:
Life and Times of Stein 4 v.
The Expansion of England 1 v.

Miss Sewell:
Amy Herbert 2 v.
Ursula 2 v.
A Glimpse of the World 2 v.
The Journal of a Home Life 2 v.
After Life 2 v.
The Experience of Life; or, Aunt Sarah 2 v.

Shakespeare:
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Earl Stanhope (Lord Mahon):
History of England 7 v.
The Reign of Queen Anne 2 v.

Sterne:
The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy 1 v.
A Sentimental Journey (w. portrait) 1 v.

Robert Louis Stevenson:
Treasure Island 1 v.

"Still Waters," Author of—
Still Waters 1 v.
Dorothy 1 v.
De Cressy 1 v.
Uncle Ralph 1 v.
Maiden Sisters 1 v.
Martha Brown 1 v.
Vanessa 1 v.

M. C. Stirling:
Two Tales of Married Life 2 v.
Vol. II, A True Man,
Vol. I. *vide* G. M. Craik.

"The Story of Elizabeth," Author of—
v. Miss Thackeray.

Mrs. H. Beecher Stowe:
Uncle Tom's Cabin (w. portrait) 2 v.
A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin 2 v.
Dred 2 v.
The Minister's Wooing 1 v.
Oldtown Folks 2 v.

"Sunbeam Stories," Author of—
vide Mackarness.

Swift:
Gulliver's Travels 1 v.

J. A. Symonds:
Sketches in Italy 1 v.
New Italian Sketches 1 v.

Baroness Tautphoeus:
Cyrilla 2 v.
The Initials 2 v.
Quits 2 v.
At Odds 2 v.

Colonel Meadows Taylor:
Tara: a Mahratta Tale 3 v.

Templeton:
Diary & Notes 1 v.

Lord Tennyson:
Poetical Works 7 v.
Queen Mary 1 v.
Harold 1 v.
Ballads and other Poems 1 v.
Becket; The Cup; The Falcon 1 v.

W. M. Thackeray:
Vanity Fair 3 v.
The History of Pendennis 3 v.
Miscellanies 8 v.
The History of Henry Esmond 2 v.
The English Humourists 1 v.
The Newcomes 4 v.
The Virginians 4 v.
The Four Georges;
Lovel the Widower 1 v.
The Adventures of Philip 2 v.
Denis Duval 1 v.
Roundabout Papers 2 v.
Catherine 1 v.
The Irish Sketch Book 2 v.
The Paris Sketch Book (w. portrait) 2 v.

Miss Thackeray:
The Story of Elizabeth 1 v.
The Village on the Cliff 1 v.
Old Kensington 2 v.
Bluebeard's Keys 1 v.
Five Old Friends 1 v.
Miss Angel 1 v.
Out of the World 1 v.
Fulham Lawn 1 v.
From an Island 1 v.
Da Capo 1 v.
Madame de Sévigné 1 v.
A Book of Sibyls 1 v.

Thomas a Kempis:
The Imitation of Christ 1 v.

A. Thomas:
Denis Donne 2 v.
On Guard 2 v.
Walter Goring 2 v.
Played out 2 v.
Called to Account 2 v.
Only Herself 2 v.
A narrow Escape 2 v.

Thomson:
Poetical Works (with portrait) 1 v.

F. G. Trafford:
vide Mrs. Riddell.

G. O. Trevelyan:
The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay (w. portrait) 4 v.
Selections from the Writings of Lord Macaulay 2 v.

Trois-Etoiles:
vide Murray.

Anthony Trollope:
Doctor Thorne 2 v.
The Bertrams 2 v.
The Warden 1 v.
Barchester Towers 2 v.

Castle Richmond 2 v.
The West Indies 1 v.
Framley Parsonage 2 v.
North America 3 v.
Orley Farm 3 v.
Rachel Ray 2 v.
The Small House at Allington 3 v.
Can you forgive her? 3 v.
The Belton Estate 2 v.
Nina Balatka 1 v.
The Last Chronicle of Barset 3 v.
The Claverings 2 v.
Phineas Finn 3 v.
He knew he was Right 3 v.
The Vicar of Bullhampton 2 v.
Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite 1 v.
Ralph the Heir 2 v.
The Golden Lion of Granpere 1 v.
Australia and New Zealand 3 v.
Lady Anna 2 v.
Harry Heathcote of Gangoil 1 v.
The Way we live now 4 v.
The Prime Minister 4 v.
The American Senator 3 v.
South Africa 2 v.
Is he Popenjoy? 3 v.
An Eye for an Eye 1 v.
John Caldigate 3 v.
Cousin Henry 1 v.
The Duke's Children 3 v.
Dr. Wortle's School 1 v.
Ayala's Angel 3 v.
The Fixed Period 1 v.
Marion Fay 2 v.
Kept in the Dark 1 v.
Frau Frohmann, etc. 1 v.
Alice Dugdale, etc. 1 v.
La Mère Bauche, etc. 1 v.
The Mistletoe Bough, etc. 1 v.
An Autobiography 1 v.
An Old Man's Love 1 v.

T. Adolphus Trollope:
The Garstangs of Garstang Grange 2 v.
A Siren 2 v.

The Two Cosmos 1 v.

"Vèra," Author of—
Vèra 1 v.
The Hôtel du Petit St. Jean 1 v.
Blue Roses 2 v.
Within Sound of the Sea 2 v.
The Maritime Alps and their Seaboard 2 v.

Victoria R. I.:
vide Leaves.

Virginia 1 v.

L. B. Walford:
Mr. Smith 2 v.
Pauline 2 v.
Cousins 2 v.
Troublesome Daughters 2 v.

Mackenzie Wallace:
Russia 3 v.

Eliot Warburton:
The Crescent and the Cross 2 v.
Darien 2 v.

S. Warren:
Passages from the Diary of a late Physician 2 v.

Ten Thousand a-Year 3 v.
Now and Then 1 v.
The Lily and the Bee 1 v.

"Waterdale Neighbours," Author of—
vide Justin M^{c}Carthy.

Miss Wetherell:
The wide, wide World 1 v.
Queechy 2 v.
The Hills of the Shatemuc 2 v.
Say and Seal 2 v.
The Old Helmet 2 v.

A Whim and its Consequences 1 v.

W. White: Holidays in Tyrol 1 v.

"Who Breaks—Pays," Author of—
vide Mrs. Jenkin.

J. S. Winter:
Regimental Legends 1 v.

Mrs. Henry Wood:
East Lynne 3 v.
The Channings 2 v.
Mrs. Halliburton's Troubles 2 v.
Verner's Pride 3 v.
The Shadow of Ashlydyat 3 v.
Trevlyn Hold 2 v.
Lord Oakburn's Daughters 2 v.
Oswald Cray 2 v.
Mildred Arkell 2 v.
St. Martin's Eve 2 v.
Elster's Folly 2 v.
Lady Adelaide's Oath 2 v.
Orville College 1 v.
A Life's Secret 1 v.
The Red Court Farm 2 v.
Anne Hereford 2 v.
Roland Yorke 2 v.
George Canterbury's Will 2 v.
Bessy Rane 2 v.
Dene Hollow 2 v.
The Foggy Night at Offord, etc. 1 v.
Within the Maze 2 v.
The Master of Greylands 2 v.
Johnny Ludlow (*First Series*) 2 v.
Told in the Twilight 2 v.
Adam Grainger 1 v.
Edina 2 v.
Pomeroy Abbey 2 v.
Lost in the Post, etc. By Johnny Ludlow 1 v.
A Tale of Sin, etc. By Johnny Ludlow 1 v.
Anne, etc. By Johnny Ludlow 1 v.
Court Netherleigh 2 v.
The Mystery of Jessy Page, etc. By Johnny Ludlow 1 v.
Helen Whitney's Wedding, etc. By Johnny Ludlow 1 v.
The Story of Dorothy Grape, etc. By Johnny Ludlow 1 v.

Wordsworth:
Select Poetical Works 2 v.

Lascelles Wraxall:
Wild Oats 1 v.

Edm. Yates:
Land at Last 2 v.
Broken to Harness 2 v.
The Forlorn Hope 2 v.
Black Sheep 2 v.
The Rock Ahead 2 v.
Wrecked in Port 2 v.

Dr. Wainwright's Patient 2 v.
Nobody's Fortune 2 v.
Castaway 2 v.
A Waiting Race 2 v.
The Yellow Flag 2 v.
The Impending Sword 2 v.
Two, by Tricks 1 v.
A Silent Witness 2 v.
Recollections and Experiences 2 v.

Miss Yonge:
The Heir of Redclyffe 2 v.
Heartsease 2 v.
The Daisy Chain 2 v.
Dynevor Terrace 2 v.
Hopes and Fears 2 v.
The Young Step-Mother 2 v.
The Trial 2 v.
The Clever Woman of the Family 2 v.
The Dove in the Eagle's Nest 2 v.
The Danvers Papers; the Prince and the Page 1 v.
The Chaplet of Pearls 2 v.
The two Guardians 1 v.
The Caged Lion 2 v.
The Pillars of the House 5 v.
Lady Hester 1 v.
My Young Alcides 2 v.
The Three Brides 2 v.
Womankind 2 v.
Magnum Bonum 2 v.
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Three pages of handwriting at front were not easily read and there might be errors in transcription.

Page 72, "Lilybæaum" changed to "Lilybæum"

Page 149, "Golden, und gleaming" changed to "Golden, and gleaming"

Page 279, "turned aud beheld" changed to "turned and beheld"

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