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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AMONG THE
MILLET AND OTHER POEMS ***

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AMONG THE MILLET

[Pg i]

AND

Other Poems.

BY

ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN

Ottawa:
J. DURIE & SON.
1888

Entered according to Act of Parliament of Canada, in the
year 1888, by ARCHIBALD LAMPMAN, at the
Department of Agriculture.

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TO MY WIFE.

[Pg iii]

*Though fancy and the might of rhyme,
That turneth like the tide,
Have borne me many a musing time,
Beloved, from thy side,*

*Ah yet, I pray thee, deem not, Sweet,
Those hours were given in vain;
Within these covers to thy feet
I bring them back again.*

CONTENTS:

[Pg iv]

I.
POEMS.

AMONG THE MILLET	1
APRIL	2
AN OCTOBER SUNSET	5
THE FROGS	6
AN IMPRESSION	9
SPRING ON THE RIVER	10
WHY DO YE CALL THE POET LONELY	11
HEAT	12
AMONG THE TIMOTHY	14
FREEDOM	18
MORNING ON THE LIÈVRES	21
IN OCTOBER	23
LAMENT OF THE WINDS	24
BALLADE OF SUMMER'S SLEEP	25
WINTER	27
WINTER HUES RECALLED	30
STORM	34
MIDNIGHT	37
SONG OF THE STREAM-DROPS	38
BETWEEN THE RAPIDS	40
NEW YEAR'S EVE	43
UNREST	45
SONG	46
ONE DAY	47
SLEEP	48
THREE FLOWER PETALS	50

[Pg v]

PASSION	51
A BALLADE OF WAITING	52
BEFORE SLEEP	53
A SONG	56
WHAT DO POETS WANT WITH GOLD	58
THE KING'S SABBATH	60
THE LITTLE HANDMAIDEN	61
ABU MIDJAN	64
THE WEAVER	67
THE THREE PILGRIMS	69
THE COMING OF WINTER	73
EASTER EVE	74
THE ORGANIST	82
THE MONK	87
THE CHILD'S MUSIC LESSON	103
AN ATHENIAN REVERIE	105

II. SONNETS.

LOVE-DOUBT	123
PERFECT LOVE	124
LOVE-WONDER	125
COMFORT	126
DESPONDENCY	127
OUTLOOK	128
GENTLENESS	129
A PRAYER	130
MUSIC	131
KNOWLEDGE	132
SIGHT	133
AN OLD LESSON FROM THE FIELDS	134
WINTER-THOUGHT	135
DEEDS	136
ASPIRATION	137
THE POETS	138
THE TRUTH	139
THE MARTYRS	140
A NIGHT OF STORM	141
AT THE RAILWAY STATION	142
A FORECAST	143
IN NOVEMBER	144
THE CITY	145
MIDSUMMER NIGHT	146
THE LOONS	147
MARCH	148
SOLITUDE	149
THE MAPLES	150
THE DOG	151

[Pg vi]

I. POEMS.

[Pg vii]

POEMS.

[Pg 1]

AMONG THE MILLET.

The dew is gleaming in the grass,
The morning hours are seven,
And I am fain to watch you pass,
Ye soft white clouds of heaven.

Ye stray and gather, part and fold;
The wind alone can tame you;
I think of what in time of old
The poets loved to name you.

They called you sheep, the sky your sward,
A field without a reaper;
They called the shining sun your lord,
The shepherd wind your keeper.

Your sweetest poets I will deem
The men of old for moulding
In simple beauty such a dream,
And I could lie beholding,

Where daisies in the meadow toss,
The wind from morn till even,
Forever shepherd you across
The shining field of heaven.

APRIL.

[Pg 2]

Pale season, watcher in unvexed suspense,
Still priestess of the patient middle day,
Betwixt wild March's humored petulence
And the warm wooing of green kirtled
May,
Maid month of sunny peace and sober
grey,
Weaver of flowers in sunward glades that
ring
With murmur of libation to the spring:

As memory of pain, all past, is peace,
And joy, dream-tasted, hath the deepest
cheer,
So art thou sweetest of all months that
lease
The twelve short spaces of the flying year.
The bloomless days are dead, and frozen
fear
No more for many moons shall vex the
earth,

Dreaming of summer and fruit laden mirth.

The grey song-sparrows full of spring have
 sung
Their clear thin silvery tunes in leafless
 trees;
The robin hops, and whistles, and among
The silver-tasseled poplars the brown bees
Murmur faint dreams of summer
 harvestries;
The creamy sun at even scatters down
A gold-green mist across the murmuring
 town.

By the slow streams the frogs all day and
 night
Dream without thought of pain or heed of
 ill,
Watching the long warm silent hours take
 flight,
And ever with soft throats that pulse and
 thrill,
From the pale-weeded shallows trill and
 trill,
Tremulous sweet voices, flute-like,
 answering
One to another glorying in the spring.

[Pg 3]

All day across the ever-cloven soil,
Strong horses labour, steaming in the sun,
Down the long furrows with slow straining
 toil,
Turning the brown clean layers; and one
 by one
The crows gloom over them till daylight
 done
Finds them asleep somewhere in duskèd
 lines
Beyond the wheatlands in the northern
 pines.

The old year's cloaking of brown leaves
 that bind
The forest floor-ways, plated close and
 true —
The last love's labour of the autumn wind
 —
Is broken with curled flower buds white
 and blue
In all the matted hollows, and speared
 through
With thousand serpent-spotted blades up-
 sprung,
Yet bloomless, of the slender adder-
 tongue.

In the warm noon the south wind creeps
 and cools,

Where the red-budded stems of maples
 throw
Still tangled etchings on the amber pools,
Quite silent now, forgetful of the slow
Drip of the taps, the troughs, and trampled
 snow,
The keen March mornings, and the
 silvering rime
And mirthful labour of the sugar prime.

[Pg 4]

Ah, I have wandered with unwearied feet,
All the long sweetness of an April day,
Lulled with cool murmurs and the drowsy
 beat
Of partridge wings in secret thickets grey,
The marriage hymns of all the birds at
 play,
The faces of sweet flowers, and easeful
 dreams
Beside slow reaches of frog-haunted
 streams;

Wandered with happy feet, and quite
 forgot
The shallow toil, the strife against the
 grain,
Near souls, that hear us call, but answer
 not,
The loneliness, perplexity and pain,
And high thoughts cankered with an
 earthly stain
And then the long draught emptied to the
 lees,
I turn me homeward in slow pacing ease,

Cleaving the cedar shadows and the thin
Mist of grey gnats that cloud the river
 shore,
Sweet even choruses, that dance and spin
Soft tangles in the sunset; and once more
The city smites me with its dissonant roar.
To its hot heart I pass, untroubled yet,
Fed with calm hope, without desire or fret.

So to the year's first altar step I bring
Gifts of meek song, and make my spirit
 free
With the blind working of unanxious
 spring,
Careless with her, whether the days that
 flee
Pale drouth or golden-fruited plenty see,
So that we toil, brothers, without distress,
In calm-eyed peace and godlike
 blamelessness.

[Pg 5]

AN OCTOBER SUNSET.

One moment the slim cloudflakes seem to
lean
With their sad sunward faces aureoled,
And longing lips set downward
brightening
To take the last sweet hand kiss of the
king,
Gone down beyond the closing west acold;
Paying no reverence to the slender queen,
That like a curvèd olive leaf of gold
Hangs low in heaven, rounded toward sun,
Or the small stars that one by one unfold
Down the gray border of the night begun.

THE FROGS.

[Pg 6]

I.

Breathers of wisdom won without a quest,
Quaint uncouth dreamers, voices high
and strange,
Flutists of lands where beauty hath no
change,
And wintery grief is a forgotten guest,
Sweet murmurers of everlasting rest,
For whom glad days have ever yet to
run,
And moments are as æons, and the sun
But ever sunken half-way toward the west.

Often to me who heard you in your day,
With close wrapt ears, it could not
choose but seem
That earth, our mother, searching in what
way,
Men's hearts might know her spirit's
inmost dream,
Ever at rest beneath life's change and
stir,
Made you her soul, and bade you pipe
for her.

II.

In those mute days when spring was in her
glee,
And hope was strong, we knew not why
or how,
And earth, the mother, dreamed with
brooding brow.

Musing on life, and what the hours might
be,

When love should ripen to maternity,
Then like high flutes in silvery
interchange

Ye piped with voices still and sweet and
strange,
And ever as ye piped, on every tree

The great buds swelled; among the pensive
woods

The spirits of first flowers awoke and
flung
From buried faces the close fitting hoods,
And listened to your piping till they fell,
The frail spring-beauty with her
perfumed bell,
The wind-flower, and the spotted adder-
tongue.

III.

All the day long, wherever pools might be
Among the golden meadows, where the
air

Stood in a dream, as it were moorèd
there
Forever in a noon-tide reverie,
Or where the birds made riot of their glee
In the still woods, and the hot sun shone
down,
Crossed with warm lucent shadows on
the brown

Leaf-paven pools, that bubbled dreamily,

Or far away in whispering river meads
And watery marshes where the brooding
noon,

Full with the wonder of its own sweet
boon,
Nestled and slept among the noiseless
reeds,
Ye sat and murmured, motionless as
they,
With eyes that dreamed beyond the
night and day.

IV.

And when, day passed and over heaven's
height,

Thin with the many stars and cool with
dew,
The fingers of the deep hours slowly
drew

The wonder of the ever-healing night,
No grief or loneliness or wrapt delight

[Pg 7]

[Pg 8]

Or weight of silence ever brought to you
Slumber or rest; only your voices grew
More high and solemn; slowly with
hushed flight

Ye saw the echoing hours go by, long-
drawn,
Nor ever stirred, watching with
fathomless eyes,
And with your countless clear
antiphonies
Filling the earth and heaven, even till
dawn,
Last-risen, found you with its first pale
gleam,
Still with soft throats unaltered in your
dream.

V.

And slowly as we heard you, day by day,
The stillness of enchanted reveries
Bound brain and spirit and half-closed
eyes,
In some divine sweet wonder-dream
astray;
To us no sorrow or upreared dismay
Nor any discord came, but evermore
The voices of mankind, the outer roar,
Grew strange and murmurous, faint and far
away.

Morning and noon and midnight
exquisitely,
Wrapt with your voices, this alone we
knew,
Cities might change and fall, and men
might die,
Secure were we, content to dream with
you,
That change and pain are shadows
faint and fleet,
And dreams are real, and life is only
sweet.

[Pg 9]

AN IMPRESSION.

I heard the city time-bells call
Far off in hollow towers,
And one by one with measured fall
Count out the old dead hours;

I felt the march, the silent press
Of time, and held my breath;

I saw the haggard dreadfulness
Of dim old age and death.

SPRING ON THE RIVER.

[Pg 10]

O sun, shine hot on the river;
For the ice is turning an ashen hue,
And the still bright water is looking
through,
And the myriad streams are greeting
you
With a ballad of life to the giver,
From forest and field and sunny town,
Meeting and running and tripping down,
With laughter and song to the river.

Oh! the din on the boats by the river;
The barges are ringing while day avails,
With sound of hewing and hammering
nails,
Planing and painting and swinging pails,
All day in their shrill endeavour;
For the waters brim over their wintry
cup,
And the grinding ice is breaking up,
And we must away down the river.

Oh! the hum and the toil of the river;
The ridge of the rapid sprays and skips:
Loud and low by the water's lips,
Tearing the wet pines into strips,
The saw mill is moaning ever.
The little grey sparrow skips and calls
On the rocks in the rain of the water
falls,
And the logs are adrift in the river.

[Pg 11]

Oh! restlessly whirls the river;
The rivulets run and the cataract drones:
The spiders are flitting over the stones:
Summer winds float and the cedar
moans;
And the eddies gleam and quiver.
O sun, shine hot, shine long and abide
In the glory and power of thy summer
tide
On the swift longing face of the river.

WHY DO YE CALL THE POET LONELY.

Why do ye call the poet lonely,

Because he dreams in lonely places?
He is not desolate, but only
Sees, where ye cannot, hidden faces.

HEAT.

[Pg 12]

From plains that reel to southward, dim,
The road runs by me white and bare;
Up the steep hill it seems to swim
Beyond, and melt into the glare.
Upward half way, or it may be
Nearer the summit, slowly steals
A hay-cart, moving dustily
With idly clacking wheels.

By his cart's side the wagoner
Is slouching slowly at his ease,
Half-hidden in the windless blur
Of white dust puffing to his knees.
This wagon on the height above,
From sky to sky on either hand,
Is the sole thing that seems to move
In all the heat-held land.

Beyond me in the fields the sun
Soaks in the grass and hath his will;
I count the marguerites one by one;
Even the buttercups are still.
On the brook yonder not a breath
Disturbs the spider or the midge.
The water-bugs draw close beneath
The cool gloom of the bridge.

Where the far elm-tree shadows flood
Dark patches in the burning grass,
The cows, each with her peaceful cud,
Lie waiting for the heat to pass.
From somewhere on the slope near by
Into the pale depth of the noon
A wandering thrush slides leisurely
His thin revolving tune.

[Pg 13]

In intervals of dreams I hear
The cricket from the drougthy ground;
The grass-hoppers spin into mine ear
A small innumerable sound.
I lift mine eyes sometimes to gaze:
The burning sky-line blinds my sight:
The woods far off are blue with haze;
The hills are drenched in light.

And yet to me not this or that
Is always sharp or always sweet;
In the sloped shadow of my hat
I lean at rest, and drain the heat;

Nay more, I think some blessed power
Hath brought me wandering idly here:
In the full furnace of this hour
My thoughts grow keen and clear.

AMONG THE TIMOTHY.

[Pg 14]

Long hours ago, while yet the morn was
blithe,
Nor sharp athirst had drunk the beaded
dew,
A reaper came, and swung his cradled
scythe
Around this stump, and, shearing
slowly, drew
Far round among the clover, ripe for
hay,
A circle clean and grey;
And here among the scented swathes that
gleam,
Mixed with dead daisies, it is sweet to
lie
And watch the grass and the few-
clouded sky,
Nor think but only dream.

For when the noon was turning, and the
heat
Fell down most heavily on field and
wood,
I too came hither, borne on restless feet,
Seeking some comfort for an aching
mood.
Ah, I was weary of the drifting hours,
The echoing city towers,
The blind grey streets, the jingle of the
throng,
Weary of hope that like a shape of stone
Sat near at hand without a smile or
moan,
And weary most of song.

And those high moods of mine that
sometime made
My heart a heaven, opening like a
flower,
A sweeter world where I in wonder
strayed,
Begirt with shapes of beauty and the
power
Of dreams that moved through that
enchanted clime
With changing breaths of rhyme,
Were all gone lifeless now like those white
leaves,

[Pg 15]

That hang all winter, shivering dead and
blind
Among the sinewy beeches in the wind,
That vainly calls and grieves.

Ah! I will set no more mine overtaskèd
brain
To barren search and toil that beareth
nought,
Forever following with sorefooted pain
The crossing pathways of unbournèd
thought;
But let it go, as one that hath no skill,
To take what shape it will,
An ant slow-burrowing in the earthy
gloom,
A spider bathing in the dew at morn,
Or a brown bee in wayward fancy borne
From hidden bloom to bloom.

Hither and thither o'er the rocking grass
The little breezes, blithe as they are
blind,
Teasing the slender blossoms pass and
pass,
Soft-footed children of the gipsy wind,
To taste of every purple-fringed head
Before the bloom is dead;
And scarcely heed the daisies that,
endowed
With stems so short they cannot see, up-
bear
Their innocent sweet eyes distressed,
and stare
Like children in a crowd.

[Pg 16]

Not far to fieldward in the central heat,
Shadowing the clover, a pale poplar
stands
With glimmering leaves that, when the
wind comes, beat
Together like innumerable small hands,
And with the calm, as in vague dreams
astray,
Hang wan and silver-grey;
Like sleepy mænads, who in pale surprise,
Half-wakened by a prowling beast, have
crept
Out of the hidden covert, where they
slept,
At noon with languid eyes.

The crickets creak, and through the
noonday glow,
That crazy fiddler of the hot mid-year,
The dry cicada plies his wiry bow
In long-spun cadence, thin and dusty
sere:

From the green grass the small
 grasshoppers' din
 Spreads soft and silvery thin:
 And ever and anon a murmur steals
 Into mine ears of toil that moves alway,
 The crackling rustle of the pitch-forked
 hay
 And lazy jerk of wheels.

As so I lie and feel the soft hours wane,
 To wind and sun and peaceful sound
 laid bare,
 That aching dim discomfort of the brain
 Fades off unseen, and shadowy-footed
 care
 Into some hidden corner creeps at last
 To slumber deep and fast;
 And gliding on, quite fashioned to forget,
 From dream to dream I bid my spirit
 pass
 Out into the pale green ever-swaying
 grass
 To brood, but no more fret.

And hour by hour among all shapes that
 grow
 Of purple mints and daisies gemmed
 with gold
 In sweet unrest my visions come and go;
 I feel and hear and with quiet eyes
 behold;
 And hour by hour, the ever-journeying
 sun,
 In gold and shadow spun,
 Into mine eyes and blood, and through the
 dim
 Green glimmering forest of the grass
 shines down,
 Till flower and blade, and every cranny
 brown,
 And I are soaked with him.

[Pg 17]

FREEDOM.

[Pg 18]

Out of the heart of the city begotten
 Of the labour of men and their
 manifold hands,
 Whose souls, that were sprung from the
 earth in her morning,
 No longer regard or remember her
 warning,
 Whose hearts in the furnace of care have
 forgotten
 Forever the scent and the hue of her
 lands;

Out of the heat of the usurer's hold,
From the horrible crash of the strong
man's feet;
Out of the shadow where pity is dying;
Out of the clamour where beauty is lying,
Dead in the depth of the struggle for
gold;
Out of the din and the glare of the
street;

Into the arms of our mother we come,
Our broad strong mother, the innocent
earth,
Mother of all things beautiful, blameless,
Mother of hopes that her strength makes
tameless,
Where the voices of grief and of battle
are dumb,
And the whole world laughs with the
light of her mirth.

Over the fields, where the cool winds
sweep,
Black with the mould and brown with
the loam,
Where the thin green spears of the wheat
are appearing,
And the high-ho shouts from the smoky
clearing;
Over the widths where the cloud
shadows creep;
Over the fields and the fallows we
come;

[Pg 19]

Over the swamps with their pensive
noises,
Where the burnished cup of the
marigold gleams;
Skirting the reeds, where the quick winds
shiver
On the swelling breast of the dimpled
river,
And the blue of the king-fisher hangs
and poises,
Watching a spot by the edge of the
streams;

By the miles of the fences warped and
dyed
With the white-hot noons and their
withering fires,
Where the rough bees trample the creamy
bosoms
Of the hanging tufts of the elder blossoms,
And the spiders weave, and the grey
snakes hide,
In the crannied gloom of the stones
and the briers;

Over the meadow lands sprouting with
thistle,
Where the humming wings of the
blackbirds pass,
Where the hollows are banked with the
violets flowering,
And the long-limbed pendulous elms are
towering,
Where the robins are loud with their
voluble whistle,
And the ground sparrow scurries
away through the grass,

[Pg 20]

Where the restless bobolink loiters and
woos
Down in the hollows and over the
swells,
Dropping in and out of the shadows,
Sprinkling his music about the meadows,
Whistles and little checks and coos,
And the tinkle of glassy bells;

Into the dim woods full of the tombs
Of the dead trees soft in their
sepulchres,
Where the pensive throats of the shy birds
hidden,
Pipe to us strangely entering unbidden,
And tenderly still in the tremulous
glooms
The trilliums scatter their white-
winged stars;

Up to the hills where our tired hearts
rest,
Loosen, and halt, and regather their
dreams;
Up to the hills, where the winds restore us,
Clearing our eyes to the beauty before us,
Earth with the glory of life on her
breast,
Earth with the gleam of her cities and
streams.

Here we shall commune with her and no
other;
Care and the battle of life shall cease;
Men her degenerate children behind us,
Only the might of her beauty shall bind us,
Full of rest, as we gaze on the face of
our mother,
Earth in the health and the strength of
her peace.

[Pg 21]

MORNING ON THE LIÈVRES.

Far above us where a jay
Screams his matins to the day,
Capped with gold and amethyst,
Like a vapour from the forge
Of a giant somewhere hid,
Out of hearing of the clang
Of his hammer, skirts of mist
Slowly up the woody gorge
Lift and hang.

Softly as a cloud we go,
Sky above and sky below,
Down the river, and the dip
Of the paddles scarcely breaks,
With the little silvery drip
Of the water as it shakes
From the blades, the crystal deep
Of the silence of the morn,
Of the forest yet asleep,
And the river reaches borne
In a mirror, purple grey,
Sheer away
To the misty line of light,
Where the forest and the stream
In the shadow meet and plight,
Like a dream.

[Pg 22]

From amid a stretch of reeds,
Where the lazy river sucks
All the water as it bleeds
From a little curling creek,
And the muskrats peer and sneak
In around the sunken wrecks
Of a tree that swept the skies
Long ago,
On a sudden seven ducks
With a splashy rustle rise,
Stretching out their seven necks,
One before, and two behind,
And the others all arow,
And as steady as the wind
With a swivelling whistle go,
Through the purple shadow led,
Till we only hear their whir
In behind a rocky spur,
Just ahead.

IN OCTOBER.

[Pg 23]

Along the waste, a great way off, the
pines,
Like tall slim priests of storm, stand up
and bar
The low long strip of dolorous red that
lines

The under west, where wet winds moan
afar.
The cornfields all are brown, and brown
the meadows
With the blown leaves' wind-heapèd
traceries,
And the brown thistle stems that cast no
shadows,
And bear no bloom for bees.

As slowly earthward leaf by red leaf slips,
The sad trees rustle in chill misery,
A soft strange inner sound of pain-crazed
lips,
That move and murmur incoherently;
As if all leaves, that yet have breath, were
sighing,
With pale hushed throats, for death is at
the door,
So many low soft masses for the dying
Sweet leaves that live no more.

Here I will sit upon this naked stone,
Draw my coat closer with my numbèd
hands,
And hear the ferns sigh, and the wet woods
moan,
And send my heart out to the ashen
lands;
And I will ask myself what golden
madness,
What balmèd breaths of dreamland
spicery,
What visions of soft laughter and light
sadness
Were sweet last month to me.

[Pg 24]

The dry dead leaves flit by with thin wierd
tunes,
Like failing murmurs of some
conquered creed,
Graven in mystic markings with strange
runes,
That none but stars and biting winds
may read;
Here I will wait a little; I am weary,
Not torn with pain of any lurid hue,
But only still and very gray and dreary,
Sweet sombre lands, like you.

LAMENT OF THE WINDS.

We in sorrow coldly witting,
In the bleak world sitting, sitting,
By the forest, near the mould,

Heard the summer calling, calling,
Through the dead leaves falling, falling,
That her life grew faint and old.

And we took her up, and bore her,
With the leaves that moaned before her,
To the holy forest bowers,
Where the trees were dense and serried,
And her corpse we buried, buried,
In the graveyard of the flowers.

[Pg 25]

Now the leaves, as death grows vaster,
Yellowing deeper, dropping faster,
All the grave wherein she lies
With their bodies cover, cover,
With their hearts that love her, love her,
For they live not when she dies:

And we left her so, but stay not
Of our tears, and yet we may not,
Though they coldly thickly fall,
Give the dead leaves any, any,
For they lie so many, many,
That we cannot weep for all.

BALLADE OF SUMMER'S SLEEP.

Sweet summer is gone; they have laid her
away —
The last sad hours that were touched
with her grace —
In the hush where the ghosts of the dead
flowers play;
The sleep that is sweet of her
slumbering space
Let not a sight or a sound erase
Of the woe that hath fallen on all the
lands:
Gather ye, dreams, to her sunny face,
Shadow her head with your golden
hands.

[Pg 26]

The woods that are golden and red for a
day
Girdle the hills in a jewelled case,
Like a girl's strange mirth, ere the quick
death slay
The beautiful life that he hath in chase.
Darker and darker the shadows pace
Out of the north to the southern
sands,
Ushers bearing the winter's mace:
Keep them away with your woven
hands.

The yellow light lies on the wide wastes
 gray,
 More bitter and cold than the winds that
 race,
 From the skirts of the autumn, tearing
 away,
 This way and that way, the woodland
 lace.
 In the autumn's cheek is a hectic
 trace;
 Behind her the ghost of the winter
 stands;
 Sweet summer will moan in her soft
 gray place:
 Mantle her head with your glowing
 hands.

Envoi.

Till the slayer be slain and the spring
 displace
 The might of his arms with her rose-
 crowned bands,
 Let her heart not gather a dream that is
 base:
 Shadow her head with your golden
 hands.

WINTER.

[Pg 27]

The long days came and went; the riotous
 bees
 Tore the warm grapes in many a dusty-
 vine,
 And men grew faint and thin with too
 much ease,
 And Winter gave no
 sign:
 But all the while beyond the northmost
 woods
 He sat and smiled and watched his
 spirits play
 In elfish dance and eery roundelay,
 Tripping in many
 moods
 With snowy curve and fairy crystal shine.

But now the time is come: with southward
 speed
 The elfin spirits pass: a secret sting
 Hath fallen and smitten flower and fruit
 and weed,
 And every leafy thing.
 The wet woods moan: the dead leaves
 break and fall;

In still night-watches wakeful men have
heard
The muffled pipe of many a passing
bird,
High over hut and hall,
Straining to southward with unresting
wing.

And then they come with colder feet, and
fret
The winds with snow, and tuck the
streams to sleep
With icy sheet and gleaming coverlet,
And fill the valleys
deep
With curvèd drifts, and a strange music
raves
Among the pines, sometimes in wails,
and then
In whistled laughter, till affrighted men
Draw close, and into
caves
And earthy holes the blind beasts curl and
creep.

And so all day above the toiling heads
Of men's poor chimneys, full of impish
freaks,
Tearing and twisting in tight-curlèd shreds
The vain unnumbered
reeks,
The Winter speeds his fairies forth and
mocks
Poor bitten men with laughter icy cold,
Turning the brown of youth to white and
old
With hoary-woven
locks,
And grey men young with roses in their
cheeks.

And after thaws, when liberal water swells
The bursting eaves, he biddeth drip and
grow
The curly horns of ribbèd icicles
In many a beard-like
row.
In secret moods of mercy and soft dole,
Old warpèd wrecks and things of
mouldering death
That summer scorns and man
abandoneth
His careful hands
console
With lawny robes and draperies of snow.

And when night comes, his spirits with
chill feet,

[Pg 28]

[Pg 29]

Winged with white mirth and noiseless
 mockery,
 Across men's pallid windows peer and
 fleet,
 And smiling silverly
 Draw with mute fingers on the frosted
 glass
 Quaint fairy shapes of icèd witcheries,
 Pale flowers and glinting ferns and
 frigid trees
 And meads of mystic
 grass,
 Graven in many an austere phantasy.

 But far away the Winter dreams alone,
 Rustling among his snow-drifts, and
 resigns
 Cold fondling ears to hear the cedars moan
 In dusky-skirted lines
 Strange answers of an ancient runic call;
 Or somewhere watches with his antique
 eyes,
 Gray-chill with frosty-lidded reveries,
 The silvery moonshine
 fall
 In misty wedges through his girth of pines.

 Poor mortals haste and hide away: creep
 soon
 Into your icy beds: the embers die;
 And on your frosted panes the pallid moon
 Is glimmering
 brokenly.
 Mutter faint prayers that spring will come
 e'erwhile,
 Scarring with thaws and dripping days
 and nights
 The shining majesty of him that smites
 And slays you with a
 smile
 Upon his silvery lips, of glinting mockery.

WINTER HUES RECALLED.

[Pg 30]

Life is not all for effort: there are hours,
 When fancy breaks from the exacting will,
 And rebel thought takes schoolboy's
 holiday,
 Rejoicing in its idle strength. 'Tis then,
 And only at such moments, that we know
 The treasure of hours gone—scenes once
 beheld,
 Sweet voices and words bright and
 beautiful,

Impetuous deeds that woke the God within
us,
The loveliness of forms and thoughts and
colors,
A moment marked and then as soon
forgotten.
These things are ever near us, laid away,
Hidden and waiting the appropriate times,
In the quiet garner-house of memory.
There in the silent unaccounted depth,
Beneath the heated strainage and the rush
That teem the noisy surface of the hours,
All things that ever touched us are stored
up,
Growing more mellow like sealed wine
with age;
We thought them dead, and they are but
asleep.
In moments when the heart is most at rest
And least expectant, from the luminous
doors,
And sacred dwelling place of things
unfeared,
They issue forth, and we who never knew
Till then how potent and how real they
were,
Take them, and wonder, and so bless the
hour.

[Pg 31]

Such gifts are sweetest when unsought. To
me,
As I was loitering lately in my dreams,
Passing from one remembrance to another,
Like him who reads upon an outstretched
map,
Content and idly happy, these rose up,
Out of that magic well-stored picture
house,
No dream, rather a thing most keenly real,
The memory of a moment, when with feet,
Arrested and spell bound, and captured
eyes,
Made wide with joy and wonder, I beheld
The spaces of a white and wintry land
Swept with the fire of sunset, all its width
Vale, forest, town, and misty eminence,
A miracle of color and of beauty.

I had walked out, as I remember now,
With covered ears, for the bright air was
keen,
To southward up the gleaming snow-
packed fields,
With the snowshoer's long rejoicing stride,
Marching at ease. It was a radiant day
In February, the month of the great
struggle

'Twixt sun and frost, when with advancing
spears,
The glittering golden vanguard of the
spring
Holds the broad winter's yet unbroken rear
In long-closed wavering contest. Thin pale
threads
Like streaks of ash across the far off blue
Were drawn, nor seemed to move. A
brooding silence
Kept all the land, a stillness as of sleep;
But in the east the grey and motionless
woods,
Watching the great sun's fiery slow
decline,
Grew deep with gold. To westward all was
silver.
An hour had passed above me; I had
reached
The loftiest level of the snow-piled fields,
Clear eyed, but unobservant, noting not,
That all the plain beneath me and the hills
Took on a change of color splendid,
gradual,
Leaving no spot the same; nor that the sun
Now like a fiery torrent overflamed
The great line of the west. Ere yet I turned
With long stride homeward, being heated
With the loose swinging motion, weary
too,
Nor uninclined to rest, a buried fence,
Whose topmost log just shouldered from
the snow,
Made me a seat, and thence with heated
cheeks,
Grazed by the northwind's edge of stinging
ice,
I looked far out upon the snow-bound
waste,
The lifting hills and intersecting forests,
The scarce marked courses of the buried
streams,
And as I looked lost memory of the frost,
Transfixed with wonder, overborne with
joy.
I saw them in their silence and their
beauty,
Swept by the sunset's rapid hand of fire,
Sudden, mysterious, every moment
deepening
To some new majesty of rose or flame.
The whole broad west was like a molten
sea
Of crimson. In the north the light-lined
hills
Were veiled far off as with a mist of rose
Wondrous and soft. Along the darkening
east

[Pg 32]

[Pg 33]

The gold of all the forests slowly changed
To purple. In the valley far before me,
Low sunk in sapphire shadows, from its
hills,
Softer and lovelier than an opening flower,
Uprose a city with its sun-touched towers,
A bunch of amethysts.

Like one spell-
bound

Caught in the presence of some god, I
stood,
Nor felt the keen wind and the deadly air,
But watched the sun go down, and
watched the gold
Fade from the town and the withdrawing
hills,
Their westward shapes athwart the dusky
red
Freeze into sapphire, saw the arc of rose
Rise ever higher in the violet east,
Above the frore front of the uprearing
night
Remorsefully soft and sweet. Then I
awoke
As from a dream, and from my shoulders
shook
The warning chill, till then unfelt,
unfeared.

STORM.

[Pg 34]

Out of the grey northwest, where many a
day gone by
Ye tugged and howled in your
tempestuous grot,
And evermore the huge frost giants lie,
Your wizard guards in vigilance
unforgot,
Out of the grey northwest, for now the
bonds are riven,
On wide white wings your thongless flight
is driven,
That lulls but resteth not.

And all the grey day long, and all the
dense wild night
Ye wheel and hurry with the sheeted
snow,
By cedared waste and many a pine-dark
height,
Across white rivers frozen fast below;
Over the lonely forests, where the flowers
yet sleeping
Turn in their narrow beds with dreams of
weeping

In some remembered woe;

Across the unfenced wide marsh levels,
where the dry
Brown ferns sigh out, and last year's
sedges scold
In some drear language, rustling haggardly
Their thin dead leaves and dusky hoods
of gold;
Across grey beechwoods where the pallid
leaves unfalling
In the blind gusts like homeless ghosts are
calling
With voices cracked and old;

[Pg 35]

Across the solitary clearings, where the
low
Fierce gusts howl through the blinded
woods, and round
The buried shanties all day long the snow
Sifts and piles up in many a spectral
mound;
Across lone villages in eery wildernesses
Whose hidden life no living shape
confesses
Nor any human sound;

Across the serried masses of dim cities,
blown
Full of the snow that ever shifts and
swells,
While far above them all their towers of
stone
Stand and beat back your fierce and
tyrannous spells,
And hour by hour send out, like voices
torn and broken
Of battling giants that have grandly
spoken,
The veering sound of bells;

So day and night, oh wind, with hiss and
moan you fleet,
Where once long gone on many a green-
leafed day
Your gentler brethren wandered with light
feet
And sang with voices soft and sweet as
they,
The same blind thought that you with
wilder might are speaking,
Seeking the same strange thing that you
are seeking
In this your stormier way.

[Pg 36]

Oh wind, wild-voicèd brother, in your
northern cave,
My spirit also being so beset

With pride and pain, I heard you beat and
rave,
Grinding your chains with furious howl
and fret,
Knowing full well that all earth's moving
things inherit
The same chained might and madness of
the spirit,
That none may quite forget.

You in your cave of snows, we in our
narrow girth
Of need and sense, forever chafe and
pine;
Only in moods of some demonic birth
Our souls take fire, our flashing wings
untwine;
Even like you, mad wind, above our
broken prison,
With streaming hair and maddened eyes
uprisen,
We dream ourselves divine;

Mad moods that come and go in some
mysterious way,
That flash and fall, none knoweth how
or why,
Oh wind, our brother, they are yours to-
day,
The stormy joy, the sweeping mastery;
Deep in our narrow cells, we hear you, we
awaken
With hands afret and bosoms strangely
shaken,
We answer to your cry.

I most that love you, wind, when you are
fierce and free,
In these dull fetters cannot long remain;
Lo, I will rise and break my thongs and
flee
Forth to your drift and beating, till my
brain
Even for an hour grow wild in your divine
embraces,
And then creep back into mine earthly
traces,
And bind me with my chain.

Nay, wind, I hear you, desperate brother,
in your might
Whistle and howl; I shall not tarry long,
And though the day be blind and fierce, the
night
Be dense and wild, I still am glad and
strong
To meet you face to face; through all your
gust and drifting

[Pg 37]

With brow held high, my joyous hands
 uplifting,
I cry you song for song.

MIDNIGHT.

From where I sit, I see the stars,
 And down the chilly floor
The moon between the frozen bars
 Is glimmering dim and hoar.

Without in many a peaked mound
 The glinting snowdrifts lie;
There is no voice or living sound;
 The embers slowly die.

[Pg 38]

Yet some wild thing is in mine ear;
 I hold my breath and hark;
Out of the depth I seem to hear
 A crying in the dark:

No sound of man or wife or child,
 No sound of beast that groans,
Or of the wind that whistles wild,
 Or of the tree that moans:

I know not what it is I hear;
 I bend my head and hark:
I cannot drive it from mine ear,
 That crying in the dark.

SONG OF THE STREAM-DROPS.

By silent forest and field and mossy stone,
 We come from the wooded hill, and we
 go to the sea.
We labour, and sing sweet songs, but we
 never moan,
 For our mother, the sea, is calling us
 cheerily.
We have heard her calling us many and
 many a day
From the cool grey stones and the white
 sands far away.

[Pg 39]

The way is long, and winding and slow
 is the track,
 The sharp rocks fret us, the eddies
 bring us delay,
But we sing sweet songs to our mother,
 and answer her back;

Gladly we answer our mother,
sweetly repay.
Oh, we hear, we hear her singing wherever
we roam,
Far, far away in the silence, calling us
home.

Poor mortal, your ears are dull, and you
cannot hear;
But we, we hear it, the breast of our
mother abeat;
Low, far away, sweet and solemn and
clear,
Under the hush of the night, under the
noontide heat:
And we sing sweet songs to our mother,
for so we shall please her best,
Songs of beauty and peace, freedom and
infinite rest.

We sing, and sing, through the grass and
the stones and the reeds,
And we never grow tired, though we
journey ever and aye,
Dreaming, and dreaming, wherever the
long way leads,
Of the far cool rocks and the rush of
the wind and the spray.
Under the sun and the stars we murmur
and dance and are free,
And we dream and dream of our mother,
the width of the sheltering sea.

[Pg 40]

BETWEEN THE RAPIDS.

The point is turned; the twilight shadow
fills
The wheeling stream, the soft receding
shore,
And on our ears from deep among the hills
Breaks now the rapid's sudden
quickenning roar.
Ah yet the same, or have they changed
their face,
The fair green fields, and can it still be
seen,
The white log cottage near the mountain's
base,
So bright and quiet, so home-like and
serene?
Ah, well I question, for as five years go,
How many blessings fall, and how much
woe.

Aye there they are, nor have they changed
their cheer,
The fields, the hut, the leafy mountain
brows;
Across the lonely dusk again I hear
The loitering bells, the lowing of the
cows,
The bleat of many sheep, the stilly rush
Of the low whispering river, and
through all,
Soft human tongues that break the
deepening hush
With faint-heard song or desultory call:
Oh comrades hold; the longest reach is
past;
The stream runs swift, and we are flying
fast.

[Pg 41]

The shore, the fields, the cottage just the
same,
But how with them whose memory
makes them sweet?
Oh if I called them, hailing name by name,
Would the same lips the same old shouts
repeat?
Have the rough years, so big with death
and ill,
Gone lightly by and left them smiling
yet?
Wild black-eyed Jeanne whose tongue was
never still,
Old wrinkled Picaud, Pierre and pale
Lisette,
The homely hearts that never cared to
range,
While life's wide fields were filled with
rush and change.

And where is Jacques, and where is
Verginie?
I cannot tell; the fields are all a blur.
The lowing cows whose shapes I scarcely
see,
Oh do they wait and do they call for
her?
And is she changed, or is her heart still
clear
As wind or morning, light as river
foam?
Or have life's changes borne her far from
here,
And far from rest, and far from help and
home?
Ah comrades, soft, and let us rest awhile,
For arms grow tired with paddling many a
mile.

[Pg 42]

The woods grow wild, and from the rising
shore
The cool wind creeps, the faint wood
odours steal;
Like ghosts adown the river's blackening
floor
The misty fumes begin to creep and
reel.
Once more I leave you, wandering toward
the night,
Sweet home, sweet heart, that would
have held me in;
Whither I go I know not, and the light
Is faint before, and rest is hard to win.
Ah sweet ye were and near to heaven's
gate;
But youth is blind and wisdom comes too
late.

Blacker and loftier grow the woods, and
hark!
The freshening roar! The chute is near
us now,
And dim the canyon grows, and inky dark
The water whispering from the birchen
prow.
One long last look, and many a sad adieu,
While eyes can see and heart can feel
you yet,
I leave sweet home and sweeter hearts to
you,
A prayer for Picaud, one for pale
Lisette,
A kiss for Pierre, my little Jacques, and
thee,
A sigh for Jeanne, a sob for Verginie.

Oh, does she still remember? Is the dream
Now dead, or has she found another
mate?
So near, so dear; and ah, so swift the
stream;
Even now perhaps it were not yet too
late.
But oh, what matter; for before the night
Has reached its middle, we have far to
go:
Bend to your paddles, comrades; see, the
light
Ebbs off apace; we must not linger so.
Aye thus it is! Heaven gleams and then is
gone
Once, twice, it smiles, and still we wander
on.

[Pg 43]

NEW YEAR'S EVE.

Once on the year's last eve in my mind's
might
Sitting in dreams, not sad, nor quite
elysian,
Balancing all 'twixt wonder and
derision,
Methought my body and all this world
took flight,
And vanished from me, as a dream,
outright;
Leaning out thus in sudden strange
decision,
I saw as it were in the flashing of a
vision,
Far down between the tall towers of the
night,
Borne by great winds in awful unison,
The teeming masses of mankind
sweep by,
Even as a glittering river with deep
sound
And innumerable banners, rolling on
Over the starry border glooms that
bound
The last gray space in dim eternity.

And all that strange unearthly multitude
Seemed twisted in vast seething
companies,
That evermore with hoarse and terrible
cries
And desperate encounter at mad feud
Plunged onward, each in its implacable
mood
Borne down over the trampled
blazonries
Of other faiths and other phantasies,
Each following furiously, and each
pursued;
So sped they on with tumult vast and
grim,
But ever meseemed beyond them I
could see
White-haloed groups that sought
perpetually
The figure of one crowned and
sacrificed;
And faint, far forward, floating tall and
dim,
The banner of our Lord and
Master, Christ.

[Pg 44]

[Pg 45]

UNREST.

All day upon the garden bright
The sun shines strong,
But in my heart there is no light,
Or any song.

Voices of merry life go by,
Adown the street;
But I am weary of the cry
And drift of feet.

With all dear things that ought to please
The hours are blessed,
And yet my soul is ill at ease,
And cannot rest.

Strange spirit, leave me not too long,
Nor stint to give,
For if my soul have no sweet song,
It cannot live.

SONG.

[Pg 46]

Songs that could span the earth,
When leaping thought had stirred them,
In many an hour since birth,
We heard or dreamed we heard them.

Sometimes to all their sway
We yield ourselves half fearing,
Sometimes with hearts grown grey
We curse ourselves for hearing.

We toil and but begin;
In vain our spirits fret them,
We strive, and cannot win,
Nor evermore forget them.

A light that will not stand,
That comes and goes in flashes,
Fair fruits that in the hand
Are turned to dust and ashes.

Yet still the deep thoughts ring
Around and through and through us,
Sweet nights that make us sing,
But bring no resting to us.

ONE DAY.

[Pg 47]

The trees rustle; the wind blows
Merrily out of the town;
The shadows creep, the sun goes
Steadily over and down.

In a brown gloom the moats gleam;
Slender the sweet wife stands;
Her lips are red; her eyes dream;
Kisses are warm on her hands.

The child moans; the hours slip
Bitterly over her head:
In a gray dusk, the tears drip;
Mother is up there dead.

The hermit hears the strange bright
Murmur of life at play;
In the waste day and the waste night
Times to rebel and to pray.

The laborer toils in gray wise,
Godlike and patient and calm;
The beggar moans; his bleared eyes
Measure the dust in his palm.

The wise man marks the flow and ebb
Hidden and held aloof:
In his deep mind is laid the web,
Shuttles are driving the woof.

[Pg 48]

SLEEP.

If any man, with sleepless care oppressed,
On many a night had risen, and addressed
His hand to make him out of joy and moan
An image of sweet sleep in carven stone,
Light touch by touch, in weary moments
planned,
He would have wrought her with a patient
hand,
Not like her brother death, with massive
limb
And dreamless brow, unstartled,
changeless, dim,
But very fair, though fitful and afraid,
More sweet and slight than any mortal
maid.
Her hair he would have carved a mantle
smooth
Down to her tender feet to wrap and
soothe
All fevers in, yet barbèd here and there
With many a hidden sting of restless care;
Her brow most quiet, thick with opiate
rest,

Yet watchfully lined, as if some hovering
 guest
Of noiseless doubt were there; so too her
 eyes
His light hand would have carved in
 cunning wise
Broad with all languor of the drowsy
 South,
Most beautiful, but held askance; her
 mouth
More soft and round than any rose half-
 spread,
Yet ever twisted with some nervous dread.
He would have made her with one marble
 foot,
Frail as a snow-white feather, forward put,
Bearing sweet medicine for all distress,
Smooth languor and unstrung
 forgetfulness;
The other held a little back for dread;
One slender moonpale hand held forth to
 shed
Soft slumber dripping from its pearly tip
Into wide eyes; the other on her lip.
So in the watches of his sleepless care
The cunning artist would have wrought her
 fair;
Shy goddess, at keen seeking most afraid
Yet often coming, when we least have
 prayed.

[Pg 49]

THREE FLOWER PETALS.

[Pg 50]

What saw I yesterday walking apart
 In a leafy place where the cattle wait?
Something to keep for a charm in my heart
 —

 A little sweet girl in a garden gate.
Laughing she lay in the gold sun's might,
 And held for a target to shelter her,
In her little soft fingers, round and white,
 The gold-rimmed face of a sunflower.

Laughing she lay on the stone that stands
 For a rough-hewn step in that sunny
 place,
And her yellow hair hung down to her
 hands,
 Shadowing over her dimpled face.
Her eyes like the blue of the sky, made
 dim
 With the might of the sun that looked at
 her,
Shone laughing over the serried rim,
 Golden set, of the sunflower.

Laughing, for token she gave to me
Three petals out of the sunflower; —
When the petals are withered and gone,
 shall be
Three verses of mine for praise of her,
That a tender dream of her face may rise
And lighten me yet in another hour,
Of her sunny hair and her beautiful eyes,
Laughing over the gold sunflower.

PASSION.

[Pg 51]

As a weed beneath the ocean,
As a pool beneath a tree
Answers with each breath or motion
An imperious mastery;

So my spirit swift with passion
Finds in every look a sign,
Catching in some wondrous fashion
Every mood that governs thine.

In a moment it will borrow,
Flashing in a gusty train,
Laughter and desire and sorrow
Anger and delight and pain.

A BALLADE OF WAITING.

[Pg 52]

No girdle hath weaver or goldsmith
 wrought
So rich as the arms of my love can be;
No gems with a lovelier lustre fraught
Than her eyes, when they answer me
 liquidly.
Dear lady of love, be kind to me
In days when the waters of hope
 abate,
And doubt like a shimmer on sand shall
 be,
In the year yet, Lady, to dream and
 wait.

Sweet mouth, that the wear of the world
 hath taught
No glitter of wile or traitorie,
More soft than a cloud in the sunset
 caught,
Or the heart of a crimson peony;
Oh turn not its beauty away from me;
To kiss it and cling to it early and late

Shall make sweet minutes of days that
flee,
In the year yet, Lady, to dream and
wait.

Rich hair that a painter of old had sought
For the weaving of some soft phantasy,
Most fair when the streams of it run
distraught
On the firm sweet shoulders yellowly;
Dear Lady, gather it close to me,
Weaving a nest for the double freight
Of cheeks and lips that are one and free,
For the year yet, Lady, to dream and
wait.

[Pg 53]

Envoi.

So time shall be swift till thou mate with
me,
For love is mightiest next to fate,
And none shall be happier, Love, than we,
In the year yet, Lady, to dream and wait.

BEFORE SLEEP.

Now the creeping nets of sleep
Stretch about and gather nigh,
And the midnight dim and deep
Like a spirit passes by,
Trailing from her crystal dress
Dreams and silent frostiness.

Yet a moment, ere I be
Tangled in the snares of night,
All the dreamy heart of me
To my Lady takes its flight,
To her chamber where she lies,
Wrapt in midnight phantasies.

Over many a glinting street
And the snow capped roofs of men,
Towers that tremble with the beat
Of the midnight bells, and then,
Where my body may not be,
Stands my spirit holily.

[Pg 54]

Wake not, Lady, wake not soon:
Through the frosty windows fall
Broken glimmers of the moon
Dimly on the floor and wall;
Wake not, Lady, never care,
'Tis my spirit kneeling there.

Let him kneel a moment now,

For the minutes fly apace;
Let him see the sleeping brow,
And the sweetly rounded face:
He shall tell me soon aright
How my Lady looks to-night.

How her tresses out and in
Fold in many a curly freak,
Round about the snowy chin
And the softly tinted cheek,
Where no sorrows now can weep,
And the dimples lie asleep.

How her eyelids meet and match,
Gathered in two dusky seams,
Each the little creamy thatch
Of an azure house of dreams,
Or two flowers that love the light
Folded softly up at night.

[Pg 55]

How her bosom, breathing low,
Stirs the wavy coverlet
With a motion soft and slow:
Oh, my Lady, wake not yet;
There without a thought of guile
Let my spirit dream a while.

Yet, my spirit, back to me,
Hurry soon and have a care;
Love will turn to agony,
If you rashly linger there;
Bending low as spirits may,
Touch her lips and come away.

So, fond spirit, beauty-fed,
Turning when your watch is o'er,
Weave a cross above the bed
And a sleep-rune on the floor,
That no evil enter there,
Ugly shapes and dreams beware.

Then, ye looming nets of sleep,
Ye may have me all your own,
For the night is wearing deep
And the ice-winds whisk and moan;
Come with all your drowsy stress,
Dreams and silent frostiness.

[Pg 56]

A SONG.

Oh night and sleep,
Ye are so soft and deep,
I am so weary, come ye soon to me.
Oh hours that creep,
With so much time to weep,

I am so tired, can ye no swifter be?

Come, night, anear;
I'll whisper in thine ear
What makes me so unhappy, full of care;
Dear night, I die
For love that all men buy
With tears, and know not it is dark despair.

Dear night, I pray,
How is it that men say
That love is sweet? It is not sweet to me.
For one boy's sake
A poor girl's heart must break;
So sweet, so true, and yet it could not be!

[Pg 57]

Oh, I loved well,
Such love as none can tell:
It was so true, it could not make him
know:
For he was blind,
All light and all unkind:
Oh, had he known, would he have hurt me
so?

Oh night and sleep,
Ye are so soft and deep,
I am so weary, come ye soon to me.
Oh hours that creep,
With so much time to weep,
I am so tired, can ye no swifter be?

WHAT DO POETS WANT WITH GOLD?

[Pg 58]

What do poets want with gold,
Cringing slaves and cushioned ease;
Are not crusts and garments old
Better for their souls than these?

Gold is but the juggling rod
Of a false usurping god,
Graven long ago in hell
With a sombre stony spell,
Working in the world forever.
Hate is not so strong to sever
Beating human heart from heart.
Soul from soul we shrink and part,
And no longer hail each other
With the ancient name of brother
Give the simple poet gold,
And his song will die of cold.
He must walk with men that reel
On the rugged path, and feel
Every sacred soul that is
Beating very near to his.

Simple, human, careless, free,
As God made him, he must be:
For the sweetest song of bird
Is the hidden tenor heard
In the dusk, at even-flush,
From the forest's inner hush,
Of the simple hermit thrush.

[Pg 59]

What do poets want with love?
Flowers that shiver out of hand,
And the fervid fruits that prove
Only bitter broken sand?

Poets speak of passion best,
When their dreams are undistressed,
And the sweetest songs are sung,
E'er the inner heart is stung.
Let them dream; 'tis better so;
Ever dream, but never know.
If their spirits once have drained
All that goblet crimson-stained,
Finding what they dreamed divine,
Only earthly sluggish wine,
Sooner will the warm lips pale,
And the flawless voices fail,
Sooner come the drooping wing,
And the afterdays that bring,
No such songs as did the spring.

THE KING'S SABBATH.

[Pg 60]

Once idly in his hall king Olave sat
Pondering, and with his dagger whittled
chips;
And one drew near to him with austere
lips,
Saying, "To-morrow is Monday," and at
that
The king said nothing, but held forth his
flat
Broad palm, and bending on his mighty
hips,
Took up and mutely laid thereon the
slips
Of scattered wood, as on a hearth, and gat
From off the embers near, a burning brand.
Kindling the pile with this, the dreaming
Dane
Sat silent with his eyes set and his bland
Proud mouth, tight-woven, smiling,
drawn with pain,
Watching the fierce fire flare, and wax,
and wane,
Hiss and burn down upon his shrivelled
hand.

THE LITTLE HANDMAIDEN.

[Pg 61]

The King's son walks in the garden fair—
 Oh, the maiden's heart is merry!
He little knows for his toil and care,
That the bride is gone and the bower is
 bare.
 Put on garments of white, my
 maidens!

The sun shines bright through the
 casement high—
 Oh, the maiden's heart is merry!
The little handmaid, with a laughing eye,
Looks down on the king's son, strolling by.
 Put on garments of white, my
 maidens!

"He little knows that the bride is gone,
 And the Earl knows little as he;
She is fled with her lover afar last night,
 And the King's son is left to me."

And back to her chamber with velvety step
 The little handmaid did glide,
And a gold key took from her bosom
 sweet,
 And opened the great chests wide.

She bound her hair with a band of blue,
 And a garland of lilies sweet;
And put on her delicate silken shoes,
 With roses on both her feet.

[Pg 62]

She clad her body in spotless white,
 With a girdle as red as blood.
The glad white raiment her beauty bound,
 As the sepals bind the bud:

And round and round her white neck she
 flung
 A necklace of sapphires blue;
On one white finger of either hand
 A shining ring she drew.

And down the stairway and out of the door
 She glided, as soft and light,
As an airy tuft of a thistle seed
 Might glide through the grasses
 bright.

And into the garden sweet she stole—
 The little birds carolled loud—
Her beauty shone as a star might shine
 In the rift of a morning cloud.

The King's son walked in the garden fair,
 And the little handmaiden came,
 Through the midst of a shimmer of roses
 red,
 Like a sunbeam through a flame.

The King's son marvelled, his heart leaped
 up,
 "And art thou my bride?" said he,
 "For, North or South, I have never beheld
 A lovelier maid than thee."

[Pg 63]

"And dost thou love me?" the little maid
 cried,
 "A fine King's son, I wis!"
 And the King's son took her with both his
 hands,
 And her ruddy lips did kiss.

And the little maid laughed till the beaded
 tears,
 Ran down in a silver rain.
 "O foolish King's son!" and she clapped
 her hands,
 Till the gold rings rang again.

"O King's son, foolish and fooled art thou,
 For a goodly game is played:
 Thy bride is away with her lover last night,
 And I am her little handmaid."

And the King's son sware a great oath, said
 he,—
Oh, the maiden's heart is merry!
 "If the Earl's fair daughter a traitress be,
 The little handmaid is enough for me."
*Put on garments of white, my
 maidens!*

The King's son walks in the garden fair—
Oh, the maiden's heart is merry!
 And the little handmaiden walketh there,
 But the old Earl pulleth his beard for care.
*Put on garments of white, my
 maidens!*

ABU MIDJAN.

[Pg 64]

Underneath a tree at noontide
 Abu Midjan sits distressed,
 Fetters on his wrists and ancles,
 And his chin upon his breast;

For the Emir's guard had taken,
 As they passed from line to line,

Reeling in the camp at midnight,
Abu Midjan drunk with wine.

Now he sits and rolls uneasy,
Very fretful, for he hears,
Near at hand, the shout of battle,
And the din of driving spears.

Both his heels in wrath are digging
Trenches in the grassy soil,
And his fingers clutch and loosen,
Dreaming of the Persian spoil.

To the garden, over-weary
Of the sound of hoof and sword,
Came the Emir's gentle lady,
Anxious for her fighting lord.

Very sadly, Abu Midjan,
Hanging down his head for shame,
Spoke in words of soft appealing
To the tender-hearted dame:

[Pg 65]

"Lady, while the doubtful battle
Ebbs and flows upon the plains,
Here in sorrow, meek and idle,
Abu Midjan sits in chains.

"Surely Saad would be safer
For the strength of even me;
Give me then his armour, Lady,
And his horse, and set me free.

"When the day of fight is over,
With the spoil that he may earn,
To his chains, if he is living,
Abu Midjan will return."

She, in wonder and compassion,
Had not heart to say him nay;
So, with Saad's horse and armour,
Abu Midjan rode away.

Happy from the fight at even,
Saad told his wife at meat,
How the army had been succoured
In the fiercest battle-heat,

By a stranger horseman, coming
When their hands were most in need,
And he bore the arms of Saad,
And was mounted on his steed;

[Pg 66]

How the faithful battled forward,
Mighty where the stranger trod,
Till they deemed him more than mortal,
And an angel sent from God.

Then the lady told her master

How she gave the horse and mail
To the drunkard, and had taken
Abu Midjan's word for bail.

To the garden went the Emir,
Running to the tree, and found
Torn with many wounds and bleeding,
Abu Midjan meek and bound.

And the Emir loosed him, saying,
As he gave his hand for sign,
"Never more shall Saad's fetters
Chafe thee for a draught of wine."

Three times to the ground in silence
Abu Midjan bent his head;
Then with glowing eyes uplifted,
To the Emir spake and said:

"While an earthly lord controlled me,
All things for the wine I bore;
Now, since God alone shall judge me,
Abu Midjan drinks no more."

THE WEAVER.

[Pg 67]

All day, all day, round the clacking net
The weaver's fingers fly:
Gray dreams like frozen mists are set
In the hush of the weaver's eye;
A voice from the dusk is calling yet,
"Oh, come away, or we die!"

Without is a horror of hosts that fight,
That rest not, and cease not to kill,
The thunder of feet and the cry of flight,
A slaughter weird and shrill;
Gray dreams are set in the weaver's sight,
The weaver is weaving still.

"Come away, dear soul, come away, or we
die;
Hear'st thou the moan and the rush!
Come away;
The people are slain at the gates, and they
fly;
The kind God hath left them this day;
The battle-axe cleaves, and the foemen
cry,
And the red swords swing and slay."

"Nay, wife, what boots it to fly from pain,
When pain is wherever we fly?
And death is a sweeter thing than a chain:
'Tis sweeter to sleep than to cry.

[Pg 68]

The kind God giveth the days that wane;
If the kind God hath said it, I die."

And the weaver wove, and the good wife
fled,
And the city was made a tomb,
And a flame that shook from the rocks
overhead
Shone into that silent room,
And touched like a wide red kiss on the
dead
Brown weaver slain by his loom.

Yet I think that in some dim shadowy land,
Where no suns rise or set,
Where the ghost of a whilom loom doth
stand
Round the dusk of its silken net,
Forever flyeth his shadowy hand,
And the weaver is weaving yet.

THE THREE PILGRIMS.

[Pg 69]

In days, when the fruit of men's labour was
sparing,
And hearts were weary and nigh to
break,
A sweet grave man with a beautiful
bearing
Came to us once in the fields and spake.

He told us of Roma, the marvellous city,
And of One that came from the living
God,
The Virgins' Son, who in heavenly pity,
Bore for His people the rood and rod,

And how at Roma the gods were broken,
The new was strong, and the old nigh
dead,
And love was more than a bare word
spoken,
For the sick were healed and the poor
were fed;

And we sat mute at his feet, and
hearkened:
The grave man came in an hour; and
went,
But a new light shone on a land long
darkened;
The toil was weary, the fruit was spent:

So we came south, till we saw the city,
Speeding three of us, hand in hand,

Seeking peace and the bread of pity,
Journeying out of the Umbrian land;

Till we saw from the hills in a dazzled
coma

Over the vines that the wind made
shiver,
Tower on tower, the great city Roma,
Palace and temple, and winding river:

And we stood long in a dream and waited,
Watching and praying and purified,
And came at last to the walls belated,
Entering in at the eventide:

And many met us with song and dancing,
Mantled in skins and crowned with
flowers,
Waving goblets and torches glancing;
Faces drunken, that grinned in ours:

And one, that ran in the midst, came near
us—
"Crown yourselves for the feast," he
said,
But we cried out, that the God might hear
us,
"Where is Jesus, the living bread?"

And they took us each by the hand with
laughter;
Their eyes were haggard and red with
wine:
They haled us on, and we followed after,
"We will show you the new God's
shrine."

Ah, woe to our tongues, that, forever
unsleeping,
Harp and uncover the old hot care,
The soothing ash from the embers
sweeping,
Wherever the soles of our sad feet fare.

Ah, we were simple of mind, not knowing,
How dreadful the heart of a man might
be;
But the knowledge of evil is mighty of
growing;
Only the deaf and the blind are free.

We came to a garden of beauty and
pleasure—
It was not the way that our own feet
chose—
Where a revel was whirling in many a
measure,
And the myriad roar of a great crowd
rose;

[Pg 70]

[Pg 71]

And the midmost round of the garden was
 reddened
 With pillars of fire in a great high ring—
One look—and our souls forever were
 deadened,
 Though our feet yet move, and our
 dreams yet sting;

For we saw that each was a live man
 flaming,
 Limbs that a human mother bore,
And a thing of horror was done, past
 naming,
 And the crowd spun round, and we saw
 no more.

And he that ran in the midst, descrying,
 Lifted his hand with a foul red sneer,
And smote us each and the other, crying,
 "Thus we worship the new God here.

"The Cæsar comes, and the people's pæans
 Hail his name for the new made light,
Pitch and the flesh of the Galileans,
 Torches fit for a Roman night;"

And we fell down to the earth, and
 sickened,
 Moaning, three of us, head by head,
"Where is He, whom the good God
 quickened?
 Where is Jesus, the living bread?"

[Pg 72]

Yet ever we heard, in the foul mirth
 turning,
 Man and woman and child go by,
And ever the yells of the charred men
 burning,
 Piercing heavenward, cry on cry;

And we lay there, till the frightful revel
 Died in the dawn with a few short
 moans
Of some that knelt in the wan and level
 Shadows, that fell from the blackened
 bones.

Numb with horror and sick with pity,
 The heart of each as an iron weight,
We crept in the dawn from the awful city,
 Journeying out of the seaward gate.

The great sun came from the sea before us;
 A soft wind blew from the scented
 south;
But our eyes knew not of the steps that
 bore us
 Down to the ships at the Tiber's mouth;

And we prayed then, as we turned our
faces
Over the sea to the living God,
That our ways might be in the fierce bare
places,
Where never the foot of a live man trod:

And we set sail in the noon not caring.
Whither the prow of the dark ship came,
No more over the old ways faring;
For the sea was cold, but the land was
flame:

[Pg 73]

And the keen ship sped, and a deadly coma
Blotted away from our eyes forever,
Tower on tower, the great city Roma,
Palace and temple and yellow river.

THE COMING OF WINTER.

Out of the Northland sombre weirds are
calling;
A shadow falleth southward day by day;
Sad summer's arms grow cold; his fire is
falling;
His feet draw back to give the stern one
way.

It is the voice and shadow of the slayer,
Slayer of loves, sweet world, slayer of
dreams;
Make sad thy voice with sober plaint and
prayer;
Make gray thy woods, and darken all
thy streams.

Black grows the river, blacker drifts the
eddy:
The sky is grey; the woods are cold
below:
Oh make thy bosom, and thy sad lips
ready,
For the cold kisses of the folding snow.

EASTER EVE.

[Pg 74]

Hear me, Brother, gently met;
Just a little, turn not yet,
Thou shalt laugh, and soon forget:
Now the midnight draweth near.
I have little more to tell;
Soon with hollow stroke and knell,

Thou shalt count the palace bell,
Calling that the hour is here.

Burdens black and strange to bear,
I must tell, and thou must share,
Listening with that stony stare,
Even as many a man before.
Years have lightly come and gone
In their jocund unison.
But the tides of life roll on — —
They remember now no more.

Once upon a night of glee,
In an hour of revelry,
As I wandered restlessly,
I beheld with burning eye,
How a pale procession rolled
Through a quarter quaint and old,
With its banners and its gold,
And the crucifix went by.

Well I knew that body brave
That was pierced and hung to save,
But my flesh was now a grave
For the soul that gnashed within.
He that they were bearing by,
With their banners white and high,
He was pure, and foul was I,
And his whiteness mocked my sin.

[Pg 75]

Ah, meseemed that even he,
Would not wait to look on me,
In my years and misery,
Things that he alone could heal.
In mine eyes I felt the flame
Of a rage that nought could tame,
And I cried and cursed his name,
Till my brain began to reel.

In a moment I was 'ware,
How that many watching there,
Fearfully with blanch and stare,
Crossed themselves, and shrank
away;
Then upon my reeling mind,
Like a sharp blow from behind,
Fell the truth, and left me blind,
Hopeless now, and all astray.

O'er the city wandering wide,
Seeking but some place to hide,
Where the sounds of mirth had died,
Through the shaken night I stole;
From the ever-eddy stream
Of the crowds that did but seem
Like processions in a dream
To my empty echoing soul.

[Pg 76]

Till I came at last alone

To a hidden street of stone,
Where the city's monotone
 On the silence fell no more.
Then I saw how one in white
With a footstep mute and light,
Through the shadow of the night
 Like a spirit paced before.

And a sudden stillness came
Through my spirit and my frame,
And a spell without a name
 Held me in his mystic track.
Though his presence seemed so mild,
Yet he led me like a child,
With a yearning strange and wild,
 That I dared not turn me back.

Oh, I could not see his face,
Nor behold his utmost grace,
Yet I might not change my pace
 Fastened by a strange belief;
For his steps were sad and slow,
And his hands hung straight below,
And his head was bowed, as though
 Pressed by some immortal grief.

So I followed, yet not I
Held alone that company:
Every silent passer-by
 Paled and turned and joined with me;
So we followed still and fleet,
While the city street by street,
Fell behind our rustling feet
 Like a deadened memory.

Where the sound of sin and riot
Broke upon the night's dim quiet,
And the solemn bells hung nigh it
 Echoed from their looming towers;
Where the mourners wept alway,
Watching for the morning grey;
Where the weary toiler lay,
 Husbanding the niggard hours;

By the gates where all night long
Guests in many a joyous throng,
With the sound of dance and song,
 Dreamed in golden palaces;
Still he passed, and door by door
Opened with a pale outpour,
And the revel rose no more
 Hushed in deeper phantasies.

As we passed, the talk and stir
Of the quiet wayfarer
And the noisy banqueter
 Died upon the midnight dim.
They that reeled in drunken glee

[Pg 77]

[Pg 78]

Shrank upon the trembling knee,
And their jests died pallidly,
As they rose and followed him.

From the street and from the hall,
From the flare of festival
None that saw him stayed, but all
Followed where his wonder would:
And our feet at first so few
Gathered as those white feet drew,
Till at last our number grew
To a pallid multitude;

And the hushed and awful beat
Of our pale unnumbered feet
Made a murmur strange and sweet,
As we followed evermore.
Now the night was almost passed,
And the dawn was overcast,
When the stranger stayed at last
At a great cathedral door.

Never word the stranger said,
But he slowly raised his head,
And the vast doors openèd
By an unseen hand withdrawn;
And in silence wave on wave,
Like an army from the grave,
Up the aisles and up the nave,
All that spectral crowd rolled on.

As I followed close behind,
Knowledge like an awful wind
Seemed to blow my naked mind
Into darkness black and bare;
Yet with longing wild and dim,
And a terror vast and grim,
Nearer still I pressed to him,
Till I almost touched his hair.

[Pg 79]

From the gloom so strange and eery,
From the organ low and dreary,
Rose the wailing miserere,
By mysterious voices sung;
And a dim light shone, none knew,
How it came, or whence it grew,
From the dusky roof and through
All the solemn spaces flung.

But the stranger still passed on,
Till he reached the altar stone,
And with body white and prone
Sunk his forehead to the floor;
And I saw in my despair,
Standing like a spirit there,
How his head was bruised and bare,
And his hands were clenched before,

How his hair was fouled and knit

With the blood that clotted it,
Where the prickled thorns had bit
 In his crownèd agony;
In his hands so wan and blue,
Leaning out, I saw the two
Marks of where the nails pierced through,
 Once on gloomy Calvary.

[Pg 80]

Then with trembling throat I owned
All my dark sin unatoned,
Telling it with lips that moaned,
 And methought an echo came
From the bended crowd below,
Each one breathing faint and low,
Sins that none but he might know:
 "Master I did curse thy name."

And I saw him slowly rise
With his sad unearthly eyes,
Meeting mine with meek surprise,
 And a voice came solemnly.
"Never more on mortal ground
For thy soul shall rest be found,
But when bells at midnight sound
 Thou must rise and come with me."

Then my forehead smote the floor,
Swooning, and I knew no more,
Till I heard the chancel door
 Open for the choristers:
But the stranger's form was gone,
And the church was dim and lone:
Through the silence, one by one
 Stole the early worshippers.

I am ageing now I know;
That was many years ago,
Yet or I shall rest below
 In the grave where none intrude,
Night by night I roam the street,
And that awful form I meet,
And I follow pale and fleet,
 With a ghostly multitude.

[Pg 81]

Every night I see his face,
With its sad and burdened grace,
And the torn and bloody trace,
 That in hands and feet he has.
Once my life was dark and bad;
Now its days are strange and sad,
And the people call me mad:
 See, they whisper as they pass.

Even now the echoes roll
From the swinging bells that toll;
It is midnight, now my soul
 Hasten; for he glideth by.
Stranger, 'tis no phantasie:

Look! my master waits for me
Mutely, but thou canst not see
With thy mortal blinded eye.

THE ORGANIST.

[Pg 82]

In his dim chapel day by day
The organist was wont to play,
And please himself with fluted reveries;
And all the spirit's joy and strife,
The longing of a tender life,
Took sound and form upon the ivory keys;
And though he seldom spoke a word,
The simple hearts that loved him heard
His glowing soul in these.

One day as he was wrapped, a sound
Of feet stole near; he turned and found
A little maid that stood beside him there.
She started, and in shrinking-wise
Besought him with her liquid eyes
And little features, very sweet and spare.
"You love the music, child," he said,
And laid his hand upon her head,
And smoothed her matted hair.

She answered, "At the door one day
I sat and heard the organ play;
I did not dare to come inside for fear;
But yesterday, a little while,
I crept half up the empty aisle
And heard the music sounding sweet and
clear;
To-day I thought you would not mind,
For, master dear, your face was kind,
And so I came up here."

[Pg 83]

"You love the music then," he said,
And still he stroked her golden head,
And followed out some winding reverie;
"And you are poor?" said he at last;
The maiden nodded, and he passed
His hand across his forehead dreamingly;
"And will you be my friend?" he spake,
"And on the organ learn to make
Grand music here with me?"

And all the little maiden's face
Was kindled with a grateful grace;
"Oh, master, teach me; I will slave for
thee!"
She cried; and so the child grew dear
To him, and slowly year by year
He taught her all the organ's majesty;
And gave her from his slender store

Bread and warm clothing, that no more
Her cheeks were pinched to see.

And year by year the maiden grew
Taller and lovelier, and the hue
Deepened upon her tender cheeks untried.
Rounder, and queenlier, and more fair
Her form grew, and her golden hair
Fell yearly richer at the master's side.
In speech and bearing, form and face,
Sweeter and graver, grace by grace,
Her beauties multiplied.

[Pg 84]

And sometimes at his work a glow
Would touch him, and he murmured
low,
"How beautiful she is?" and bent his head;
And sometimes when the day went by
And brought no maiden he would sigh,
And lean and listen for her velvet tread;
And he would drop his hands and say,
"My music cometh not to-day;
Pray God she be not dead!"

So the sweet maiden filled his heart,
And with her growing grew his art,
For day by day more wondrously he
played.
Such heavenly things the master
wrought,
That in his happy dreams he thought
The organ's self did love the gold-haired
maid:
But she, the maiden, never guessed
What prayers for her in hours of rest
The sombre organ prayed.

At last, one summer morning fair,
The maiden came with braided hair
And took his hands, and held them eagerly.
"To-morrow is my wedding day;
Dear master, bless me that the way
Of life be smooth, not bitter unto me."
He stirred not; but the light did go
Out of his shrunken cheeks, and oh!
His head hung heavily.

[Pg 85]

"You love him, then?" "I love him well,"
She answered, and a numbness fell
Upon his eyes and all his heart that bled.
A glory, half a smile, abode
Within the maiden's eyes and glowed
Upon her parted lips. The master said,
"God bless and bless thee, little maid,
With peace and long delight," and laid
His hands upon her head.

And she was gone; and all that day

The hours crept up and slipped away,
 And he sat still, as moveless as a stone.
 The night came down, with quiet stars,
 And darkened him: in colored bars
 Along the shadowy aisle the moonlight
 shone.
 And then the master woke and passed
 His hands across the keys at last,
 And made the organ moan.

The organ shook, the music wept;
 For sometimes like a wail it crept
 In broken moanings down the shadows
 drear;
 And otherwhiles the sound did swell,
 And like a sudden tempest fell
 Through all the windows wonderful and
 clear.
 The people gathered from the street,
 And filled the chapel seat by seat—
 They could not choose but hear.

[Pg 86]

And there they sat till dawning light,
 Nor ever stirred for awe. "To-night,
 The master hath a noble mood," they said.
 But on a sudden ceased the sound:
 Like ghosts the people gathered round,
 And on the keys they found his fallen
 head.
 The silent organ had received
 The master's broken heart relieved,
 And he was white and dead.

THE MONK.

[Pg 87]

I.

In Nino's chamber not a sound intrudes
 Upon the midnight's tingling silentness,
 Where Nino sits before his book and
 broods,
 Thin and brow-burdened with some fine
 distress,
 Some gloom that hangs about his mournful
 moods
 His weary bearing and neglected dress:
 So sad he sits, nor ever turns a leaf—
 Sorrow's pale miser o'er his hoard of grief.

II.

Young Nino and Leonora, they had met
 Once at a revel by some lover's chance,

And they were young with hearts already
set
To tender thoughts, attuned to romance;
Wherefore it seemed they never could
forget
That winning touch, that one
bewildering glance:
But found at last a shelter safe and sweet,
Where trembling hearts and longing hands
might meet.

III.

[Pg 88]

Ah, sweet their dreams, and sweet the life
they led
With that great love that was their
bosoms' all,
Yet ever shadowed by some circling dread
It gloomed at moments deep and
tragical,
And so for many a month they seemed to
tread
With fluttering hearts, whatever might
befall,
Half glad, half sad, their sweet and secret
way
To the soft tune of some old lover's lay.

IV.

But she is gone, alas he knows not where,
Or how his life that tender gift should
lose:
Indeed his love was ever full of care,
The hasty joys and griefs of him who
woos,
Where sweet success is neighbour to
despair,
With stolen looks and dangerous
interviews:
But one long week she came not, nor the
next,
And so he wandered here and there
perplexed;

V.

Nor evermore she came. Full many days
He sought her at their trysts, devised
deep schemes
To lure her back, and fell on subtle ways
To win some word of her; but all his
dreams
Vanished like smoke, and then in sore
amaze
From town to town, as one that crazed
seems,

He wandered, following in unhappy quest
Uncertain clues that ended like the rest.

[Pg 89]

VI.

And now this midnight, as he sits forlorn,
The printed page for him no meaning
bears;
With every word some torturing dream is
born;
And every thought is like a step that
scares
Old memories up to make him weep and
mourn.
He cannot turn but from their latchless
lair,
The weary shadows of his lost delight
Rise up like dusk birds through the lonely
night.

VII.

And still with questions vain he probes his
grief,
Till thought is wearied out, and dreams
grow dim.
What bitter chance, what woe beyond
belief
Could keep his lady's heart so hid from
him?
Or was her love indeed but light and brief,
A passing thought, a moment's dreamy
whim?
Aye there it stings, the woe that never
sleeps:
Poor Nino leans upon his book, and
weeps.

VIII.

Until at length the sudden grief that shook
His piercèd bosom like a gust is past,
And laid full weary on the wide-spread
book,
His eyes grow dim with slumber light
and fast;
But scarcely have his dreams had time to
look
On lands of kindlier promise, when
aghast
He starts up softly, and in wondering wise
Listens atremble with wide open eyes.

IX.

[Pg 90]

What sound was that? Who knocks like
one in dread

With such swift hands upon his outer
door?
Perhaps some beggar driven from his bed
By gnawing hunger he can bear no
more,
Or questing traveller with confused tread,
Straying, bewildered in the midnight
hoar.
Nino uprises, scared, he knows not how,
The dreams still pale about his burdened
brow.

X.

The heavy bolt he draws, and unawares
A stranger enters with slow steps,
unsought,
A long robed monk, and in his hand he
bears
A jewelled goblet curiously wrought;
But of his face beneath the cowl he wears
For all his searching Nino seeth nought;
And slowly past him with long stride he
hies,
While Nino follows with bewildered eyes.

XI.

Straight on he goes with dusky rustling
gown.
His steps are soft, his hands are white
and fine;
And still he bears the goblet on whose
crown
A hundred jewels in the lamplight shine;
And ever from its edges dripping down
Falls with dark stain the rich and
lustrous wine,
Wherefrom through all the chamber's
shadowy deeps
A deadly perfume like a vapour creeps.

XII.

[Pg 91]

And now he sets it down with careful
hands
On the slim table's polished ebony;
And for a space as if in dreams he stands,
Close hidden in his sombre drapery.
"Oh lover, by thy lady's last commands,
I bid thee hearken, for I bear with me
A gift to give thee and a tale to tell
From her who loved thee, while she lived,
too well."

XIII.

The stranger's voice falls slow and
solemnly.
Tis soft, and rich, and wondrous deep of
tone;
And Nino's face grows white as ivory,
Listening fast-rooted like a shape of
stone.
Ah, blessed saints, can such a dark thing
be?
And was it death, and is Leonora gone?
Oh, love is harsh, and life is frail indeed,
That gives men joy, and then so makes
them bleed.

XIV.

"There is the gift I bring"; the stranger's
head
Turns to the cup that glitters at his side:
"And now my tongue draws back for very
dread,
Unhappy youth, from what it must not
hide.
The saddest tale that ever lips have said;
Yet thou must know how sweet Leonora
died,
A broken martyr for love's weary sake,
And left this gift for thee to leave or take."

XV.

[Pg 92]

Poor Nino listens with that marble face,
And eyes that move not, strangely wide
and set.
The monk continues with his mournful
grace:
"She told me, Nino, how you often met
In secret, and your plighted loves kept
pace
Together, tangled in the self-same net;
Your dream's dark danger and its dread
you knew,
And still you met, and still your passion
grew.

XVI.

"And aye with that luxurious fire you fed
Your dangerous longing daily, crumb by
crumb;
Nor ever cared that still above your head
The shadow grew; for that your lips
were dumb.
You knew full keenly you could never
wed:
'Twas all a dream: the end must surely
come;

For not on thee her father's eyes were
turned
To find a son, when mighty lords were
spurned.

XVII.

"Thou knowest that new-sprung prince,
that proud up-start,
Pisa's new tyrant with his armèd thralls,
Who bends of late to take the people's part,
Yet plays the king among his marble
halls,
Whose gloomy palace in our city's heart
Frowns like a fortress with its loop-
holed walls.
'Twas him he sought for fair Leonora's
hand,
That so his own declining house might
stand.

XVIII.

[Pg 93]

"The end came soon; 'twas never known to
thee;
But, when your love was scarce a six
months old,
She sat one day beside her father's knee,
And in her ears the dreadful thing was
told.
Within one month her bridal hour should
be
With Messer Gianni for his power and
gold;
And as she sat with whitened lips the
while,
The old man kissed her, with his crafty
smile.

XIX.

"Poor pallid lady, all the woe she felt
Thou, wretched Nino, thou alone canst
know.
Down at his feet with many a moan she
knelt,
And prayed that he would never wound
her so.
Ah, tender saints! it was a sight to melt
The flintiest heart; but his could never
glow.
He sat with clenched hands and
straightened head,
And frowned, and glared, and turned from
white to red.

XX.

"And still with cries about his knees she
clung,
Her tender bosom broken with her care.
His words were brief, with bitter fury
flung:
'The father's will the child must meekly
bear;
I am thy father, thou a girl and young.'
Then to her feet she rose in her despair,
And cried with tightened lips and eyes
aglow,
One daring word, a straight and simple,
"No"!

XXI.

[Pg 94]

"Her father left her with wild words, and
sent
Rough men, who dragged her to a
dungeon deep,
Where many a weary soul in darkness pent
For many a year had watched the slow
days creep,
And there he left her for his dark intent,
Where madness breeds and sorrows
never sleep.
Coarse robes he gave her, and her lips he
fed
With bitter water and a crust of bread.

XXII.

"And day by day still following out his
plan,
He came to her, and with determined
spite
Strove with soft words and then with curse
and ban
To bend her heart so wearied to his
might,
And aye she bode his bitter pleasure's
span,
As one that hears, but hath not sense or
sight.
Ah, Nino, still her breaking heart held true:
Poor lady sad, she had no thought but you.

XXIII.

"The father tired at last and came no more,
But in his settled anger bade prepare
The marriage feast with all luxurious store,
With pomps, and shows and splendors
rich and rare;
And so in toil another fortnight wore,
Nor knew she aught what things were in
the air,

Till came the old lord's message brief and
coarse:
Within three days she should be wed by
force.

XXIV.

[Pg 95]

"And all that noon and weary night she
lay,
Poor child, like death upon her prison
stone,
And none that came to her but crept away,
Sickened at heart to see her lips so
moan,
Her eyes so dim within their sockets grey,
Her tender cheeks so thin and ghastly
grown;
But when the next morn's light began to
stir,
She sent and prayed that I might be with
her.

XXV.

"This boon he gave: perchance he deemed
that I,
The chaplain of his house, her
childhood's friend,
With patient tones and holy words, might
try
To soothe her purpose to his gainful
end.
I bowed full low before his crafty eye,
But knew my heart had no base help to
lend.
That night with many a silent prayer I
came
To poor Leonora in her grief and shame.

XXVI.

"But she was strange to me: I could not
speak
For glad amazement, mixed with some
dark fear;
I saw her stand no longer pale and weak,
But a proud maiden, queenly and most
clear,
With flashing eyes and vermeil in her
cheek:
And on the little table, set anear,
I marked two goblets of rare workmanship
With some strange liquor crownèd to the
lip.

XXVII.

[Pg 96]

"And then she ran to me and caught my
hand,
Tightly imprisoned in her meagre twain,
And like the ghost of sorrow she did stand,
And eyed me softly with a liquid pain:
'Oh father, grant, I pray thee, I command,
One boon to me, I'll never ask again,
One boon to me and to my love, to both;
Dear father, grant, and bind it with an
oath.'

XXVIII.

"This granted I, and then with many a wail
She told me all the story of your woe,
And when she finished, lightly but most
pale,
To those two brimming goblets she did
go,
And one she took within her fingers frail,
And looked down smiling in its crimson
glow:
'And now thine oath I'll tell; God grant to
thee
No rest in grave, if thou be false to me.

XXIX.

"Alas, poor me! whom cruel hearts would
wed
On the sad morrow to that wicked lord;
But I'll not go; nay, rather I'll be dead,
Safe from their frown and from their
bitter word.
Without my Nino life indeed were sped;
And sith we two can never more accord
In this drear world, so weary and perplexed,
We'll die, and win sweet pleasure in the
next.

XXX.

[Pg 97]

"Oh father, God will never give thee rest,
If thou be false to what thy lips have
sworn,
And false to love, and false to me
distressed,
A helpless maid, so broken and
outworn.
This cup—she put it softly to her breast—
I pray thee carry, ere the morrow morn,
To Nino's hand, and tell him all my pain;
This other with mine own lips I will drain.'

XXXI.

"Slowly she raised it to her lips, the while

I darted forward, madly fain to seize
Her dreadful hands, but with a sudden wile
She twisted and sprang from me with
bent knees,
And rising turned upon me with a smile,
And drained her goblet to the very lees.
'Oh priest, remember, keep thine oath,' she
cried,
And the spent goblet fell against her side.

XXXII.

"And then she moaned and murmured like
a bell:
'My Nino, my sweet Nino!' and no more
She said, but fluttered like a bird and fell
Lifeless as marble to the footworn floor;
And there she lies even now in lonely cell,
Poor lady, pale with all the grief she
bore,
She could not live, and still be true to thee,
And so she's gone where no rude hands
can be."

XXXIII.

[Pg 98]

The monk's voice pauses like some
mournful flute,
Whose pondered closes for sheer sorrow
fail,
And then with hand that seems as it would
suit
A soft girl best, it is so light and frail,
He turns half round, and for a moment
mute
Points to the goblet, and so ends his
tale:
"Mine oath is kept, thy lady's last
command;
'Tis but a short hour since it left her hand."

XXXIV.

So ends the stranger: surely no man's
tongue
Was e'er so soft, or half so sweet, as his.
Oft as he listened, Nino's heart had sprung
With sudden start as from a spectre's
kiss;
For deep in many a word he deemed had
rung
The liquid fall of some loved emphasis;
And so it pierced his sorrow to the core,
The ghost of tones that he should hear no
more.

XXXV.

But now the tale is ended, and still keeps
The stranger hidden in his dusky weed;
And Nino stands, wide-eyed, as one that
sleeps,
And dimly wonders how his heart doth
bleed.
Anon he bends, yet neither moans nor
weeps,
But hangs atremble, like a broken reed;
"Ah! bitter fate, that lured and sold us so,
Poor lady mine; alas for all our woe!"

XXXVI.

[Pg 99]

But even as he moans in such dark mood,
His wandering eyes upon the goblet fall.
Oh, dreaming heart! Oh, strange
ingratitude!
So to forget his lady's lingering call,
Her parting gift, so rich, so crimson-hued,
The lover's draught, that shall be cure
for all.
He lifts the goblet lightly from its place,
And smiles, and rears it with his courtly
grace.

XXXVII.

"Oh, lady sweet, I shall not long delay:
This gift of thine shall bring me to thine
eyes.
Sure God will send on no unpardoned way
The faithful soul, that at such bidding
dies.
When thou art gone, I cannot longer stay
To brave this world with all its wrath
and lies,
Where hands of stone and tongues of
dragon's breath
Have bruised mine angel to her piteous
death."

XXXVIII.

And now the gleaming goblet hath scarce
dyed
His lips' thin pallor with its deathly red,
When Nino starts in wonder, fearful-eyed,
For, lo! the stranger with outstretchèd
head
Springs at his face one soft and sudden
stride,
And from his hand the deadly cup hath
sped,
Dashed to the ground, and all it's seeded
store
Runs out like blood upon the marble floor.

XXXIX.

"Oh Nino, my sweet Nino! speak to me,
Nor stand so strange, nor look so
deathly pale.
'Twas all to prove thy heart's deaf
constancy
I brought that cup and told that piteous
tale.
Ah! chains and cells and cruel treachery
Are weak indeed when women's hearts
assail.
Art angry, Nino?" 'Tis no monk that cries,
But sweet Leonora with her love-lit eyes.

XL.

She dashes from her brow the pented
hood;
The dusky robe falls rustling to her feet;
And there she stands, as aye in dreams she
stood.
Ah, Nino, see! Sure man did never meet
So warm a flower from such a sombre bud,
So trembling fair, so wan, so pallid
sweet.
Aye, Nino, down like saint upon thy knee,
And soothe her hands with kisses warm
and free.

XLI.

And now with broken laughter on her lips,
And now with moans remembering of
her care,
She weeps, and smiles, and like a child she
slips
Her lily fingers through his curly hair,
The while her head with all it's sweet she
dips,
Close to his ear, to soothe and murmur
there;
"Oh, Nino, I was hid so long from thee,
That much I doubted what thy love might
be.

XLII.

"And though 'twas cruel hard of me to try
Thy faithful heart with such a fearful
test,
Yet now thou canst be happy, sweet, as I
Am wondrous happy in thy truth
confessed.
To haggard death indeed thou needst not
fly
To find the softness of thy lady's breast;

For such a gift was never death's to give,
But thou shalt have me for thy love, and
live.

XLIII.

"Dost see these cheeks, my Nino? they're
so thin,
Not round and soft, as when thou
touched them last:
So long with bitter rage they pent me in,
Like some poor thief in lonely dungeon
cast;
Only this night through every bolt and gin
By cunning stealth I wrought my way at
last.
Straight to thine heart I fled, unfaltering,
Like homeward pigeon with uncaged
wing.

XLIV.

"Nay, Nino, kneel not; let me hear thee
speak.
We must not tarry long; the dawn is
nigh."
So rises he, for very gladness weak;
But half in fear that yet the dream may
fly,
He touches mutely mouth and brow and
cheek;
Till in his ear she 'gins to plead and
sigh:
"Dear love, forgive me for that cruel tale,
That stung thine heart and made thy lips so
pale."

XLV.

[Pg 102]

And so he folds her softly with quick
sighs,
And both with murmurs warm and
musical
Talk and retalk, with dim or smiling eyes,
Of old delights and sweeter days to fall:
And yet not long, for, ere the starlit skies
Grow pale above the city's eastern wall,
They rise, with lips and happy hands
withdrawn,
And pass out softly into the dawn.

XLVI.

For Nino knows the captain of a ship,
The friend of many journeys, who may
be
This very morn will let his cables slip

For the warm coast of sunny Sicily.
 There in Palermo, at the harbour's lip,
 A brother lives, of tried fidelity:
 So to the quays by hidden ways they wend
 In the pale morn, nor do they miss their
 friend.

XLVII.

And ere the shadow of another night
 Hath darkened Pisa, many a foe shall
 stray
 Through Nino's home, with eyes malignly
 bright
 In wolfish quest, but shall not find his
 prey:
 The while those lovers in their white-
 winged flight
 Shall see far out upon the twilight grey,
 Behind, the glimmer of the sea, before,
 The dusky outlines of a kindlier shore.

THE CHILD'S MUSIC LESSON.

[Pg 103]

Why weep ye in your innocent toil at all?
 Sweet little hands, why halt and tremble
 so?
 Full many a wrong note falls, but let it fall!
 Each note to me is like a golden glow;
 Each broken cadence like a morning call;
 Nay, clear and smooth I would not have
 you go,
 Soft little hands, upon the curtained
 threshold set
 Of this long life of labour, and unrestful
 fret.

Soft sunlight flickers on the checkered
 green:
 Warm winds are stirring round my
 dreaming seat:
 Among the yellow pumpkin blooms, that
 lean
 Their crumpled rims beneath the heavy
 heat,
 The striped bees in lazy labour glean
 From bell to bell with golden-feathered
 feet;
 Yet even here the voices of hard life go by;
 Outside, the city strains with its eternal
 cry.

Here, as I sit—the sunlight on my face,

And shadows of green leaves upon mine
eyes—
My heart, a garden in a hidden place,
Is full of folded buds of memories.
Stray hither then with all your old time
grace,
Child-voices, trembling from the
uncertain keys;
Play on, ye little fingers, touch the settled
gloom,
And quickly, one by one, my waiting buds
will bloom.

Ah me, I may not set my feet again
In any part of that old garden dear,
Or pluck one widening blossom, for my
pain;
But only at the wicket gaze I here:
Old scents creep into mine inactive brain,
Smooth scents of things, I may not
come anear;
I see, far off, old beaten pathways they
adorn;
I cannot feel with hands the blossom or the
thorn.

Toil on, sweet hands; once more I see the
child;
The little child, that was myself,
appears,
And all the old-time beauties, undefined,
Shine back to me across the opening
years,
Quick griefs, that made the tender bosom
wild,
Short blinding gusts, that died in
passionate tears,
Sweet life, with all its change, that now so
happy seems,
With all its child-heart glories, and
untutored dreams.

Play on into the golden sunshine so,
Sweeter than all great artists' labouring:
I too was like you once, an age ago:
God keep you, dimpled fingers, for you
bring
Quiet gliding ghosts to me of joy and woe,
No certain things at all that thrill or
sting,
But only sounds and scents and savours of
things bright,
No joy or aching pain; but only dim
delight.

[Pg 104]

AN ATHENIAN REVERIE.

How the returning days, one after one,
Come ever in their rhythmic round,
 unchanged,
Yet from each loopèd robe for every man
Some new thing falls. Happy is he
Who fronts them without fear, and like the
 gods
Looks out unanxiously on each day's gift
With calmly curious eye. How many
 things
Even in a little space, both good and ill,
Have fallen on me, and yet in all of them
The keen experience or the smooth
 remembrance
Hath found some sweet. It scarcely seems
 a month
Since we saw Crete; so swiftly sped the
 days,
Borne onward with how many changing
 scenes,
Filled with how many crowding memories.
Not soon shall I forget them, the stout
 ship,
All the tense labour with the windy sea,
The cloud-wrapped heights of Crete,
 beheld far off,
And white Cytæon with its stormy pier,
The fruitful valleys, the wild mountain
 road,
And those long days of ever-vigilant toil,
Scarcely with sleepless craft and unmoved
 front
Escaping robbers, that quiet restful eve
At rich Gortyna, where we lay and
 watched
The dripping foliage, and the darkening
 fields,
And over all huge-browed above the night
Ida's great summit with it's fiery crown;
And then once more the stormy
 treacherous sea,
The noisy ship, the seamen's vehement
 cries,
That battled with the whistling wind, the
 feet
Reeling upon the swaying deck, and eyes
Strained anxiously toward land; ah, with
 what joy
At last the busy pier at Nauplia,
Rest and firm shelter for our racking
 brains:
Most sweet of all, most dear to memory
That journey with Euktemon through the
 hills
By fair Cleonæ and the lofty pass;

[Pg 106]

Then Corinth with its riotous jollity,
Remembered like a reeling dream; and
 here
Good Theron's wedding, and this festal
 day;
And I, chief helper in its various rites,
Not least, commissioned through these
 wakeful hours
To dream before the quiet thalamos,
Unsleeping, like some full-grown bearded
 Eros,
The guardian of love's sweetest mysteries.
To-morrow I shall hear again the din
Of the loosed cables, and the rowers'
 chaunt,
The rattled cordage and the plunging oars.
Once more the bending sail shall bear us
 on
Across the level of the laughing sea.
Ere mid-day we shall see far off behind us,
Faint as the summit of a sultry cloud,
The white Acropolis. Past Sunium
With rushing keel, the long Eubœan
 strand,
Hymettus and the pine-dark hills shall fade
Into the dusk: at Andros we shall water,
And ere another starlight hush the shores
From seaward valleys catch upon the wind
The fragrance of old Chian vintages.
At Chios many things shall fall, but none
Can trace the future; rather let me dream
Of what is now, and what hath been, for
 both
Are fraught with life.

[Pg 107]

 Here the unbroken
 silence
Awakens thought and makes remembrance
 sweet.
How solidly the brilliant moonlight shines
Into the courts; beneath the colonnades
How dense the shadows. I can scarcely see
Yon painted Dian on the darkened wall;
Yet how the gloom hath made her real.
 What sound,
Piercing the leafy covert of her couch,
Hath startled her. Perchance some
 prowling wolf,
Or luckless footsteps of the stealthy Pan,
Creeping at night among the noiseless
 steeps
And hollows of the Erymanthian woods,
Roused her from sleep. With listening
 head,
Snatched bow, and quiver lightly slung,
 she stands,
And peers across that dim and motionless
 glade,

Beckoning about her heels the wakeful
dogs;

Yet Dian, thus alert, is but a dream,
Making more real this brooding quietness.
How strong and wonderful is night!

[Pg 108]

Mankind
Has yielded all to one sweet helplessness:
Thought, labour, strife and all activities
Have ebbed like fever. The smooth tide of
sleep,
Rolling across the fields of Attica,
Hath covered all the labouring villages.
Even great Athens with her busy hands
And busier tongues lies quiet beneath it's
waves.

Only a steady murmur seems to come
Up from her silentness, as if the land
Were breathing heavily in dreams. Abroad
No creature stirs, not even the reveller,
Staggering, unlanterned, from the cool

Piræus,
With drunken shout. The remnants of the
feast,
The crumpled cushions and the broken
wreathes,
Lie scattered in yon shadowy court, whose
stones
Through the warm hours drink up the
staining wine.

The bridal oxen in their well-filled stalls
Sleep, mindless of the happy weight they
drew.

The torch is charred; the garlands at the
door,

So gay at morning with their bright
festoons,

Hang limp and withered; and the joyous
flutes

Are empty of all sound. Only my brain
Holds now in it's remote unsleeping depths
The echo of the tender hymenæos
And memory of the modest lips that sang
it.

Within the silent thalamos the queen,
The sea-sprung radiant Cytherean reigns,
And with her smiling lips and fathomless
eyes

[Pg 109]

Regards the lovers, knowing that this hour
Is theirs once only. Earth and thought and
time

Lie far beyond them, a great gulf of joy,
Absorbing fear, regret and every grief,
A warm eternity: or now perchance
Night and the very weight of happiness,
Unsought, have turned upon their
tremulous eyes

The mindless stream of sleep; nor do they
care

If dawn should never come.

How joyously
These hours have gone with all their
 pictured scenes,
A string of golden beads for memory
To finger over in her moods, or stay
The hunger of some wakeful hour like this,
The flowers, the myrtles, the gay bridal
 train,
The flutes and pensive voices, the white
 robes,
The shower of sweet-meats, and the jovial
 feast,
The bride cakes, and the teeming
 merriment,
Most beautiful of all, most sweet to name,
The good Lysippe with her down-cast
 eyes,
Touched with soft fear, half scared at all
 the noise,
Whose tears were ready as her laughter,
 fresh,
And modest as some pink anemone.
How young she looked, and how her
 smiling lips
Betrayed her happiness. Ah, who can tell,
How often, when no watchful eye was
 near,
Her eager fingers, trembling and ashamed,
Essayed the apple-pips, or strewed the
 floor
With broken poppy petals. Next to her,
Theron himself the gladest goodliest
 figure,
His honest face ruddy with health and joy,
And smiling like the Ægean, when the sun
Hangs high in heaven, and the freshening
 wind
Comes in from Melos, rippling all its floor:
And there was Manto too, the good old
 crone,
So dear to children with her store of tales,
Warmed with new life: how to her old grey
 face
And withered limbs the very dance of
 youth
Seemed to return, and in her aged eyes
The waning fire rekindled: little Mæon,
That mischievous satyr with his tipsy
 wreath,
Who kept us laughing at his pranks, and
 made
Old Pyrrho angry. Him too sleep hath
 bound
Upon his rough-hewn couch with subtle
 thong,

[Pg 110]

Crowding his brain with odd fantastic
 shapes.
Even in sleep his little limbs, I think,
Twitch restlessly, and still his tongue gibes
 on
With inarticulate murmur. Ah, quaint
 Mæon!
And Manto, poor old Manto, what dim
 dreams
Of darkly-moving chaos and slow shapes
Of things that creep encumbered with huge
 burdens
Gloom and infest her through these
 dragging hours,
Haunting the wavering soul, so near the
 grave?
But all things journey to the same quiet
 end
At last, life, joy and every form of motion.
Nothing stands still. Not least inevitable,
The sad recession of this passionate love,
Whose panting fires, so soon and with
 such grief,
Burn down to ash.

[Pg 111]

 Ai! Ai! 'tis a strange
 madness
To give up thought, ambition, liberty,
And all the rooted custom of our days,
Even life itself for one all pampering
 dream,
That withers like those garlands at the
 door;
And yet I have seen many excellent men
Besotted thus, and some that bore till
 death,
In the crook'd vision and embittered
 tongue,
The effect of this strange poison, like a
 scar,
An ineradicable hurt; but Fate,
Who deals more wondrously in this
 disease
Even than in others, yet doth sometimes
 will
To make the same thing unto different men
Evil or good. Was not Demetrios happy,
Who wore his fetters with such grace, and
 spent
On Chione, the Naxian, that shrewd girl,
His fortune and his youth, yet, while she
 lived,
Enjoyed the rich reward? He seemed like
 one,
That trod on wind, and I remember well,
How when she died in that remorseless
 plague,
And I alone stood with him at the pyre,

He shook me with his helpless passionate
grief.

And honest Agathon, the married man,
Whose boyish fondness for his pretty wife
We smiled at, and yet envied; at the close
Of each day's labour how he posted home,
And thence no bait, however plumed,
could draw him.

We laughed, but envied him. How sweet
she looked

That morning at the Dyonisia,
With her rare eyes and modest girlish
grace,

Leading her two small children by the
palm.

I too might marry, if the faithful gods
Would promise me such joy as Agathon's.
Perhaps some day—but no, I am not one
To clip my wings, and wind about my feet
A net, whose self-made meshes are as
stern

As they are soft. To me is ever present
The outer world with its untravelled paths,
The wanderer's dream, the itch to see new
things.

A single tie could never bind me fast,
For life, this joyous, busy, ever-changing
life,

Is only dear to me with liberty,
With space of earth for feet to travel in
And space of mind for thought.

Not so for all;
To most men life is but a common thing,
The hours a sort of coin to barter with,
Whose worth is reckoned by the sum they
buy
In gold, or power, or pleasure; each short
day
That brings not these deemed fruitless as
dry sand.

Their lives are but a blind activity,
And death to them is but the end of
motion,

Grey children who have madly eat and
drunk,

Won the high seats or filled their chests
with gold.

And yet for all their years have never seen
The picture of their lives, or how life looks
To him who hath the deep uneager eye,
How sweet and large and beautiful it was,
How strange the part they played. Like
him who sits

Beneath some mighty tree, with half-
closed eyes,

At ease rejoicing in its murmurous shade,

[Pg 112]

[Pg 113]

Yet never once awakes from his dull
dream
To mark with curious joy the kingly trunk,
The sweeping boughs and tower of leaves
that gave it,
Even so the most of men; they take the
gift,
And care not for the giver. Strange indeed
Are they, and pitiable beyond measure,
Who, thus unmindful of their
wretchedness,
Crowd at life's bountiful gates, like
fattening beggars,
Greedy and blind. For see how rich a thing
Life is to him who sees, to whom each
hour
Brings some fresh wonder to be brooded
on,
Adds some new group or studied history
To that wrought sculpture, that our
watchful dreams
Cast up upon the broad expanse of time,
As in a never-finished frieze, not less
The little things that most men pass
unmarked
Than those that shake mankind. Happy is
he,
Who, as a watcher, stands apart from life,
From all life and his own, and thus from
all,
Each thought, each deed, and each hour's
brief event,
Draws the full beauty, sucks its meaning
dry.
For him this life shall be a tranquil joy.
He shall be quiet and free. To him shall
come
No gnawing hunger for the coarser touch,
No mad ambition with its fateful grasp;
Sorrow itself shall sway him like a dream.

How full life is; how many memories
Flash, and shine out, when thought is
sharply stirred;
How the mind works, when once the
wheels are loosed,
How nimbly, with what swift activity.
I think, 'tis strange that men should ever
sleep,
There are so many things to think upon,
So many deeds, so many thoughts to
weigh,
To pierce, and plumb them to the silent
depth.
Yet in that thought I do rebuke myself,
Too little given to probe the inner heart,
But rather wont, with the luxurious eye,
To catch from life it's outer loveliness,

[Pg 114]

Such things as do but store the joyous
memory
With food for solace rather than for
thought,
Like light-lined figures on a painted jar.
I wonder where Euktemon is to-night,
Euktemon with his rough and fitful talk,
His moody gesture and defiant stride;
How strange, how bleak and
unapproachable;
And yet I liked him from the first. How
soon
We know our friends, through all disguise
of mood,
Discerning by a subtle touch of spirit
The honest heart within. Euktemon's
glance
Betrayed him with it's gusty friendliness,
Flashing at moments from the clouded
brow,
Like brave warm sunshine, and his
laughter too,
So rare, so sudden, so contagious,
How at some merry scene, some well-told
tale,
Or swift invention of the wingèd wit,
It broke like thunderous water, rolling out
In shaken peals on the delighted ear.
Yet no man would have dreamed, who saw
us two
That first grey morning on the pier at
Crete,
That friendship could have forged thus
easily
A bond so subtle and so sure between us;
He, gloomy and austere; I, full of thought
As he, yet in an adverse mood, at ease,
Lifting with lighter hands the lids of life,
Untortured by its riddles; he, whose smiles
Were rare and sudden as the autumn sun;
I, to whom smiles are ever near the lip.
And yet I think he loved me too; my mood
Was not unpleasant to him, though I know
At times I teased him with my flickering
talk.
How self-immured he was; for all our
converse
I gathered little, little, of his life,
A bitter trial to me, who love to learn
The changes of men's outer circumstance,
The strokes that fate has shaped them with,
and so,
Fitting to these their present speech and
favour,
Discern the thought within. From him I
gleaned
Nothing. At the least word, however
guarded,

[Pg 115]

[Pg 116]

That sought to try the fastenings of his life
With prying hands, how mute and dark he
grew,
And like the cautious tortoise at a touch
Drew in beneath his shell.

But ah, how
sweet
The memory of that long untroubled day,
To me so joyous, and so free from care,
Spent as I love on foot, our first together,
When fate and the reluctant sea at last
Had given us safely to dry land; the tramp
From grey Mycenæ by the pass to Corinth,
The smooth white road, the soft caressing
air,
Full of the scent of blossoms, the clear sky,
Strewn lightly with the little tardy clouds,
Old Helios' scattered flock, the low-
branched oaks
And fountained resting-places, the cool
nooks,
Where eyes less darkened with life's use
than mine
Perchance had caught the Naiads in their
dreams,
Or won white glimpses of their flying
heels.
How light our feet were: with what
rhythmic strides
We left the long blue gulf behind us, sown
Far out with snowy sails; and how our
hearts
Rose with the growth of morning, till we
reached
That moss-hung fountain on the hillside
near
Cleonæ, where the dark anemones
Cover the ground, and make it red like fire.
Could ever grief, I wonder, or fixed care,
Or even the lingering twilight of old age,
Divest for me such memories of their
sweet?
Even Euktemon's obdurate mood broke
down.
The odorous stillness, the serene bright air,
The leafy shadows, the warm blossoming
earth,
Drew near with their voluptuous
eloquence,
And melted him. Ah, what a talk we had!
How eagerly our nimble tongues ran on,
With linked wit, in joyous sympathy.
Such hours, I think, are better than long
years
Of brooding loneliness, mind touching
mind

[Pg 117]

To leaping life, and thought sustaining
thought,
Till even the darkest chambers of grey
time,
His ancient seats, and bolted mysteries,
Open their hoary doors, and at a look
Lay all their treasures bare. How, when our
thought
Wheeling on ever bolder wings at last
Grew as it seemed too large for utterance,
We both fell silent, striving to recall
And grasp such things as in our daring
mood
We had but glimpsed and leaped at; yet
how long
We studied thus with absent eyes, I know
not;
Our thought died slowly out; the busy
road,
The voices of the passers-by, the change
Of garb and feature, and the various
tongues
Absorbed us. Ah, how clearly I recall
them!
For in these silent wakeful hours the mind
Is strangely swift. With what sharp lines
The shapes of things that even years have
buried
Shine out upon the rapid memory,
Moving and warm like life. I can see now
The form of that tall peddler, whose
strange wares,
Outlandish dialect and impudent gait
Awoke Euktemon's laughter. In mine ear
Is echoing still the cracking string of gibes,
They flung at one another. I remember too
The grey-haired merchant with his bold
black eyes
And brace of slaves, the old ship captain
tanned
With sweeping sea-winds and the pitiless
sun,
But best of all that dainty amorous pair,
Whose youthful spirit neither heat nor toil
Could conquer. What a charming group
they made?
The creaking litter and the long brown
poles,
The sinewy bearers with their cat-like
stride,
Dripping with sweat, that merry dark-eyed
girl,
Whose sudden beauty shook us from our
dreams,
And chained our eyes. How beautiful she
was?
Half-hid among the gay Miletian cushions,

[Pg 118]

The lovely laughing face, the gracious
form,
The fragrant lightly-knotted hair, and eyes
Full of the dancing fire of wanton Corinth.
That happy stripling, whose delighted feet
Swung at her side, whose tongue ran on so
gaily,
Is it for him alone she wreathes those
smiles,
And tunes so musically that flexile voice,
Soft as the Lydian flute? Surely his gait
Proclaimed the lover, and his well-filled
girdle
Not less the lover's strength. How joyously
He strode, unmindful of his ruffled curls,
Whose perfumes still went wide upon the
wind,
His dust-stained robe unheeded, and the
stones
Whose ragged edges frayed his delicate
shoes.
How radiant, how full of hope he was!
What pleasant memories, how many things
Rose up again before me, as I lay
Half-stretched among the crushed
anemones,
And watched them, till a far off jutting
ledge
Precluded sight, still listening till mine
ears
Caught the last vanishing murmur of their
talk.

[Pg 119]

Only a little longer; then we rose
With limbs refreshed, and kept a swinging
pace
Toward Corinth; but our talk, I know not
why,
Fell for that day. I wonder what there was
About those dainty lovers or their speech,
That changed Euktemon's mood; for all the
way
From high Cleonæ to the city gates,
Till sunset found us loitering without aim,
Half lost among the dusky-moving
crowds,
I could get nothing from him but dark
looks,
Short answers and the old defiant stride.
Some memory pricked him. It may be,
perchance,
A woman's treachery, some luckless
passion,
In former days endured, hath seared his
blood,
And dowered him with that cureless bitter
humour.
To him solitude and the wanderer's life

[Pg 120]

Alone are sweet, the tumults of this world
 A thing unworthy of the wise man's touch,
 Its joys and sorrows to be met alike
 With broad-browed scorn. One quality at
 least
 We have in common; we are idlers both,
 Shifters and wanderers through this
 sleepless world,
 Albeit in different moods. 'Tis that, I think,
 That knit us, and the universal need
 For near companionship. Howe'er it be,
 There is no hand that I would gladlier
 grasp,
 Either on earth or in the nether gloom,
 When the grey keel shall grind the Stygian
 strand,
 Than stern Euktemon's.

II. SONNETS.

[Pg 121]

[Pg 122]

LOVE-DOUBT.

[Pg 123]

Yearning upon the faint rose-curves that
 flit
 About her child-sweet mouth and
 innocent cheek,
 And in her eyes watching with eyes all
 meek
 The light and shadow of laughter, I would
 sit
 Mute, knowing our two souls might never
 knit;
 As if a pale proud lily-flower should
 seek
 The love of some red rose, but could not
 speak
 One word of her blithe tongue to tell of it.

For oh, my Love was sunny-lipped and
 stirred
 With all swift light and sound and
 gloom not long
 Retained; I, with dreams weighed, that
 ever heard
 Sad burdens echoing through the
 loudest throng
 She, the wild song of some May-merry
 bird;
 I, but the listening maker of a song.

PERFECT LOVE.

[Pg 124]

Beloved, those who moan of love's brief
day
Shall find but little grace with me, I
guess,
Who know too well this passion's
tenderness
To deem that it shall lightly pass away,
A moment's interlude in life's dull play;
Though many loves have lingered to
distress,
So shall not ours, sweet Lady,
ne'ertheless,
But deepen with us till both heads be grey.

For perfect love is like a fair green plant,
That fades not with its blossoms, but
lives on,
And gentle lovers shall not come to want,
Though fancy with its first mad dream
be gone;
Sweet is the flower, whose radiant glory
flies,
But sweeter still the green that never dies.

LOVE-WONDER.

[Pg 125]

Or whether sad or joyous be her hours,
Yet ever is she good and ever fair.
If she be glad, 'tis like a child's wild air,
Who claps her hands above a heap of
flowers;
And if she's sad, it is no cloud that lowers,
Rather a saint's pale grace, whose
golden hair
Gleams like a crown, whose eyes are
like a prayer
From some quiet window under minster
towers.

But ah, Beloved, how shall I be taught
To tell this truth in any rhymed line?
For words and woven phrases fall to
naught,
Lost in the silence of one dream divine,
Wrapped in the beating wonder of this
thought:
Even thou, who art so precious, thou art
mine!

COMFORT.

Comfort the sorrowful with watchful eyes
In silence, for the tongue cannot avail.
Vex not his wounds with rhetoric, nor
the stale
Worn truths, that are but maddening
mockeries
To him whose grief outmasters all replies.
Only watch near him gently; do but
bring
The piteous help of silent ministering,
Watchful and tender. This alone is wise.

So shall thy presence and thine every
motion,
The grateful knowledge of thy sad
devotion
Melt out the passionate hardness of his
grief,
And break the flood-gates of the pent-up
soul.
He shall bow down beneath thy mute
control,
And take thine hands, and weep, and
find relief.

DESPONDENCY.

Slow figures in some live remorseless
frieze,
The approaching days escapeless and
unguessed,
With mask and shroud impenetrably
dressed;
Time, whose inexorable destinies
Bear down upon us like impending seas;
And the huge presence of this world, at
best
A sightless giant wandering without
rest,
Agèd and mad with many miseries.
The weight and measure of these things
who knows?
Resting at times beside life's thought-
swept stream,
Sobered and stunned with unexpected
blows,
We scarcely hear the uproar; life doth
seem,
Save for the certain nearness of its woes,
Vain and phantasmal as a sick man's
dream.

OUTLOOK.

[Pg 128]

Not to be conquered by these headlong
days,
But to stand free: to keep the mind at
brood
On life's deep meaning, nature's altitude
Of loveliness, and time's mysterious ways;
At every thought and deed to clear the
haze
Out of our eyes, considering only this,
What man, what life, what love, what
beauty is,
This is to live, and win the final praise.

Though strife, ill fortune and harsh human
need
Beat down the soul, at moments blind
and dumb
With agony; yet, patience—there shall
come
Many great voices from life's outer
sea,
Hours of strange triumph, and, when few
men heed,
Murmurs and glimpses of eternity.

GENTLENESS.

[Pg 129]

Blind multitudes that jar confusedly
At strife, earth's children, will ye never
rest
From toils made hateful here, and dawns
distressed
With ravelling self-engendered misery?
And will ye never know, till sleep shall see
Your graves, how dreadful and how
dark indeed
Are pride, self-will, and blind-voiced
anger, greed,
And malice with its subtle cruelty?

How beautiful is gentleness, whose face
Like April sunshine, or the summer
rain,
Swells everywhere the buds of generous
thought?
So easy, and so sweet it is; its grace
Smooths out so soon the tangled
knots of pain.
Can ye not learn it? will ye not be
taught?

A PRAYER.

[Pg 130]

Oh earth, oh dewy mother, breathe on us
Something of all thy beauty and thy
might,
Us that are part of day, but most of
night,
Not strong like thee, but ever burdened
thus
With glooms and cares, things pale and
dolorous
Whose gladdest moments are not wholly
bright;
Something of all thy freshness and thy
light,
Oh earth, oh mighty mother, breathe on us.

Oh mother, who wast long before our day,
And after us full many an age shalt be.
Careworn and blind, we wander from thy
way:
Born of thy strength, yet weak and halt
are we
Grant us, oh mother, therefore, us who
pray,
Some little of thy light and majesty.

MUSIC.

[Pg 131]

Move on, light hands, so strongly tenderly,
Now with dropped calm and yearning
undersong,
Now swift and loud, tumultuously
strong,
And I in darkness, sitting near to thee,
Shall only hear, and feel, but shall not see,
One hour made passionately bright with
dreams,
Keen glimpses of life's splendour,
dashing gleams
Of what we would, and what we cannot
be.

Surely not painful ever, yet not glad,
Shall such hours be to me, but blindly
sweet,
Sharp with all yearning and all fact at
strife,
Dreams that shine by with
unremembered feet,
And tones that like far distance make
this life

Spectral and wonderful and strangely sad.

KNOWLEDGE.

[Pg 132]

What is more large than knowledge and
more sweet;
Knowledge of thoughts and deeds, of
rights and wrongs,
Of passions and of beauties and of
songs;
Knowledge of life; to feel its great heart
beat
Through all the soul upon her crystal seat;
To see, to feel, and evermore to know;
To till the old world's wisdom till it
grow
A garden for the wandering of our feet.

Oh for a life of leisure and broad hours,
To think and dream, to put away small
things,
This world's perpetual leaguer of dull
naughts;
To wander like the bee among the flowers
Till old age find us weary, feet and
wings
Grown heavy with the gold of many
thoughts.

SIGHT.

[Pg 133]

The world is bright with beauty, and its
days
Are filled with music; could we only
know
True ends from false, and lofty things
from low;
Could we but tear away the walls that
graze
Our very elbows in life's frosty ways;
Behold the width beyond us with its
flow,
Its knowledge and its murmur and its
glow,
Where doubt itself is but a golden haze.

Ah brothers, still upon our pathway lies
The shadow of dim weariness and fear,
Yet if we could but lift our earthward eyes
To see, and open our dull ears to hear,

Then should the wonder of this world
draw near
And life's innumerable harmonies.

AN OLD LESSON FROM THE FIELDS.

[Pg 134]

Even as I watched the daylight how it sped
From noon till eve, and saw the light
wind pass
In long pale waves across the flashing
grass,
And heard through all my dreams,
wherever led,
The thin cicada singing overhead,
I felt what joyance all this nature has,
And saw myself made clear as in a
glass,
How that my soul was for the most part
dead.

Oh, light, I cried, and, heaven, with all
your blue,
Oh, earth, with all your sunny
fruitfulness,
And ye, tall lilies, of the wind-vexed
field,
What power and beauty life indeed
might yield,
Could we but cast away its conscious
stress,
Simple of heart, becoming even as you.

WINTER-THOUGHT.

[Pg 135]

The wind-swayed daisies, that on every
side
Throng the wide fields in whispering
companies,
Serene and gently smiling like the eyes
Of tender children long beatified,
The delicate thought-wrapped buttercups
that glide
Like sparks of fire above the wavering
grass,
And swing and toss with all the airs that
pass,
Yet seem so peaceful, so preoccupied;

These are the emblems of pure pleasures
flown,

I scarce can think of pleasure without
these.
Even to dream of them is to disown
The cold forlorn midwinter reveries,
Lulled with the perfume of old hopes new-
blown,
No longer dreams, but dear realities.

DEEDS.

[Pg 136]

'Tis well with words, oh masters, ye have
sought
To turn men's yearning to the great and
true,
Yet first take heed to what your own
hands do;
By deeds not words the souls of men are
taught;
Good lives alone are fruitful; they are
caught
Into the fountain of all life
(wherethrough
Men's souls that drink are broken or
made new)
Like drops of heavenly elixir, fraught
With the clear essence of eternal youth.
Even one little deed of weak untruth
Is like a drop of quenchless venom
cast,
A liquid thread, into life's feeding
stream,
Woven forever with its crystal gleam,
Bearing the seed of death and woe at
last.

ASPIRATION.

[Pg 137]

Oh deep-eyed brothers was there ever
here,
Or is there now, or shall there sometime
be
Harbour or any rest for such as we,
Lone thin-cheeked mariners, that aye must
steer
Our whispering barks with such keen hope
and fear
Toward misty bournes across that
coastless sea,
Whose winds are songs that ever gust
and flee,

Whose shores are dreams that tower but
come not near.

Yet we perchance, for all that flesh and
mind
Of many ills be marked with many a
trace,
Shall find this life more sweet more
strangely kind,
Than they of that dim-hearted earthly
race,
Who creep firm-nailed upon the earth's
hard face,
And hear nor see not, being deaf and blind.

THE POETS.

[Pg 138]

Half god, half brute, within the self-same
shell,
Changers with every hour from dawn
till even,
Who dream with angels in the gate of
heaven,
And skirt with curious eyes the brinks of
hell,
Children of Pan, whom some, the few,
love well,
But most draw back, and know not what
to say,
Poor shining angels, whom the hoofs
betray,
Whose pinions frighten with their goatish
smell.

Half brutish, half divine, but all of earth,
Half-way 'twixt hell and heaven, near to
man,
The whole world's tangle gathered in
one span,
Full of this human torture and this mirth:
Life with its hope and error, toil and
bliss,
Earth-born, earth-reared, ye know it as it
is.

THE TRUTH.

[Pg 139]

Friend, though thy soul should burn thee,
yet be still.
Thoughts were not meant for strife, nor
tongues for swords.

He that sees clear is gentlest of his
words,
And that's not truth that hath the heart to
kill.
The whole world's thought shall not one
truth fulfil.
Dull in our age, and passionate in youth,
No mind of man hath found the perfect
truth,
Nor shalt thou find it; therefore, friend, be
still.

Watch and be still, nor hearken to the fool,
The babbler of consistency and rule:
Wisest is he, who, never quite secure,
Changes his thoughts for better day
by day:
To-morrow some new light will shine, be
sure,
And thou shalt see thy thought another
way.

THE MARTYRS.

[Pg 140]

Oh ye, who found in men's brief ways no
sign
Of strength or help, so cast them forth,
and threw
Your whole souls up to one ye deemed
most true,
Nor failed nor doubted but held fast your
line,
Seeing before you that divine face shine;
Shall we not mourn, when yours are
now so few,
Those sterner days, when all men
yearned to you,
White souls whose beauty made their
world divine:

Yet still across life's tangled storms we see,
Following the cross, your pale
procession led,
One hope, one end, all others
sacrificed,
Self-abnegation, love, humility,
Your faces shining toward the bended
head,
The wounded hands and patient feet
of Christ.

[Pg 141]

A NIGHT OF STORM.

Oh city, whom grey stormy hands have
 sown
With restless drift, scarce broken now of
 any,
Out of the dark thy windows dim and
 many
Gleam red across the storm. Sound is there
 none,
Save evermore the fierce wind's sweep and
 moan,
From whose grey hands the keen white
 snow is shaken
In desperate gusts, that fitfully lull and
 waken,
Dense as night's darkness round thy towers
 of stone.

Darkling and strange art thou thus vexed
 and chidden;
More dark and strange thy veiled
 agony,
City of storm, in whose grey heart are
 hidden
What stormier woes, what lives that
 groan and beat,
Stern and thin-cheeked, against time's
 heavier sleet,
Rude fates, hard hearts, and prisoning
 poverty.

THE RAILWAY STATION.

[Pg 142]

The darkness brings no quiet here, the
 light
No waking: ever on my blinded brain
The flare of lights, the rush, and cry, and
 strain,
The engines' scream, the hiss and thunder
 smite:
I see the hurrying crowds, the clasp, the
 flight,
Faces that touch, eyes that are dim with
 pain:
I see the hoarse wheels turn, and the
 great train
Move labouring out into the bourneless
 night.

So many souls within its dim recesses,
 So many bright, so many mournful
 eyes:

Mine eyes that watch grow fixed with
dreams and guesses;
What threads of life, what hidden
histories,
What sweet or passionate dreams and dark
distresses,
What unknown thoughts, what various
agonies!

A FORECAST.

[Pg 143]

What days await this woman, whose
strange feet
Breathe spells, whose presence makes
men dream like wine,
Tall, free and slender as the forest pine,
Whose form is moulded music, through
whose sweet
Frank eyes I feel the very heart's least beat,
Keen, passionate, full of dreams and
fire:
How in the end, and to what man's
desire
Shall all this yield, whose lips shall these
lips meet?

One thing I know: if he be great and pure,
This love, this fire, this beauty shall
endure;
Triumph and hope shall lead him by the
palm:
But if not this, some differing thing he be,
That dream shall break in terror; he shall
see
The whirlwind ripen, where he sowed
the calm.

IN NOVEMBER.

[Pg 144]

The hills and leafless forests slowly yield
To the thick-driving snow. A little while
And night shall darken down. In
shouting file
The woodmen's carts go by me homeward-
wheeled,
Past the thin fading stubbles, half
concealed,
Now golden-grey, sowed softly through
with snow,
Where the last ploughman follows still
his row,

Turning black furrows through the
whitening field.

Far off the village lamps begin to gleam,
Fast drives the snow, and no man comes
this way;
The hills grow wintery white, and
bleak winds moan
About the naked uplands. I alone
Am neither sad, nor shelterless, nor
grey,
Wrapped round with thought, content to
watch and dream.

THE CITY.

[Pg 145]

Beyond the dusky corn-fields, toward the
west,
Dotted with farms, beyond the shallow
stream,
Through drifts of elm with quiet peep
and gleam,
Curved white and slender as a lady's wrist,
Faint and far off out of the autumn mist,
Even as a pointed jewel softly set
In clouds of colour warmer, deeper yet,
Crimson and gold and rose and amethyst,
Toward dayset, where the journeying sun
grown old
Hangs lowly westward darker now than
gold,
With the soft sun-touch of the yellowing
hours
Made lovelier, I see with dreaming eyes,
Even as a dream out of a dream, arise
The bell-tongued city with its glorious
towers.

MIDSUMMER NIGHT.

[Pg 146]

Mother of balms and soothings manifold,
Quiet-breathèd night whose brooding
hours are seven,
To whom the voices of all rest are given,
And those few stars whose scattered
names are told,
Far off beyond the westward hills
outrolled,
Darker than thou, more still, more
dreamy even,

The golden moon leans in the dusky
 heaven,
And under her one star—a point of gold:

And all go slowly lingering toward the
 west,
As we go down forgetfully to our rest,
 Weary of daytime, tired of noise and
 light:
Ah, it was time that thou should'st come;
 for we
Were sore athirst, and had great need of
 thee,
Thou sweet physician, balmy-bosomed
 night.

THE LOONS.

[Pg 147]

Once ye were happy, once by many a
 shore,
Wherever Glooscap's gentle feet might
 stray,
Lulled by his presence like a dream, ye
 lay
Floating at rest; but that was long of yore.
He was too good for earthly men; he bore
 Their bitter deeds for many a patient
 day,
And then at last he took his unseen way.
He was your friend, and ye might rest no
 more:

And now, though many hundred altering
 years
Have passed, among the desolate northern
 meres
Still must ye search and wander
 querulously,
Crying for Glooscap, still bemoan the
 light
With wierd entreaties, and in agony
 With awful laughter pierce the lonely
 night.

MARCH.

[Pg 148]

Over the dripping roofs and sunk snow-
 barrows
The bells are ringing loud and strangely
 near,

The shout of children dins upon mine
 ear
 Shrilly, and like a flight of silvery arrows
 Showers the sweet gossip of the British
 sparrows,
 Gathered in noisy knots of one or two,
 To joke and chatter just as mortals do
 Over the days long tale of joys and
 sorrows;

Talk before bed-time of bold deeds
 together
 Of thefts and fights, of hard-times and the
 weather,
 Till sleep disarm them, to each little
 brain
 Bringing tucked wings and many a
 blissful dream,
 Visions of wind and sun, of field and
 stream,
 And busy barn-yards with their scattered
 grain.

SOLITUDE.

[Pg 149]

How still it is here in the woods. The trees
 Stand motionless, as if they did not dare
 To stir, lest it should break the spell. The
 air
 Hangs quiet as spaces in a marble frieze.
 Even this little brook, that runs at ease,
 Whispering and gurgling in its knotted
 bed,
 Seems but to deepen with its curling
 thread
 Of sound the shadowy sun-pierced
 silences.

Sometimes a hawk screams or a
 woodpecker
 Startles the stillness from its fixèd mood
 With his loud careless tap. Sometimes I
 hear
 The dreamy white-throat from some
 far off tree
 Pipe slowly on the listening solitude
 His five pure notes succeeding
 pensively.

AUTUMN MAPLES.

[Pg 150]

The thoughts of all the maples who shall
name,
When the sad landscape turns to cold
and grey?
Yet some for very ruth and sheer
dismay,
Hearing the northwind pipe the winter's
name,
Have fired the hills with beaconing clouds
of flame;
And some with softer woe that day by
day,
So sweet and brief, should go the
westward way,
Have yearned upon the sunset with such
shame,

That all their cheeks have turned to
tremulous rose;
Others for wrath have turned a rusty
red,
And some that knew not either grief
or dread,
Ere the old year should find its iron
close,
Have gathered down the sun's last smiles
acold,
Deep, deep, into their luminous hearts of
gold.

THE DOG.

[Pg 151]

"Grotesque!" we said, the moment we
espied him,
For there he stood, supreme in his
conceit,
With short ears close together and queer
feet
Planted irregularly: first we tried him
With jokes, but they were lost; we then
defied him
With bantering questions and loose
criticism:
He did not like, I'm sure, our catechism,
But whisked and snuffed a little as we
eyed him.

Then flung we balls, and out and clear
away,
Up the white slope, across the crusted
snow,
To where a broken fence stands in the way,
Against the sky-line, a mere row of
pegs,

Quicker than thought we saw him flash
and go,
A straight mad scuttling of four
crooked legs.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AMONG THE
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