



ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

From a Photograph by Walker & Cocksell, after the Drawing by Talford

POETICAL WORKS
OF
ELIZABETH BARRETT
BROWNING

WITH TWO PROSE ESSAYS



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DEDICATION

TO MY FATHER

WHEN your eyes fall upon this page of dedication, and you start to see to whom it is inscribed, your first thought will be of the time far off when I was a child and wrote verses, and when I dedicated them to you who were my public and my critic. Of all that such a recollection implies of saddest and sweetest to both of us, it would become neither of us to speak before the world ; nor would it be possible for us to speak of it to one another, with voices that did not falter. Enough, that what is in my heart when I write thus, will be fully known to yours.

And my desire is that you, who are a witness how if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have fallen from exhausted hands before this day,—that you, who have shared with me in things bitter and sweet, softening or enhancing them, every day,—that you, who hold with me over all sense of loss and transiency, one hope by one Name,—may accept from me the inscription of these volumes, the exponents of a few years of an existence which has been sustained and comforted by you as well as given. Somewhat more faint-hearted than I used to be, it is my fancy thus to seem to return to a visible personal dependence on you, as if indeed I were a child again ; to conjure your beloved image between myself and the public, so as to be sure of one smile,—and to satisfy my heart while I sanctify my ambition, by associating with the great pursuit of my life its tenderest and holiest affection.

Your

E. B. B.

LONDON, 50 WIMPOLE STREET,
1844.

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EARLY POEMS, 1820-33

THE BATTLE OF MARATHON¹

Behold

What care employs me now, my vows I pay
To the sweet Muses, teachers of my youth!—AKENSIDE.

Ancient of days! August Athena! Where,
Where are thy men of might, thy grand in soul?
Gone—glimmering through the dream of things that were.
First in the race that led to glory's goal,
They won, and passed away.—BYRON.

PREFACE

THAT poetry is the first, and most celebrated of all the fine arts, has not been denied in any age, or by any philosopher. The culture of the soul, which Sallust so nobly describes, is necessary to those refined pleasures, and elegant enjoyments, in which man displays his superiority to brutes. It is alone the elevation of the soul, not the form of the body, which constitutes the proud distinction; according to the learned historian, ‘Alterum nobis cum diis, alterum cum belluis commune est.’ The noblest of the productions of man, that which inspires the enthusiasm of virtue, the energy of truth, is poetry: poetry elevates the mind to heaven, kindles within it unwonted fires, and bids it throb with feelings exalting to its nature.

This humble attempt may by some be unfortunately attributed to vanity, to an affection of talent, or to the still more absurd desire of being thought a *genius*. With the humility and deference due to their judgements, I wish to plead not

guilty to their accusations, and, with submission, to offer these pages to the perusal of the few kind and partial friends who may condescend to read them, assured that their criticism will be tempered with mercy.

Happily it is not now, as it was in the days of Pope, who was so early in actual danger of thinking himself ‘the greatest genius of the age.’ Now, even the female may drive her Pegasus through the realms of Parnassus, without being saluted with the most equivocal of all appellations, a learned lady; without being celebrated by her friends as a Sappho, or traduced by her enemies as a pedant; without being abused in the Review, or criticized in society; how justly then may a child hope to pass unheeded!

In these reading days there need be little vulgar anxiety among poets for the fate of their works: the public taste is no longer so epicurean. As the press pours forth profusion, the literary multitude eagerly receive its lavish offerings, while the sublimity of Homer, and the majesty of Virgil, those grand and solitary specimens of ancient poetic excellence, so renowned through the lapse of ages, are by many read only as schoolbooks, and are justly estimated alone by the comparative

¹ Dedication to the original edition of 1820: ‘To him to whom “I owe the most,” and whose admonitions have guided my youthful muse, even from her earliest infancy, to the Father whose never-failing kindness, whose unwearied affection, I never can repay, I offer these pages as a small testimony of the gratitude of his affectionate child, ELIZABETH B. BARRETT.’

THE BATTLE OF MARATHON

, whose hearts can be touched by the grandeur of their sentiments, or exalted by their kindred fire; by them this dereliction must be felt, but they can do no more than mourn over this semblance of decline in literary judgement and poetic taste. Yet, in contemplating the poets of our own times—(for there are real poets, though they be mingled with an inferior multitude of the common herd)—who, unsophisticated by prejudice, can peruse those inspired pages emitted from the soul of Byron, or who can be dazzled by the gems sparkling from the rich mine of the imagination of Moore, or captivated by scenes glowing in the descriptive powers of Scott, without a proud consciousness that our day may boast the exuberance of true poetic genius? And if criticism be somewhat too general in its suffrage, may it not be attributed to an overwhelming abundance of contemporary authors, which induces it to err in discrimination, and may cause its praises to be frequently ill-merited, and its censures ill-deserved; as the eye, wandering over a garden where flowers are mingled with weeds, harassed by exertion and dimmed by the brilliancy of colours, frequently mistakes the flower for the weed, and the weed for the flower?

It is worthy of remark, that when Poetry first burst from the mists of ignorance—when first she shone a bright star illuminating the then narrow understanding of the Greeks—from that period when Homer, the sublime poet of antiquity, awoke the first notes of poetic inspiration to the praise of valour, honour, patriotism, and, best of all, to a sense of the high attributes of the Deity, though darkly and mysteriously revealed; then it was, and not till then, that the seed of every virtue, of every great quality, which had so long lain dormant in the souls of the Greeks, burst into the germ; as when the sun disperses the mist cowering o'er the face of the heavens, illumines with his resplendent rays the whole creation, and speaks to the verdant beauties of nature, joy, peace, and gladness. Then it was that Greece began to give those immortal examples of exalted feeling, and of patriotic virtue, which have since astonished the world; then it was

that the unenlightened soul of the savage rose above the degradation which assimilated him to the brute creation, and discovered the first rays of social independence, and of limited freedom; not the freedom of barbarism, but that of a state enlightened by a wise jurisdiction, and restrained by civil laws. From that period man seems to have first proved his resemblance to his Creator, and his superiority to brutes, and the birth of Poetry was that of all the kindred arts; in the words of Cicero, ‘*Quo minus ergo honoris erat poetis eo minora studia fuerunt.*’

It is no disparagement to an historical poem to enlarge upon its subject; but where truth is materially outraged, it ceases to be history. Homer, in his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and Virgil, in his *Aeneid*, have greatly beautified their subjects, so grand in themselves, and, with true poetic taste and poetic imagery, have contributed with magnificent profusion to adorn those incidents which otherwise would appear tame, barren, and uninteresting. It is certain, however happily they have succeeded, their poems cannot be called strictly historical, because the truth of history is not altogether their undeviated form. Virgil, especially, has introduced in his *Aeneid* ‘an anachronism of nearly three hundred years, Dido having fled from Phoenicia that period after the age of Aeneas.’ But in that dependence upon the truth of history which I would enforce as a necessary quality in an historical poem, I do not mean to insinuate that it should be mere prose versified, or a suspension of the functions of the imagination, for then it could no longer be poetry. It is evident that an historical poem should possess the following qualifications:—Imagination, invention, judgement, taste, and truth; the four first are necessary to poetry, the latter to history. He who writes an historical poem must be directed by the pole-star of history, truth; his path may be laid beneath the bright sun of invention, amongst the varied walks of imagination, with judgement and taste for his guides, but his goal must be that resplendent and unchangeable luminary, truth.

Imagination must be allowed to be the

characteristic, and invention the very foundation, of poetry. The necessity of the latter in all poetic effusions is established by that magnificent translator of the greatest of poets, Pope, in this beautiful passage : ‘ It is the invention that in different degrees distinguishes all great geniuses : the utmost extent of human study, learning, and industry, which masters everything besides, can never attain to this. It furnishes art with all her materials, and without it, judgement itself can but steal wisely ; for art is only a prudent steward, who lives on managing the riches of nature.’ And in this ingenious note the editor, Mr. Wakefield, elegantly exemplifies it : ‘ For poetry, in its proper acceptation, is absolutely creation, *nōlqas* or invention. In the three requisites prescribed by Horace of poetic excellence, “ *Ingenium cui sit cui mens divinior atque os magna sonaturum.* ” The first, “ *ingenium,* ” or native fertility of intellect, corresponds to the “ *invention* ” of Pope.’

The battle of Marathon is not, perhaps, a subject calculated to exercise the powers of the imagination, or of poetic fancy, the incidents being so limited ; but it is a subject every way formed to call forth the feelings of the heart, to awake the strongest passions of the soul. Who can be indifferent, who can preserve his tranquillity, when he hears of one little city rising undaunted, and daring her innumerable enemies, in defence of her freedom—of a handful of men overthrowing the invaders, who sought to molest their rights and to destroy their liberties ? Who can hear unmoved of such an example of heroic virtue, of patriotic spirit, which seems to be crying from the ruins of Athens for honour and immortality ? The heart, which cannot be fired by such a recital, must be cold as the icy waters of the Pole, and must be devoid at once of manly feeling and of patriotic virtue ; for what is it that can awaken the high feelings which sometimes lie dormant in the soul of man, if it be not liberty ? Liberty, beneath whose fostering sun the arts, genius, every congenial talent of the mind, spring up spontaneously, and unite in forming one bright garland

of glory around the brow of independence ; liberty, at whose decline virtue sinks before the despotic sway of licentiousness, effeminity, and vice. At the fall of liberty, the immortal Republics of Rome and Athens became deaf to the call of glory, fame, and manly virtue. ‘ *On vit manifestement (says Montesquieu) pendant le peu de temps que dura la tyrannie des décembres, à quel point l’agrandissement de Rome dépendoit de sa liberté ; l’état sembla avoir perdu l’âme qui la faisoit mouvoir.* ’ And Bigland thus : ‘ It was not till luxury had corrupted their manners, and their liberties were on the eve of their extinction, that the principal citizens of Athens and of Rome began to construct magnificent houses, and to display their opulence and splendour in private life.’

It may be objected to my little poem, that the mythology of the ancients is too much called upon to support the most considerable incidents ; it may unhappily offend those feelings most predominant in the breast of a Christian, or it may be considered as injudicious in destroying the simplicity so necessary to the epic. *Clover’s Leonidas* is commended by Lyttelton, because he did not allow himself the liberty so largely taken by his predecessors, of ‘ wandering beyond the bounds, and out of sight, of common sense in the airy regions of poetic mythology ’ ; yet, where is the poet more remarkable for simplicity than Homer, and where is the author who makes more frequent use of heathen mythology ? ‘ The heathens,’ says Rollin, ‘ addressed themselves to their gods, as beings worthy of adoration.’

He who writes an epic poem must transport himself to the scene of action ; he must imagine himself possessed of the same opinions, manners, prejudices, and beliefs ; he must suppose himself to be the hero he delineates, or his picture can no longer be nature, and what is not natural cannot please. It would be considered ridiculous in the historian or poet describing the ancient manners of Greece, to address himself to that Omnipotent Being who first called the world out of chaos, nor would it be considered less so if he were to be silent upon the whole subject ; for

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in all nations, in all ages, religion must be the spur of every noble action, and the characteristic of every lofty soul.

Perhaps I have chosen the rimes of Pope, and departed from the noble simplicity of the Miltonic verse, injudiciously. The immortal poet of England, in his apology for the verse of *Paradise Lost*, declares 'rimes to be, to all judicious ears, trivial, and of no true musical delight.' In my opinion, humble as it is, the custom of riming would ere now have been abolished amongst poets, had not Pope, the disciple of the immortal Dryden, awakened the lyre to music, and proved that rime could equal blank verse in simplicity and gracefulness, and vie with it in elegance of composition, and in sonorous melody. No one who has read his translation of Homer, can refuse him the immortality which he merits so well, and for which he laboured so long. He it was who planted rime for ever in the regions of Parnassus, and uniting elegance with strength, and sublimity with beauty, raised the English language to the highest excellence of smoothness and purity.

I confess that I have chosen Homer for a model, and perhaps I have attempted to imitate his style too often and too closely; and yet some imitation is authorized by poets immortalized in the annals of Parnassus, whose memory will be revered as long as man has a soul to appreciate their merits. Virgil's magnificent description of the storm in the first book of the *Aeneid* is almost literally translated from Homer, where Ulysses, quitting the Isle of Calypso for 'Phaeacia's dusty shore,' is overwhelmed by Neptune. That sublime picture, 'Ponto nox incubat atra,' and the beautiful apostrophe, 'O terque quaterque beati,' is a literal translation of the same incident in Homer. There are

many other imitations, which it would be unnecessary and tedious here to enumerate. Even Milton, the pride and glory of English taste, has not disdained to replenish his imagination from the abundant fountains of the first and greatest of poets. It would have been both absurd and presumptuous, young and inexperienced as I am, to have attempted to strike out a path for myself, and to have wandered among the varied windings of Parnassus, without a guide to direct my steps, or to warn me from those fatal quicksands of literary blunders, in which, even with the best guide, I find myself so frequently immersed. There is no humility, but rather folly, in taking inferiority for a model, and there is no vanity, but rather wisdom, in following humbly the footsteps of perfection; for who would prefer quenching his thirst at the stagnant pool, when he may drink the pure waters of the fountain-head? Thus, then, however unworthily, I have presumed to select, from all the poets of ancient or modern ages, Homer, the most perfect of the votaries of Apollo, whom every nation has contributed to immortalize, to celebrate, and to admire.

If I have in these pages proved what I desired, that poetry is the parent of liberty, and of all the fine arts, and if I have succeeded in clearing up some of the obscurities of my little poem, I have attained my only object; but if on the contrary I have failed, it must be attributed to my incapacity, and not to my inclination. Either way, it would be useless to proceed further, for nothing can be more true than the declaration of Bigland, 'that a good book seldom requires, and a worthless never deserves, a long preface.'

THE BATTLE OF MARATHON

BOOK I

The war of Greece with Persia's haughty King,
No vulgar strain, eternal Goddess, sing !
What dreary ghosts to glutted Pluto fled,
What nations suffered, and what heroes bled :
Sing Asia's powerful Prince, who envious saw
The fame of Athens, and her might in war ;
And scorns her power, at Cytherea's call
Her ruin plans, and meditates her fall ;
How Athens, blinded to th' approaching chains
By Vulcan's artful spouse, unmoved remains ;
Deceived by Venus thus, unconquered Greece
Forgot her glories in the lap of peace ;
While Asia's realms and Asia's lord prepare
T' ensnare her freedom by the wiles of war :
Hippias't exalt upon th'Athenian throne,
Where once Pisistratus his father shone.
For yet her son Aeneas' wrongs impart
Revenge and grief to Cytherea's heart ;
And still from smoking Troy's once sacred wall
Does Priam's reeking shade for vengeance call.
Minerva saw, and Paphia's Queen defied,
A boon she begged, nor Jove the boon denied ;
That Greece should rise triumphant o'er her foe,
Disarm th' invaders, and their power o'erthrew.
Her prayer obtained, the blue-eyed Goddess flies
As the fierce eagle, thro' the radiant skies.
To Aristides then she stood confessed,
Shows Persia's arts, and fires his warlike breast :
Then pours celestial ardour o'er his frame,
And points the way to glory and to fame.

Awe struck the Chief, and swells his troubled soul,
In pride and wonder thoughts progressive roll.
He only groaned and smote his labouring breast,
At once by Pallas and by care opprest.
Inspired he moved, earth echoed where he trod,
All full of Heaven, all burning with the God.
Th' Athenians viewed with awe the mighty man,
To whom the Chief impassioned thus began :
'Hear, all ye Sons of Greece ! Friends, Fathers, hear !
The Gods command it, and the Gods revere !
No madness mine, for mark, O favoured Greeks !
That by my mouth the martial Goddess speaks !
This know, Athenians, that proud Persia now
Prepares to twine thy laurels on her brow ;
Behold her princely Chiefs their weapons wield,
By Venus fired, and shake the brazen shield.
I hear their shouts that echo to the skies,
I see their lances blaze, their banners rise,
I hear the clash of arms, the battle's roar,
And all the din and thunder of the war !
I know that Greeks shall purchase just renown,
And fame impartial shall Athena crown.
Then Greeks, prepare your arms ! award the yoke,
Thus Jove commands.'—Sublime the hero spoke ;
The Greeks assent with shouts, and rend the skies
With martial clamour and tumultuous cries.
So struggling winds with rage indignant sweep
The azure waters of the silent deep,

Sudden the seas rebellowing, frightful
rise,
And dash their foaming surges to the
skies ;
Burst the firm sand, and boil with dread-
ful roar,
Lift their black waves, and combat with
the shore.
So each brave Greek in thought aspires
to fame,
Stung by his words, and dread of future
shame ;
Glory's own fires within their bosom
rise,
And shouts tumultuous thunder to the
skies.
But Love's celestial Queen resentful saw
The Greeks (by Pallas warned) prepare
for war;
Th' indignant Goddess of the Paphian
bower
Deceives Themistocles with heavenly
power ;
The hero, rising, spoke : 'O rashly blind,
What sudden fury thus has seized thy
mind ?
Boy as thou art, such empty dreams be-
ware !
Shall we for griefs and wars unsought
prepare ?
The will of mighty Jove, whate'er it be,
Obey, and own th' Omnipotent decree.
If our disgrace and fall the fates employ,
Why did we triumph o'er perfidious
Troy ?
Why, say, O Chief, in that eventful hour
Did Grecian heroes crush Dardanian
power ?'
Him eyeing sternly, thus the Greek
replies,
Renowned for truth, and as Minerva
wise :
'O Son of Greece, no heedless boy am I,
Despised in battle's toils, nor first to fly,
Nor dreams or frenzy call my words
astray,
The heaven-sent mandate pious I obey.
If Pallas did not all my words inspire,
May heaven pursue me with unceasing
ire !
But if (oh, grant my prayer, almighty
Jove)
I bear a mandate from the Courts above,

Then thro' yon heaven let awful thunder
roar
Till Greeks believe my mission, and
adore !'
He ceased—and thro' the host one
murmur ran,
With eyes transfixed upon the godlike
man,
But hark ! o'er earth expands the
solemn sound ;
It lengthening grows—heaven's azure
vaults resound,
While peals of thunder beat the echoing
ground.
Prostrate, convinced, divine Themis-
tocles
Embraced the hero's hands, and clasped
his knees :
'Behold me here' (the awe-struck
Chieftain cries,
While tears repentant glisten in his eyes),
'Behold me here, thy friendship to en-
treat,
Themistocles, a suppliant at thy feet.
Before no haughty despot's royal throne
This knee has bent—it bends to thee
alone,
Thy mission to adore, thy truth to own.
Behold me, Jove, and witness what I
swear
By all on earth I love, by all in heaven
I fear :
Some fiend inspired my words of dark
design,
Some fiend concealed beneath a robe
divine ;
Then aid me in my prayer, ye Gods
above,
Bid Aristides give me back his love !'
He spake and wept; benign the godlike
man
Felt tears descend, and paused, then thus
began :
'Thrice worthy Greek, for this shall we
contend !
Ah no ! I feel thy worth, thou more than
friend.
Pardon sincere, Themistocles, receive ;
The heart declares 'tis easy to forgive.
He spake divine, his eye with Pallas
burns,
He spake and sighed, and sighed and
wept by turns.

Themistocles beheld the Chief opprest,
Awe-struck he paused, then rushed upon
 his breast,
Whom sage Miltiades with joy addressed :
' Hero of Greece, worthy a hero's name,
Adored by Athens, fav'rite child of fame!
Glory's own spirit does with truth com-
 bine
To form a soul so godlike, so divine !
O Aristides, rise, our Chief ! to save
The fame, the might of Athens from the
 grave.
Nor then refuse thy noble arm to lend
To guard Athena, and her state defend.
First I, obedient, 'customed homage pay
To own a hero's and a leader's sway.'
He said, and would have knelt ; the man
 divine
Perceived his will, and stayed the Sire's
design.
' Not mine, O Sage, to lead this gallant
band,'
He generous said, and grasped his agèd
hand,
' Proud as I am in glory's arms to rise,
Athenian Greeks, to shield your liberties,
Yet 'tis not mine to lead your powerful
state,
Enough it is to tempt you to be great ;
Be't for Miltiades, experienced sage,
To curb your ardour and restrain your
 rage,
Your souls to temper—by his skill prepare
To succour Athens, and conduct the
 war.
More fits my early youth to purchase
fame
By deeds in arms t'immortalize my name.'
Firmly he spake, his words the Greek
 inspire,
And all were hushed to listen and admire.
The Sage thus : ' Most Allied to Gods !
 the fame,
The pride, the glory of the Grecian name,
E'en by thee, Chief, I swear, to whom
 is given
The sacred mandate of yon marble
heaven —
To lead, not undeserving of thy love,
T'avert the yoke, if so determines Jove.'
Amidst the host imagination rose
And paints the combat, but disdains the
 woes.

And heaven-born fancy, with dishevelled
hair,
Points to the ensanguined field, and
victory there.
But soon, too soon, these empty dreams
are driven
Forth from their breasts. But soothing
hope is given :
Hope sprung from Jove, man's sole and
envied heaven.
Then all his glory Aristides felt,
And begged the Chieftain's blessing as
 he knelt :
Miltiades his pious arms outspread,
Called Jove's high spirit on the hero's
head ;
Nor called unheard —sublime in upper
air
The bird of Jove appeared to bless his
prayer.
Lightning he breathed, not harsh, not
fiercely bright,
But one pure stream of heaven-collected
light :
Jove's sacred smile lulls every care to
rest,
Calms every woe, and gladdens every
breast.
But what shrill blast thus bursts upon the
ear ?
What banners rise, what heralds' forms
appear ?
That haughty mien, and that commanding
face
Bespeak them Persians, and of noble
race ;
One on whose hand Darius' signet
beamed,
Superior to the rest, a leader seemed,
With brow contracted and with flashing
eye
Thus threatening spoke, in scornful
majesty :
' Know Greeks that I, a sacred herald,
 bring
The awful mandate of the Persian King,
To force allegiance from the sons of
Greece ;
Then earth and water give, nor scorn his
 peace.
For if, for homage, back reproof I bear,
To meet his wrath, his vengeful wrath,
 prepare ;

For not in vain ye scorn his dread command
When Asia's might comes thundering in his hand.'
To whom Miltiades with kindling eye :
' We scorn Darius, and his threats defy ;
And now, proud herald, shall we stoop to shame ?
Shall Athens tremble at a tyrant's name ?
Persian, away ! such idle dreams forbear,
And shun our anger and our vengeance fear.'
' Oh ! vain thy words,' the herald fierce began ;
' Thrice vain thy dotaged words, O powerless man,
Sons of a desert, hoping to withstand All the joint forces of Darius' hand ;
Fools, fools, the King of millions to defy, For freedom's empty name to ask to die !
Yet stay, till Persia's powers their banners rear,
Then shall ye learn our forces to revere,
And ye, O impotent, shall deign to fear !'
To whom great Aristides : rising ire
Boiled in his breast, and set his soul on fire :
' O wretch accurst,' the hero cried, ' to seek
T' insult experienced age, t' insult a Greek !
Inglorious slave ! whom truth and heaven deny,
Unfit to live, yet more unfit to die :
But, trained to pass the goblet at the board
And servile kiss the footsteps of thy lord,
Whose wretched life no glorious deeds beguile,
Who lives upon the semblance of a smile,
Die ! thy base shade to gloomy regions fled,
Join there the shivering phantoms of the dead.
Base slave, return to dust !' His victim then
In fearful accents cried : ' O best of men,
Most loved of Gods, most merciful, most just,
Behold me humbled, grovelling in the dust :
Not mine th' offence, the mandate stern I bring
From great Darius, Asia's tyrant King.

Oh, strike not, Chief ; not mine the guilt, not mine.
Ah, o'er those brows severe let mercy shine,
So dear to heaven, of origin divine ! Tributes, lands, gold, shall wealthy Persia give.
All, and yet more, but bid me, wretched, live !'
He trembling, thus persuades with fond entreat
And nearer pressed, and clasped the hero's feet.
Forth from the Grecian's breast all rage is driven,
He lifts his arms, his eyes, his soul to heaven.
' Hear, Jove omnipotent, all wise, all great,
To whom all fate is known, whose will is fate ;
Hear, thou all-seeing one, hear, Sire divine,
Teach me thy will, and be thy wisdom mine !
Behold this suppliant ! life or death decree ;
Be thine the judgement, for I bend to thee.'
And thus the Sire of Gods and men replies,
While pealing thunder shakes the groaning skies ;
The awful voice thro' spheres unknown was driven,
Resounding thro' the dark'ning realms of heaven ;
Aloft in air sublime the echo rode,
And earth resounds the glory of the God :
' Son of Athena, let the coward die,
And his pale ghost to Pluto's empire fly ;
Son of Athena, our command obey,
Know thou our might, and then adore our sway.'
Th' Almighty spake—the heavens convulsive start,
From the black clouds the whizzing lightnings dart
And dreadful dance along the troubled sky,
Struggling with fate in awful mystery.
The hero heard, and Jove his breast inspired,
Nor now by pity touched, but anger fired ;

While his big heart within his bosom
burns,
Off from his feet the clinging slave he
spurns.
Vain were his cries, his prayers 'gainst
fate above,
Jove wills his fall, and who can strive
with Jove?
To whom the hero : 'Hence to Pluto's
sway,
To realms of night ne'er lit by Cynthia's
ray ;
Hence—from yon gulf the earth and
water bring
And crown with victory your mighty
King.'
He said; and where the gulf of death
appeared,
Where raging waves, with rocks sub-
limely reared,
He hurled the wretch, at once of hope
bereaved ;
Struggling he fell, the roaring flood re-
ceived.
E'en now for life his shrieks, his groans
implore,
And now death's latent agony is o'er,
He struggling sinks, and sinks to rise no
more.
The train, amazed, behold their herald
die,
And Greece in arms—they tremble and
they fly.
So some fair herd upon the verdant
mead
See by the lion's jaws their foremost
bleed ;
Fearful they fly, lest what revolving fate
Had doomed their leader, should them-
selves await.
Then shouts of glorious war and fame
resound,
Athena's brazen gates receive the losty
sound.
But she whom Paphia's radiant climes
adore
From her own bower the work of Pallas
saw :
Tumultuous thoughts within her bosom
rise,
She calls her car, and at her will it flies.
Th' eternal car with gold celestial burns,
Its polished wheel on brazen axle turns :

This to his spouse by Vulcan's self was
given,
An offering worthy of the forge of heaven.
The Goddess mounts the seat and seized
the reins,
The doves celestial cut th' aerial plains ;
Before the sacred birds and car of gold
Self-moved the radiant gates of heaven
unfold.
She then dismounts, and thus to mighty
Jove
Begins the Mother and the Queen of
Love :
'And is it thus, O Sire, that fraud should
spring
From the pure breast of heaven's eternal
King ?
Was it for this Saturnius' word was given
That Greece should fall 'mong nations
curst of heaven ?
Thou swore by hell's black flood, and
heaven above ;
Is this, oh say, is this the faith of Jove ?
Behold stern Pallas Athens' sons alarms,
Darius' herald crushed, and Greece in
arms ;
E'en now behold her crested streamers
fly,
Each Greek resolved to triumph or to die.
Ah me, unhappy ! when shall sorrow
cease ?
Too well I know the fatal might of Greece ;
Was't not enough imperial Troy should
fall,
That Argive hands should raze the god-
built wall ?
Was't not enough Anchises' son should
roam
Far from his native shore and much-loved
home ?
All this, unconscious of thy fraud, I bore ;
For thou, O Sire, t' allay my vengeance,
sware
That Athene towering in her might should
fall
And Rome should triumph on her pros-
trate wall.
But oh, if haughty Greece should captive
bring
The great Darius, Persia's mighty King,
What power her pride, what power her
might shall move ?
Note'en the Thunderer, not eternal Jove ;

E'en to thy heaven shall rise her towering fame,
And prostrate nations will adore her name.
Rather on me thy instant vengeance take
Than all should fall for Cytherea's sake!
Oh! hurl me flaming in the burning lake,
Transfix me there unknown to Olympian calm,
Launch thy red bolt, and bare thy crimson arm,
I'd suffer all—more—bid my woes increase,
To hear but one sad groan from haughty Greece.'
She thus her grief with fruitless rage expressed,
And pride and anger swelled within her breast.
But he whose thunders awe the troubled sky
Thus mournful spake, and curbed the rising sigh :
' And it is thus celestial pleasures flow ?
E'en here shall sorrow reach and mortal woe ?
Shall strife the heavenly powers for ever move,
And e'en insult the sacred ear of Jove ?
Know, O rebellious, Greece shall rise sublime,
In fame the first, nor, daughter, mine the crime,
In valour foremost, and in virtue great :
Fame's highest glories shall attend her state.
So fate ordains, nor all my boasted power
Can raise those virtues, or those glories lower.
But rest secure, destroying time must come,
And Athens' self must own imperial Rome.'
Then the great Thunderer, and with visage mild,
Shook his ambrosial curls before his child,
And bending awful gave the eternal nod ;
Heaven quaked, and fate adored the parent God.
Joy seized the Goddess of the smiles and loves,
Nor longer care her heavenly bosom moves ;

Hope rose, and o'er her soul its powers displayed,
Nor checked by sorrow, nor by grief dismayed.
She thus : ' O thou, whose awfulthunders roll
Thro' heaven's ethereal vaults and shake the Pole,
Eternal Sire, so wonderfully great,
To whom is known the secret page of fate,
Say, shall great Persia, next to Rome most dear
To Venus' breast, shall Persia learn to fear ?
Say, shall her fame and princely glories cease ?
Shall Persia, servile, own the sway of Greece ?'
To whom the Thunderer bent his brow divine.
And thus in accents heavenly and benign :
' Daughter, not minethe secrets to relate,
The mysteries of all-revolving fate.
But ease thy breast ; enough for thee to know,
What powerful fate decrees will Jove bestow !'
He then her griefs and anxious woes beguiled,
And in his sacred arms embraced his child.
Doubt clouds the Goddess' breast—she calls her car,
And lightly sweeps the liquid fields of air.
When sable night midst silent nature springs,
And o'er Athena shakes her drowsy wings.
The Paphian Goddess from Olympus flies,
And leaves the starry senate of the skies.
To Athens' heaven-blest towers the Queen repairs
To raise more sufferings, and to cause more cares ;
The Pylian Sage she moved, so loved by fame,
In face, in wisdom, and in voice the same.
Twelve Chiefs in sleep absorbed and grateful rest
She first beheld, and them she thus addrest :
' Immortal Chiefs,' the fraudful Goddess cries,
While all the hero kindled in her eyes,

' For you, these aged arms did I employ,
For you, we razed the sacred walls of
Troy,
And now for you my shivering shade is
driven
From Pluto's dreary realms by urgent
heaven;
Then oh, be wise, nor tempt th' unequal
fight
In open fields, but wait superior might
Within immortal Athens' sacred wall;
There strive, there triumph, nor there
fear to fall!
To own the Thunderer's sway, then
Greeks prepare.'
Benign she said, and melted into air.

BOOK II

WHEN from the briny deep the orient
morn
Exalts her purple light and beams
unshorn,
And when the flaming orb of infant day
Glares o'er the earth and re-illumes the
sky,
The twelve deceived, with souls on fire,
arose,
While the false vision fresh in memory
glows.
The Senate first they sought, whose
lofty wall
Midst Athens rises, and o'er shadows all;
The pride of Greece, it lifts its front
sublime,
Unbent amidst the ravages of time.
High on their lowering seats, the heroes
found
The Chiefs of Athens solemn ranged
around;
One of the twelve, the great Clombrotus,
then,
Renowned for piety, and loved by men:
' Assembled heroes, Chiefs to Pallas dear,
All great in battle and in virtue, hear!
When night with sable wings extended
rose
And wrapt our weary limbs in sweet
repose,
I and my friends, Cydoon famed in song,
Thelon the valiant, Heracles the strong,
Cleon and Thermosites, in battle great,
By Pallas loved and blest by partial fate,

To us and other six, while day toils steep
Our eyes in happy dreams and grateful
sleep,
The Pylian Sage appeared. But not as
when
On Troy's last dust he stood, the pride
of men;
Driven from the shore of Acheron he
came
From lower realms to point the path to
fame.
" O glorious Chiefs," the sacred hero said,
" For you and for your fame all Troy has
bled;
Hither for you my shivering shade is
driven
From Pluto's dreary realms by urgent
heaven;
Then oh, be wise, nor tempt th' unequal
fight
In open field, but wait superior might
Within immortal Athens' sacred wall;
There strive, there triumph, nor there
fear to fall!
To own the Thunderer's sway, then
Greeks prepare."
Benign he said, and melted into air.
" Leave us not thus," I cried, " O Pylian
Sage,
Experienced Nestor, famed for reverend
age;
Say first, great hero, shall the trump of
fame
Our glory publish, or disclose our shame?
Oh, what are Athens' fates!" In vain
I said;
E'en as I spoke the shadowy Chief had
fled.
Then here we flew to own the vision's
sway,
And heaven's decrees to adore and to
obey.
He thus; and as before the blackened
skies
Sound the hoarse breezes, murmuring
as they rise,
So thro' th' assembled Greeks one mur-
mur rose,
One long dull echo lengthening as it goes.
Then all was hushed in silence—breath-
less awe
Opprest each tongue, and trembling they
adore.

But now uprising from th' astonished
Chiefs,
Divine Miltiades exposed his griefs ;
For well the godlike warrior Sage had
seen
The frauds deceitful of the Paphian
Queen,
And feared for Greece—for Greece to
whom is given
Eternal fame, the purest gift of heaven.
And yet he feared. The pious hero rose,
Majestic in his sufferings, in his woes ;
Grief clammed his tongue, but soon his
spirit woke,
Words burst aloft, and all the Patriot
spoke.
'O Athens, Athens! all the snares I view;
Thus shalt thou fall, and fall inglorious
too !
Are all thy boasted dignities no more ?
Is all thy might, are all thy glories o'er ?
Oh, woe on woe, unutterable grief !
Not Nestor's shade, that cursed phantom
chief,
But in that reverend air, that lofty mien,
Behold the frauds of Love's revengeful
Queen.
Not yet her thoughts does vengeance
cease t' employ ;
Her son Aeneas' wrongs, and burning
Troy,
Not yet forgotten lie within her breast,
Nor soothed by time, nor by despair
deprest.
Greeks still extolled by glory and by
fame—
For yet, O Chiefs ! ye bear a Grecian
name—
If in these walls, these sacred walls, we
wait
The might of Persia and the will of fate,
Before superior force will Athens fall
And one o'erwhelming ruin bury all.
Then in the open plain your might essay,
Rush on to battle, crush Darius' sway ;
The frauds of Venus, warrior Greeks,
beware,
Disdain the Persian foes, nor stoop to
fear.'
This said, Clombrotus him indignant
heard,
Nor felt his wisdom, nor his wrath he
feared.

With rage the Chief, the godlike Sage,
beheld,
And passion in his stubborn soul re-
belled.
'Thrice impious man,' th' infuriate
Chieftain cries
(Flames black and fearful flashing from
his eyes),
'Where lies your spirit, Greeks ! and
can ye bow
To this proud upstart of your power so
low !
What ! does his aspect awe ye ? is his eye
So full of haughtiness and majesty ?
Behold the impious soul, that dares defy
The power of Gods and Sovereign of
the sky !
And can your hands no sacred weapon
wield
To crush the tyrant, and your country
shield ?
On, Greeks !—your sons, your homes,
your country free
From such usurping Chiefs and tyranny !'
He said, and grasped his weapon ; at
his words
Beneath the horizon gleamed ten thou-
sand swords,
Ten thousand swords e'en in one instant
raised,
Sublime they danced aloft, and midst
the Senate blazed ;
Nor wisdom checked, nor gratitude re-
prest,
They rose, and flashed before the Sage's
breast.
With pride undaunted, greatness un-
subdued,
'Gainst him in arms the impetuous Greeks
he viewed,
Unarmed, unawed, before th' infuriate
bands,
Nor begged for life, nor stretched his
suppliant hands.
He stood astounded, riveted, opprest
By grief unspeakable, which swelled
his breast ;
Life, feeling, being, sense forgotten lie,
Buried in one wide waste of misery.
Can this be Athens ! this her Senate's
pride ?
He asked but gratitude,—was this de-
nied ?

Tho' Europe's homage at his feet were
 hurled
 Athens forsakes him—Athens was his
 world.
 Unutterable woe! by anguish stung
 All his full soul rushed heaving to his
 tongue,
 And thoughts of power, of fame, of
 greatness o'er,
 He cried 'Athenians!' and he could no
 more.
 Awed by that voice of agony, that word,
 Hushed were the Greeks, and sheathed
 the obedient sword;
 They stood abashed—to them the ancient
 Chief
 Began, and thus relieved his swelling
 grief:
 'Athenians! warrior Greeks! my words
 revere!
 Strike me, but listen—bid me die, but
 hear!
 Hear not Clombrotus when he bids you
 wait,
 At Athens' walls, Darius and your fate;
 I feel that Pallas' self my soul inspires,
 My mind she strengthens, and my bosom
 fires;
 Strike, Greeks! but hear me; think not
 to this heart
 You thirsty swords one breath of fear
 impart!
 Such slavish, low-born thoughts, to
 Greeks unknown,
 A Persian feels, and cherishes alone!
 Hear me, Athenians! hear me, and
 believe,
 See Greece mistaken! e'en the Gods
 deceive.
 But fate yet wavers—yet may wisdom
 move
 These threatening woes and thwart the
 Queen of Love.
 Obey my counsels, and invoke for aid
 The cloud-compelling God and blue-eyed
 maid;
 I fear not for myself the silent tomb;
 Death lies in every shape, and death
 must come.
 But ah! ye mock my truth, traduce my
 fame,
 Ye blast my honour, stigmatize my
 name!

Ye call me tyrant when I wish thee free,
 Usurper, when I live but, Greece, for
 thee!
 And thus the Chief—and boding silence
 drowned
 Each clam'rous tongue, and sullen reigned
 around.
 'O Chief!' great Aristides first began,
 'Mortal yet perfect, godlike and yet man!
 Boast of ungrateful Greece! my prayer
 attend.
 Oh! be my Chieftain, Guardian, Father,
 Friend!
 And ye, O Greeks! impetuous and
 abhorred,
 Again presumptuous, lift the rebelsword,
 Again your weapons raise, in hateful
 ire,
 To crush the Leader, Hero, Patriot, Sire!
 Not such was Greece when Greeks united
 stood
 To bathe perfidious Troy in hostile
 blood;
 Not such were Greeks inspired by glory;
 then
 As Gods they conquered, now they're
 less than men!
 Degenerate race! now lost to once-
 loved fame,
 Traitors to Greece and to the Grecian
 name!
 Who now your honours, who your
 praise will seek?
 Who now shall glory in the name of
 Greek?
 But since such discords your base souls
 divide,
 Procure the lots, let Jove and Heaven
 decide.
 To him Clombrotus thus admiring cries:
 'Thy thoughts how wondrous, and thy
 words how wise!
 So let it be, avert the threatened woes,
 And Jove be present and the right dis-
 close;
 But give me, Sire of Gods and powers
 above,
 The heavenly vision, and my truth to
 prove!
 Give me t' avenge the breach of all thy
 laws,
 T' avenge myself, then aid my righteous
 cause!

If this thou wilt, I'll to thine altars lead
 Twelve bulls which to thy sacred name
 shall bleed,
 Six snow-white heifers of a race divine
 Prostrate shall fall, and heath the groaning
 shrine.
 Nor thin the most—six rams that fearless
 stray
 Untouched by man, for thee this arm
 shall slay.'
 Thus prayed the Chief, with shouts the
 heavens resound ;
 Jove weighs the balance and the lots go
 round !
 Declare, O Muse! for to thy piercing eyes
 The book of fate irrevocably lies ;
 What lots leapt forth, on that eventful day,
 Who won, who lost, all-seeing Goddess,
 say !
 First great Clombrotus all his fortune
 tried
 And strove with fate, but Jove his prayer
 denied.
 Infuriate to the skies his arms are driven,
 And raging thus upbraids the King of
 Heaven :
 'Is this the virtue of the blest abodes,
 And this the justice of the God of Gods ?
 Can he who hurls the bolt and shakes
 the sky
 The prayer of truth, unblemished truth,
 deny ?
 Has he no faith by whom the clouds are
 riven,
 Who sits superior on the throne of heaven ?
 No wonder earth-born men are prone
 to fall
 In sin, or listen to dishonour's call,
 When Gods, th' immortal Gods, trans-
 gress the laws
 Of truth, and sin against a righteous
 cause.'
 Furious he said, by anger's spirit fired,
 Then sullen from the Senate walls retired.
 'Tis now Miltiades' stern fate to dare,
 But first he lifts his pious soul in prayer.
 'Daughter of Jove !' the mighty Chief
 began,
 'Without thy wisdom, frail and weak
 is man.
 A phantom Greece adores; oh, show
 thy power,
 And prove thy love in this eventful hour !

Crown all thy glory, all thy might
 declare !
 The Chieftain prayed, and Pallas heard
 his prayer.
 Swayed by the presence of the power
 divine,
 The fated lot, Miltiades, was thine !
 That hour the swelling trump of partial
 fame
 Diffused eternal glory on thy name !
 'Daughter of Jove,' he cries, 'uncon-
 quered maid !
 Thy power I own, and I confess thy aid ;
 For this twelve ewes upon thy shrine
 shall smoke
 Of milk-white fleece, the comeliest of
 their flock,
 While hecatombs and generous sacrifice
 Shall fume and blacken half th' aston-
 ished skies.'
 And thus the Chief—the shouting Greeks
 admire,
 While truth's bright spirit sets their
 Souls on fire.
 Then thus Themistocles : 'Ye Grecian
 host,
 Not now the time for triumph or for
 boast.
 Now, Greeks ! for graver toils your minds
 prepare,
 Not for the strife, but council of the war.
 Behold the sacred herald ! sent by
 Greece
 To Sparta's vales, now hushed in leagues
 of peace ;
 Her Chiefs, to aid the common cause,
 t' implore,
 And bid Darius shun the Argive shore ;
 Behold him here ! then let the leader
 Greek
 Command the bearer of our hopes to
 speak.'
 And thus the Sage : 'Where'er the
 herald stands,
 Bid him come forth, 'tis Athens' Chief
 commands,
 And bid him speak with freedom uncon-
 trolled,
 His thoughts deliver and his charge un-
 fold.'
 He said and sate—the Greeks impatient
 wait
 The will of Sparta and Athena's fate.

Silent they sate—so ere the whirlwinds
rise,
Ere billows foam and thunder to the
skies,
Nature in death-like calm her breath sus-
pends,
And hushed in silent awe th' approaching
storm attends.
Now midst the Senate's walls the herald
stands :
'Ye Greeks,' he said, and stretched his
sacred hands,
'Assembled heroes, ye Athenian bands,
And thou, beloved of Jove, our Chief,
O Sage,
Renowned for wisdom, as renowned for
age,
And all ye Chiefs in battle rank divine !
No joyful mission swayed by Pallas
mine.
The hardy Spartans with one voice de-
clare
Their will to aid our freedom and our
war ;
Instant they armed, by zeal and impulse
driven,
But on the plains of the mysterious heaven
Comets and fires were writ—an awful
sign,
And dreadful omen of the wrath divine :
While threatened plagues upon their
shores appear,
They curb their valour, all subdued by
fear ;
The oracles declare the will above,
And of the sister and the wife of Jove,
That not until the moon's bright course
was o'er
The Spartan warriors should desert their
shore.
Threats following threats succeed the
mandate dire,
Plagues to themselves, and to their har-
vest fire.
The Spartan Chiefs desist, their march
delay
To wait th' appointed hour and heaven
obey.
Grief smote my heart, my hopes and
mission vain ;
Their town I quitted for my native plain,
And when an eminence I gained, in woe
I gazed upon the verdant fields below,

Where Nature's ample reign, extending
wide,
Displays her graces with commanding
pride ;
Where cool Eurotas winds her limpid
floods
Thro' verdant valleys, and thro' shady
woods ;
And crowned in majesty o'er towering
all,
In bright effulgence Sparta's lofty wall.
To these I looked farewell, and humbled,
bowed
In chastened sorrow to the thundering
God.
'Twas thus I mused, when from a ver-
dant grove
That wafts delicious perfume from above,
The monster Pan his form gigantic reared,
And dreadful to my awe-struck sight
appeared.
I hailed the God who reigns supreme
below,
Known by the horns that started from
his brow ;
Up to the hips a goat, but man's his face,
Tho' grim, and stranger to celestial grace.
Within his hand a shepherd's crook he
bore,
The gift of Dian on th' Arcadian shore ;
Before th' immortal power I, fearing,
bowed,
Congealed with dread, and thus ad-
dressed the God :
" Comes Hermes' son, as awful as his sire,
To vent upon the Greeks immortal ire ?
Is't not enough the mandate stern I bring
From Sparta's Chiefs and Sparta's royal
King,
That heaven enjoins them to refrain from
fight
Till Dian fills again her horns with light !
Then vain their aid, ere then may
Athens fall
And Persia's haughty Chiefs invest her
wall."
I said and sighed, the God in accents mild
My sorrow thus and rigid griefs beguiled:
" Not to destroy I come, O chosen Greek,
Not Athens' fall, but Athens' fame I seek.
Then give again to honour and to fame
My power despised and my forgotten
name.

At Sparta's doom no longer, Chief,
repine,
But learn submission to the will divine ;
Behold e'en now, within this fated hour,
On Marathonian plains, the Persian
power !
E'en Hippias' self inspires th' embattled
host,
Th' Athenian's terror, as the Persian's
boast.
Bid Athens rise and glory's powers
attest.
Enough—no more—the fates conceal the
rest."
He said, his visage burned with heavenly
light ;
He spoke and, speaking, vanished from
my sight ;
And awed, I sought where those loved
walls invite.
But think not, warrior Greeks, the fault
is mine,
If Athens fall—it is by wrath divine.
I vainly, vainly grieve, the evil springs
From him—the God of Gods, the King
of Kings !'
The Herald said, and bent his sacred
head,
While cherished hope from every bosom
fled.
Each dauntless hero, by despair deprest,
Felt the deep sorrow swelling in his
breast :
They mourn for Athens, friendless and
alone ;
Cries followed cries, and groan succeeded
groan.
Th' Athenian matrons, startled at the
sound,
Rush from their looms and anxious
crowd around.
They ask the cause, the fatal cause is
known
By each fond sigh and each renewing
groan,
While in their arms some infant love
they bear
At once for which they joy, for which
they fear.
Hushed on its mother's breast, the
cherished child,
Unconscious midst the scene of terror,
smiled.

On rush the matrons, they despairing
seek
Miltiades, adored by every Greek ;
Him found at length, his counsels they
entreat,
Hang on his knees and clasp his sacred
feet ;
Their babes before him on the ground
they throw
In all the maddening listlessness of woe.
First Delopeia, of the matrons chief,
Thus vents her bursting soul in frantic
grief,
While her fond babe she holds aloft in
air ;
Thus her roused breast prefers a mother's
prayer :
'O Son of Cimon, for the Grecians raise
To heaven thy fame, thy honour, and
thy praise.
Thus—thus—shall Athens and her heroes
fall,
Shall thus one ruin seize and bury all ?
Say, shall these babes be strangers then
to fame,
And be but Greeks in spirit and in name ?
Oh, first, ye Gods ! and hear a mother's
prayer,
First let them glorious fall in ranks of
war !
If Asia triumph, then shall Hippins reign,
And Athens' free-born sons be slaves
again !
O Son of Cimon ! let thy influence call
The souls of Greeks to triumph or to
fall !
And guard their own, their children's,
country's name,
From foul dishonour and eternal shame !'
Thus thro' her grieves the love of glory
broke ;
The mother wept, but 'twas the Patriot
spoke :
And as before the Greek she bowed with
grace,
The lucid drops bedewed her lovely face.
Their shrieks and frantic cries the
matrons cease,
And death-like silence awes the sons of
Greece.
Thrice did the mighty Chief of Athens
seek
To curb his feelings and essay to speak ;

'Twas vain—the ruthless sorrow wrung his breast,
His mind disheartened and his soul ope-
rest.
He thus—while o'er his cheek the moisture stole :
'Retire, ye matrons, nor unman mysoul !
Tho' little strength this aged arm re-
tains,
My swelling soul Athena's foe disdains ;
Hushed be your griefs, to heaven for victory cry,
Assured we'll triumph or with freedom die.
And ye, O Chiefs, when night disowns her sway,
And pensive Dian yields her power to day,
To quit these towers for Marathon pre-
pare,
And brave Darius in the ranks of war.
For yet may Jove protect the Grecian name
And crown, in unborn ages, Athens' fame.'
He said—and glowing with the warlike fire,
And cheered by hope, the godlike Chiefs retire.
Now Cynthia rules the earth, the flaming God
In ocean sinks, green Neptune's old abode ;
Black Erebus on drowsy pinions springs,
And o'er Athena cowers his sable wings.

BOOK III

WHEN from the deep the hour's eternal sway
Impels the coursers of the flaming day,
The long-haired Greeks with brazen arms prepare
Their freedom to preserve and wage the war.
First Aristides from the couch arose,
While his great mind with all Minerva glows ;
His mighty limbs his golden arms invest,
The cuirass blazes on his ample breast,
The glittering cuisses both his legs enfold,
And the huge shield's on fire with burnished gold ;

His hands two spears uphold of equal size,
And fame's bright glories kindle in his eyes ;
Upon his helmet plumes of horse-hair nod,
And forth he moved, majestic as a God !
Upon his snorting steed the warrior sprung,
The courser neighed, the brazen armour rung ;
From heaven's ethereal heights the martial maid
With conscious pride the hero's might surveyed.
Him as she eyed, she shook the gorgon shield ;
'Henceforth to me,' she cried, 'let all th' immortals yield.
Let monster Mars the Latian regions own,
For Attica, Minerva stands alone.'
And now th' unconquered Chief of Justice gains
The Senate's walls, and there the steed detains,
Whence he dismounts—Miltiades he seeks,
Beloved of Jove, the leader of the Greeks :
Nor sought in vain ; there clad in armour bright
The Chieftain stood, all eager for the fight.
Within his aged hands two lances shine,
The helmet blazed upon his brows divine ;
And as he bends beneath th' unequal weight
Youth smiles again, when with gigantic might
His nervous limbs immortal arms could wield,
Crush foe on foe, and raging, heap the field.
Yet tho' such days were past, and ruthless age
Transformed the warrior to the thought-
ful sage ;
Tho' the remorseless hand of silent time
Impaired each joint and stiffened every limb ;
Yet thro' his breast the fire celestial stole,
Throbbed in his veins, and kindled in his soul.

In thought, the Lord of Asia threats no more,
And Hippias bites the dust mid seas of gore.
Him as he viewed, the youthful hero's breast
Heaved high with joy, and thus the Sage addressed :
'Chief, best beloved of Pallas,' he began,
'In fame allied to Gods, O wondrous man !
Behold Apollo gilds th' Athenian wall,
Our freedom waits, and fame and glory call
To battle ! Asia's King and myriads dare,
Swell the loud trump, and swell the din of war.'
He said impatient ; then the warriors sage
Began, regardless of the fears of age :
'Not mine, O youth, with caution to control
The fire and glory of thy eager soul ;
So was I wont in brazen arms to shine,
Such strength and such impatient fire were mine.'

He said, and bade the trumpet's peals rebound,
High, and more high, the echoing war-notes sound :
Sudden one general shout the din replies,
A thousand lances blazing as they rise,
And Athens' banners wave and float along the skies.

So from the marsh the cranes embodied fly,
Clap their glad wings and cut the liquid sky ;
With thrilling cries they mount their joyful way,
Vig'rous they spring, and hail the new-born day.
So rose the shouting Greeks, inspired by fame
To assert their freedom and maintain their name.

First came Themistocles, in arms renowned,
Whose steed, impatient, tore the trembling ground ;
High o'er his helmets snowy plumes arise,
And shade that brow which Persia's might defies ;

A purple mantle graceful waves behind,
Nor hides his arms, but floats upon the wind ;
His mighty form two crimson belts enfold,
Rich in embroidery and stiff with gold.
Callimachus the Polemarch next came,
The theme of general praise and general fame.
Cynaegirus, who e'en the Gods would dare,
Heap ranks on ranks, and thunder thro' the war ;
His virtues godlike ; man's his strength surpassed,
In battle foremost, and in flight the last ;
His ponderous helm's a shaggy lion's hide,
And the huge war-axe clattered at his side ;
The mighty Chief a brazen chariot bore,
While fame and glory hail him and adore.
Antenor next his aid to Athens gave,
Like Paris youthful, and like Hector brave ;
Cleon, Minerva's priest, experienced sage,
Advanced in wisdom, as advanced in age.
Agregoras, Delenus' favourite child ;
The parent's cares the glorious son beguiled ;
But now he leaves his sire to seek his doom,
His country's freedom or a noble tomb.
And young Aratus, moved with youthful pride,
And heart elated at the hero's side.
Next thou, Cleones, thou triumphant moved,
By Athens honoured, by the Greeks beloved :
And Sthenelus the echoing pavements trod,
From youth devoted to the martial God.
Honour unspotted crowned the hero's name,
Unbounded virtue and unbounded fame.
Such heroes shone the foremost of the host,
All Athens' glory and all Athens' boast.
Behind, a sable cloud of warriors rise
With ponderous arms, and shouting rend the skies :
These bands with joy Miltiades inspire,
Fame fills his breast and sets his soul on fire ;

Aloft he springs into the gold-wrought
car,
While the shrill blast resounds, to war!
to war!
The coursers plunge as conscious of
their load
And, proudly neighing, feel they bear
a God.
The snow-white steeds by Pallas' self
were given,
Which sprung from the immortal breed
of heaven.
The car was wrought of brass and bur-
nished gold,
And divers figures on its bulk were told,
Of heroes who in plunging to the fight
Shrouded Troy's glories in eternal night :
Of fierce Pelides, who relenting gave,
At Priam's prayer, to Hector's corpse a
grave:
Here Spartan Helen flies her native shore
To bid proud Troy majestic stand no
more :
There Hector clasps his consort to his
breast,
Consoles her sufferings, tho' himself op-
prest ;
And there he rushes to the embattled
field
For victory or death, nor e'en in death
to yield :
Here Ilium prostrate feels the Argive ire,
Her heroes perished, and her towers on
fire :
And here old Priam breathes his last-
drawn sigh,
And feels 'tis least of all his griefs to
die :
There his loved sire, divine Aeneas,
bears,
And leaves his own with all a patriot's
tears ;
While in one hand he holds his weeping
boy,
And looks his last on lost unhappy Troy.
The warrior seized the reins, the im-
patient steeds
Foam at the mouth and spring where
glory leads.
The gates the heroes pass, th' Athenian
dames
Bend from their towers, and bid them
save from flames

Their walls, their infant heirs, and fill
the skies
With shouts, entreaties, prayers, and
plaintive cries :
Echo repeats their words, the sounds
impart
New vigour to each Greek's aspiring
heart.
Forward with shouts they press, and
hastening on
Try the bold lance and dream of Mara-
thon.
Meanwhile the Persians on th' embattled
plain
Prepare for combat, and the Greeks dis-
dain.
Twice twenty sable bulls they daily pay,
Unequalled homage, to the God of day ;
Such worthy gifts the wealthy warriors
bring,
And such the offerings of the Persian
King ;
While the red wine around his altars
flowed
They beg protection from the flaming
God.
But the bright Patron of the Trojan war
Accepts their offerings, but rejects their
prayer :
The power of love alone dares rigid fate,
To vent on Greece her vengeance and
her hate ;
Not love for Persia prompts the venge-
ful dame,
But hate for Athens, and the Grecian
name :
In Phoebus' name the fraudful Queen
receives
The hecatombs, and happy omens gives.
And now the heralds with one voice
repeat
The will of Datis echoing thro' the fleet,
To council, to convene the Persian train,
That Athens' Chiefs should brave their
might in vain.
The Chiefs and Hippias' self his will obey,
And seek the camp—the heralds lead the
way.
There on the couch their leader Datis sat
In ease luxurious, and in kingly state ;
Around his brow pride deep and scornful
played,
A purple robe his slothful limbs arrayed,

Which o'er his form its silken draperies fold,
Majestic sweeps the ground, and glows with gold ;
While Artaphernes resting at his side
Surveys th' advancing train with conscious pride.
The elder leader, mighty Datis, then :
' Assembled Princes, great and valiant men,
And thou thrice glorious Hippias, loved by heaven,
To whom, as to thy sire, is Athens given ;
Behold the Grecian banners float afar,
Shouting they hail us, and provoke the war.
Then, mighty Chiefs and Princes, be it yours
To warm and fire the bosoms of our powers,
That when the morn has spread her saffron light
The Greeks may own and dread Darius' might ;
For know, O Chiefs, when once proud Athens falls,
When Persian flames shall reach her haughty walls,
From her depression wealth to you shall spring,
And honour, fame, and glory to your King.
He said ; his words the Princes' breasts inspire :
Silent they bend, and with respect retire.
And now the Greeks in able marches gain,
By Pallas fired, the Marathonian plain.
Before their eyes th' unbounded ocean rolls
And all Darius' fleet—unawed their souls :
They fix their banners and the tents they raise,
And in the sun their polished javelins blaze.
Their leader's self within the brazen car
Their motions orders, and prepares for war ;
Their labours o'er, the aged hero calls
The Chiefs to council midst the canvas walls.

And then the Sage : ' How great the Persian host !
But let them not their strength or numbers boast ;
Their slothful minds, to love of fame unknown,
Sigh not for war, but for the spoil alone.
Strangers to honour's pure immortal light,
They not as heroes, but as women fight ;
Grovelling as proud, and cowardly as vain,
The Greeks they fear, their numbers they disdain.
And now, Athenians ! fired by glory, rise
And lift your fame unsullied to the skies,
Your victim Persia, liberty your prize.
And now twice twenty sable bullocks bring
To heap the altars of the thundering King,
Bid twelve white heifers of gigantic breed
To Jove's great daughter, wise Minerva, bleed,
And then in sleep employ the solemn night,
Nor till Apollo reigns provoke the fight.'
The hero said ; the warlike council o'er
They raise the lofty altars on the shore.
They pile in heaps the pride of all the wood ;
They fall the first, who first in beauty stood :
The pine that soars to heaven, the sturdy oak,
And cedars crackle at each hero's stroke.
And now two altars stand of equal size,
And lift their forms majestic to the skies ;
The heroes then twice twenty bullocks bring,
A worthy offering to the thundering King.
The aged leader seized the sacred knife,
Blow followed blow, out gushed the quivering life ;
Thro' their black hides the ruthless steel is driven,
The victims groan—Jove thunders from his heaven.
And then their bulks upon the pile they lay,
The flames rush upward, and the armies pray.

Driven by the wind, the roaring fires
ascend,
And now they hiss in air, and now
descend ;
With all their sap, the new-cut faggots
raise
Their flames to heaven, and crackle as
they blaze.
And then the Sage : 'Oh, thou of powers
above
The first and mightiest, hear, eternal
Jove !
Give us, that Athens in her strength may
rise,
And lift our fame and freedom to the
skies !'
This said, he ceased—th' assembled
warriors pour
The sacred incense, and the God adore;
Then partial Jove propitious heard their
prayer,
Thrice shook the heavens, and thundered
tho' the air.
With joy the Greeks the favouring sign
inspires,
And their breasts glow with all the war-
like fires :
And now twelve heifers white as snow
they lead
To great Minerva's sacred name to bleed;
They fall—their bulks upon the pile are
laid,
Sprinkled with oil, and quick in flame
arrayed.
And now descending midst the darkening
skies
Behold the Goddess of the radiant eyes ;
The ground she touched, beneath the
mighty load
Earth groaning rocks, and nature hails
the God.
Within her hand her father's lightnings
shone,
And shield that blazes near th' eternal
throne ;
The Greeks with fear her dauntless form
surveyed,
And trembling bowed before the blue-
eyed maid.
Then favouring, thus began the power
divine,
While in her eyes celestial glories
shine :

'Ye sons of Athens, loved by heaven,'
she cries,
'Revered by men, be valiant and be wise.
When morn awakes, Darius' numbers
dare,
Clang your loud arms, and rouse the
swelling war :
But first to yon proud fleet a herald send
To bid the Persians yield, and fight sus-
pend ;
For vainly to their God they suppliant
call,
Jove favours Greece, and Pallas wills
their fall.'
She said, and thro' the depths of air she
flies,
Mounts the blue heaven, and scales the
liquid skies.
The Greeks rejoicing thank the powers
above,
And Jove's great daughter, and eternal
Jove ;
And now a herald to the fleet they send
To bid the Persians yield, and war sus-
pend.
Thro' the divided troops the herald goes,
Thro' Athens' host, and thro' th' un-
numbered foes ;
Before the holy man the Persian bands
Reverend give way, and ask what
Greece demands :
He tells not all, but that he, chosen,
seeks
Datis their Chief, by order of the Greeks.
The mission but in part he sage reveals,
And what his prudence prompts him he
conceals.
Then to their Chief they lead him, where
he sat
With pomp surrounded, and in gorgeous
state ;
Around his kingly couch his arms were
spread
Flaming in gold, by forge Cyclopean
made.
And then stern Datis, frowning, thus
began :
'What hopes deceive thee, miserable
man ?
What treacherous fate allureth thee thus
to stray
Thro' all our hosts ! What Gods beguile
the way ?'

Think'st thou to 'scape the Persian steel,
when Greece
Our herald crushed, and banished hopes
of peace?
But speak, what will the Greeks? and
do they dare
To prove our might, and tempt th' un-
equal war?
Or do they deign to own Darius' sway,
And yield to Persia's might th' em-
battled day?
To whom th' Athenian herald made reply:
'The Greeks disdain your terms, and
scorn to fly.
Unknown to heroes and to sons of Greece
The shameful slavery of a Persian peace;
Defiance stern, not servile gifts I bring,
Your bonds detested, and despised your
King.
Of equal size, the Greeks two altars raise
To Jove's high glory, and Minerva's
praise;
The God propitious heard, and from the
skies
Descends the Goddess of the azure eyes,
And thus began—"Assembled Greeks,
give ear,
Attend my wisdom, nor my glory fear;
When morn awakes, Darius' numbers
dare,
Clang your loud arms, and rouse the
swelling war:
But first to you proud fleet a herald send
To bid the Persians yield, and war sus-
pend;
For vainly to their God they suppliant call,
Jove favours Greece, and Pallas wills
their fall."
The Goddess spoke; th' Athenians own
her sway;
I seek the fleet, and heaven's command
obey.
The Greeks disdain your millions in the
war,
Nor I, O Chief, your promised vengeance
fear.
Strike! but remember that the God on
high
Who rules the heavens, and thunders
tho' the sky,
Not unrevenged will see his herald slain,
Nor shall thy threats his anger tempt in
vain.'

And thus the Greek: then Datis thus
replies,
Flames black and fearful scowling from
his eyes:
'Herald, away! and Asia's vengeance
fear;
Back to your frenzied train my mandate
bear,
That Greece and Grecian Gods may threat
in vain—
We scorn their anger, and their wrath
disdain:
For he who lights the earth and rules the
skies
With happy omens to our vows replies;
When morn uprising breathes her saffron
light,
Prepare to dare our millions in the fight.
Thy life I give, Darius' will to say,
And Asia's hate—hence, Chief, no more,
away!'
He said, and anger filled the Grecian's
breast,
But prudent, he the rising wrath sup-
pressed;
Indignant, thro' the canvas tents he strode
And silently invoked the thundering God.
Fears for his country in his bosom rose
As on he wandered midst unnumbered
foes;
He strikes his swelling breast and hastens
on
O'er the wide plains of barren Marathon.
And now he sees the Grecian banners rise,
And well-armed warriors blaze before
his eyes.
Then thus he spoke: 'Ye Grecian bands,
give ear,
Ye warrior Chiefs and Attic heroes hear!
Your will to Asia's other Prince I told,
All which you bade me, Chieftains, to
unfold;
But Pallas' vengeance I denounced in
vain,
Your threats he scorned, and heard with
proud disdain.
The God, he boasts, who lights the earth
and skies,
With happy omens to his vows replies;
Then when the uprising morn extends
her light
Prepare, ye Greeks, to dare his powers
in fight.'

He said—the Greeks for instant strife
declare
Their will, and arm impatient for the war.
Then he, their godlike Chief, as Pallas
sage :
'Obey my counsels, and repress your
rage,
Ye Greeks,' he cried, 'the sacred night
displays
Her shadowy veil, and earth in gloom
arrays ;
Her sable shades e'en Persia's Chiefs
obey,
And wait the golden mandate of the day :
Such is the will of Jove, and Gods above,
And such the order of the loved of Jove.'
He said—the Greeks their leader's word
obey,
They seek their tents, and wait th' ap-
proaching day ;
O'er either host celestial Somnus reigns,
And solemn silence lulls th' embattled
plains.

BOOK IV

AND now the morn by Jove to mortals
given
With rosy fingers opes the gates of
heaven.
The Persian Princes and their haughty
Lord
Gird on their arms, and seize the flaming
sword :
Forth, forth they rush to tempt the battle's
roar,
Earth groans, and shouts re-bellowing
shake the shore.
As when the storm the heavenly azure
shrouds
With sable night, and heaps on clouds
the clouds,
The Persians rose, and crowd th' em-
battled plain,
And stretch their warlike millions to the
main ;
And now th' Athenians throng the fatal
field,
By fame inspired, and swords and buck-
lers wield ;
In air sublime their floating banners rise,
The lances blaze, the trumpets rend the
skies.

And then Miltiades : 'Athenians, hear,
Behold the Persians on the field appear,
Dreadful in arms ; remember, Greeks,
your fame,
Rush to the war, and vindicate your
name ;
Forward ! till low in death the Persians lie,
For freedom triumph or for freedom die.'
He said ; his visage glows with heavenly
light ;
He spoke sublime, and rushed into the
fight.
And now the fury of the day began—
Lance combats lance, and man's opposed
to man ;
Beneath their footsteps groans the labour-
ing plain,
And shouts re-echoing bellow to the
main ;
Mars rages fierce ; by heroes, heroes die;
Earth rocks, Jove thunders, and the
wounded cry.
What mighty Chiefs by Aristides fell,
What heroes perished, heavenly God-
dess, tell :
First thou, O Peleus ! felth his conquering
hand,
Stretched in the dust and weltering in
the sand ;
Thro' thy bright shield the forceful
weapon went,
Thyself in arms o'erthrown, thy corselet
rent.
Next rash Antennes met an early fate,
And feared, alas ! th' unequal foe too late ;
And Delucus the sage, and Philo fell,
And Crotan sought the dreary gates of
hell,
And Mnemon's self with wealth and
honour crowned,
Revered for virtue, and for fame re-
nowned ;
He, great in battle, feared the hero's hand,
Groaning he fell, and spurned the reeking
sand.
But what bold chief thus rashly dares
advance ?
Tho' not in youth, he shakes the dreadful
lance ;
Proudly the earth the haughty warrior
trod,
He looked a Monarch and he moved a
God :

Then on the Greek with rage intrepid
flew
And with one blow th' unwary Greek
o'erthrew;
That hour, O Chief, and that eventful
day,
Had bade thee pass a shivering ghost
away,
But Pallas, fearful for her fav'rite's life,
Sudden upraised thee to renew the
strife;
Then Aristides with fresh vigour rose,
Shame fired his breast, his soul with
anger glows;
With all his force he rushes on the foe,
The warrior bending disappoints the
blow,
And thus with rage contemptuous :
‘Chieftain, know,
Hippias, the loved of heaven, thine eyes
behold,
Renowned for strength of arm, in battle
bold,
But tell thy race, and who the man
whose might
Dares cope with rebel Athens' King in
fight.’
Stung to the soul, ‘O slave,’ the Greek
returns,
While his big heart within his bosom
burns,
‘Perfidious Prince, to faith and truth
unknown;
On Athens'ashes raise thy tyrant throne,
When Grecia's chiefs and Grecia's heroes
fall,
When Persia's fires invest her lofty wall,
When nought but slaves within her
towers remain ;
Then, nor till then, shalt thou, O Hippias,
reign,
Then, nor till then, will Athens yield her
fame
To foul dishonour and eternal shame !
Come on ! no matter what my race or
name;
For this, O Prince, this truth unerring
know,
That in a Greek you meet a noble foe.’
Furious he said, and on the Prince he
sprung
With all his force, the meeting armour
rung,

Struggling they raged, and both together
fell.
That hour the tyrant's ghost had entered
hell,
But partial fate prolonged the Prince's
breath,
Renewed the combat, and forbade the
death.
Meanwhile the hosts the present war
suspend,
Silent they stand, and heaven's decree
attend.
First the bright lance majestic Hippias
threw,
But erringly the missile weapon flew ;
Then Aristides hurled the thirsty dart,
Struck the round shield, and nearly
pierced his heart,
But the bright arms, that shone with
conscious pride,
Received the blow, and turned the point
aside.
And thus the Greek : ‘Whom your inquir-
ing eyes
Behold, O Prince,’ th' Athenian hero
cries,
‘Is Aristides, called the just, a name
By Athens honoured, nor unknown to
fame.’
Scared at the sound, and seized by sudden
fright,
The Prince starts back in mean, inglorious
flight.
And now Bellona rages o'er the field,
All strive elated, all disdain to yield ;
And great Themistocles, in arms re-
nowned,
Stretched heaps of heroes on the groan-
ing ground.
First by his hand fell Dclo's self, divine,
The last-loved offspring of a noble line ;
Straight thro' his neck the reeking dart
was driven,
Prostrate he sinks, and vainly calls to
heaven.
Next godlike Phanes, midst the Persians
just,
Leucon and mighty Caudos bit the
dust ;
And now the Greek, with pride im-
prudent, dares
Victorious Mandrocles, renowned in
wars.

The agile Persian swift avoids the blow,
Furious disarms and grasps th' unequal
foe!
Th' intrepid Greek with godlike calm
awaits
His instant fall, and dares th' impending
fates;
But great Cynaegirus his danger spies
And lashed his steeds—the ponderous
chariot flies,
Then from its brazen bulk he leaps to
ground,
Beneath his clanging arms the plains re-
sound,
And on the Persian rushes fierce, and
raised
The clattering axe on high, which threat-
ening blazed,
And lopped his head; out spouts the
smoking gore,
And the huge trunk rolled bleeding on
the shore.
And then Cynaegirus: 'Thus, Persian, go
And boast thy victory in the shades
below,
A headless form, and tell who bade thee
bleed,
For know a Greek performed the won-
drous deed:
But thou, Themistocles, O hero! say
Who bade thee rush, to tempt th' unequal
fray?
But learn from this thy daring to restrain,
And seek less mighty foes upon the plain.
With secret wrath the youthful hero
burned,
And thus impetuous to the Chief returned:
'Such thoughts as these, unworthy those
who dare
The battle's rage, and tempt the toils of
war;
Heedless of death, and by no fears
opprest,
Conquest my aim, I leave to heaven the
rest.'
He said, and glowed with an immortal
light,
Plunged 'midst the foes, and mingled in
the fight.
Zeno, the bravest of the Persian youth,
Renowned for filial piety and truth,
His mother's only joy; she loved to trace
His father's features in his youthful face:

That sire, in fight o'erwhelmed mid seas
of gore,
Slept unentombed, and cared for fame no
more.
And now as youth in opening manhood
glows,
All his loved father in his visage rose;
Like him, regardful of his future fame,
Resolved like him to immortalize his
name,
At glory's call he quits his native shore
And feeble parent, to return no more.
Oh! what prophetic grieves her bosom
wrung
When on his neck in agony she hung!
When on that breast she hid her sorrow-
ing face,
And feared to take, or shun, the last
embrace!
Unhappy youth! the fates decree thy
doom,
Those flowers, prepared for joy, shall
deck thy tomb;
Thy mother now no more shall hail thy
name,
So high enrolled upon the lists of fame.
Nor check the widow's tear, the widow's
sigh,
For e'en her son, her Zeno's doom to die;
Zeno, e'en thou! for so the Gods decree,
A parents' threshold opes no more for
thee!
On him the hero turned his eye severe,
Nor on his visage saw one mark of fear;
There manly grace improved each separ-
ate part,
And joined by ties of truth the face and
heart.
The supple javelin then the Grecian tries
With might gigantic, and the youth
defies.
Its point impetuous at his breast he flung,
The brazen shield received, and mocking
rung;
Then Zeno seized the lance, the Chief
defied,
And scoffing, thus began, in youthful
pride:
'Go, mighty Greek! to weaker warriors
go,
And fear this arm, and an unequal foe;
A mother gave the mighty arms I bear,
Nor think with such a gift I cherish fear.'

He hurled the lance, but Pallas' self was
there
And turned the point: it passed in empty
air.
With hope renewed, again the hero tries
His boasted might; the thirsty weapon
flies;
In Zeno's breast it sinks, and drank the
gore,
And stretched the hero vanquished on
the shore;
Gasping for utterance, and life and breath,
For fame he sighs, nor fears approaching
death.
Themistocles perceived, and bending low
Thought of his friends, and tears began
to flow
That washed the bleeding bosom of his
foe.
Young Zeno then the Grecian hero eyed,
Rejects his offered aid, and all defied,
Breathed one disdainful sigh, and turned
his head and died.
Such Persians did the godlike warrior
slay,
And bade their groaning spirits pass
away.
Epizelus, the valiant and the strong,
Thundered in fight, and carried death
along;
Him not a Greek in strength of arms
surpassed,
In battle foremost, but in virtue last.
He, impious man, to combat dared defy
The Gods themselves, and senate of the
sky,
E'en earth and heaven, and heaven's
eternal sire,
He mocks his thunders and despairs his
ire.
But now the retributive hour is come,
And rigid justice seals the boaster's
doom:
Theseus he sees within the fight, revealed
To him alone—to all the rest concealed.
To punish guilt, he leaves the shades
below
And quits the seat of never-ending woe:
Pale as in death, upon his hands he bore
Th' infernal serpent of the dreadful shore,
To stay his progress should he strive to
fly
From Tart'rus far, and gain the uppersky.

This (dreadful sight!) with slippery
sinews now
Wreathed round his form, and clasped
his ghastly brow;
With horror struck and seized with sud-
den awe
The Greek beheld, nor mingled in the
war.
Withheld from combat by the force of fear,
He trembling thus: 'Oh say, what God
draws near!
But speak thy will, if 'tis a God, oh
speak!
Nor vent thy vengeance on a single
Greek.'
Vainly he suppliant said o'erpowered
with fright,
And instant from his eyeballs fled the
sight;
Confused, distracted, to the skies he
throws
His frantic arms, and thus bewails his
woes:
'Almighty! thou by whom the bolts are
driven!'
He said, and cast his sightless balls to
heaven,
'Restore my sight, unhappy me, restore
My own loved offspring, to behold once
more!
So will I honour thy divine abodes,
And learn how dreadful th' avenging
Gods!
And if—but oh, forbid!—you mock my
prayer
And cruel fate me ever cursed declare,
Give me, to yeld to fame alone my life,
And fall immortalized in glorious strife!
He said—the God who thunders thro' the
air
Frowns on his sufferings and rejects his
prayer;
Around his form the dreadful Aegis
spread,
And darts fall harmless on his wretched
head;
Condemned by fate in ceaseless pain to
groan,
Friendless in grief, in agony alone.
Now Mars and death pervade on every
side,
And heroes fall and swell the crimson
tide.

Not with less force th' Athenian leader shone,
In strife conspicuous, nor to fame unknown,
Advanced in wisdom and in honoured years ;
He nor for life, but for the battle fears.
Borne swift as winds within the flying car,
Now here, now there, directs the swelling war,
On every side the foaming coursers guides,
Here praises valour, and there rashness chides ;
While from his lips persuasive accents flow
T' inspire th' Athenians, or unman the foe.
The glorious Greeks rush on with daring might,
And shout and thunder, and increase the fight.
Nor yet inglorious do the Persians shine,
In battle's ranks they strength and valour join :
Datis himself impels the ponderous car
Thro' broken ranks, conspicuous in the war,
In armour sheathed, and terror round him spread,
He whirls his chariot over heaps of dead ;
Where'er he dreadful rushes, warriors fly,
Ghosts seek their hell, and chiefs and heroes die.
All pale with rage he ranks on ranks o'erthrows,
For blood he gasps, and thunders midst his foes :
Callimachus, the mighty leader, found
In fight conspicuous, bearing death around :
The lance, wheeled instant from the Persian's hand,
Transfixed the glorious Grecian in the sand ;
Fate ends the hero's life, and stays his breath,
And clouds his eyeballs with the shade of death :
Erect in air the cruel javelin stood,
Pierced thro' his breast, and drank the spouting blood.

Released from life's impending woes and care,
The soul immerses in the fields of air :
Then, crowned with laurels, seeks the blest abodes
Of awful Pluto and the Stygian floods.
And now with joy great Aristides saw
Again proud Hippias thundering thro' the war,
And mocking thus, 'O tyrant, now await
The destined blow, behold thy promised fate !'
Thrice mighty King, obey my javelin's call,
For e'en thy godlike self's decreed to fall !'
He said, and hurled the glittering spear
-on high,
The destined weapon hissed along the sky ;
Winged by the hero's all-destroying hand
It pierced the Prince, and stretched him on the sand.
Then thro' the air the awful peals were driven,
And lightnings blazed along the vast of heaven ;
The Persian hosts behold their bulwark die,
Fear chills their hearts, and all their numbers fly,
And reached the fleet; the shouting Greeks pursue
All Asia's millions, flying in their view.
On, on, they glorious rush, and side by side,
Yet red with gore, they plunge into the tide ;
For injured freedom's sake th' indignant main
With swelling pride receives the crimson stain ;
The Persians spread the sail, nor dare delay,
And suppliant call upon the King of day,
But vainly to their Gods the cowards pray.
Some of the ships th' Athenian warriors stay
And fire their bulks ; the flames destroy-ing rise,
Rushing they swell, and mount into the skies.

Foremost Cynaegirus, with might divine,
While midst the waves his arms majestic
shine ;
With blood-stained hand a Persian ship
he seized,
The vessel vainly strove to be released ;
With fear the crew the godlike man beheld,
And pride and shame their troubled
bosoms swelled.
They lop his limb ; then Pallas fires his
frame
With scorn of death, and hope of future
fame :
Then with the hand remaining seized the
prize,
A glorious spirit kindling in his eyes.
Again the Persians wield the unmanly
blow
And wreak their vengeance on a single
foe ;

The fainting Greek, by loss of blood
opprest,
Still feels the patriot rise within his breast ;
Within his teeth the shattered ship he
held,
Nor in his soul one wish for life rebelled.
But strength decaying, fate suppress his
breath,
And o'er his brows expand the dews of
death ;
The Elysium plains his generous spirit
trod,
'He lived a Hero and he died a God.'
By vengeance fired, the Grecians from
the deep
With rage and shouting scale the losty
ship,
Then in the briny bosom of the main
They hurl in heaps the living and the slain ;
Thro' the wide shores resound triumphant
cries,
Fill all the seas, and thunder thro' the
skies.

AN ESSAY ON MIND

Brama assai, poco spera, e nulla chiede.—TASSO.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1826

IN offering this little volume to the world, it is not my intention to trespass long on its indulgence, 'with prefaces, and passages, and excusations.' As, however, preface-writing strangely reminds one of Bottom's prologuizing device, which so ingeniously sheweth the 'disfigurement of moonshine,' and how lion was no lion after all, but plain 'Snug the joiner,' I will treat the subject according to my great prototype; declaring to those readers who 'cannot abide lions,' that their 'parlous fear' is here unnecessary, and assuring the public that 'moonshine' shall be introduced as seldom as is consistent with modern composition.

But something more is necessary; and since writers commonly make use of their prefaces as opportunities for auricular

confession to the absolving reader, I am prepared to acknowledge, with unfeigned humility, that the imputation of presumption is likely to be attached to me, on account of the form and title of this production. And yet, to imagine that a confidence in our powers is undeviatingly shown by our selection of an extensive field for their exertion, is an error; for the subject supports the writer, as much as it is supported by him. It is not difficult to draw a succession of affecting images from objects intrinsically affecting; and ideas arising from an elevated subject are naturally elevated. As Tacitus hath it, 'materia aluntur.' Thought catches the light reflected from the object of her contemplation, and, 'expanded by the genius of the spot,' loses much of her material

grossness ; unless indeed, like Thales, she fall into the water while looking at the stars.

'Ethical poetry,' says that immortal writer we have lost, 'is the highest of all poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth.' I am nevertheless aware how often it has been asserted that poetry is not a proper vehicle for abstract ideas—how far the assertion may be correct, is with me a matter of doubt. We do not deem the imaginative incompatible with the philosophic, for the name of Bacon is on our lips ; then why should we expel the argumentative from the limits of the poetic ? If indeed we consider Poetry as Plato considered her, when he banished her from his republic ; or as Newton, when he termed her 'a kind of ingenious nonsense' ; or as Locke, when he pronounced that 'gaming and poetry went usually together' ; or as Boileau, when he boasted of being acquainted with two arts equally useful to mankind—'writing verses, and playing at skittles,'—we shall find no difficulty in assenting to this opinion. But while we behold in poetry the inspiritings to political feeling, the 'monumentum aere perennius' of buried nations, we are loath to believe her unequal to the higher walks of intellect : when we behold the works of the great though erring Lucretius, the sublime Dante, the reasoning Pope—when we hear Quintilian acknowledge the submission due from Philosophers to Poets, and Gibbon declare Homer to be 'the law-giver, the theologian, the historian, and the philosopher of the ancients,' we are *unable* to believe it. Poetry is the enthusiasm of the understanding ; and, as Milton finely expresses it, there is 'a high reason in her fancies.'

As, according to the plan of my work, I have dwelt less on the operations of the mind than on their effects, so I have not touched on that point difficult to argue, and impossible to determine—the nature of her substance. The investigation is curious, and the subject a glorious one ; but, after all, our closest reasonings there-upon are acquired from analogy, and our most extensive views must be content to

take their places among other ingenious speculations. The columns of Hercules are yet unpassed. Metaphysicians have cavilled and confuted ; but they have failed in their endeavour to establish any permanent theoretical edifice on that windy site. The effort was vainly made even by our enlightened Locke ; and, as in the days of Socratic disputation, it is still given to the learned to ask, though not to answer, '*τι δὲ ή ψυχή*.' Perhaps, however, the following sensible acknowledgement would better become their human lips, than the most artfully constructed hypothesis—The things we understand are so excellent, that we believe what we do not understand to be likewise excellent¹.

The effects of mental operation, or productions of the mind, I have divided into two classes—the philosophical, and the poetical ; the former of which I have subdivided into three divisions—History, Physics, and Metaphysics : History, or the doctrine of man, as an active and social being ; Physics, or the doctrine of efficient causes ; Metaphysics, or the doctrine of abstractions, and final causes. Lord Bacon's comprehensive discernment of the whole, and Locke's acute penetration into parts, have assisted me in my trembling endeavour to trace the outline of these branches of knowledge. To have considered them methodically, and in detail, would have greatly exceeded both the limits of my volume, and, what is more material, the extent of my information : but if I may be allowed to hope that

The lines, though touch'd thus faintly, are drawn right.

I shall have nothing left to wish.

Poetry is treated in as cursory a manner as Philosophy, though not precisely for the same reasons. I have been deterred from a further development of her nature and principles, by observing that no single subject has employed the didactic pen with such frequent success, and by a consequent unwillingness to incur a charge of tediousness, when repeating what is well known, or one of presumption,

¹ I here adopt, with some little variation, an expression which fell from Socrates, on the subject of a work by Heraclitus the obscure.

when intruding new-fangled maxims in the place of those deservedly established. The act of white-washing an ancient Gothic edifice would be less indicative of bad taste than the latter attempt. Since the time of Horace, many excellent didactic writers have formed poetic systems from detached passages of that unsystematic work, his *Ars Poetica*. Pope and Boileau, in their Essays on Poetry and Criticism, have with superior method traced his footsteps. And yet, 'haut passibus aequis' —it is only justice to observe, that though the poem has been excelled, the poet remains unequalled. For the merits of his imitators are, except in arrangement, Horace's merits, while the merits of Horace are his own¹.

I wish that the sublime circuit of intellect, embraced by the plan of my poem, had fallen to the lot of a spirit more powerful than mine. I wish it had fallen to the lot of one familiar with the dwelling-place of Mind, who could search her secret chambers, and call forth those that sleep; or of one who could enter into her temples, and cast out the iniquitous who buy and sell, profaning the sanctuary of God; or of one who could try the golden links of that chain which hangs from Heaven to

earth, and show that it is not placed there for man to covet for lucre's sake, or for him to weigh his puny strength at one end against Omnipotence at the other; but that it is placed there to join, in mysterious union, the natural and the spiritual, the mortal and the eternal, the creature and the Creator. I wish the subject of my poem had fallen into such hands, that the powers of the execution might have equalled the vastness of the design—and the public will wish so too. But as it is—though I desire this field to be more meritoriously occupied by others—I would mitigate the voice of censure for myself. I would endeavour to show, that while I may have often erred, I have not clung willingly to error; and that while I may have failed in representing, I have never ceased to love Truth. If there be much to condemn in the following pages, let my narrow capacity, as opposed to the infinite object, it would embrace, be generously considered; if there be any thing to approve, I am ready to acknowledge the assistance which my illustrations have received from the exalting nature of their subject—as the waters of Haly's acquire a peculiar taste from the soil over which they flow.

AN ESSAY ON MIND

My narrow leaves cannot in them contayne
The large discourse.—SPENSER.

ANALYSIS OF BOOK I

The poem commences by remarking the desire, natural to the mind, of investigating its own qualities—qualities the more exalted, as their development has seldom been impeded by external circumstances—The various dispositions of different minds are next considered, and are compared to the varieties of scenic nature; inequalities in the spiritual not being more wonderful than inequalities in the natural—Byron and Campbell contrasted—The varieties of genius having been thus treated, the art of criticism is briefly alluded to, as generally independent of genius, but always useful to its productions—Jeffrey—The various stages of life in which genius appears, and the different causes

by which its influence is discovered—Cowley, Alferi—Allusion to the story of the emotion of Thucydides on hearing Herodotus recite his History at the Olympic Games—The elements of Mind are thus arranged, Invention, Judgment, Memory, and Association—The creations of mind are next noticed, among which we first behold Philosophy—History, Science, and Metaphysics are included in the studies of Philosophy.

Of History, it is observed, that though on a cursory view her task of recalling the past may appear of little avail, it is in reality one of the highest importance—The living are sent for a lesson to the grave—The present state of Rome alluded to; and the future state of England anticipated—Condemnation of those who deprive historical facts of their moral inference, and only make use of their basis to render falsehood more secure—Gibbon—Condemnation of those who would colour the political

¹ He is indebted to Aristotle, which, however, cannot be said to affect his poetical originality.

conduct of past ages with their own political feelings—Hume, Mitford—From the writers, we turn to the readers of history—Their extreme scepticism, or credulity—They are recommended to be guided by no faction, but to measure facts by their consistency with reason; to study the personal character and circumstances of an historian before they give entire credit to his representations—The influence of private feeling and prejudice—Miller—Science is introduced—Apostrophe to man—Episode of Archimedes—Parallel between history and science—The pride of the latter considered most excessive—The risk attending knowledge—Buffon, Leibnitz—The advantageous experience to be derived from the errors of others illustrated by an allusion to Southey's Hexameters—Utility the object of Science—An exclusive attention to parts deprecated, since it is impossible even to have a just idea of PARTS without acquiring a knowledge of their relative situation in the whole—The extreme difficulty of enlarging the contemplations of a mind long accustomed to contracted views—The scale of knowledge; every science being linked with the one preceding and succeeding, giving and receiving reciprocal support—Why this system is not calculated, as might be conjectured, either to render scientific men superficial, or to intrude on the operations of genius—That the danger of knowledge originates in PARTIAL knowledge—Apostrophe to Newton.

BOOK I

SINCE Spirit first inspired, pervaded all,
And Mind met Matter at th' Eternal call—
Since dust weighed Genius down, or
Genius gave
Th' immortal halo to the mortal's grave—
Th' ambitious soul her essence hath
defined,
And Mind hath eulogized the powers of
Mind.
Ere Revelation's holy light began
To strengthen Nature, and illumine Man—
When Genius, on Icarian pinions, flew,
And Nature's pencil Nature's portrait
drew—
When Reason shuddered at her own
wan beam,
And Hope turned pale beneath the sickly
gleam—
Even then hath Mind's triumphant in-
fluence spoke,
Dust owned the spell, and Plato's spirit
woke,
Spread her eternal wings, and rose sub-
lime
Beyond th' expanse of circumstance and
time:

Blinded, but free, with faith instinctive
soared,
And found her home where prostrate
saints adored !
Thou thing of light! that warm'st the
breasts of men,
Breath'st from the lips, and tremblest
from the pen!
Thou, formed at once t' astonish, fire,
beguile—
With Bacon reason, and with Shake-
speare smile !
The subtle cause, ethereal essence! say,
Why dust rules dust, and clay surpasses
clay;
Why a like mass of atoms should combine
To form a Tully and a Catiline?
Or why, with flesh perchance of equal
weight,
One cheers a prize-fight, and one frees
a state?
Why do not I the muse of Homer call,
Or why, indeed, did Homer sing at all?
Why wrote not Blackstone upon love's
delusion,
Or Moore a libel on the Constitution?
Why must the faithful page refuse to tell
That Dante, Laura sang, and Petrarch,
Hell—
That Tom Paine argued in the throne's
defence—
That Byron nonsense wrote, and Thur-
low sense—
That Southey sighed with all a patriot's
cares,
While Locke gave utterance to Hexa-
meters?
Thou thing of light! instruct my pen to find
Th' unequal powers, the various forms
of Mind!
O'er Nature's changeful face direct your
sight;
View light meet shade, and shade dis-
solve in light!
Mark, from the plain, the cloud-capped
mountain soar;
The sullen ocean spurn the desert shore!
Behold, afar, the playmate of the storm,
Wild Niagara lifts his awful form—
Spits his black foam above the madd'ning
floods,
Himself the savage of his native woods—

See him, in air, his smoking torrents
wheel,
While the rocks totter, and the forests
reel—
Then, giddy, turn! lo! Shakespeare's
Avon flows,
Charmed, by the green-sward's kiss, to
soft repose;
With tranquil brow reflects the smile of
fame,
And, 'midst her sedges, sighs her Poet's
name.

Thus, in bright sunshine and alternate
storms,
Is various mind expressed in various
forms.
In equal men, why burns not equal fire?
Why are not valleys hills,—or mountains
higher?
Her destined way hath destined Nature
trod;
While Matter, Spirit rules, and Spirit,
God.

Let outward scenes, for inward sense
designed,
Call back our wand'ring to the world
of Mind!
Where Reason, o'er her vasty realms,
may stand,
Convene proud thoughts, and stretch
her sceptred hand.
Here, classic recollections breathe
around;
Here, living Glory consecrates the
ground;
And here, Mortality's deep waters span
The shores of Genius and the paths of
Man!

O'er this imagined land your soul direct—
Mark Byron, the Mont Blanc of intellect,
'Twixt earth and heaven exalt his brow
sublime,
O'erlook the nations, and shake hands
with Time!
Stretched at his feet do Nature's beauties
throng,
The flowers of love, the gentleness of
song;
Above, the Avalanche's thunder speaks,
While Terror's spirit walks abroad, and
shrieks!

To some Utopian strand, some fairy
shore,
Shall soft-eyed Fancy waft her Campbell
o'er I
Wont o'er the lyre of Hope his hand to
fling,
And never waken a discordant string;
Who ne'er grows awkward by affecting
grace,
Or 'common sense confounds with com-
mon-place';
To bright conception adds expression
chaste,
And human feeling joins to classic taste:
For still, with magic art, he knows, and
knew,
To touch the heart, and win the judg-
ment too!

Thus, in uncertain radiance, Genius
glows,
And fitful gleams on various mind be-
stows:
While Mind, exulting in th' admitted day,
On various themes reflects its kindling ray.
Unequal forms receive an equal light;
And Klopstock wrote what Kepler could
not write.

Yet Fame hath welcomed a less noble
few,
And Glory hailed whom Genius never
knew;
Art laboured Nature's birthright to
secure,
And forged, with cunning hand, her sig-
nature.
The scale of life is linked by close degrees;
Motes float in sunbeams, mites exist in
cheese;
Critics seize half the fame which bards
receive,
And Shakespeare suffers that his friends
may live;
While Bentley leaves, on stilts, the
beaten track,
And peeps at glory from some ancient's
back.
But though to hold a lantern to the sun
Be not too wise, and were as well un-
done—
Though, e'en in this inventive age, alas!
A moral darkness can't be cured by gas—

And though we may not reasonably deem
How poets' craniums can be turned by
steam—

Yet own we, in our juster reasonings,
That lanterns, gas, and steam are useful
things;

And oft this truth Reflection ponders
o'er—

Bards would write worse if critics wrote
no more.

Let Jeffrey's praise our willing pen en-
gage,
The lettered critic of a lettered age !
Who justly judges, rightfully discerns,
With wisdom teaches and with candour
learns.

His name on Scotia's brightest tablet
lives,

And proudly claims the laurel that it
gives.

Eternal Genius ! fashioned like the sun,
To make all beautiful thou look'st upon !
Prometheus of our earth ! whose kindling
smile

May warm the things of clay a little
while ;

Till by thy touch inspired, thine eyes
surveyed,

Thou stoop'st to love the glory thou hast
made,

And weepest, human-like, the mortal's
fall,

When by and by a breath disperses all.
Eternal Genius ! mystic essence ! say,
How on 'the chosen breast' descends
thy day !

Breaks it at once in Thought's celestial
dream,

While Nature trembles at the sudden
gleam ?

Or steals it gently, like the morning's
light,

Shedding, unmarked, an influence soft
and bright,

Till all the landscape gather on the sight ?

As different talents, different breasts in-
spire,

So different causes wake the latent fire.
The gentle Cowley of our native clime
Lisp'd his first accents in Aonian rime.

Alfieri's startling muse tuned not her
strings,

And dumbly looked 'unutterable things';
Till, when six lustrums o'er his head had
past,

Conception found expression's voice at
last;

Broke the bright light, uprose the
smothered flame,

And Mind and Nature owned their poet's
fame !

To some the waving woods, the harp of
spring,

A gently-breathing inspiration bring !

Some hear from Nature's haunts her
whispered call ;

And Mind hath triumphed by an apple's
fall.

Wave Fancy's picturing wand ! recall
the scene

Which Mind hath hallowed—where her
sons have been—

Where, 'midst Olympia's concourse,
simply great,

Th' historic sage, the son of Lyxes, sate,
Grasping th' immortal scroll: he breathed
no sound,

But, calm in strength, an instant looked
around,

And rose—the tone of expectation rushed
Through th' eager throng—he spake,
and Greece was hushed !

See, in that breathless crowd, Olorus
stand,

While one fair boy hangs, list'ning, on
his hand—

The young Thucydides ! with upward
brow

Of radiance, and dark eye, that beaming
now

Full on the speaker, drinks th' inspirèd
air—

Gazing entranced and turned to marble
there !

Yet not to marble—for the wild emotion
Is kindling on his cheek, like light on
ocean,

Coming to vanish ; and his pulses throb
With transport, and the inarticulate sob

Swells to his lip—internal nature leaps
To glorious life, and all th' historian
weeps !

The mighty master marked the favoured child—
Did Genius linger there? She did, and smiled!
Still on itself let Mind its eye direct,
To view the elements of intellect—
How wild Invention (daring artist!) plies
Her magic pencil, and creating dies;
And Judgement near the living canvas stands,
To blend the colours for her airy hands;
While Memory waits, with twilight mists o'ercast,
To mete the length'ning shadows of the past:
And bold Association, not untaught, The links of fact unites with links of thought;
Forming th' electric chains which mystic bind
Scholastic learning and reflective mind.
Let reasoning Truth's unerring glance survey
The fair creations of the mental ray;
Her holy lips, with just discernment, teach
The forms, the attributes, the modes of each;
And tell, in simple words, the narrow span
That circles intellect and fetters man;
Where darkling mists o'er Time's last footstep creep,
And Genius drops her languid wing—to weep.
See first Philosophy's mild spirit, nigh,
Raise the rapt brow and lift the thoughtful eye;
Whether the glimmering lamp, that History gave,
Light her enduring steps to some lone grave,
The while she dreams on him asleep beneath,
And conjures mystic thoughts of life and death:
Whether, on Science' rushing wings, she sweep
From concave heaven to earth, and search the deep,

Showing the pensile globe attraction's force,
The tides their mistress, and the stars their course:
Or whether (task with nobler object fraught)
She turn the powers of thinking back on thought—
With mind, delineate mind; and dare define
The point, where human minglest with divine:
Majestic still, her solemn form shall stand,
To show the beacon on the distant land—
Of thought and nature chronicler sublime!
The world her lesson, and her teacher Time!
And when, with half a smile and half a sigh,
She lifts old History's faded tapestry
I' the dwelling of past years, she ay is seen
Point to the shades, where bright'ning tints had been—
The shapeless forms outworn and milk-dewed o'er—
And bids us reverence what was loved before;
Gives the dank wreath and dusty urn to fame,
And lends its ashes—all she can—a name.
Think'st thou in vain, while pale Time glides away,
She rakes cold graves and chronicles their clay?
Think'st thou in vain she counts the bony things
Once loved as patriots, or obeyed as kings?
Lifts she in vain the past's mysterious veil?
Seest thou no moral in her awful tale?
Can man the crumbling pile of nations scan,
And is their mystic language mute for man?
Go! let the tomb its silent lesson give,
And let the dead instruct thee how to live!
If Tully's page hath bade thy spirit burn
And lit the raptured cheek—behold his urn!

If Maro's strains thy soaring fancy guide,
That hail 'th' eternal city' in their pride—
Then turn to mark, in some reflective
hour,
The immortality of mortal power!
See the crushed column and the ruined
dome—
'Tis all Eternity has left of Rome!
While travelled crowds, with curious
gaze, repair
To read the littleness of greatness there!

Alas! alas! so Albion shall decay,
And all my country's glory pass away!
So shall she perish, as the mighty must,
And be Italia's rival—in the dust;
While her ennobled sons, her cities fair,
Be dimly thought of 'midst the things
that were!
Alas! alas! her fields of pleasant green,
Her woods of beauty, and each well-
known scene!
Soon o'er her plains shall grisly Ruin
haste,
And the gay vale become the silent waste!
Ah! soon perchance, our native tongue
forgot,
The land may hear strange words it
knoweth not;
And the dear accents which our bosoms
move
With sounds of friendship, or with tones
of love,
May pass away; or, conned on mould-
ring page,
Gleam 'neath the midnight lamp for
unborn sage;
Totellour dream-like tale to future years,
And wake th' historian's smile, and
schoolboy's tears!

Majestic task! to join, though placed afar,
The things that have been with the
things that are!
Important trust! the awful dead to scan,
And teach mankind to moralize from man!
Stupendous charge! when on the record
true
Depend the dead, and hang the living too!
And, oh! thrice impious he who dares
abuse
That solemn charge, and good and ill
confuse!

Thrice guilty he who, false with 'words
of sooth,'
Would pay to Prejudice his debt to Truth;
The hallowed page of fleeting Time profane,
And prove to Man that man has lived in
vain;
Pass the cold grave with colder jestings
by;
And use the truth to illustrate a lie!

Let Gibbon's name be traced in sorrow
here—
Too great to spurn, too little to revere!
Who followed Reason, yet forgot her
laws,
And found all causes but the 'great first
Cause':
The paths of time with guideless footsteps
trod,
Blind to the light of nature and of God;
Deaf to the voice, amid the past's dread
hour,
Which sounds His praise and chronicles
His power!
In vain for *him* was Truth's fair tablet
spread
When Prejudice, with jaundiced organs,
read.
In vain for *us* the polished periods flow,
The fancy kindles, and the pages glow,
When one bright hour, and startling
transport past,
The musing soul must turn—to sigh at
last.
Still let the page be luminous and just,
Nor private feeling war with public trust;
Still let the pen from narrowing views
forbear,
And modern faction ancient freedom
spare.
But, ah! too oft th' historian bends his
mind
To flatter party—not to serve mankind;
To make the dead in living feuds engage,
And give all time the feelings of his age.
Great Hume hath stooped the Stuarts'
fame t' increase,
And ultra Mitford soared to libel Greece!

Yet must the candid muse, impartial, learn
To trace the errors which her eyes dis-
cern;

View every side, investigate each part,
And get the holy scroll of Truth by
heart;
No blame misplaced, and yet no fault
forgot—
Like ink employed to write with—not
to blot.
Hence, while historians just réproof
incur,
We find some readers, with their
authors, err;
And soon discover, that as few excel
In reading justly, as in writing well.
For prejudice, or ignorance, is such,
That men believe too little or too much;
Too apt to cavil, or too glad to trust,
With confidence misplaced, or blame
unjust.

Seek out no faction—no peculiar school—
But lean on Reason as your safest rule;
Let doubtful facts with patient hand beled,
To take their place on this Procrustean
bed!

What plainly fits not may be thrown
aside

Without the censure of pedantic pride :
For nature still to just proportion clings,
And human reason judges natural things.
Moreover, in th' historian's bosom look,
And weigh his feelings ere you trust his
book ;

His private friendships, private wrongs,
descry,

Where tend his passions, where his
interests lie—

And while his proper faults your mind
engage,

Discern the ruling foibles of his age.
Hence, when on deep research, the
work you find

A too obtrusive transcript of his mind;
When you perceive a fact too highly
wrought,

Which kindly seems to prove a fav'rite
thought;

Or some opposing truth traced briefly
out,

With hand of careless speed—then turn
to doubt!

For private feeling like the taper glows,
And here a light and there a shadow
throws.

If some gay picture, vilcly daubed, were
seen

With grass of azure and a sky of green,
Th' impatient laughter we'd suppress in
vain,

And deem the painter jesting, or insane.
But when the sun of blinding prejudice
Glares in our faces, it deceives our eyes;
Truth appears falsehood to the dazzled
sight,

The comment apes the fact, and black
seems white;

Commingled hues, their separate colours
lost,

Dance wildly on, in bright confusion lost;
And, midst their drunken whirl, the
giddy eye

Beholds one shapeless blot for earth and
sky.

Of such delusions let the mind take heed,
And learn to think, or wisely cease to
read;

And if a style of laboured grace display
Perverted feelings in a pleasing way—
False tints on real objects brightly laid,
Facts in disguise, and Truth in masquer-
ade—

If cheating thoughts in beauteous dress
appear,
With magic sound, to captivate the ear—
Th' enchanting poison of that page
decline,

Or drink Circean draughts—and turn to
swine!

We hail with British pride and ready
praise

Enlightened Miller of our modern days!
Too firm though temp'rate, liberal though
exact,

To give too much to argument or fact,
To love details and draw no moral thence,
Or seek the comment and forget the sense:
He leaves all vulgar aims, and strives
alone

To find the ways of Truth, and make them
known!

Spirit of life! for ay with heavenly breath
Warm the dull clay and cold abodes of
death!

Clasp in its urn the consecrated dust,
And bind a laurel round the broken bust;

While 'mid decaying tombs, thy pensive choice,
Thou bid'st the silent utter forth a voice,
To prompt the actors of our busy scene,
And tell what is, the tale of what *has been!*

Yet turn, Philosophy! with brows sublime
Shall Science follow on the steps of Time!
As o'er Thought's measureless depths we bend to hear
The whispered sound which stole on Descartes' ear,
Hallowing the sunny visions of his youth
With that eternal mandate, 'Search for Truth!'
Yes! search for Truth—the glorious path is free;
Mind shows her dwelling, Nature holds the key:
Yes! search for Truth—her tongue shall bid thee scan
The book of knowledge, for the use of Man!

Man! Man! thou poor antithesis of power!
Child of all time! yet creature of an hour!
By turns chameleon of a thousand forms,
The lord of empires, and the food of worms!
The little conqueror of a petty space,
The more than mighty, or the worse than base!
Thou ruined landmark in the desert way,
Betwixt the all of glory and decay!
Fair beams the torch of Science in thine hand,
And sheds its brightness o'er the glimmering land;
While in thy native grandeur, bold and free,
Thou bid'st the wilds of nature smile for thee,
And treadest Ocean's paths full royally!
Earth yields her treasures up; celestial air
Receives thy globe of life when, journeying there,
It bounds from dust, and bends its course on high,
And walks in beauty through the wondering sky.

And yet, proud clay! thine empire is a span,
Nor all thy greatness makes thee more than man!
While Knowledge, Science, only serve t' impart
The god thou *wouldst* be, and the thing thou *art!*

Where stands the Syracusan, while the roar
Of men and engines echoes through the shore?
Where stands the Syracusan. Haggard Fate,
With ghastly smile, is sitting at the gate;
And Death forgets his silence 'midst the crash
Of rushing ruins; and the torches' flash Waves redly on the straggling forms that die;
And masterless steeds beneath that gleam dart by,
Scared into madness by the battle-cry;
And sounds are hurtling in the angry air, Of hate, and pain, and vengeance, and despair—
The smothered voice of babes—the long, wild shriek
Of mothers, and the curse the dying speak!
Where stands the Syracusan? Tranquil sage,
He bends sublime o'er Science' splendid page,
Walks the high circuit of extended mind,
Surpasses man, and dreams not of mankind;
While on his listless ear the battle-shout Falls senseless—as if echo breathed about
The hum of many words, the laughing glee
Which lingered there when Syracuse was free.
Away! away! for louder accents fall—
But not the sounds of joy from marble hall!
Quick steps approach—but not of sylphic feet
Whose echo heralded a smile more sweet,
Coming, all sport, th' indulgent sage t' upbraid
For lonely hours, to studious musing paid.

Be hushed! Destruction bares the flickering blade!
 He asked to live, th' unfinished lines to fill,
 And died—to solve a problem deeper still.
 He died, the glorious! who, with soaring sight,
 Sought some new world to plant his foot of might;
 Thereon in solitary pride to stand,
 And lift our planet with a master's hand!
 He sank in death—Creation only gave
 That thorn-encumbered space which forms his grave—
 An unknown grave, till Tully chanced to stray,
 And named the spot where Archimedes lay!
 Genius! behold the limit of thy power!
 Thou fir'st the soul, but, when life's dream is o'er,
 Giv'st not the silent pulse one throb the more:
 And mighty beings come and pass away,
 Like other comets, and like other—clay.

Though analysing Truth must still divide
 Historic state and scientific pride,
 Yet one stale fact our judging thoughts infer—
 Since each is human, each is prone to err!
 Oft in the night of Time doth History stray,
 And lift her lantern and proclaim it day!
 And oft when day's eternal glories shine
 Doth Science, boasting, cry—"The light is mine!"
 So hard to bear, with unobstructed sight,
 Th' excess of darkness or th' extreme of light.

Yet, to be just, though faults belong to each,
 The themes of one an humbler moral teach:
 And, 'midst th' historian's eloquence and skill,
 The human chronicler is human still.
 If on past power his eager thoughts be cast,
 It brings an awful antidote—"tis past!

If deathless fame his ravished organs scan,
 The deathless fame exists for buried man:
 Power and decay at once he turns to view,
 And, with the strength, beholds the weakness too.
 Not so doth Science' musing son aspire,
 And pierce creation with his eye of fire.
 Yon mystic pilgrims of the starry way
 No humbling lesson to his soul convey;
 No tale of change their changeless course hath taught,
 And works divine excite no earthward thought.
 And still he, reckless, builds the splendid dream;
 And still his pride increases with his theme;
 And still the cause is slighted in th' effect;
 And still self-worship follows self-respect:
 Too apt to watch the engines of the scene,
 And lose the hand which moves the vast machine;
 View Matter's form, and not its moving soul;
 Interpret parts, and misconceive the whole:
 While, darkly musing 'twixt the earth and sky,
 His heart grows narrow, as his hopes grow high;
 And quits for ay, with unavailing loss,
 The sympathies of earth, but not the dross;
 Till Time sweeps down the fabric of his trust,
 And life and riches turn to death and dust.
 And such is Man! 'neath Error's foul assaults
 His noblest moods beget his grossest faults!
 When Knowledge lifts her hues of varied grace,
 The fair exotic of a brighter place,
 To keep her stem, from mundane blasts, enshrined,
 He makes a fatal hot-bed of his mind;
 Too oft adapted, in their growth, to spoil
 The natural beauties of a generous soil.

Ah ! such is Man ! thus strong, and weak
withal,
His rise oft renders him too prone to fall !
The loftiest hills' fresh tints the soonest
fade,
And highest buildings cast the deepest
shade !

So Buffon erred ; amidst his chilling
dream,
The judgement grew material as the
theme :
Musing on Matter, till he called away
The modes of Mind to form the modes
of clay ;
And made, confusing each, with judge-
ment blind,
Mind stoop to dust, and dust ascend to
Mind.
So Leibnitz erred, when, in the starry
hour,
He read no weakness where was written
' Power ' ;
Beheld the verdant earth, the circling
sea,
Nor dreamt so fair a world could cease
to be !
Yea ! but he heard the Briton's awful
name,
As, scattering darkness, in his might he
came,
Girded with Truth, and earnest to confute
What gave to Matter Mind's best attri-
bute.
Sternly they strove—th' unequal race
was run !
The owl met the eagle at the sun !

While such defects their various forms
unfold,
And rust so foul obscures the brightest
gold,
Let Science soaring sons the ballast cast,
But judge their present errors by their
past ;
As some poor wanderer in the darkness
goes,
When fitful wind, in hollow murmur,
blows,
Hailing, with trembling joy, the light-
ning's ray,
Which threatens his safety, but illumines his
way.

Gross faults buy deep experience. Sages
tell
That Truth, like Aesop's fox, is in a well ;
And, like the goat his fable prates about,
Fools must stay in, that wise men may
get out.
What thousand scribblers of our age
would choose
To throw a toga round the English muse,
Rending her garb of ease, which grace-
ful grew .
From Dryden's loom, beprankt with
varied hue !
In that dull aim, by Mind unsanctified,
What thousand Wits would have their
wits belied,
Devoted Southeby ! if thou hadst not
tried !
Use is the aim of Science ; this the end
The wise appreciate, and the good com-
mend.
For not, like babes, the flaming torch
we prize,
That sparkling lustre may attract our
eyes ;
But that, when evening shades impede
the sight,
It casts on objects round a useful light.
Use is the aim of Science ! give again
A golden sentence to the faithful pen—
Dwell not on parts ! for parts contract
the mind ;
And knowledge still is useless, when
confined.
The yearning soul, enclosed in narrow
bound,
May be ingenious, but is ne'er profound :
Spoiled of its strength, the fettered
thought grows tame ;
And want of air extinguishes the flame !
And as the sun, beheld in mid-day blaze,
Seems turned to darkness, as we strive
to gaze ;
So mental vigour, on one object cast,
That object's self becomes obscured at
last.
'Tis easy, as Experience may aver,
To pass from general to particular,
But most laborious to direct the soul
From studying parts to reason on the
whole :

Thoughts, trained on narrow subjects,
to let fall;
And learn the unison of each with all.

In Nature's reign a scale of life we find :
A scale of knowledge we behold in mind ;
With each progressive link our steps
ascend,
And traverse all before they reach the
end ;
Searching, while Reason's powers may
farther go.
The things we know not by the things
we know.

Buthold methinkssome sonsof Thought
demand,
' Why strive to form the Trajan's vase
in sand ?
Are Reason's paths so few, that Mind
may call
Her finite energies to tread them all ?
Lo ! Learning's waves in bounded channel
sweep ;
When they flow wider, shall they run as
deep ?
Shall that broad surface no dull shallow
hide,
Growing dank weeds of superficial pride ?
Then Heaven may leave our giant powers
alone,
Nor give each soul a focus of its own !
Genius bestows in vain the chosen page
If all the tome the minds of all engage !'

Nay ! I reply—with free congenial breast
Let each peruse the part which suits him
best !
But, lest contracting prejudice mislead,
Regard the context as he turns to read !
Hence, liberal feeling gives th' en-
lightened soul
The spirit with the letter of the scroll.

With what triumphant joy, what glad
surprise,
The dull behold the dullness of the wise !
What insectribes of brainless impudence
Buzz round the carcass of perverted
sense !
What railing idiots hunt, from classic
school,
Each flimsy sage and scientific fool,

Crying, " Tis well ! we see the blest effect
Of watchful night and toiling intellect !'
Yet let them pause, and tremble—vainly
glad ;

For too much learning maketh no man
mad !
Too little dims the sight, and leads us o'er
The twilight path, where fools have been
before ;
With not enough of Reason's radiance
seen
To track the footsteps where those fools
have been.

Divinest Newton ! if my pen may show
A name so mighty in a verse so low—
Still let the sons of Science, joyful, claim
The bright example of that splendid
name !
Still let their lips repeat, my page be-
speak,
The sage how learned ! and the man how
meek !
Too wise, to think his human folly less ;
Too great, to doubt his proper littleness ;
Too strong, to deem his weakness passed
away ;
Too high in soul, to glory in his clay :
Rich in all nature, but her erring side :
Endowed with all of Science—but its
pride.

ANALYSIS OF BOOK II

Metaphysics—Address to Metaphysicians—The most considerable portion of their errors conceived to arise from difficulties attending the use of words—That on one hand, thoughts become obscure without the assistance of language, while on the other, language from its material analogy deteriorates from spiritual meaning—Allusion to a probable mode of communication between spirits after death—That a limited respect, though not a servile submission, is due to verbal distinctions—Clearness of style peculiarly necessary to Metaphysical subjects—The graces of Composition not inconsistent with them—Plato, Bacon, Bolingbroke—The extremes into which Philosophers have fallen with regard to sensation and reflection—Berkeley, Condillac—That subject briefly considered—Abstractions—Longinus, Burke, Price, Payne Knight—Blind submission to authorities deprecated—The Pythagorean saying opposed, and Cicero's unphilosophical assertion alluded to—That, however, it partakes of injustice to love Truth,

and yet refuse our homage to the advocates of Truth—How the names of great writers become endeared to us by early recollections—Description of the schoolboy's first intellectual gratifications—That even without reference to the past, some immortal names are entitled to our veneration, since they are connected with Truth—Bacon—Apostrophe to Locke.

Poetry is introduced—More daring than Philosophy, she personifies abstractions, and brings the things unseen before the eye of the Mind—How often reason is indebted to poetic imagery—Irving—The poetry of prose—Plato's ingratitude—Philosophers and Poets contrasted—An attempt to define Poetry—That the passions make use of her language—Nature the poet's study—Shakespeare—Human nature as seen in cities—Scenic nature, and how the mind is affected thereby—That Poetry exists not in the object contemplated but is created by the contemplating mind—The ideal—Observations on the structure of verse, as adapted to the subject treated—Milton, Horace, Pope
The French Drama—Corneille, Racine—Harmony and chasteness of versification—The poem proceeds to argue, that the Muse will refuse her inspiration to a soul unattuned to generous sympathy, unkindled by the deeds of Virtue, or the voice of Freedom—Contemptuous notice of those prompted only by interest to aspire to poetic eminence—What should be the Poet's best guerdon—From the contemplation of motives connected with Freedom, we are led by an unnatural transition to Greece—Her present glorious struggle—Anticipation of her ultimate independence, and the restoration of the Muses to their ancient seats—Allusion to the death of Byron—Reflections on Mortality—The terrors of death as beheld by the light of Nature—The consolations of death as beheld with reference to a future state—Contemplation of the immortality of Mind, and her perfected powers—Conclusion.

BOOK II

But now to higher themes! no more
confined
To copy Nature, Mind returns to Mind.
We leave the throng, so nobly and so well
Tracing, in Wisdom's book, things visible,
And turn to things unseen; where,
greatly wrought,
Soul questions soul, and thought revolves
on thought.
My spirit loves, my voice shall hail ye,
now,
Sons of the patient eye and passionless
brow!
Students sublime! Earth, man, unmoved,
ye view,
Time, circumstance; for what are they
to you?

What is the crash of world
kings—
When worlds and monarchies
brittle things ?
What the lost, shall
blindly dares
A sea of storm? Ye sketch the waves
which bears !
The cause, and not th' effect, your
thoughts exact;
The principle of action, not the act,—
The soul ! the soul ! and, 'midst so grand
a task,
Ye call her rushing passions, and ye ask
Whence are ye? and each mystic thing
responds!
I would be all ye are—except those
bonds!

Except those bonds! Even here is oft
described
The love to parts, the poverty of pride!
Even here, while Mind in Mind's horizon
springs,
Her 'native mud' is weighing on her
wings!
Even here, while Truth invites the ardent
crowd,
Ixion-like, they rush t' embrace a cloud!
Even here, oh! soul reproach to human
wit!
A Hobbes hath reasoned, and Spinoza
writ!

Rank pride does much! and yet we
justly cry,
Our greatest errors in our weakness lie.
For thoughts unclothed by language are,
at best,
Obscure; while grossness injures those
express
Through words, in whose analysis we find
Th' analogies of Matter, not of Mind:
Hence, when the use of words is graceful
brought,
As physical dress to metaphysic thought,
The thought, howe'er sublime its pristine
state,
Is by th' expression made degenerate;
Its spiritual essence changed, or cramped;
and hence
Some hold by words who cannot hold
by sense,

AN ESSAY ON MIND

And leave the thought behind, and take
th' attire—
Elijah's mantle, but without his fire !
Yet spurn not words ! 'tis needful to
confess
They give ideas a body and a dress !
Behold them traverse Learning's region
round,
The vehicles of thought on wheels of
sound ;
Mind's winged strength, wherewith the
height is won,
Unless she trust their frailty to the sun.
Destroy the body !—will the spirit stay ?
Destroy the car !—will Thought pursue
her way ?
Destroy the wings !—let Mind their aid
forgo !
Do no Icarian billows yawn below ?
Ah ! spurn not words with reckless insolu-
lence ;
But still admit their influence with the
sense.
And fear to slight their laws ! Perchance
we find
No perfect code transmitted to mankind ;
And yet mankind, till life's dark sands
are run,
Prefers imperfect government to none.
Thus Thought must bend to words !—
Some sphere of bliss
Ere long shall free her from th' alloy of
this :
Some kindred home for Mind—some
holy place
Where spirits look on spirits, 'face to
face,'—
Where souls may see as they themselves
are seen,
And voiceless intercourse may pass
between,
All pure—all free ! as light, which doth
appear
In its own essence incorrupt and clear !
One service, praise ! one age, eternal
youth !
One tongue, intelligence ! one subject,
truth !
Till then, no freedom Learning's search
affords
Of soul from body, or of thought from
words.

For thought may lose, in struggling to
be hence,
The gravitating power of common sense ;
Through all the depths of space with
Phaethon hurled,
To impair our reason, as he scorched our
world.
Hence this preceptive truth my page
affirms—
Respect the technicality of terms !
Yet not in base submission, lest we find
That, aiding clay, we crouch too low for
Mind ;
Too apt conception's essence to forget,
And place all wisdom in the alphabet.
Still let appropriate phrase the sense
invest ;
That what is well conceived be well
express'd !
Nor e'er the reader's wearied brain en-
gage
In hunting meaning down the mazy page,
With three long periods tortured into one,
The sentence ended, with the sense
begun ;
Nor in details, which schoolboys know
by heart,
Perplex each turning with the terms of art.
To understand, we deem no common
good ;
And 'tis less easy to be *understood*.
But let not clearness be your only praise,
When style may charm a thousand differ-
ent ways ;
In Plato glow, to life and glory wrought,
By high companionship with noblest
thought ;
In Bacon, warm abstraction with a breath,
Catch Pocsy's bright beams, and smile
beneath ;
In St. John roll, a generous stream, along,
Correctly free and regularly strong.
Nor scornful deem the effort out of place
With taste to reason, and convince with
grace ;
But ponder wisely, ere you know, too
late,
Contempt of trifles will not prove us
great !
The Cynics, not their tubs, respect en-
gage ;
And dirty tunic never made a sage.

E'en Cato had he owned the Senate's will,
And washed his toga, had been Cato still.
Justly we censure, yet are free to own
That indecision is a crime unknown.
For, never faltering, seldom reasoning long,
And still most positive whene'er most wrong,
No theoretic sage is apt to fare
Like Mah'met's coffin—hung in middle air!
No! fenced by Error's all-sufficient trust,
These stalk 'in nubibus'—those crawl in dust.
From their proud height, the first demand to know
If spiritual essence should descend more low!
The last, as vainly, from their dunghill cry,
Can body's grossness hope t' aspire more high?
And while Reflection's empire these disclose,
Sensation's sovereign right is told by those.
Lo! Berkeley proves an old hypothesis!
'Out on the senses!' (he was out of his!)
'All is idea, and nothing real springs
But God and Reason!'—(not the right of kings!)
'Hold!' says Condillac, with profound surprise—
'Why prate of Reason? we have ears and eyes!'

Condillac! while the dangerous periods fall
Upon thy page, to stamp sensation *all*;
While (coldly studious!) thine ingenious scroll
Endows the mimic statue with a soul
Composed of sense—behold the generous hound—
His piercing eye, his ear awake to sound,
His scent, most delicate organ! and declare
What triumph hath the 'Art of thinking'
there!
What Gall, or Spurzheim, on his front
hath sought
The mystic bumps indicative of Thought!

Or why, if Thought do there maintain her throne,
Will reasoning curs leave logic for a bone?
Mind is imprisoned in a lonesome tower:
Sensation is its window—hence herb, flower,
Landscapes all sun, the rush of thousand springs,
Waft in sweet scents, fair sights, soft murmurings;
And in her joy she gazeth—yet ere long Reason awaketh in her, bold and strong,
And o'er the scene exerting secret laws, First seeks th' efficient, then the final cause,
Abstracts from forms their hidden accidents,
And marks in outward substance inward sense.
Our first perceptions formed, we search, to find
The operations of the forming mind;
And turn within by Reason's certain route,
To view the shadows of the things without,
Discerned, retained, compared, combined, and brought
To mere abstraction by abstracting Thought.
Hence to discern, retain, compare, connect,
We deem the faculties of Intellect;
The which, mused on, exert a new control,
And fresh ideas are opened on the soul.
Sensation is a stream with dashing spray
That shoots in idle speed its arrowy way;
When lo! the mill arrests its waters' course,
Turning to use their unproductive force:
The cunning wheels by foamy currents sped,
Reflection triumphs,—and mankind is fed!
Since Pope hath shown, and Learning still must show,
'We cannot reason but from what we know,'

AN ESSAY ON MIND

Unfold the scroll of Thought and turn
to find
The undeviating signature of Mind !
There judge her nature by her nature's
course,
And trace her actions upwards to their
source.
So when the property of Mind we call
An essence or a substance spiritual,
We name her thus by marking how she
clings
Less to the forms than essences of things ;
For body clings to body—objects seen
And substance sensible alone have been
Sensation's study ; while reflective Mind
Essence unseen in objects seen may find,
And, tracing whence her known impres-
sions came,
Give single forms an universal name.
So when particular sounds in concord
rise,
Those sounds as *melody* we generalize ;
When pleasing shapes and colours blend,
the soul
Abstracts th'idea of *beauty* from the whole,
Deducting thus, by Mind's enchanting
spell,
The intellectual from the sensible.
Hence bold Lenginus' splendid periods
grew,
'Who was himself the great sublime he
drew' :
Hence Burke, the poet-reasoner, learned
to trace
His glowing style of energetic grace :
Hence thoughts, perchance, some
favoured bosoms move.
Which Price might own, and classic
Knight approve !
Go I light a rushlight ere the day is done
And call its glimm'ring brighter than
the sun !
Go ! while the stars in midnight glory
beam,
Prefer their cold reflection in the stream !
But be not that dull slave who only looks
On Reason 'through the spectacles of
books' !
Rather by Truth determine what is true,
And reasoning works through Reason's
medium view ;

For authors can't monopolize her light :
'Tis yours to read as well as theirs to
write.
To judge is yours ! — then why submissive
call
'The master said so' ! — 'tis no rule at
all !
Shall passive sufferance e'en to mind
belong
When right divine in man is human
wrong ?
Shall a high name a low idea enhance
When all may fail, as some succeed -- by
chance ?
Shall fixed chimeras unfixed reason
shock ?
And if Locke err, must thousands err
with Locke ?
Men ! claim your charter ! spurn th'unjust
control,
And shake the bondage from the free-
born soul !
Go walk the porticoes ! and teach your
youth
All names are bubbles, but the name of
Truth !
If fools by chance attend to Wisdom's
rules,
'Tis no dishonour to be right with fools ;
If human faults to Plato's page belong,
Not even with Plato willingly go wrong.
But though the judging page declare it
well
To love Truth better than the lips which
tell,
Yet 'twere an error, with injustice classed,
T'adore the former and neglect the last.
Oh ! beats there, Heaven ! a heart of
human frame,
Whose pulses throb not at some kindling
name ?
Some sound which brings high musings
in its track,
Or calls perchance the days of childhood
back
In its dear echo, when, without a sigh,
Swift hoop and bounding ball were first
laid by,
To clasp in joy, from schoolroom tyrant
free,
The classic volume on the little knee,
And con sweet sounds of dearest min-
strelsy,

Or words of sterner lore ; the young
brow, fraught
With a calm brightness which might
mimic thought,
Leant on the boyish hand—as, all the
while,
A half-heaved sigh, or a y th' unconscious
smile,
Would tell how o'er that page the soul
was glowing
In an internal transport, past the know-
ing !
How feelings, erst unfeet, did then ap-
pear,
Give forth a voice, and murmur, 'We
are here !'
As lute-strings which a strong hand
plays upon,
Or Mennin's statue singing 'neath the
sun.
Ah me ! for such are pleasant memories,
And call the tears of fondness to our
eyes
Reposing on this gone-by dream, when
thus
One marbled book was all the world to
us,
The gentlest bliss our innocent thoughts
could find—
The happiest cradle of our infant mind !
And though such hours be past we shall
not less
Think on their joy with grateful tender-
ness,
And bless the page which bade our reason
wake,
And love the prophet for his mission's
sake.
But not alone doth Memory's shoulde-
ring flame
Reflect a radiance on a glorious name ;
For there are names of pride ; and they
who bear
Have walked with Truth, and turned their
footsteps where
We walk not—their beholdings ay have
been
O'er Mind's far countries which we have
not seen.
Our thoughts are not their thoughts !
and oft we dream
That light upon the awful brow doth
gleam,

16 / Id is
of E.

From that high converse ; as
trod
Towards the people from
God
His lips were silent, but his
bright,
And prostrate Israel trembled at the sight.
What tongue can syllable our Bacon's
name,
Nor own a heart exulting in his fame ?
Where prejudice's wild blasts were wont
to blow,
And waves of ignorance rolled dark
below,
He raised his sail and left the coast
behind—
Sublime Columbus of the realms of Mind !
Dared folly's misists, opinion's treacherous
sands,
And walked, with godlike step, th' un-
trodden lands !
But ah ! our Muse of Britain, standing
near,
Hath dimmed my tablet with a pensive
tear !
Thrice the proud theme her free-born
voice essays,
And thrice that voice is faltering in his
praise—
Yea ! till her eyes in silent triumph turn
To mark afar her Locke's sepulchral urn !
O urn ! where students rapturous vigils
keep,
Where sages envy, and where patriots
weep !
O name ! that bids my glowing spirit
wake—
To freemen's hearts endeared for Free-
dom's sake !
O soul ! too bright in life's corrupting hour
To rise by faction or to crouch to power !
While radiant Genius lifts her heaven-
ward wing,
And human bosoms own the Mind I sing ;
While British writers British thoughts
record,
And England's press is fearless as her
sword ;
While 'mid the seas which gird our
favoured isle
She clasps her chartered rights with
conscious smile—

So long be thou her glory and her guide,
Thy page her study and thy name her
pride!

Oh! ever thus, immortal Locke, belong
First to my heart, as noblest in my song;
And since in thee the Muse enraptured
find

A moral greatness and creating mind,
Still may thine influence, which with
honoured light
Beams when I read, illumine me as I write!
The page too guiltless, and the soul too
free,

To call a frown from Truth, or blush
from thee!

But where Philosophy would fear to soar,
Young Poesy's elastic steps explore!
Her fairy foot, her daring eye pursues
The light of faith—nor trembles as she
views!

Wont o'er the Psalmist's holy harp to
hang,

And swell the sacred note which Milton
sang;

Mingling reflection's chords with fancy's
lays,

The tones of music with the voice of
praise!

And while Philosophy, in spirit free,
Reasons, believes, yet cannot plainly see,
Poetic Rapture to her dazzled sight
Portrays the shadows of the things of
light;

Delighting o'er the unseen worlds to roam,
And waft the pictures of perfection home.
Thus Reason oft the aid of fancy seeks,
And strikes Pierian chords—when Irving
speaks!

Oh! silent be the withering tongue of
those

Who call each page bereft of measure,
prose;

Who deem the Muse possessed of such
faint spells

That, like poor fools, she glories in her
bells;

Who hear her voice alone in tinkling
chime,

And find a line's whole magic in its rime;
Forgetting, if the gilded shrine be fair,
What purer spirit may inhabit there!

For such, indignant at her questioned
might,
Let Genius cease to charm—and Scott
to write!

Ungrateful Plato! o'er thy cradled rest
The Muse hath hung, and all her love
express;

Thy first imperfect accents fondly taught,
And warmed thy visions with poetic
thought!

Ungrateful Plato! should her deadliest
foe

Be found within the breast she tended so?
Spoiled of her laurels, should she weep
to find

The best beloved become the most un-
kind?

And was it well or generous, Brutus-like,
To pierce the hand that gave the power
to strike?

Sages by reason reason's powers direct;
Bards through the heart convince the
intellect:

Philosophy majestic brings to view
Mind's perfect modes, and fair proportions
too;

Enchanting Poesy bestows the while,
Upon its sculptured grace, her magic
smile,

Bids the cold form with living radiance
glow,

And stamps existence on its marble brow!
For Poesy's whole essence, when defined,
Is elevation of the reasoning mind,
When inward sense from Fancy's page
is taught,

And moral feeling ministers to Thought.
And hence the natural passions all agree
In seeking Nature's language—poetry.
When Hope, in soft perspective, from afar
Sees lovely scenes more lovely than they
are,

To deck the landscape tiptoe Fancy brings
Her plastic shapes and bright imaginings;
Or when man's breast by torturing pangs
is stung,

If fearful silence cease t' enchain his
tongue,

In metaphor the feelings seek relief,
And all the soul grows eloquent with
grief.

Poetic fire, like Vesta's, pure and bright,
Should draw from Nature's sun its holy
light.

With Nature should the musing poet
roam,
And steal instruction from her classic
tome;
When 'neath her guidance, least inclined
to err—
The ablest painter when he copies *her*.

Belovèd Shakespeare! England's dearest
fame!

Dead is the breast that swells not at thy
name!

Whether thine Ariel skim the seas along,
Floating on wings ethereal as his song—
Lear rave amid the tempest—or Macbeth
Question the hags of hell on midnight
heath—

Immortal Shakespeare! still thy lips
impart
The noblest comment on the human
heart.
And as fair Eve, in Eden newly placed,
Gazed on her form, in limpid waters
traced,
And stretched her gentle arms, with
pleased surprise,
To meet the image of her own bright
eyes—

So Nature on thy magic page surveys
Her sportive graces and untutored ways!
Wondering, the soft reflection doth she
see,
Then laughing owns she loves herself
in thee!

Shun not the haunts of crowded cities,
then;

Nor e'er, as man, forget to study men!
What though the tumult of the town
intrude

On the deep silence and the lofty mood;
'Twill make thy human sympathies rejoice
To hear the music of a human voice,
To watch strange brows by various
reason wrought,

To claim the interchange of thought with
thought,

T' associate mind with mind, for Mind's
own weal,

As steel is ever sharpened best by steel.

T' impassioned bards the scenic world is
dear—

But Nature's glorious masterpiece is
here!

All poetry is beauty, but exprest
In inward essence, not in outward vest.
Hence lovely scenes, reflective poets
find,

Awake their lovelier images in Mind:
Nor doth the pictured earth the bard
invite,

The lake of azure or the heaven of light,
But that his swelling breast arouses there
Something less visible, and much more
fair!

There is a music in the landscape round—
A silent voice, that speaks without a
sound—

A witching spirit, that, reposing near,
Breathes to the heart, but comes not to
the ear!

These softly steal, his kindling soul t'
embrace,
And natural beauty gild with moral
grace.

Think not, when summer breezes tell
their tale,

The poet's thoughts are with the summer
gale;

Think not his Fancy builds her elfin
dream

On painted floweret, or on sighing
stream:

No single objects cause his raptured
starts,

For Mind is narrowed, not inspired, by
parts.

But o'er the scene the poet's spirit broods,
To warm the thoughts that form his
noblest moods,

Peopling his solitude with faëry play,
And beckoning shapes that whisper him
away,

While lilled fields, and hedgerow blos-
soms white,

And hills, and glittering streams, are full
in sight—

The forests wave, the joyous sun be-
guiles,

And all the poetry of Nature smiles!

Such poetry is formed by Mind, and not
By scenic grace of one peculiar spot.

The artist lingers in the moonlit glade,
And light and shade, with him, are—light
and shade ;
The philosophic chemist wandering there
Dreams of the soil and nature of the air ;
The rustic marks the young herbs' fresh'n-
ing hue,
And only thinks—his scythe may soon
pass through !

None 'muse on nature with a Poet's eye,'
None read, but Poets, Nature's poetry !
Its characters are traced in mystic hand,
And all may gaze, but few can understand.

Nor here alone the Poet's dwelling rear,
Though Beauty's voice perchance is
sweetest here ! .
Bind not his footsteps to the sylvan scene,
To heathy banks, fair woods, and valleys
green,
When Mind is all his own ! Her dear
impress
Shall throw a magic o'er the wilderness
As o'er the blossoming vale, and ay recall
Its shadowy plane and silver waterfall,
Or sleepy crystal pool, reposing by,
To give the earth a picture of the sky !
Such, gazed on by the spirit, are, I ween,
Lovelier than ever prototype was seen ;
For Fancy teacheth Memory's hand to
trace

Nature's ideal form in Nature's place.
In every theme by lofty Poet sung
The thought should seem to speak, and
not the tongue.

When godlike Milton lifts th' exalted
song

The subject bears the burning words
along—

Resounds the march of Thought, th'
o'erflowing line,

Full cadence, solemn pause, and strength
divine !

When Horace chats his neighbour's
faults away

The sportive measures, like his muse,
are gay ;

For once Good-humour Satire's byway
took,

And all his soul is laughing in his book !
On moral Pope's didactic page is found
Sound ruled by sense, and sense made
clear by sound,

The power to reason and the taste to
please,
While, as the subject varies in degrees,
He stoops with dignity and soars with
ease.

Hence let our Poets, with discerning
glance,

Forbear to imitate the stage of France.
What though Corneille arouse the thrilling
chords,

And walk with Genius o'er th' inspirèd
boards ;

What though his rival bring, with calmer
grace,

The classic unities of time and place—
All polish and all eloquence—'twere
mean

To leave the path of Nature for Racine ;
When Nero's parent, 'midst her woe,
defines

The wrong that tortures—in two hundred
lines :

Or when Orestes, maddened by his
crime,
Forgets life, joy, and everything—but
rime.

While thus to character and nature true,
Still keep the harmony of verse in view ;
Yet not in changeless concord,—it
should be,

Though graceful, nervous,—musical,
though free ;

Not clogged by useless drapery, not beset
By the superfluous word or epithet,
Wherein Conception only dies in state,
As Draco smothered by the garments'
weight—

But join, Amphion-like (whose magic
fire

Won the deep music of the Maian lyre,
To call Boeotia's city from the ground),
The just in structure with the sweet in
sound.

Nor this the whole—the poet's classic
strain

May flow in smoothest numbers, yet in
vain ;

And Taste may please, and Fancy sport
awhile,—

And yet Aonia's muse refuse to smile !

For lo! her heavenly lips these words reveal—
 'The sage may coldly *think*, the bard must *feel*'
 And if his writings, to his heart untrue,
 Would ape the fervent throb it never knew;
 If generous deeds, and Virtue's noblest part,
 And Freedom's voice, could never warm that heart;
 If Interest taxed the produce of the brain,
 And fettered Genius followed in her train,
 Weeping as each unwilling word she spoke—
 Then hush the lute—its master-string is broke!
 In vain the skilful hand may linger o'er—
 Concord is dead, and music speaks no more!

There are, and have been such—they were forgot
 If shame could veil their page, if tears could blot!
 There are, and have been, whose dishonoured lay
 Aspired t' enrapture that the world might—pay!
 Whose life was one long bribe, oft counted o'er—
 Bribed to think on, and bribed to think no more;
 Bribed to laugh, weep, nor ask the reason why;
 Bribed to tell truth, and bribed to gild a lie!
 O Man! for this, the sensual left behind,
 We boast our empire o'er the vast of Mind?
 O Mind! reported valueless till sold,
 Thought dross till metamorphosed into gold
 By Midas' touch—breath'st thou immortal verse

To throw a ducat in an empty purse—
 To walk the market at a bellman's cry
 For knaves to sell and wondering fools to buy?
 Can Heaven-born bards, undone by lucre's lust,
 Crouch thus, like Heaven-born ministers,

to dust indeed—yet wherefore blame?
 They keep their profits though they lose their fame.

Leave to the dross they seek the groveling throng,
 And swell with nobler aim th' Aonian song!
 Enough for thee, uninfluenced and un-hired,
 If Truth reward the strain herself inspired!
 Enough for thee if grateful Man command,
 If Genius love, and Virtue call thee friend!
 Enough for thee to wake th' exalted mood,
 Reprove the erring, and confirm the good;
 Excite the tendersmile, the generous tear,
 Or rouse the thought to loftiest Nature dear,
 Which rapturous greets amidst the fervent line
 Thy name, O Freedom! glorious Hellas, thine!

I love my own dear land—it doth rejoice
 The soul to stretch my arms and lift my voice,
 To tell her of my love! I love her green
 And bowery woods, her hills in mossy sheen,
 Her silver running waters—there's no spot
 In all her dwelling which my breast loves not—
 No place not heart-enchanted! Sunnier skies
 And calmer waves may meet another's eyes;
 I love the sullen mist, the stormy sea,
 The winds of rushing strength which, like the land, are free!
 Such is my love—yet, turning thus to thee,
 O Graecia! I must hail with hardly less Of joy, and pride, and deepening tenderness,
 And feelings wild I know not to control,
 My other country—country of my soul!
 For so, to me, thou art! my lips have sung Of thee with childhood's lisp, and harp unstrung!

*In thee, my Fancy's pleasant walks have been,
Telling her tales, while Memory wept between!*

*And now for thee I joy, with heart beguiled,
As if a dying friend looked up and smiled.*

Lo! o'er Aegaea's waves the shout hath risen!

Lo! Hope hath burst the fetters of her prison!

And Glory sounds the trump along the shore,

And Freedom walks where Freedom walked before!

*Ipsara glimmers with heroic light,
Redd'ning the waves that lash her flaming height;*

And Aegypt hurries from that dark blue sea!

*Lo! o'er the cliffs of famed Thermopylae
And voiceful Marathon the wild winds sweep,*

Bearing this message to the brave who sleep—

'They come! they come! with their embattled shock,

From Pelion's steep and Paros' foam-dashed rock!

They come from Tempe's vale and Helicon's spring,

*And proud Eurotas' banks, the river king!
They come from Leuctra, from the waves that kiss*

*Athena—from the shores of Salamis;
From Sparta, Thebes, Euboea's hills of blue—*

To live with Hellas—or to sleep with you!

Smile—smile, beloved land! and though no lay

From Doric pipe may charm thy glades to-day—

Though dear Ionic music murmur not Adown the vale, its echo all forgot!—

Yet smile, beloved land! for soon, around, Thy silent earth shall utter forth a sound

As whilom; and, its pleasant groves among,

The Grecian voice shall breathe the Grecian song,

*While the exiled muse shall 'habit still
The happy haunts of her Parnassian hill.
Till then, behold the cold, dumb sepulchre—*

*The ruined column—ocean, earth, and air,
Man and his wrongs!—thou hast Tyrtaeus there!*

*And pardon, if across the heaving main
Sound the far melody of minstrel strain
In wild and fitful gust from England's shore,*

*For his immortal sake, who never more
Shall tread with living foot, and spirit free,*

Her fields, or breathe her passionate poetry—

The pilgrim bard, who lived and died for thee,

*O land of Memory! loving thee no less
Than parent—with the filial tenderness
And holy ardour of the Argive son,
Straining each nerve to bear thy chariot on—*

Till when its wheels the place of glory swept

He laid him down before the shrine—and slept.

*So be it! at his cold, unconscious bier
We fondly sate, and dropped the natural tear—*

*Yet wept not wisely, for he sank to rest
On the dear earth his waking thoughts loved best,*

*And gently life's last pulses stole away!
No Moschus sang a requiem o'er his clay,
But Greece was sad! and breathed above, below,*

The warrior's sigh, the silence, and the woe!

*And is this all? Is this the little sum
For which we toil—to which our glories come?*

Doth History bend her mouldering pages o'er,

And Science stretch her bulwark from the shore,

And Sages search the mystic paths of Thought,

And Poets charm with lays that Genius taught—

For this? to labour through their little day,
To weep an hour, then want the tear they pay—
To ask the urn, their death and life to tell,
When the dull dust would give that tale as well!

Man! hast thou seen the gallant vessel sweep,
Borrowing her moonlight from the jealous deep,
And gliding with mute foot and silver wing
Over the waters like a soul-moved thing?
Man, hast thou gazed on this—then looked again,
And seen no speck on all that desolate main,
And heard no sound—except the gurgling cry,
The winds half stifled in their mockery?

Woe unto thee! for thus thy course is run,
And in the fullness of thy noonday sun
The darkness cometh—yea! thou walk'st abroad
In glory, Child of Mind, Creation's Lord—
And wisdom's music from thy lips hath gushed!
Then comes the *Selah!* and the voice is hushed,
And the light past! we seek where thou hast been
In beauty—but thy beauty is not seen!
We breathe the air thou breath'dst, we tread the spot
Thy feet were wont to tread, but find thee not!
Beyond, sits Darkness with her haggard face,
Brooding fiend-like above thy burying-place—

Beneath, let wildest Fancy take her fill!
Shall we seek on? we shudder, and are still!
Yet woe not unto thee, thou child of Earth!
Though moonlight sleep on thy deserted hearth
We will not cry 'alas!' above thy clay!
It was, perchance, thy joyous pride to stray
On Mind's lone shore, and linger by the way:
But now thy pilgrim's staff is laid aside,
And on thou journeyest o'er the sullen tide,
To bless thy wearied sight, and glad thine heart
With all that Mind's serener skies impart;
Where Wisdom suns the day no shades destroy,
And Learning ends in Truth, as hope in joy:
While we stand mournful on the desert beach,
And wait, and wish, thy distant bark to reach,
And weep to watch it passing from our sight,
And sound the gun's salute, and sigh our last 'good night!'

And oh! while thus the spirit glides away,
Give to the world its memory with its clay!
Some page our country's grateful eyes may scan;
Some useful truth to bless surviving man;
Some name to honest bosoms justly dear;
Some grave to exalt the thought and claim the tear;
So when the pilgrim Sun is travelling o'er
The last blue hill, to gild a distant shore,
He leaves a freshness in the evening scene
That tells Creation where his steps have been!

SHORTER POEMS

APPENDED TO 'AN ESSAY ON MIND' AND THE FIRST VERSION
OF 'PROMETHEUS BOUND,' 1833

TO MY FATHER ON HIS BIRTH-DAY

Causa fui Pater his.—HORACE.

AMIDST the days of pleasant mirth,
That throw their halo round our earth ;
Amidst the tender thoughts that rise
To call bright tears to happy eyes ;
Amidst the silken words that move
To syllable the names we love ;
There glides no day of gentle bliss
More soothing to the heart than *this!*
No thoughts of fondness e'er appear
More fond, than those I write of here !
No name can e'er on tablet shine,
My Father ! more beloved than *thine!*

'Tis sweet, adown the shady past,
A lingering look of love to cast—
Back th' enchanted world to call,
That beamed around us first of all ;
And walk with Memory fondly o'er
The paths where Hope had been before—
Sweet to receive the sylphic sound
That breathes in tenderness around,
Repeating to the listening ear
The names that made our childhood
dear—

For parted Joy, like Echo, kind,
Will leave her dulcet voice behind,
To tell, amidst the magic air,
How oft she smiled and lingered there.
Oh ! let the deep Aonian shell
Breathe tuneful numbers, clear and well,
While the glad Hours, in fair array,
Lead on this buxom Holiday ,
And Time, as on his way he springs,
Hates the last bard who gave him wings ;
For 'neath thy gentleness of praise,
My Father ! rose my early lays !
And when the lyre was scarce awake,
I loved its strings for *thy* loved sake ;
Wooed the kind Muses—but the while
Thought only how to win thy smile—

My proudest fame —my dearest pride—
More dear than all the world beside !
And now, perchance, I seek the tone
For magic that is more its own ;
But still my Father's looks remain
The best Macenas of my strain ;
My gentlest joy, upon his brow
To read the smile, that meets me now—
To hear him, in his kindness, say
The words,—perchance he'll speak to-
day !

SPENSERIAN STANZAS ON A BOY OF THREE YEARS OLD

Child of the sunny lockes and beautifull
brow !
In thoughtfull tendernesse I gaze on
thee—
Upon thy daintie cheek Expression's
glow
Daunceth in tyme to thine heart's
melodie ;
Ne mortall wight mote lovelier urchin
see !
Nathlesse it teens this pensive brest of
mine
To think—belive the innocent revelrie
Shall be eclipsed in those soft blue
eyne—
Whenso the howre of youth no more for
thee shall shine.

Ah me ! eftsoons thy childhood's
pleasaunt dais
Shall fly away, and be a whilome thing !
And sweetest mearimake, and birthday
lais
Be recked not of, except when memo-
ries bring
Feres to their embers with awaking
wing,

To make past love rejoice thy tender
sprite,
Albeit the toyles of daunger thee en-
ring !
Child of the wavy lockes and brow of
light—
Then be thy conscience pure, as nowthy
face is bright.

VERSES TO MY BROTHER

For we were nursed upon the self-same hill.
Lycidas.

I WILL write down thy name, and
when 'tis writ,
Will turn me from the hum that mortals
keep
In the wide world without, and gaze
on it !
It teileth of the past—calling from sleep
Such dear, yet mournful thoughts, as
make us smile, and weep.

Beloved and best ! what thousand
feelings start,
As o'er the paper's course my fingers
move—
My Brother ! dearest, kindest as thou
art !
How can these lips my heart's affection
prove ?
I could not speak the words, if words
could speak my love.

Together have we passed our infant
hours,
Together sported Childhood's spring
away,
Together culled young Hope's fast
budding flowers,
To wreath the forehead of each
coming day !
Yes ! for the present's sun makes e'en
the future gay.

And when the laughing mood was
nearly o'er,
Together, many a minute did we wile
On Horace' page, or Maro's sweeter
lore ;

While one young critic, on the classic
style,
Would sagely try to frown, and make
the other smile.

But now alone thou con st the ancient
tome—
And sometimes thy dear studies, it
may be,
Are crossed by dearer dreams of me
and home !
Alone I muse on Homer—thoughts
are free—
And if mine often stray, they go in
search of thee !

I may not praise thee here—I will not
bless !
Yet all thy goodness doth my memory
bear,
Cherished by more than Friendship's
tenderness—
And, in the silence of my evening
prayer,
Thou shalt not be forgot—thy dear name
shall be there !

STANZAS ON THE DEATH OF
LORD BYRON

λέγε πάσιν ἀπόλετο.—BION.

I am not now
That which I have been.—*Childe Harold.*
He was, and is not ! Graccia's trembling
shore,
Sighing through all her palmy groves,
shall tell
That Harold's pilgrimage at last is
o'er—
Mute the impassioned tongue, and
tuneful shell,
That erst was wont in noblest strains
to swell—
Hushed the proud shouts that rode
Aegae'a wave !
For lo ! the great Deliv'rer breathes
farewell !
Gives to the world his mem'ry and a
grave—
Expiring in the land he only lived to save !

Mourn, Hellas, mourn! and o'er thy
widowed brow,
For ay, the cypress wreath of sorrow
twine;
And in thy new-formed beauty, desolate,
throw
The fresh-culled flowers on *his* sepulchral shrine.
Yes I let that heart whose fervour was
all thine,
In consecrated urn lamented be!
That generous heart where genius
thrilled divine,
Hath spent its last most glorious throb
for thee—
Then sank amid the storm that made thy
children free!

Britannia's poet! Graecia's hero,
sleeps!
And Freedom, bending o'er the breathless clay,
Lifts up her voice, and in her anguish weeps!
For *us*, a night hath clouded o'er our
day,
And hushed the lips that breathed our
fairest lay.
Alas! and must the British lyre resound
A requiem, while the spirit wings away
Of him who on its strings such music
found,
And taught its startling chords to give so
sweet a sound!

The theme grows sadder—but my soul
shall find
A language in these tears! No more—
no more!
Soon, 'midst the shriekings of the
tossing wind,
The 'dark blue depths' he sang of,
shall have bore
Our *all* of Byron to his native shore!
His grave is thick with voices—to the
ear
Murmuring an awful tale of greatness
o'er;
But Memory strives with Death, and
lingering near,
Shall consecrate the dust of Harold's
lonely bier!

MEMORY

My Fancy's steps have often strayed
To some fair vale the hills have made;
Where sparkling waters travel o'er,
And hold a mirror to the shore;
Windings with murmurings in and out,
To find the flowers which grow about.
And there, perchance, in childhood bold,
Some little elf, four summers old,
Adown the vales may chance to run,
To hunt his shadow in the sun!
But when the waters meet his eyes,
He starts and stops with glad surprise,
And shouts, with merry voice, to view
The banks of green, the skies of blue,
Th' inverted flocks that bleating go,
Lilies, and trees of apple-blow,
Seeming so beautiful below!
He peeps above—he glances round,
And then looks down, and thinks he's
found
Reposing in the stream, to woo one,
A world even lovelier than the true one.

Thus, with visions gay and light,
Hath Fancy loved my page to dight;
Yet Thought hath, through a vista, seen
Something less frivolous, I ween:
Then, while my chatting pen runs on,
I'll tell you what she dreamt upon.

Memory's the streamlet of the scene,
Which sweeps the hills of Life between;
And, when our walking hour is past,
Upon its shore we rest at last;
And love to view the waters fair,
And see lost joys depicted there.

My —, when thy feet are led
To press those banks we all must tread,
May Virtue's smile and Learning's praise
Adorn the waters to thy gaze;
And, o'er their lucid course, be lent
The sunshine of a life well spent!
Then, if a thought should glad thy breast
Of those who loved thee first and best,
My name, perchance, may haunt the
spot,
Not quite unprized—nor all forgot.

TO —

MINE is a wayward lay;
And, if its echoing rimes I try to
string
Proveth a truant thing,
Whenso some names I love, send it
away!

For then, eyes swimming o'er,
And clasped hands, and smiles in fondness
meant,
Are much more eloquent—
So it had fain begone, and speak no more!

Yet shall it come again,
Ah, friend beloved! if so thy wishes be,
And, with wild melody,
I will, upon thine ear, cadence my
strain—

Cadence my simple line,
Unfashioned by the cunying hand of Art,
But coming from my heart,
To tell the message of its love to thine!

As ocean shells, when taken
From Ocean's bed, will faithfully repeat
Her ancient music sweet—
Ev'n so these words, true to my heart,
shall waken!

Oh! while our bark is seen,
Our little bark of kindly, social love,
Down life's clear stream to move
Toward the summer shores, where al
is green—

So long thy name shall bring
Echoes of joy unto the grateful gales,
And thousand tender tales,
To freshen the fond hearts that round
thee cling!

Hast thou not looked upon
The flowerets of the field in lowly dress?
Blame not my simpleness—
Think only of my love!—my song is
gone.

STANZAS

OCCASIONED BY A PASSAGE IN
MR. EMERSON'S JOURNAL

Which states that, on the mention of Lord Byron's name, Captain Demetrius, an old Rounietiot, burst into tears

NAME not his name, or look afar—
For when my spirit hears
That name, its strength is turned to
woe—
My voice is turned to tears.

Name me the host and battle-storm,
Mine own good sword shall stem;
Name me the foeman and the block,
I have a smile for them!

But name him not, or cease to mark
This brow where passions sweep—
Behold, a warrior is a man,
And as a man may weep!

I could not scorn my Country's foes,
Did not these tears descend—
I could not love my Country's fame,
And not my Country's Friend.

Deem not his memory e'er can be
Upon our spirits dim—
Name us the generous and the free,
And we must think of him!

For his voice resounded through our land
Like the voice of liberty,
As when the war-trump of the wind
Upstirs our dark blue sea.

His arm was in the foremost rank,
Where embattled thousands roll—
His name was in the love of Greece,
And his spell was on her soul!

But the arm that wielded her good sword,
The brow that wore the wreath,
The lips that breathed the deathless
thoughts—
They went asleep in death.

Ye left his **HEART**, when ye took away
The dust in funeral state ;
And we dumbly placed in a little urn
That home of all things great.

The banner streamed—the war-shout
rose—

Our heroes played their part ;
But not a pulse would throb or burn—
Oh ! could it be *his* heart !

I will not think—'tis worse than vain
Upon such thoughts to keep ;
Then, Briton, name me not his name—
I cannot choose but weep !

THE PAST

THERE is a silence upon the Ocean,
Albeit it swells with a feverish motion ;
Like to the battle-camp's fearful calm,
While the banners are spread, and the
warriors arm.

The winds beat not their drum to the
waves,
But sullenly moan in the distant caves ;
Talking over, before they rise,
Some of their dark conspiracies.

And so it is in this life of ours,
A calm may be on the present hours,
But the calmest hour of festive glee
May turn the mother of woe to thee.

I will betake me to the Past,
And she shall make my love at last ;
I will find my home in her tarrying-
place—

I will gaze all day on her deathly face !

Her form, though awful, is fair to view ;
The clasp of her hand, though cold, is
true ;
Her shadowy brow hath no changeful-
ness,
And her numbered smiles can grow no
less !

Her voice is like a pleasant song,
Which we have not heard for very long,
And which a joy on our souls will cast,
Though we know not where we heard
it last.

She shall walk with me, away, away,
Where'er the mighty have left their
clay ;
She shall speak to me in places lone,
With a low and holy tone.

Aye ! when I have lit my lamp at night,
She will be present with my sprite ;
And I will say, whate'er it be,
Every word she telleth me !

THE PRAYER

METHOUGHT that I did stand upon a
tomb—
And all was silent as the dust beneath,
While feverish thoughts upon my soul
would come,
Losing my words in tears : I thought
of death ;
And prayed that when my lips gave
out the breath,
The friends I loved like life might stay
behind :
So, for a little while, my name might
eath
Be something dear,—spoken with
voices kind,
Heard with remembering looks, from
eyes which tears would blind !

I prayed that I might sink unto my rest
(O foolish, selfish prayer !) before
them all ;
So I might look my last on those loved
best—
So never would my voice repining call,
And never would my tears impassioned
fall

On one familiar face turning to clay !
So would my tune of life be musical,
Albeit abrupt—like airs the Spaniards
play,
Which in the sweetest part break off,
and die away.

Methought I looked around ! the scene
was ripe
With little vales, green banks, and
waters heaving ;
And every living thing did joy in life,

And every thing of beauty did seem
living—
Oh, then, life's pulse was at my heart
reviving ;
And then I knew that it was good to bear
Dispensed woe, that by the spirit's
grieving
It might be weaned from a world so
fair!—
Thus with submissive words mine heart
did close its prayer.

ON A PICTURE OF RIEGO'S WIDOW

PLACED IN AN EXHIBITION

DAUGHTER of Spain ! a passer by
May mark the cheek serenely pale—
The dark eyes which dream silently,
And the calm lip which gives no wail !

Calm ! it bears not a deeper trace
Of feelings it disdained to show;
We look upon the Widow's face,
And only read the Patriot's woe!

No word, no look, no sigh of thine,
Would make his glory seem more dim;
Thou wouldst not give to vulgar eyne
The sacred tear which fell for HIM.

Thou wouldst not hold to the world's
view

Thy ruined joys, thy broken heart—
The jeering world—it only knew
Of all thine anguish—that thou WEREST !

While o'er his grave thy steps would go
With a firm tread,—stilling thy love,—
As if the dust would blush below
To feel one faltering foot above.

For Spain, he dared the noble strife--
For Spain, he gave his latest breath ;
And he who lived the Patriot's life
Was dragged to die the traitor's death !

And the shout of thousands swept around,
As he stood the traitor's block beside ;
But his dying lips gave a free sound—
Let the fee weep!—THY brow had
pride !

Yet haply in the midnight air,
When none might part thy God and
thee,
The lengthened sob, the passionate
prayer,
Have spoken thy soul's agony !

But silent else, thou passed away—
The plaint unbreathed, the anguish
hid—
More voiceless than the echoing clay
Which idly knocked thy coffin's lid.

Peace be to thee ! while Britons seek
This place, if British souls they bear,
'Twill start the crimson in the cheek
To see Riego's widow THERE !

SONG

WEEP, as if you thought of laughter !
Smile, as tears were coming after !
Marry your pleasures to your woes ;
And think life's green well worth its
rose !

No sorrow will your heart betide,
Without a comfort by its side ;
The sun may sleep in his sea-bed,
But you have starlight overhead.

Trust not to Joy ! the rose of June,
When opened wide, will wither soon ;
Italian days without twilight
Will turn them suddenly to night.

Joy, most changeful of all things,
Flits away on rainbow wings ;
And when they look the gayest, know,
It is that they are spread to go !

THE DREAM

A FRAGMENT

I HAD a dream!—my spirit was un-
bound
From the dark iron of its dungeon, clay,
And rode the steeds of Time ;—my
thoughts had sound,
And spoke without a word,—I went
away
Among the buried ages, and did lay

The pulses of my heart beneath the touch
Of the rude minstrel Time, that he should play
Thereon a melody which might seem such
As musing spirits love—mournful, but not too much!

I had a dream—and there mine eyes did see
The shadows of past deeds like present things—
The sepulchres of Greece and Hesperi,
Aegyptus, and old lands, gave up their kings,
Their prophets, saints, and minstrels, whose lute-strings
Keep a long echo—yea, the dead, white bones
Did stand up by the house whereto Death clings,
And dressed themselves in life, speaking of thrones,
And fame, and power, and beauty, in familiar tones!

I went back further still, for I beheld
What time the earth was one fair Paradise—
And over such bright meads the waters welled,
I wot the rainbow was content to rise
Upon the earth, when absent from the skies!
And there were tall trees that I never knew,
Whereon sate nameless birds in merry guise,
Folding their radiant wings, as the flowers do,
When summer nights send sleep down with the dew.

• • • • •

Anon there came a change—a terrible motion,
That made all living things grow pale and shake!
The dark Heavens bowed themselves unto the ocean,
Like a strong man in strife—Ocean did take

His flight across the mountains; and the lake
Was lashed into a sea where the winds ride—
Earth was no more, for in her merry-make
She had forgot her God—Sin claimed his bride,
And with his vampire breath sucked out her life's fair tide!
Life went back to her nostrils, and she raised
Her spirit from the waters once again—
The lovely sights, on which I erst had gazed,
Were not—though she was beautiful as when
The Grecian called her ‘Beauty’—sinful men
Walked i' the track of the waters, and felt bold—
Yea, they looked up to Heaven in calm disdain,
As if no eye had seen its vault unfold
Darkness, and fear, and death!—as if a tale were told!

And ages fled away within my dream;
And still Sin made the heart his dwelling-place,
Eclipsing Heaven from men; but it would seem
That two or three dared commune face to face,
And speak of the soul's life, of hope, and grace.
Anon there rose such sounds as angels breathe—
For a God came to die, bringing down peace—
‘Pan was not’; and the darkness that did wreath
The earth, passed from the soul—Life came by Death!

• • • • •

RIGA'S LAST SONG

I HAVE looked my last on my native land,
And over these strings I throw my hand,
To say in the death-hour's minstrelsy,
Hellas, my country! farewell to thee!

I have looked my last on my native shore;
I shall tread my country's plains no more;
But my last thought is of her fame;
But my last breath speaketh her name!

And though these lips shall soon be still,
They may now obey the spirit's will;
Though the dust be fettered, the spirit
is free—

Hellas, my country! farewell to thee!

I go to death—but I leave behind
The stirrings of Freedom's mighty mind;
Her voice shall arise from plain to sky,
Her steps shall tread where my ashes lie!

I looked on the mountains of proud Soul,
And the mountains they seemed to look
on me;

I spoke my thought on Marathon's plain,
And Marathon seemed to speak again!

And as I journeyed on my way,
I saw an infant group at play;
One shouted aloud in his childish glee,
And showed me the heights of Thermopylae!

I gazed on peasants hurrying by,—
The dark Greek pride crouched in their
eye;

So I swear in my death-hour's minstrelsy,
Hellas, my country! thou shalt be free!

No more!—I dash my lyre on the
ground—

I tear its strings from their home of
sound—

For the music of slaves shall never keep
Where the hand of a freeman was wont
to sweep!

And I bend my brows above the block,
Silently waiting the swift death shock;
For these lips shall speak what becomes
the free—

Or—Hellas, my country! farewell to
thee!

He bowed his head with a Patriot's pride,
And his dead trunk fell the mute lyre
beside!

The soul of each had passed away—
Soundless the strings—breathless the
clay!

THE VISION OF FAME

Did ye ever sit on summer noon,
Half musing and half asleep,
When ye smile in such a dreamy way,
Ye know not if ye weep—

When the little flowers are thick beneath,
And the welkin blue above;
When there is not a sound but the cattle's
low,

And the voice of the woodland dove?

A while ago, and I dreamed thus—
I mused on ancient story,—

For the heart like a minstrel of old doth
seem,

It delighteth to sing of glory.

What time I saw before me stand
A bright and lofty One;

A golden lute was in her hand,
And her brow drooped thereon.

But the brow that drooped was raised
soon,

Showing its royal sheen—

It was, I guessed, no human brow,
Though pleasant to human een.

And this brow of peerless majesty
With its whiteness did enshroud
Two eyes that, darkly mystical,
'gan look up at a cloud.

Like to the hair of Berenice,
Fetched from its house of light,
Was the hair which wreathed her
shadowless form—

And Fame the ladye hight!

But as she wended on to me,
My heart's deep fear was chidden;
For she called up the sprite of Melody,
Which in her lute lay hidden.

When ye speak to well-belovèd ones,
Your voice is tender and low:
The wires methought did love her touch—
For they did answer so.

And her lips in such a quiet way
Gave the chant soft and long,—

You might have thought she only
breathed,

And that her breath was song:—

'When Death shrouds thy memory,
Love is no shrine—
The dear eyes that weep for thee
Soon sleep like thine !
The wail murmured over thee
Fainteth away ;
And the heart which kept love for thee
Turns into clay !

'But wouldest thou remembered be,
Make me thy vow ;
This verse that flows gushingly
Telleth thee how—
Linking thy hand in mine,
Listen to me,
So not a thought of thine
Dieth with thee—

'Rifle thy pulsing heart
Of the gift, love made ;
Bid thine eye's light depart ;
Let thy cheek fade !
Give me the slumber deep,
Which night-long seems ;
Give me the joys that creep
Into thy dreams !

'Give me thy youthful years,
Merriest that fly—
So the word, spoke in *tears*,
Liveth for ay !
So thy sepulchral stone,
Nations may raise—
What time thy soul hath known
The *worth of praise* !'

She did not sing this chant to me,
Though I was sitting by ;
But I listened to it with chainèd breath,
That had no power to sigh.

And ever as the chant went on
Its measure changed to wail ;
And ever as the lips sang on
Her face did grow more pale.

Paler and paler—till anon
A fear came o'er my soul ;
For the flesh curled up from her bones,
Like to a blasted scroll !

Aye ! silently it dropped away
Before my wondering sight—
There was only a bleached skeleton
Where erst was ladye bright !

But still the vacant sockets gleamed
With supernatural fires—
But still the bony hands did ring
Against the shuddering wires !
Alas, alas ! I wended home,
With a sorrow and a shame—
Is Fame the rest of our poor hearts ?
Woe's me ! for THIS IS FAME !

THE TEMPEST

A FRAGMENT

Mors erat ante oculos.—LUCAN, lib. IX.

THE forest made my home—the voiceful
streams
My minstrel throng : the everlasting
hills,—
Which marry with the firmament, and cry
Unto the brazen thunder, 'Come away,
Come from thy secret place, and try our
strength,'—
Enwrapped me with their solemn arms.
Here, light
Grew pale as darkness, scarèd by the
shade
O' the forest Titans. Here, in piny state,
Reigned Night, the Aethiopian queen,
and crowned
The charmed brow of Solitude, her
spouse.

A sign was on creation. You beheld
Allthings encoloured in a sulph'rous hue,
As day were sick with fear. The hag-
gard clouds
O'erhung the utter lifelessness of air ;
The top boughs of the forest, all aghast,
Stared in the face of Heaven ; the deep-
mouthed wind,
That hath a voice to bay the armèd sea,
Fled with a low cry like a beaten hound ;
And only that askance the shadows flew
Some open-beaked birds in wilderment,
Naught stirred abroad. All dumb did
Nature seem,
In expectation of the coming storm.
It came in power. You soon might hear
afar
The footsteps of the martial thunder sound

Over the mountain battlements ; the sky
Being deep-stained with hues fantastical,
Red like to blood, and yellow like to fire,
And black like plumes at funerals ; over-
head
You might behold the lightning faintly
gleam
Amid the clouds which thrill and gape
aside,
And straight again shut up their solemn
jaws,
As if to interpose between Heaven's
wrath
And Earth's despair. Interposition brief !
Darkness is gathering out her mighty pall
Above us, and the pent-up rain is loosed,
Down trampling in its fierce delirium.

Was not my spirit gladdened, as with
wine,
To hear the iron rain, and view the mark
Of battle on the banner of the clouds ?
Did I not hearken for the battle-cry,
And rush along the bowing woods to
meet
The riding Tempest—skyey cataracts
Hissing around him with rebellion vain ?
Yea ! and I lifted up my glorying voice
In an 'All hail' ; when, wildly resonant,
As brazen chariots rushing from the war,
As passioned waters gushing from the
rock,
As thousand crashèd woods, the thunder
cried :
And at his cry the forest tops were shook
As by the woodman's axe ; and far and
near
Staggered the mountains with a muttered
dread.

All hail unto the lightning ! hurriedly
His lurid arms are glaring through the air,
Making the face of Heaven to show like
hell !
Let him go breathe his sulphur stench
about,
And, pale with death's own mission,
lord the storm !
Again the gleam—the glare : I turned
to hail
Death's mission : at my feet there lay the
dead !

The dead—the dead lay there ! I could
not view
(For Night espoused the storm, and made
all dark)
Its features, but the lightning in its course
Shivered above a white and corpse-like
heap,
Stretched in the path, as if to show his
prey,
And have a triumph ere he passed.
Then I
Crouched down upon the ground, and
groped about
Until I touched that thing of flesh, rain-
drenched,
And chill, and soft. Nathless, I did re-
frain
My soul from natural horror ! I did lift
The heavy head, half-bedded in the clay,
Unto my knee ; and passed my fingers o'er
The wet face, touching every lineament,
Until I found the brow ; and chased its
chill,
To know if life yet lingered in its pulse.
And while I was so busied, there did leap
From out the entrails of the firmament,
The lightning, who his white unblen-
ching breath
Blew in the dead man's face, discovering
it
As by a staring day. I knew that face—
His, who did hate me—his, whom I did
hate !
I shrunk not—spake not—sprang not
from the ground !
But felt my lips shake without cry or
breath,
And mine heart wrestle in my breast to
still
The tossing of its pulses ; and a cold,
Instead of living blood, o'ercreep my
brow.
Albeit such darkness brooded all around,
I had dread knowledge that the open
eyes
Of that dead man were glaring up to mine,
With their unwinking, unexpressive
stare ;
And mine I could not shut nor turn away.
The man was my familiar. I had borne
Those eyes to scowl on me their living
hate,

Better than I could bear their deadliness :
I had endured the curses of those lips
Far better than their silence. Oh, con-
strained

And awful silence!—awful peace of
death!

There is an answer to all questioning,
That one word—*death*. Our bitterness
can throw

No look upon the face of death, and live.
The burning thoughts that erst my soul
illumed

Were quenched at once ; as tapers in a
pit

Wherein the vapour-witches weirdly
reign

In charge of darkness. Farewell all the
past!

It was out-blotted from my memory's eyes
When clay's cold silence pleaded for its
sin.

Farewell the elemental war I farewell
The clashing of the shielded clouds—the
cry

Of scathed echoes ! I no longer knew
Silence from sound, but wandered far
away

Into the deep Eleusis of mine heart,
To learn its secret things. When armed
foes

Meet on one deck with impulse violent,
The vessel quakes thro' all her oaken ribs,
And shivers in the sea ; so with mine
heart :

For there had battled in her solitudes,
Contrary spirits ; sympathy with power,
And stooping unto power ;—the energy
And passiveness,—the thunder and the
death !

Within me was a nameless thought : it
closed

The Janus of my soul on echoing hinge,
And said ‘Peace !’ with a voice like
War’s. I bowed,

And trembled at its voice : it gave a key,
Empowered to open out all mysteries
Of soul and flesh ; of man, who doth begin,
But endeth not ; of life, and *after life*.

Day came at last : her light showed grey
and sad,

As hatched by tempest, and could scarce
prevail

Over the shaggy forest to imprint
Its outline on the sky—express or less,
Almost sans shadow as sans radiance :
An idiocy of light. I wakened from
My deep unslumb’ring dream, but uttered
naught.

My living uncoupled from the dead,
And looked out, 'mid the swart and
sluggish air,

For place to make a grave. A mighty tree
Above me, his gigantic arms out-
stretched,
Poising the clouds. A thousand muttered
spells

Of every ancient wind and thund’rous
storm

Had been off-shaken from his scatheless
bark.

He had heard distant years sweet con-
cord yield,

And go to silence ; having firmly kept
Majestical companionship with Time.

Anon his strength waxed proud : his
tusky roots

Forced for themselves a path on every
side,

Riving the earth ; and, in their savage
scorn,

Casting it from them like a thing unclean,
Which might impede his naked clamber-
ing

Unto the heavens. Now blasted, pealed,
he stood,

By the gone night, whose lightning had
come in

And rent him, even as it rent the man
Beneath his shade : and there the strong
and weak

Communion joined in deathly agony.

There, underneath, I lent my feverish
strength,

To scoop a lodgement for the traveller’s
corse.

I gave it to the silence and the pit,
And strewed the heavy earth on all :

and then—

I—I, whose hands had formed that
silent house,—

I could not look thereon, but turned and
wept !

O Death—O crownèd Death—pale-steedèd Death !
 Whose name doth make our respiration brief,
 Muffling the spirit's drum ! Thou, whom men know
 Alone by charnel-houses, and the dark Sweeping of funeral feathers, and the scath
 Of happy days,—love deemed inviolate !
 Thou of the shrouded face, which to have seen
 Is to be very awful, like thyself !—
 Thou, whom all flesh shall see !—thou, who dost call,
 And there is none to answer !—thou, whose call
 Changeth all beauty into what we fear,
 Changeth all glory into what we tread,
 Genius to silence, wrath to nothingness,
 And love—not love!—thou hast no change
 for love !
 Thou, who art Life's betrothed, and bear'st her forth
 To scare her with sad sights,—who hast thy joy
 Where'er the peopled towns are dumb
 with plague,—
 Where'er the battle and the vulture meet,—
 Where'er the deep sea writhes like Laocoön
 Beneath the serpent winds, and vessels split
 On secret rocks, and men go gurgling down,
 Down, down, to lose their shriekings in the depth !
 O universal thou ! who comest aye
 Among the minstrels, and their tongue is tied ;
 Among the sophists, and their brain is still ;
 Among the mourners, and their wail is done ;
 Among the dancers, and their tinkling feet
 No mere make echoes on the tombing earth ;
 Among the wassail rout, and all the lamps
 Are quenched, and withered the wine-pouring hands !

Mine heart is armèd not in panoply
 Of the old Roman iron, nor assumes
 The Stoic valour. 'Tis a human heart,
 And so confesses, with a human fear ;—
 That only for the hope the cross inspires,
 That only for the MAN who died and lives,
 'Twould crouch beneath thy sceptre's royalty,
 With faintness of the pulse, and backward clinging
 To life. But knowing what I soothly know,
 High-seeming Death, I dare thee ! and have hope,
 In God's goodtime, of showing to thy face
 An unsuccumbing spirit, which sublime
 May cast away the low anxieties
 That wait upon the flesh—the reptile moods ;
 And enter that eternity to come,
 Where live the dead, and only Death shall die.

A SEA-SIDE MEDITATION

Ut per aquas quae nunc rerum simulacula vide-mus.—LUCKETIUS.

Go, travel 'mid the hills ! The summer's hand
 Hath shaken pleasant freshness o'er them all.
 Go, travel 'mid the hills ! There, tuneful streams
 Are touching myriad stops, invisible ;
 And winds, and leaves, and birds, and your own thoughts
 (Not the least glad) in wordless chorus, crowd
 Around the thymele¹ of Nature.
 Go,
 And travel onward. Soon shall leaf and bird,
 Wind, stream, no longer sound. Thou shalt behold
 Only the pathless sky, and houseless sward ;
 O'er which anon are spied innumerous sails
 Of fisher vessels like the wings o' the hill,

¹ The central point of the choral movements in the Greek theatre.

And white as gulls above them, and as fast,—
 But sink they—sink they out of sight.
 And now
 The wind is springing upward in your face ;
 And, with its fresh-toned gushings, you may hear
 Continuous sound which is not of the wind,
 Nor of the thunder, nor o' the cataract's Deep passion, nor o' the earthquake's wilder pulse ;
 But which rolls on in stern tranquillity, As memories of evil o'er the soul ;—
 Boweth the bare broad Heaven.—What view you ? sea—and sea !

The sea—the glorious sea ! from side to side
 Swinging the grandeur of his foamy strength,
 And undersweeping the horizon,—on—On—with his life and voice inscrutable. Pause : sit you down in silence ! I have read
 Of that Athenian, who, when ocean raged,
 Unchained the prisoned music of his lips By shouting to the billows, sound for sound.

I marvel how his mind would let his tongue
 Affront thereby the ocean's solemnness. Are we not mute, or speak restrainedly, When overhead the trampling tempests go,
 Dashing their lightning from their hoofs ? and when We stand beside the bier ? and when we see
 The strong bow down to weep—and stray among Places which dust or mind hath sanctified ? Yeal ! for such sights and acts do tear apart
 The close and subtle clasping of a chain, Formed not of gold, but of corroded brass, Whose links are furnished from the common mine
 Of every day's event, and want, and wish; From work-times, diet-times, and sleeping-times :

And thence constructed, mean and heavy links
 Within the pandemonic walls of sense Enchain our deathless part, constrain our strength, And waste the goodly stature of our soul. Howbeit, we love this bondage ; we do cleave Unto the sordid and unholy thing, Fearing the sudden wrench required to break Those claspèd links. Behold ! all sights and sounds In air, and sea, and earth, and under earth, All flesh, all life, all ends, are mysteries ; And all that is mysterious dreadful seems, And all we cannot understand we fear. Ourselves do scare ourselves : we hide our sight
 In artificial nature from the true, And throw sensation's veil associative On God's creation, man's intelligence ; Bowing our high imaginings to eat Dust, like the serpent, once erect as they ; Binding conspicuous on our reason's brow Phylacteries of shame ; learning to feel By rote, and act by rule (man's rule, not God's !), Unto our words grow echoes, and our thoughts A mechanism of spirit. Can this last ? No ! not for ay. We cannot subject ay The heaven-born spirit to the earth-born flesh. Tame lions will scent blood, and appetite Carnivorous glare from out their restless eyes. Passions, emotions, sudden changes, throw Our nature back upon us, till we burn. What wained Cyrene's fount ? As poets sing, The change from light to dark, from dark to light. All that doth force this nature back on us, All that doth force the mind to view the mind, Engend'reth what is named by men, *sublime*. Thus when, our wonted valley left, we gain

The mountain's horrent brow, and mark
from thence
The sweep of lands extending with the
sky ;
Or view the spanless plain ; or turn our
sight
Upon yon deep's immensity ;—we
breathe
As if our breath were marble : to and fro
Do reel our pulses, and our words are
mute.
We cannot mete by parts, but grapple all ;
We cannot measure with our eye, but
soul ;
And fear is on us. The extent unused,
Our spirit, sends, to spirit's element,
To seize upon abstractions: first on
space,
The which *eternity in place* I deem ;
And then upon eternity ; till thought
Hath formed a mirror from their secret
sense,
Wherein we view ourselves, and back
recoil
At our own awful likeness ; ne'ertheless,
Cling to that likeness with a wonder wild,
And while we tremble, glory—proud in
fear.
So ends the prose of life : and so shall be
Unlocked her poetry's magnific store.
And so, thou pathless and perpetual sea,
So, o'er thy deeps, I brooded and must
brood,
Whether I view thee in thy dreadful
peace,
Like a spent warrior hanging in the sun
His glittering arms, and meditating
death ;
Or whether thy wild visage gath'reth
shades,
What time thou marshall'st forth thy
waves who hold
A covenant of storms, then roar and
wind
Under the racking rocks ; as martyrs lie
Wheel-bound ; and, dying, utter lofty
words !
Whether the strength of day is young
and high,
Or whether, weary of the watch, he sits
Pale on thy wave, and weeps himself to
death ;—
In storm and calm, at morn and eventide,

Still have I stood beside thee, and out-
thrown
My spirit onward on thine element,—
Beyond thine element,—to tremble low
Before those feet which trod thee as
they trod
Earth,—to the holy, happy, peopled
place,
Where there is no more sea. Yea, and
my soul,
Having put on thy vast similitude,
Hath wildly moaned at her proper depth,
Echoed her proper musings, veiled in
shade
Her secrets of decay, and exercised
An elemental strength, in casting up
Rare gems and things of death on fancy's
shore,
Till Nature said ‘Enough.’
Who longest dreams,
Dreams not for ever; seeing day and
night
And corporal feebleness divide his
dreams,
And on his elevate creations weigh
With hunger, cold, heat, darkness,
weariness :
Else should we be like gods ; else would
the course
Of thought's free wheels, increased in
speed and might
By an eterne volation, oversweep
The heights of wisdom, and invade her
depths :
So, knowing all things, should we have
all power ;
For is not Knowledge power ? But
mighty spells
Our operation sear ; the Babel must,
Or ere it touch the sky, fall down to earth :
The web, half formed, must tumble from
our hands,
And, ere they can resume it, lie decayed.
Mind struggles vainly from the flesh.
E'en so,
Hell's angel (saith a scroll apocryphal)
Shall, when the latter days of earth have
shrunk
Before the blast of God, affect his heaven ;
Lift his scarred brow, confirm his rebel
heart,
Shoot his strong wings, and darken pole
and pole,—

Till day be blotted into night ; and shake
The fevered clouds, as if a thousand
 storms
Throbbed into life ! Vain hope—vain
 strength—vain flight !
God's arm shall meet God's foe, and hurl
 him back !

A VISION OF LIFE AND DEATH

MINE ears were deaf to melody,
 My lips were dumb to sound :
Where didst thou wander, O my soul,
 When ear and tongue were bound ?

'I wandered by the stream of time,
 Made dark by human tears :
I threw my voice upon the waves,
 And they did throw me theirs.'

And how did sound the waves, my soul ?
 And how did sound the waves ?
'Hoarse, hoarse, and wild !—they ever
 dashed
 'Gainst ruined thrones and graves.'

And what sight on the shore, my soul ?
 And what sight on the shore ?
'Twain beings sate there silently,
 And sit there evermore.'

Now tell me fast and true, my soul ;
 Now tell me of those twain.
'One was yclothed in mourning vest,
 And one, in trappings vain.

'She in the trappings vain was fair,
 And eke fantastical :
A thousand colours dyed her garb ;
 A blackness bound them all.

'In part her hair was gaily wreathed,
 In part was wildly spread :
Her face did change its hue too fast,
 To say 'twas pale or red.

'And when she looked on earth, I thought
 She smiled for very glee :
But when she looked to heaven, I knew
 That tears stood in her ee.

'She held a mirror, there to gaze :
 It could no cheer bestow ;
For while her beauty cast the shade,
 Her breath did make it go.

'A harper's harp did lie by her,
 Without the harper's hest ;
A monarch's crown did lie by her,
 Wherein an owl had nest :

'A warrior's sword did lie by her,
 Grown rusty since the fight ;
A poet's lamp did lie by her :—
 Ah me !—where was its light ?'

And what didst thou say, O my soul,
 Unto that mystic dame ?
'I asked her of her tears, and eke
 I asked her of her name.

'She said, she built a prince's throne :
 She said, he ruled the grave ;
And that the levelling worm asked not
 If he were king or slave.

'She said, she formed a godlike tongue,
 Which lofty thoughts unsheathed ;
Which rolled its thunder round, and
 purged
 The air the nations breathed.

'She said, that tongue, all eloquent,
 With silent dust did mate ;
Whereon false friends betrayed long faith,
 And foes outspat their hate.

'She said, she warmed a student's heart,
 But heart and brow 'gan fade :
Alas, alas ! those Delphic trees
 Do cast an upas shade !

'She said, she lighted happy hearths,
 Whose mirth was all forgot :
She said, she tunèd marriage bells,
 Which rang when love was *not*.

'She said, her name was Life ; and then
 Out laughed and wept aloud,—
What time the other being strange
 Lifted the veiling shroud.

'Yea ! lifted she the veiling shroud,
 And breathed the icy breath :
Whereat, with inward shuddering,
 I knew *her* name was Death.

'Yea ! lifted she her calm, calm brow,
 Her clear cold smile on me :
Whereat within my deepness, leaped
 Mine immortality.

'She told me, it did move her smile,
To witness how I sighed,
Because that what was fragile brake,
And what was mortal died :

'As if that kings could grasp the earth,
Who from its dust began ;
As if that suns could shine at night,
Or glory dwell with man.

'She told me, she had freed *his* soul,
Who ay did freedom love ;
Who nowrecked not, were worms below,
Or ranker worms above !

'She said, the student's heart had beat
Against its prison dim ;
Until she crushed the bars of flesh,
And poured truth's light on him.

'She said, that they who left the hearth,
For ay in sunshine dwell ;
She said, the funeral tolling brought
More joy than marriage bell !

'And as she spake, she spake less loud ;
The stream resounded more :
Anon I nothing heard but waves
That wailed along the shore.'

And what didst thou say, O my soul,
Upon that mystic strife ?
'I said, that Life was only Death,
That only Death was Life.'

EARTH

How beautiful is earth ! my starry thoughts
Look down on it from their unearthly sphere,
And sing symphonious—Beautiful is earth !
The lights and shadows of her myriad hills ;
The branching greenness of her myriad woods ;
Her sky-affecting rocks; her zoning sea ;
Her rushing, gleaming cataracts ; her streams
That race below, the wingèd clouds on high ;
Her pleasantness of vale and meadow !—

Hush !
Meseemeth through the leafy trees to ring
A chime of bells to falling waters tuned ;
Whereat comes heathen Zephyrus, out
of breath

With running up the hills, and shakes
his hair
From off his glesome forehead, bold
and glad
With keeping blythe Dan Phoebus
company ;—

And throws him on the grass, though
half afraid ;
First glancing round, lest tempests should
be nigh ;

And lays close to the ground his ruddy
lips,
And shapes their beauty into sound, and
calls

On all the petalled flowers, that sit beneath
In hiding-places from the rain and snow,
To loosen the hard soil, and leave their
cold

Sad idlesse, and betake them up to him.
They straightway hear his voice—

A thought did come,
And press from out my soul the heathen
dream.

Mine eyes were purgèd. Straightway
did I bind
Round me the garment of my strength,
and heard

Nature's death-shrieking—the hereafter
cry,
When he o' the lion voice, the rainbow-
crowned,

Shall stand upon the mountains and the
sea,
And swear by earth, by Heaven's throne,
and Him

Who sitteth on the throne, there shall
be time
No more, no more ! Then, veiled Eternity
Shall straight unveil her awful counten-
ance

Unto the reeling worlds, and take the
place
Of seasons, years, and ages. Ay and ay
Shall be the time of day. The wrinkled
heaven

Shall yield her silent sun, made blind
and white

With an exterminating light: the wind,
Unchainèd from the poles, nor having
charge
Of cloud or ocean, with a sobbing wail
Shall rush among the stars, and swoon
to death.
Yea, the shrunk earth, appearing livid
pale
Beneath the red-tongued flame, shall
shudder by
From out her ancient place, and leave—
a void.
Yet haply by that void the saints re-
deemed
May sometimes stray; when memory of
sin
Ghost-like shall rise upon their holy souls;
And on their lips shall lie the name of
earth
In paleness and in silentness; until
Each looking on his brother, face to face,
And bursting into sudden happy tears
(The only tears undried) shall murmur—
‘Christ!’

THE PICTURE GALLERY AT PENSHURST

THEY spoke unto me from the silent
ground,
They looked unto me from the pictured
wall:
The echo of my footstep was a sound
Like to the echo of their own footfall,
What time their living feet were in the
hall.
I breathed where they had breathed—
and where they brought
Their souls to moralize on glory's pall,
I walked with silence in a cloud of
thought:
So, what they erst had learned, I mine
own spirit taught.

Aye! with mine eyes of flesh, I did
behold
The likeness of their flesh! They, the
great dead,
Stood still upon the canvas, while I told
The glorious memories to their ashes
wed.

There, I beheld the Sidneys:—he,
who bled
Freely for freedom's sake, bore gallantly
His soul upon his brow;—he, whose
lute said
Sweet music to the land, meseemed to
be
Dreaming, with that pale face, of love
and Arcadie.

Mine heart had shrinèd these. And
therefore past
Were these, and such as these, in mine
heart's pride,
Which deemed death glory's other
name. At last
I stayed my pilgrim feet, and paused
beside
A picture¹, which the shadows half
did hide.
The form was a fair woman's form;
the brow
Brightly between the clustering curls
espied:
The cheek a little pale, yet seeming so
As, if the lips could speak, the paleness
soon would go.

And rested there the lips, so warm
and loving,
That, they *could* speak, one might be
fain to guess:
Only they had been much too bright,
if moving,
To stay by their own will, all motion-
less.
One outstretched hand its marble seal
'gan press
On roses which looked fading; while
the eyes,
Uplifted in a calm, proud loveliness,
Seemed busy with their flow'ry
destinies,
Drawing, for ladye's heart, some moral
quaint and wise.

She perished like her roses. I did look
On her, as she did look on them—to
sigh!
Alas, alas! that the fair-written book
Of her sweet face should be in death
laid by,

¹ Vandyke's portrait of Waller's Sacharissa.

As any blotted scroll ! Its cruelty
Poisoned a heart most gentle-pulsed
of all,
And turned it unto song; therein to
die;
For grief's stern tension maketh
musical,
Unless the strained string break or ere
the music fall.

Worship of Waller's heart ! no dream
of thine
Revealed unto thee, that the lowly one,
Who sate enshadowed near thy
beauty's shine,
Should, when the light was out, the
life was done,
Record thy name with those by
Memory won
From Time's eternal burial. I am
wooded
By wholesome thoughts this sad
thought hath begun ;
For mind is strengthened when awhile
subdued,
As he who touched the earth, and rose
with power renewed.

TO A POET'S CHILD

A FAR harp swept the sea above ;
A far voice said thy name in love :
Then silence on the harp was cast ;
The voice was chained—the love went
last ! *

And as I heard the melody,
Sweet-voiced Fancy spake of thee :
And as the silence o'er it came,
Mine heart, in silence, sighed thy name.

I thought there was one only place,
Where thou couldst lift thine orphaned
face :

A little home for prayer and woe ;—
A stone above—a shroud below ;—

That evermore, that stone beside,
Thy withered joys would form thy
pride ;
As palm-trees, on their South Sea bed,
Make islands with the flowers they shed.

Child of the Dead ! my dream of thee
Was sad to tell, and dark to see ;
And vain as many a brighter dream ;
Since thou canst sing by Babel's stream !

For here, amid the worldly crowd,
'Mid common brows, and laughter loud,
And hollow words, and feelings sere,
Child of the Dead ! I meet thee here !

And is thy step so fast and light ?
And is thy smile so gay and bright ?
And *cans!* thou smile, with cheek undim,
Upon a world that frowned on *him* ?

The minstrel's harp is on his bier ;
What doth the minstrel's orphan here ?
The loving moulder in the clay ;
The loved,—she keepeth holiday !

'Tis well ! I would not doom thy years
Of golden prime, to only tears.
Fair girl ! 'twere better that thine eyes
Should find a joy in summer skies,

As if their sun were on thy fate.
Be happy ; strive not to be great ;
And go not from thy kind apart,
With lofty soul and stricken heart.

Think not too deeply : shallow thought,
Like open rills, is ever sought
By light and flowers ; while fountains
deep
Amid the rocks and shadows sleep.

Feel not too warmly : lest thou be
Too like Cyrene's waters free,
Which burn at night, when all around
In darkness and in chill is found.

Touch not the harp to win the wreath :
Its tone is fame, its echo death !
The wreath may like the laurel grow,
Yet turns to cypress on the brow !

And, as a flame springs clear and bright,
Yet leaveth ashes 'stead of light ;
So genius (fatal gift !) is doomed
To leave the heart it fired, consumed.

For thee, for thee, thou orphaned one,
I make an humble orison !
Love all the world ; and ever dream
That all are true who truly seem.

Forget I for, so, 'twill move thee not,
Or lightly move; to be forgot!
Be streams thy music; hills, thy mirth;
Thy chiefest light, the household hearth.

So, when grief plays her natural part,
And visiteth thy quiet heart;
Shall all the clouds of grief be seen
To show a sky of hope between.

So, when thy beauty senseless lies,
No sculptured urn shall o'er thee rise;
But gentle eyes shall weep at will,
Such tears as hearts like thine distil.

MINSTRELSY

One asked her once the reason why
She hadde delyte in minstrelye;
She answered on this manere.

ROBERT DE BRUNNE.

For ever, since my childish looks
Could rest on Nature's pictured books;
For ever, since my childish tongue
Could name the themes our bards have
sung;
So long, the sweetness of their singing
Hath been to me a rapture bringing!—
Yet ask me not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy.

I know that much whereof I sing
Is shapen but for vanishing;
I know that summer's flower and leaf
And shine and shade are very brief,
And that the heart they brighten may,
Before them all, be sheathed in clay!—
I do not know the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy.

A few there are whose smile and praise
My minstrel hope would kindly raise:
But, of those few—Death may impress
The lips of some with silentness;
While some may friendship's faith resign,
And heed no more a song of mine.—
Ask not, ask not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy.

The sweetest song that minstrels sing
Will charm not Joy to tarrying;
The greenest bay that earth can grow
Will shelter not in burning woe;

A thousand voices will not cheer
When *one* is mute that ay is dear!—
Is there, alas! *no* reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy?

I do not know! The turf is green
Beneath the rain's fast-dropping sheer
Yet asks not why that deeper hue
Doth all its tender leaves renew;—
And I, like-minded, am content,
While music to my soul is sent,
To question not the reason why
I have delight in minstrelsy.

Years pass—my life with them shall pass
And soon the cricket in the grass,
And summer bird, shall louder sing
Than she who owns a minstrel's string
Oh, then may some, the dear and few,
Recall her love, whose truth they knew
When all forgot to question why
She had delight in minstrelsy!

TO THE MEMORY OF

SIR UVEDALE PRICE, BART.

FAREWELL!—a word that human lip
bostow
On all that human hearts delight to know
On summer skies, and scenes that chang
as fast;
On ocean calms, and faith as fit to last
On Life, from Love's own arms, th
breaks away;
On hopes that blind, and glories th
decay! *

And everthus 'farewell, farewell,' is sai
As round the hills of lengthening tin
we tread;
As at each step the winding ways unfo
Some untried prospect which obscur
the old;—
Perhaps a prospect brightly coloured o'e
Yet not with brightness that we love
before;
And dull and dark the brightest hu
appears
To eyes like ours, surcharged and di
with tears.
Oft, oft we wish the winding road we
past,
And yon supernal summit gained at las

Where all that gradual change removed,
is found
At once, for ever, as you look around ;
Where every scene by tender eyes surveyed,
And lost and wept for, to their gaze is spread—
No tear to dim the sight, no shade to fall,
But Heaven's own sunshine lighting, charming all.

Farewell !—a common word—and yet how drear
And strange it soundeth as I write it here !
How strange that *thou* a place of death shouldst fill,
Thy brain unlighted, and thine heart grown chill !
And dark the eye, whose plausive glance to draw
Incited Nature brake her tyrant's law !
And deaf the ear, to charm whose organ true
Maeonian music tuned her harp anew !
And mute the lips where Plato's bee hath roved ;
And motionless the hand that genius moved !—
Ah, friend ! thou speakest not—but still to me
Do Genius, Music, Nature, speak of *thee* !—
Still golden fancy, still the sounding line,
And waving wood, recall some word of thine :
Some word, some look, whose living light is o'er—
And Memory sees what Hope can see no more.

Twice, twice, thy voice hath spoken.
Twice there came
To us a change, a joy—to thee, a fame !
Thou speakest once¹, and every pleasant sight,
Woods waving wild, and fountains gushing bright,
Cool copses, grassy banks, and all the dyes
Of shade and sunshine gleamed before our eyes.

¹ *Essay on the Picturesque.*

Thou spakest twice²; and every pleasant sound
Its ancient silken harmony unwound,
From Doric pipe and Attic lyre that lay
Enclasped in hands whose cunning is decay.
And now no more thou speakest ! Death hath met
And won thee to him ! Oh, remembered yet !
We cannot see, and *hearken*, and forget !

My thoughts are far. I think upon the time
When Foxley's purple hills and woods sublime
Were thrilling at thy step ; when thou didst throw
Thy burning spirit on the vale below,
To bathe its sense in beauty. Lovely ground !
There, never more shall step of thine resound !
There, Spring again shall come, but find thee not,
And deck with humid eyes her favourite spot ;
Strew tender green on paths thy foot forsakes,
And make that fair, which Memory saddest makes.
For me, all sorrowful, unused to raise
A minstrel song and dream not of thy praise,
Upon thy grave my tuneless harp I lay,
Nor try to sing what only tears can say.
So warm and fast the ready waters swell—
So weak the faltering voice thou knewest well !
Thy words of kindness calmed that voice before ;
Now, thoughts of *them* but make it tremble more ;
And leave its theme to others, and depart
To dwell within the silence where thou art.

² *Essay on the Pronunciation of the Ancient Languages.*

THE AUTUMN

Go, sit upon the lofty hill,
And turn your eyes around,
Where waving woods and waters wild
Do hymn an autumn sound.
The summer sun is faint on them—
The summer flowers depart—
Sit still—as all transformed to stone,
Except your musing heart.

How there you sate in summer-time,
May yet be in your mind;
And how you heard the green woods
sing
Beneath the freshening wind.
Though the same wind now blows around,
You would its blast recall;
For every breath that stirs the trees
Doth cause a leaf to fall.

Oh! like that wind, is all the mirth
That flesh and dust impart;
We cannot bear its visitings,
When change is on the heart.
Gay words and jests may make us smile
When Sorrow is asleep;
But other things must make us smile
When Sorrow bids us weep!

The dearest hands that clasp our hands,—
Their presence may be o'er;
The dearest voice that meets our ear,
That tone may come no more!
Youth fades; and then, the joys of
youth,
Which once refreshed our mind,
Shall come—as, on those sighing woods,
The chilling autumn wind.

Hear not the wind—view not the
woods;
Look out o'er vale and hill:
In spring, the sky encircled them—
The sky is round them still.
Come, autumn's scathe, come winter's
cold,
Come change—and human fate!
Whatever prospect HEAVEN doth bound
Can ne'er be desolate.

THE DEATH-BED OF TERESA
DEL RIEGO

Si fia muta ogni altra cosa, al fine
Parlerà il mio morire,
E ti dirà la morte il mio martire.
GUARINI.

The room was darkened; but a wan
lamp shed
Its light upon a half-uncurtained bed,
Whereon the widowed sate. Blackly
as death
Her veiling hair hung round her, and no
breath
Came from her lips to motion it. Between
Its parted clouds, the calm fair face was
seen
In a snow paleness, and snow silentness,
With eyes unquenchable, whereon did
press
A little, their white lids, so taught to lie,
By weights of frequent tears wept
secretly.
Her hands were clasped and raised—the
lamp did fling
A glory on her brow's meek suffering.

Beautiful form of woman! seeming made
Alone to shine in mirrors, there to braid
The hair and zone the waist—to garland
flowers—
To walk like sunshine through the orange
bowers—
To strike her land's guitar—and often see
In other eyes how lovely hers must be—
Grew she acquaint with anguish? Did
she sever
For ever from the one she loved for ever,
To dwell among the strangers? Ayel
and she,
Who shone most brightly in that festive
glee,
Sat down in this despair most patiently.

Some hearts are Niobes! in grief's down-
sweeping
They turn to very stone from over-
weeping,
And after, feel no more. Hers did remain
In life, which is the power of feeling
pain,

Till pain consumed the life so called below.
She heard that he was dead!—she asked
 not how—
For he was dead! She wailed not o'er
 his urn,
For he was dead—and in her hands, should
 burn
His vestal flame of honour radiantly :
Sighing would dim its light—she did not
 sigh.

She only died. They laid her in the
 ground,
Whereon th' unloving tread, and accents
 sound
Which are not of her Spain. She left
 behind,
For those among the strangers who were
 kind
Unto the poor heartbroken, her dark hair.
It once was gauded out with jewels rare ;
It swept her dying pillow—it doth lie
Beside me (thank the giver) drooping,
And very long and bright! Its tale doth go
Half to the dumb grave, half to lifetyme
 woe,
Making the heart of man, if manly, ring
Like Dodonean brass, with echoing.

TO VICTOIRE, ON HER MARRIAGE

VICTOIRE! I knew thee in thy land,
 Where I was strange to all :
I heard thee ; and were strange to me
 The words thy lips let fall.

I loved thee—for the Babel curse
 Was meant not for the heart :
I parted from thee, in such way
 As those who love may part.

And now a change hath come to us,
 A sea doth rush between !
I do not know if we can be
 Again as we have been.

I sit down in mine English land,
 Mine English hearth beside ;
And thou, to one I never knew,
 Art plighted for a bride.

It will not wrong thy present joy
 With bygone days to wend ;
Nor wrongeth it mine English hearth
 To love my Gallic friend.
Bind, bind the wreath ! the slender ring
 Thy wedded finger press !
May he who calls thy love his own,
 Call so thine happiness !
Be he Terpander to thine heart,
 And string fresh strings of gold,
Which may outgive new melodies,
 But never mar the old !
And though I clasp no more thy hand
 In my hand, and rejoice—
And though I see thy face no more,
 And hear no more thy voice—
Farewell, farewell !—let thought of me
 Visit thine heart ! There is
In mine the very selfish prayer
 That prayeth for thy bliss !

TO A BOY

WHEN my last song was said for thee
 Thy golden hair swept, long and free,
Around thee ; and a dove-like tone
 Was on thy voice—or Nature's own :
And every phrase and word of thine
 Went out in lisplings infantine !
Thy small steps faltering round our
 hearth—

Thine een out-peering in their mirth—
Blue een ! that, like thine heart, seemed
 given
To be, for ever, full of heaven !
Wert thou, in sooth, made up of glee,
When my last song was said for thee ?

And now more years are finishèd,—
For thee another song is said.
Thy voice hath lost its cooing tone ;
The lisping of thy words is gone :
Thy step treads firm—thine hair not flings
Round thee its length of golden rings—
Departed, like all lovely things !
Yet art thou still made up of glee,
When my now song is said for thee.

Wisely and well responded they,
Who cut thy golden hair away,

What time I made the bootless prayer,
That they should pause awhile, and spare.
They said, 'its sheen did less agree
With boyhood than with infancy.'
And thus I know it ay must be :
Before the revel noise is done,
The revel lamps pale one by one.

Aye ! Nature loveth not to bring
Crowned victims to life's labouring.
The mirth-effulgent eye appears
Less sparkling—to make room for tears :
After the heart's quick throbs depart,
We lose the gladness of the heart :
And, after we have lost awhile
The rose o' the lip, we lose its smile :
As Beauty could not bear to press
Near the death-pyre of Happiness.

This seemeth but a sombre dream ?
It hath more pleasant thoughts than seem.
The older a young tree doth grow
The deeper shade it sheds below ;
But makes the grass more green—the air
More fresh, than had the sun been there.
And thus our human life is found,
Albeit a darkness gather round :
For patient virtues, that their light
May shine to all men, want the night :
And holy Peace, unused to cope,
Sits meekly at the tomb of Hope,
Saying that 'she is risen !'

Then I
Will sorrow not at destiny,—
Though from thine eyes, and from thine
heart,
The glory of their light depart ;
Though on thy voice, and on thy brow,
Should come a fiercer change than now ;
Though thou no more be made of glee,
When my next song is said for thee.

REMONSTRANCE

Ox, say not it is vain to weep
That deafened bier above ;
Where genius has made room for death,
And life is past from love ;
That tears can never his bright looks
And tender words restore :
I know it is most vain to weep—
And therefore weep the more !

Oh, say not I shall cease to weep
When years have withered by ;
That ever I shall speak of joy,
As if he could reply ;
That ever mine unquivering lips
Shall name the name he bore :
I know that I may cease to weep,
And therefore weep the more !

Say, Time, who slew mine happiness,
Will leave to me my woe ;
And woe's own stony strength shall chain
These tears' impassioned flow :
Or say, that these, my ceaseless tears,
May life to death restore ;
For then my soul were wept away,
And I should weep no more !

REPLY

To weep awhile beside the bier,
Wherison his ashes lie,
Is well !—I know that rains must fall
When clouds are in the sky :
I know, *to die—to part*, will cloud
The brightest spirit o'er ;
And yet, wouldst thou for ever weep,
When he can weep no more ?

Fix not thy sight so long and fast
Upon the shroud's despair ;
Look upward unto Zion's hill,
For death was also *there* !
And think, 'The death, the scourge, the
scorn,
My sinless Saviour bore—
The curse—the pang, too deep for
tears—
That I should weep no more !'

EPITAPH

BEAUTY, who softly walkest all thy days
In silken garment to the tunes of praise ;—
Lover, whose dreamings by the green-
banked river,
Where once she wandered, fain would
last for ever ;—
King, whom the nations scan, adoring
scan,
And shout 'a god,' when sin hath marked
thee man ;—

Bard, on whose brow the Hyblan dew
remains,
Albeit the fever burneth in the veins ;—
Hero, whose sword in tyrant's blood is
hot ;—
Sceptic, who doubting, wouldest be
doubted not ;—
Man, whosoe'er thou art, whate'er thy
trust ;—
Respect thyself in me ;—thou treadest
dust.

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THE IMAGE OF GOD

I am God, and there is none like me.
Isaiah xlvi. 9.
Christ, who is the image of God.
2 Corinthians iv. 4.

THOU! art thou like to God?
(I asked this question of the glorious
sun)
Thou high unwearied one,
Whose course in heat, and light, and life
is run?

Eagles may view thy face—clouds can
assuage
Thy fiery wrath—the sage
Can mete thy stature—thou shalt fade
with age.
Thou art not like to God.

Thou! art thou like to God?
(I asked this question of the bounteous
earth)
O thou, who givest birth
To forms of beauty and to sounds of
mirth?

In all thy glory works the worm decay—
Thy golden harvests stay
For seed and toil—thy power shall pass
away.
Thou art not like to God.

Thou! art thou like to God?
(I asked this question of my deathless
soul)
O thou, whose musings roll
Above the thunder, o'er creation's whole?

Thou art not. Sin, and shame, and agony
Within thy deepness lie :
They utter forth their voice in thee, and
cry,

'Thou art not like to God.'

Then art Thou like to God ;
Thou, who didst bear the sin, and shame,
and woe—
O Thou, whose sweat did flow—
Whose tears did gush—whose brow was
dead and low ?

No grief is like Thy grief ; no heart can
prove
Love like unto Thy love ;
And none, save only Thou,—below,
above,—

O God, is like to God!

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THE APPEAL

CHILDREN of our England ! stand
On the shores that girt our land ;
The aegis of whose cloud-white rock
Braveth Time's own battle-shock.
Look above the wide, wide world ;
Where the northern blasts have furled
Their numbed wings amid the snows,
Mutt'ring in a forced repose—
Or where the maddened sun on high
Shakes his torch athwart the sky,
Till within their prison sere,
Chainèd earthquakes groan for fear !
Look above the wide, wide world,
Where a gauntlet Sin hath hurled
To astonished Life ; and where
Death's gladiatorial smile doth glare,
On making the arena bare.
Shout aloud the words that show
Jesus in the sands and snow ;—
Shout aloud the words that free,
Over the perpetual sea.

Speak ye. As a breath will sweep
Avalanche from Alpine steep,
So the spoken word shall roll
Fear and darkness from the soul.
Are ye men, and love not man ?
Love ye, and permit his ban ?
Can ye, dare ye, rend the chain
Wrought of common joy and pain,
Clasping with its links of gold,
Man to man in one strong hold ?

Lo! if the golden links ye sever,
Ye shall make your heart's flesh quiver;
And wheresoe'er the links are reft,
There shall be a bloodstain left.
To earth's remotest rock repair,
Ye shall find a vulture there:
Though for others sorrowing not,
Your own tears shall still be hot :
Though ye play a lonely part ;
Though ye bear an iron heart ;—
Woe, like Echetus, still must
Grind your iron into dust.

But, children of our Britain, ye
Rend not man's chain of sympathy ;
To those who sit in woe and night,
Denying tears and hiding light.
Ye have stretched your hands abroad
With the Spirit's sheathless sword :
Ye have spoken—and the tone
To earth's extremest verge hath gone :
East and west sublime it rolls,
Echoed by a million souls !
The wheels of rapid circling years,
Erst hot with crime, are quenched in tears.
Rocky hearts wild waters pour,
That were chained in stone before :
Bloody hands, that only bare
Hilted sword, are clasped in prayer :
Savage tongues, that wont to fling
Shouts of war in deathly ring,
Speak the name which angels sing.
Dying lips are lit the while
With a most undying smile,
Which reposing there, instead
Of language, when the lips are dead,
Saith,—'No sound of grief or pain
Shall haunt us when we move again.'

Children of our country ! brothers
To the children of all others !
Shout aloud the words that show
Jesus in the sands and snow ;—
Shout aloud the words that free,
Over the perpetual sea !

IDOLS

How weak the gods of this world are—
And weaker yet their worship made
me !
I have been an idolater
Of three—and three times they be-
trayed me !

Mine oldest worshipping was given
To natural Beauty, ay residing
In bowery earth and starry heaven,
In ebbing sea, and river gliding.
But natural Beauty shuts her bosom
To what the natural feelings tell !
Albeit I sighed, the trees would blossom—
Albeit I smiled, the blossoms scil.

Then left I earthly sights, to wander
Amid a grove of name divine,
Where bay-reflecting streams meander,
And Moloch Fame hath reared a shrine.

Not green, but black, is that reflection ;
On rocky beds those waters lie ;
That grove hath chillness and dejection—
How could I sing ? I had to sigh.

Last, human Love, thy Lares greeting,
To rest and warmth I vowed my years.
To rest ? how wild my pulse is beating !
To warmth ! ah me ! my burning tears.

Aye, *they* may burn—though thou be
frozen
By death, and changes wint'ring on !
Fame !—Beauty !—idols madly chosen—
Were yet of gold ; but *thou* art STONE !

Crumble like stone ! my voice no longer
Shall wail their names, who silent be :
There is a voice that soundeth stronger—
'My daughter, give thine heart to Me.'

Lord ! take mine heart ! O first and
fairest,
Whom all creation's ends shall hear ;
Who deathless love in death declarest !
None else is beauteous—famous—
dear !

HYMN

Lord, I cry unto Thee, make haste unto me.
Psalm cxli.
The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon
Him.
Psalm cxlv.

Since without Thee we do no good,
And with Thee do no ill,
Abide with us in weal and woe,—
In action and in will.

In weal,—that while our lips confess
The Lord who ‘gives,’ we may
Remember, with an humble thought,
The Lord who ‘takes away.’

In woe,—that while to drowning tears
Our hearts their joys resign,
We may remember *who* can turn
Such water into wine.

By hours of day,—that when our feet
O’er hill and valley run,
We still may think the light of truth
More welcome than the sun.

By hours of night,—that when the air
Its dew and shadow yields,
We still may hear the voice of God
In silence of the fields.

Oh! then sleep comes on us like death,
All soundless, deaf, and deep :
Lord! teach us so to watch and pray,
That death may come like sleep.

Abide with *us*, abide with *us*,
While flesh and soul agree ;
And when our flesh is only dust,
“Abide our souls with *Thee*.

WEARINESS

MINE eyes are weary of surveying
The fairest things, too soon decaying ;
Mine ears are weary of receiving
The kindest words—ah, past believing !
Weary my hope, of ebb and flow ;
Weary my pulse, of tunes of woe :
My trusting heart is weariest !
I would—I would I were at rest !

For *me*, can earth refuse to fade ?
For *me*, can words be faithful made ?
Will *my* embittered hope be sweet ?
My pulse forgo the human beat ?
No ! Darkness must consume mine eye—
Silence, mine ear—hope cease—pulse
die—
And o’er mine heart a stone be pressed—
Or vain this,—‘Would I were at rest !’

There is a land of rest deferred :
Nor eye hath seen, nor ear hath heard,
Nor Hope hath trod the precinct o’er ;
For hope beheld is hope no more !
There, human pulse forgets its tone—
There, hearts may know as they are
known !
Oh, for dove’s wings, thou dwelling blest,
To fly to *thee*, and be at rest !

THE SERAPHIM

Some to sing, and some to say,
Some to weep, and some to praye.—SKELTON.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1838

IT is natural for every writer who has not published frequently to revert, at least in thought, to his last work, in risking the publication of a new one. To me this is most natural, the subject of the principal poem in the present collection having suggested itself to me, though very faintly and imperfectly, when I was engaged upon my translation of the *Prometheus Bound* of Aeschylus.

I thought that, had Aeschylus lived after the incarnation and crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, he might have turned, if not in moral and intellectual yet in poetic faith, from the solitude of Caucasus to the deeper desertness of that crowded Jerusalem where none had any pity; from the 'faded white flower' of the Titanic brow, to the 'withered grass' of a heart trampled on by its own beloved; from the glorying of him who gloried that he could not die, to the sublimer meekness of the Taster of death for every man; from the taunt stung into being by the torment, to His more awful silence, when the agony stood dumb before the love! And I thought how, 'from the height of this great argument,' the scenery of the *Prometheus* would have dwarfed itself even in the eyes of its poet,—how the fissures of his rocks and the innumerable smiles of his ocean would have closed and waned into blankness,—and his demigod stood confessed so human a conception as to fall below the aspiration of his own humanity. He would have turned from such to the rent rocks and darkened sun—rent and darkened by a sympathy thrilling through nature but leaving man's heart untouched—to the multitudes whose victim was their Saviour: to the Victim, whose sustaining thought beneath an unexampled agony was not the Titanic 'I can revenge,' but the celestial 'I can forgive!'

The subjects of my two books lie side by side. The *Prometheus* of Aeschylus is avowedly one of the very noblest of human imaginations; and when we measure it with the eternal counsel we know at once and for ever how wide is the difference between man's ideal and God's divine!

The great tragic soul, though untaught directly of Deity, brooded over His creation with exhaustless faculties, until it gave back to her a thought—vast, melancholy, beneficent, malign—the Titan on the rock, the reflected image of her own fallen immortality; rejoicing in bounty, agonizing in wrong, and triumphant in revenge. This was all. 'Then,' said He, 'Lo I come!' and we knew love, in that He laid down His life for us. 'By this we know love'¹—love in its intense meaning. 'The splendour in the grass and fragrance, in the flower' are the splendour and fragrance of a love beyond them. 'All thoughts, all passions, all delights,' are 'ministers' of a love around us. All citizenship, all brotherhood, all things for which men bless us, saying, 'Surely this is good,'—are manifestations of a love within us. All exaltations of our inward nature, in which we bless ourselves, saying, 'Surely this is great,'—are yearnings to a love above us. And thus, among the fragments of our fallen state, we may guess at love even as Plato guessed at God: but by this, and this only, can we know it—that Christ laid down His life for us. Has not love a deeper mystery than wisdom, and a more ineffable lustre than power? I believe it has. I venture to believe those beautiful and often quoted words 'God is love,' to be even less an expression of condescension towards the finite, than an

¹ Ep. John i. 5. The modifying expression of God which appears in our version is not in the Greek.

assertion of essential dignity in Him who is infinite.

But if my dream be true that Aeschylus might have turned to the subject before us in poetic instinct ; and if in such a case—and here is no dream—its terror and its pathos would have sheltered into weakness the strong Greek tongue, and caused the conscious chorus to tremble round the thymele,—how much more may I turn from it in the instinct of incompetence ! In a manner I have done so. I have worn no shoes upon this holy ground : I have stood there, but have not walked. I have drawn no copy of the statue of this Great Pan,—but have caught its shadow,—shortened in the dawn of my imperfect knowledge, and distorted and broken by the unevenness of our earthly ground. I have written no work, but a suggestion. Nor has even so little been attempted without as deep a consciousness of weakness as the severest critic and the humblest Christian could desire to impress upon me. I have felt in the midst of my own thoughts upon my own theme, like Homer's 'children in a battle.'

The agents in this poem of imperfect form—a dramatic lyric, rather than a lyrical drama—are those mystic beings who are designated in Scripture the Seraphim. The subject has thus assumed a character of exaggerated difficulty, the full sense of which I have tried to express in my Epilogue. But my desire was, to gather some vision of the supreme spectacle under a less usual aspect—to glance at it, as dilated in seraphic eyes, and darkened and deepened by the near association with blessedness and Heaven. Are we not too apt to measure the depth of the Saviour's humiliation from the common estate of man, instead of from His own peculiar and primeval one ? To avoid which error I have endeavoured to count some steps of the ladder at Bethel—a very few steps, and as seen between the clouds.

And thus I have endeavoured to mark in my two Seraphic personages, distinctly and predominantly, that shrinking from, and repugnance to, evil, which in my weaker Seraph is expressed by fear, and in my stronger one by a more complex

passion ; in order to contrast with such the voluntary debasement of Him who became lower than the angels, and touched in His own sinless being sin and sorrow and death. In my attempted production of such a contrast I have been true to at least my own idea of angelic excellence, as well as to that of His perfection. For one holiness differs from another holiness in glory. To recoil from evil is according to the stature of an angel ; to subdue it is according to the infinitude of a God.

Of the poems which succeed *The Seraphim*, two ballads have been published in *The New Monthly Magazine* ; one, the *Romance of the Ganges*, was written for the illustration of *Finden's Tableaux*, edited by Miss Mitford ; and a few miscellaneous verses have appeared in the *Athenaeum*¹.

Lest in any of these poems a dreaminess be observed upon, while a lawlessness is imputed to their writer, she is anxious to assure whatever reader may think it worth while to listen to her defence, that none of them were written with a lawless purpose. For instance, *The Poet's Vow* was intended to enforce a truth—that the creature cannot be *isolated* from the creature ; and *The Romaunt of Margret*, a corresponding one, that the creature cannot be *sustained* by the creature. And if, indeed, the faintest character of poetry be granted to these compositions, it must be granted to them besides, that they contain a certain verity. For there is no greater fiction than that poetry is fiction. Poetry is essentially truthfulness ; and the very incoherencies of poetic dreaming are but the struggle and the strife to reach the True in the Unknown. 'If you please to call it but a dream,' says Cowley, 'I shall not take it ill ; because the father of poets tells us, even dreams, too, are from God²'.

It was subsequent to my writing the poem called *The Virgin Mary to the Child Jesus* that I read in a selection of religious poetry, made by Mr. James

¹ These poems are printed in this edition under the heading 'Poems, 1838-50.'

² Discourse by way of vision, concerning the government of Oliver Cromwell.

Montgomery, a lyric of the sixteenth century upon the same subject¹, together with an observation of the editor, that no living poet would be daring enough to approach it. As it has here been approached and attempted by the 'weak'st of many,' I would prove by this explanation, that consciously to impugn an opinion of Mr. Montgomery's, and to enter into rivalry with the bold simplicity of an ancient ballad, made no part of the daringness of which I confess myself guilty.

Nothing more is left to me to explain in relation to any particular poem of this collection. I need not defend them for being religious in their general character. The generation of such as held the doctrine of that critic who was *not* Longinus, and believed in the inadmissibility of religion into poetry, may have seen the end of vanity. That 'contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical,' is true if it be true that the human soul having such intercourse is parted from its humanity, or if it be true that poetry is not expressive of that humanity's most exalted state. The first supposition is contradicted by man's own experience, and the latter by the testimony of Him who knoweth what is in man. For otherwise David's 'glory' would have awakened with no 'harp and lute'; and Isaiah's poetry of diction would have fallen in ashes from his lips, beneath the fire which cleansed them.

To any less reverent objection I would not willingly reply. 'An irreligious poet,' said Burns, meaning an undevotional one, 'is a monster.' An irreligious poet, he might have said, is no poet at all. The gravitation of poetry is upwards. The poetic wing, if it move, ascends. What did even the heathen Greeks—Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Pindar? Sublimely, because born poets, darkly, because born of Adam and unrenewed in Christ, their spirits wandered like the rushing chariots and winged horses, black and white, of their brother-poet Plato², through the

¹ The coincidence consists merely of the choice of subject; the mode of treating it being wholly different.

² See his *Phaedrus*.

universe of Deity, seeking if haply they might find Him: and as that universe closed around the seekers, not with the transparency in which it flowed first from His hand, but opaquely, as double-dyed with the transgression of its sons,—they felt though they could not discern the God beyond, and used the gesture though ignorant of the language of worshipping. The blind eagle missed the sun, but soared towards its sphere. Shall the blind eagle soar—and the seeing eagle peck chaff? Surely it should be the gladness and the gratitude of such as are poets among us, that in turning towards the beautiful, they may behold the true face of God.

The disparaging speeches of prefaces are not proverbial for their real humility. I remember smiling over a preface of Pomfret, which intimates that *he* might hope for readers, as even Quarles and Wither found them! He does not add in words,—perhaps *he* did in thought, '*Fortunati nimium!*'

Without disparaging speeches, and yet with a self-distrust amounting to emotion, I offer to the public, and for the first time in my own name, these poems, which were not written because there is a public, but because they were thought and felt, and perhaps under some of the constraint referred to by Wither himself—for he *has* readers!

Those that only sip,
Or but even their fingers dip
In that sacred fount (poor elves!)
Of that brood will show themselves:
Yea, in hope to get them fame,
They will speak though of their shame.

May the omen be averted!

I assume no power of art, except that power of love towards it which has remained with me from my childhood until now. In the power of such a love, and in the event of my life being prolonged, I would fain hope to write hereafter better verses; but I never can feel more intensely than at this moment—nor can it be needful that any should—the sublime uses of poetry, and the solemn responsibilities of the poet.

LONDON, 1838.

THE SERAPHIM

I look for Angels' songs, and hear Him cry.—GILES FLETCHER.

PART THE FIRST

[*It is the time of the Crucifixion; and the angels of heaven have departed towards the earth, except the two seraphim, ADOR the Strong and ZERAH the Bright One. The place is the outer side of the shut heavenly gate.*]

Ador. O SERAPH, pause no more.
Beside this gate of heaven we stand alone.

Zerah. Of heaven!

Ador. Our brother hosts are gone—

Zerah. Are gone before.

Ador. And the golden harps the angels bore

To help the songs of their desire,
Still burning from their hands of fire,
Lie without touch or tone

Upon the glass-sea shore.

Zerah. Silent upon the glass-seashore!
Ador. There the Shadow from the

throne

Formless with infinity

Hovers o'er the crystal sea;

Awfuler than light derived,

And red with those primeval
heats

Whereby all life has lived.

Zerah. Our visible God, our heavenly
seats!

Ador. Beneath us sinks the pomp
angelical,

Cherub and seraph, powers and
virtues, all,—

The roar of whose descent has died
To a still sound, as thunder into rain.

Immeasurable space spreads magnified

With that thick life, along the plane
The worlds slid out on. What a fall

And eddy of wings innumerable,
crossed

By trailing curls that have not lost
The glitter of the God-smile shed

On every prostrate angel's head!

What gleaming up of hands that fling

Their homage in retorted rays,
From high instinct of worship-

ping,

And habitude of praise.

Zerah. Rapidly they drop below us.

Pointed palm and wing and hair

Indistinguishable show us

Only pulses in the air

Throbbing with a fiery beat,

As if a new creation heard

Some divine and plastic word,
And trembling at its new-found
being,

Awakened at our feet.

Ador. Zerah, do not wait for seeing.

His voice, His, that thrills us so

As we our harpstrings, uttered Go,

Behold the Holy in His woe.

And all are gone, save thee and—

Zerah. Thee!

Ador. I stood the nearest to the throne

In hierarchical degree,

What time the Voice said Go!

And whether I was moved alone

By the storm-pathos of the tone

Which swept through heaven the alien
name of woe,

Or whether the subtle glory broke
Through my strong and shielding
wings,

Bearing to my finite essence

Incapacious of their presence,

Infinite imaginings,

None knoweth save the Throned who
spoke;

But I, who at creation stood upright

And heard the God-breath move

Shaping the words that lightened, 'Be
there light,'

Nor trembled but with love,

Now fell down shudderingly,

My face upon the pavement whence I
had towered,

As if in mine immortal overpowered

By God's eternity.

Zerah. Let me wait!—let me wait!—

Ador. Nay, gaze not backward through
the gate.

God fills our heaven with God's own solitude
 Till all the pavements glow,
 His Godhead being no more subdued
 By itself, to glories low
 Which seraphs can sustain.
 What if thou, in gazing so,
 Shouldst behold but only one
 Attribute, the veil undone—
 Even that to which we dare to press
 Nearest, for its gentleness—
 Aye, His love!
 How the deep ecstatic pain
 Thy being's strength would capture!
 Without language for the rapture,
 Without music strong to come
 And set the adoration free,
 For ever, ever, wouldest thou be
 Amid the general chorus dumb,
 God-stricken to seraphic agony!—
 Or, brother, what if on thine eyes
 In vision bare should rise
 The life-fount whence His hand did
 gather
 With solitary force
 Our immortalities!
 Straightway how thine own would
 wither,
 Falter like a human breath,
 And shrink into a point like death,
 By gazing on its source!—
 My words have imaged dread.
 Meekly hast thou bent thine head,
 And dropt thy wings in languish-
 ment;
 Overclouding foot and face,
 As if God's throne were eminent
 Before thee, in the place.
 Yet not—not so,
 O loving spirit and meek, dost thou
 fulfil
 The supreme Will.
 Not for obeisance but obedience,
 Give motion to thy wings. Depart from
 hence.
 The voice said 'Go!'
 Zerah. Beloved, I depart.
 His will is as a spirit within my spirit,
 A portion of the being I inherit.
 His will is mine obedience. I resemble
 A flame all undefiled though it tremble;
 I go and tremble. Love me, O beloved!
 O thou, who stronger art,

And standest ever near the Infinite,
 Pale with the light of Light!
 Loveme, beloved! me, more newly made,
 More feeble, more afraid;
 And let me hear with mine thy pinions
 moved,
 As close and gentle as the loving are,
 That love being near, heaven may not
 seem so far.
 Ador. I am near thee and I love thee.
 Were I loveless, from thee gone,
 Love is round, beneath, above thee,
 God, the omnipresent One.
 Spread the wing, and lift the brow
 Well-beloved, what fearest thou?
 Zerah. I fear, I fear—
 Ador. What fear?
 Zerah. The fear of earth.
 Ador. Of earth, the God-created and
 God-praised
 In the hour of birth?
 Where every night the moon in light
 Doth lead the waters silver-faced?
 Where every day the sun doth lay
 A rapture to the heart of all
 The leafy and reeded pastoral,
 As if the joyous shout which burst
 From angel lips to see him first,
 Had left a silent echo in his ray?
 Zerah. Of earth—the God-created and
 God-curst,
 Where man is, and the thorn:
 Where sun and moon have borne
 No light to souls forlorn:
 Where Eden's tree of life no more up-
 rears
 Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but instead
 The yew-tree bows its melancholy head,
 And all the undergrasses kills and seres.
 Ador. Of earth the weak,
 Made and unmade?
 Where men that faint, do strive for
 crowns that fade?
 Where, having won the profit which
 they seek,
 They lie beside the sceptre and the gold
 With fleshless hands that cannot wield
 or hold,
 And the stars shine in their unwinking
 eyes?
 Zerah. Of earth the bold,
 Where the blind matter wrings
 An awful potency out of impotence,

Bowing the spiritual things
To the things of sense,
Where the human will replies
With eye and no,
Because the human pulse is quick or slow,
Where Love succumbs to Change,
With only his own memories, for revenge.
And the fearful mystery—

Ador. Called Death?
Zerah. Nay, death is fearful,—but who saith
'To die,' is comprehensible.
What's fearfuller, thou knowest well,
Though the utterance be not for thee,
Lest it blanch thy lips from glory—
Aye! the cursèd thing that moved
A shadow of ill, long time ago,
Across our heaven's own shining floor,
And when it vanished, some who were
On thrones of holy empire there,
Did reign — were seen — were — never more.

Come nearer, O beloved!

Ador. I am near thee. Didst thou bear thee

Ever to this earth?

Zerah. Before.
When thrilling from His hand along
Its lustrous path with spheric song
The earth was deathless, sorrowless.
Unfearing, then, pure feet might press
The grasses brightening with their feet,
For God's own voice did mix its sound
In a solemn confluence oft
With the rivers' flowing round,
And the life-tree's waving soft.

Beautiful new earth and strange!

Ador. Hast thou seen it since—the change?

Zerah. Nay, or wherefore should I fear
To look upon it now?
I have beheld the ruined things
Only in depicturings
Of angels from an earthly mission,—
Strong one, even upon thy brow,
When, with task completed, given
Back to us in that transition,

I have beheld thee silent stand,
Abstracted in the seraph band,
Without a smile in heaven.

Ador. Then thou wast not one of those
Whom the loving Father chose
In visionary pomp to sweep
O'er Judaea's grassy places,
O'er the shepherds and the sheep,
Though thou art so tender?— dimming

All the stars except one star
With their brighter kinder faces,
And using heaven's own tune in hymning,

While deep response from earth's own mountains ran,
'Peace upon earth—goodwill to man.'

Zerah. 'Glory to God!'—I said amen afar.

And those who from that earthly mission are,

Within mine ears have told
That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold
With such a sweet and prodigal constraint
The meaning yet the mystery of the song,
What time they sang it, on their natures strong,

That, gazing down on earth's dark steadfastness
And speaking the new peace in promises,
The love and pity made their voices faint
Into the low and tender music, keeping
The place in heaven, of what on earth is weeping.

Ador. Peace upon earth. Come down to it.

Zerah. Ah me!
I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.
Peace where the tempest, where the sighing is,

And worship of the idol, 'stead of His!

Ador. Yea, peace, where He is.

Zerah. He!

Say it again.

Ador. Where He is.

Zerah. Can it be
That earth retains a tree
Whose leaves, like Eden foliage, can be swayed
By the breathing of His voice, nor shrink and fade?

Ador. There is a tree!—it hath no leaf
nor root;

Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit :
Its shadow on His head is laid.

For He, the crownèd Son,
Has left His crown and throne,
Walks earth in Adam's clay,
Eve's snake to bruise and slay—

Zerah. Walks earth in clay!

Ador. And walking in the clay which
He created,

He through it shall touch death.

What do I utter? what conceive? did
breath

Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?

Or was it mine own voice, informed,
• dilated

By the seven confluent Spirits?—Speak
—answer me!

Who said man's victim was his Deity?

Zerah. Beloved, beloved, the word
came forth from thee.

Thine eyes are rolling a tempestuous light

Above, below, around,

As putting thunder-questions without
cloud,

Reverberate without sound,

To universal nature's depth and height.

The tremor of an inexpressive thought
Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud,

O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips;

And while thine hands are stretched
above,

As newly they had caught

Some lightning from the Throne, or
showed the Lord

Some retributive sword,

Thy brows do alternate with wild eclipse
And radiance, with contrasted wrath
and love,

As God had called thee to a seraph's
part,

With a man's quailing heart...

Ador. O heart—O heart of man!

O ta'en from human clay,

To be no seraph's but Jehovah's own!

Made holy in the taking,

And yet unseparate

From death's perpetual ban,
And human feelings sad and passionate!
Still subject to the treacherous forsaking
Of other hearts, and its own steadfast
pain!

O heart of man—of God! which God
has ta'en

From out the dust, with its humanity
Mournful and weak yet innocent around
it,

And bade its many pulses beating lie
Beside that incommunicable stir
Of Deity wherewith He interwound it.
O man! and is thy nature so defiled,
That all that holy Heart's devout law-
keeping,

And low pathetic beat in deserts wild,
And gushings pitiful of tender weeping
For traitors who consigned it to such
woe—

That all could cleanse thee not, without
the flow

Of blood, the life-blood — *His* — and
streaming so?

O earth the thundercleft, windshaken,
where

The louder voice of 'blood and blood'
doth rise,

Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice?

O heaven—O vacant throne!

O crownèd hierarchies, that wear your
crown

When His is put away!

Are ye unshamed that ye cannot dim
Your alien brightness to be liker Him,—
Assume a human passion, and down-lay
Your sweet secureness for congenial
fears,

And teach your cloudless ever-burning
eyes

The mystery of His tears?

Zerah. I am strong, I am strong.

Were I never to see my heaven again,
I would wheel to earth like the
tempest rain

Which sweeps there with an exult-
ant sound

To lose its life as it reaches the
ground.

I am strong, I am strong.

Away from mine inward vision swim
The shining seats of my heavenly
birth—

I see but His, I see but Him—
The Maker's steps on His cruel earth.
Will the bitter herbs of earth grow
sweet

To me, as trodden by His feet?

Will the vexed, accurst humanity,
As worn by Him, begin to be
A blessed, yea, a sacred thing,
For love, and awe, and ministering?
I am strong, I am strong.
By our angel ken shall we survey
His loving smile through his woful
clay?
I am swift, I am strong—
The love is bearing me along.
Ador. One love is bearing us along.

PART THE SECOND

[*Mid-air, above Judaea. ADOR and ZERAH are a little apart from the visible Angelic Hosts.*]

Ador. BELOVED I dost thou see?—
Zerah. Thee—thee.
Thy burning eyes already are
Grown wild and mournful as a star
Whose occupation is for ay
To look upon the place of clay
Whereon thou lookest now.
The crown is fainting on thy brow
To the likeness of a cloud,
The forehead's self a little bowed
From its aspect high and holy,
As it would in meekness meet
Some seraphic melancholy.
Thy very wings that lately flung
An outline clear, do flicker here,
And wear to each a shadow hung,
Dropped across thy feet.
In these strange contrasting glooms
Stagnant with the scent of tombs,
Seraph faces, O my brother,
Show awfully to one another.

Ador. Dost thou see?
Zerah. Even so—I see
Our empyreal company,
'Alone the memory of their brightness
Left in them, as in thee.
The circle upon circle, tier on tier,
Piling earth's hemisphere
With heavenly infiniteness,
Above us and around,
Straining the whole horizon like a bow!
Their songful lips divorced from all sound,
A darkness gliding down their silvery
glances,—
Bowing their steadfast solemn countenances

As if they heard God speak, and could
not glow.
Ador. Look downward! dost thou see?
Zerah. And wouldst thou press that
vision on my words?
Doth not Earth speak enough
Of change and of undoing,
Without a seraph's witness? Oceans
rough
With tempest, pastoral swards
Displaced by fiery deserts, mountains
ruing
The bolt fallen yesterday,
That shake their piny heads, as who
would say
'We are too beautiful for our decay'—
Shall seraphs speak of these things?
Let alone
Earth, to her earthly moan.
Voice of all things. Is there no moan
but hers?
Ador. Hearrest thou the attestation
Of the rous'd Universe,
Like a desert lion shaking
Dews of silence from its mane?
With an irrepressive passion
Uprising at once,
Rising up, and forsaking
Its solemn state in the circle of suns,
To attest the pain
Of Him who stands (O patience
sweet!)
In His own hand-prints of creation,
With human feet?
Voice of all things. Is there no moan
but ours?
Zerah. Forms, Spaces, Motions wide,
O meek, insensate things,
O congregated matters! who inherit,
Instead of vital powers,
Impulsions God-supplied;
Instead of influent spirit,
A clear informing beauty;
Instead of creature-duty,
Submission calm as rest!
Lights, without feet or wings,
In golden courses sliding!
Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,
Whose lustrous heart away was prest
Into the argent stars!
Ye crystal, firmamental bars,
That hold the skyey waters free
From tide or tempest's ecstasy!

Airs universal! thunders lorn,
That wait your lightnings in cloud-cave

Hewn out by the winds! O brave
And subtle elements! the Holy
Hath charged me by your voice
with folly¹.

Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its
wound.

Return ye to your silences inborn,
Or to your inarticulated sound.

Ador. Zerah.

Zerah. Wilt thou rebuke?
God hath rebuked me, brother.—I am
weak.

Ador. Zerah, my brother Zerah!—
could I speak

Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.

Zerah. Thy look
Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy face.
Where shall I see His?

I have thrown
One look upon earth, but one,
Over the blue mountain-lines,
Over the forests of palms and pines,
Over the harvest-lands golden,
Over the valleys that fold in
The gardens and vines—

He is not there.
All these are unworthy
Those footsteps to bear,
Before which, bowing down
I would fain quench the stars of my crown
In the dark of the earthy.
Where shall I see Him?

No reply!
Hath language left thy lips, to place
Its vocal in thine eye?
Ador. Ador! are we come
To a double portent, that
Dumb matter grows articulate
And songful seraphs dumb?
Ador. Ador!

Ador. I constrain
The passion of my silence. None
Of those places gazed upon
Are gloomy know to fit His pain.
Unto Him, whose forming word
Gave to Nature flower and sward,
She hath given back again,
For the myrtle, the thorn,

¹ His angels He charged with folly.—Job iv. 18.

For the sylvan calm, the human scorn.
Still, still, reluctant seraph, gaze beneath!
There is a city—

Zerah. Temple and tower,
Palace and purple would droop like a
flower,
(Or a cloud at our breath)
If He neared in His state
The outermost gate.

Ador. Ah me, not so
In the state of a King did the victim go!
And THOU who hangest mute of speech
'Twixt heaven and earth, with fore-head yet

Stained by the bloody sweat,
God! man! Thou hast forgone Thy
throne in each!

Zerah. Thine eyes behold Him?

Ador. Yea, below.
Track the gazing of mine eyes,
Naming God within thine heart
That its weakness may depart

And the vision rise.
Seest thou yet, beloved?

Zerah. I see
Beyond the city, crosses three,
And mortals three that hang thereon,
'Ghast and silent to the sun.
Round them blacken and welter
and press

Staring multitudes, whose father
Adam was, whose brows are dark
With his Cain's corroded mark,
Who curse with looks. Nay—let
me rather

Turn unto the wilderness.

Ador. Turn not. God dwells with men.

Zerah. Above
He dwells with angels, and they love.
Can these love? With the living's pride
They stare at those who die,—who hang
In their sight and die. They bear the
streak

Of the crosses' shadow, black not wide,
To fall on their heads, as it swerves aside
When the victims' pang
Makes the dry wood creak.

Ador. The cross—the cross!

Zerah. A woman kneels
The mid cross under,
With white lips asunder,
And motion on each.
They throb, as she feels,

With a spasm, not a speech;
And her lids, close as sleep,
Are less calm, for the eyes
Have made room there to weep
Drop on drop—

Ador. Weep! Weep blood,
All women, all men!
He sweated it, He,
For your pale womanhood
And base manhood. Agree
That these water-tears, then,
Are vain, mocking like laughter!
Weep blood!—Shall the flood
Of salt curses, whose foam is the dark-
ness, on roll
Forward, on from the strand of the
storm-beaten years,
And back from the rocks of the horrid
hereafter,
And up, in a coil, from the present's
wrath-spring,
Yea, down from the windows of heaven
opening,—
Deep calling to deep as they meet on
His soul,—
And men weep only tears?

Zerah. Little drops in the lapse!
And yet, Ador, perhaps
It is all that they can.
Tears! the lovingest man
Has no better bestowed
Upon man.

Ador. Nor on God.
Zerah. Do all-givers need gifts?
If the Giver said 'Give,' the first motion
would slay

Our Immortals, the echo would ruin away
The same worlds which He made.
Why, what angel uplifts
Such a music, so clear,
It may seem in God's ear
Worth more than a woman's hoarse
weeping? And thus,
Pity tender as tears, I above thee would
speak,
Thou woman that weepest! weep un-
scorned of us!

I, the fearless and pure, am but loving
and weak.

Ador. Speak low, my brother, low,—
and not of love,
Or human or angelic. Rather stand
Before the throne of that Supreme above,

In whose infinitude the secrerries
Of thine own being lie hid, and lift thine
hand

Exultant, saying, 'Lord God, I am wise!'—
Than utter here, 'I love.'

Zerah. And yet thine eyes
Do utter it. They melt in tender light,
The tears of heaven.

Ador. Of heaven. Ah me!
Zerah. Ador!

Ador. Say on.
Zerah. The crucified are three.

Beloved, they are unlike.

Ador. Unlike.
Zerah. For one

Is as a man who has sinned and still
Doth wear the wicked will,
The hard malign life-energy,
Tossed outward, in the parting soul's
disdain,
On brow and lip that cannot change
again.

Ador. And one—
Zerah. Has also sinned.
And yet (O marvel!) doth the Spirit-wind
Blow white those waters?—Death upon
his face

Is rather shine than shade,
A tender shine by looks beloved made.
He seemeth dying in a quiet place,
And less by iron wounds in hands and feet
Than heart-broke by new joy too sudden
and sweet.

Ador. And one!—
Zerah. And ONE!—

Ador. Why dost thou pause?
Zerah. God! God!
Spirit of my spirit! who movest

Through seraph veins in burning deity
To light the quenchless pulses!—

Ador. But hast trod
The depths of love in Thy peculiar nature,
And not in any Thou hast made and lovest
In narrow seraph hearts!—

Zerah. Above, Creator!
Within, Upholder!

Ador. And below, below,
The creature's and the upholden's sacri-
fice!

Zerah. Why do I pause?—
Ador. There is a silentness
That answers thee now,—
That, like a brazen sound

Excluding others, doth ensheath us round,—
Hear it! It is not from the visible skies
Though they are still,
Unconscious that their own dropped dews express
The light of heaven on every earthly hill.
It is not from the hills, though calm and bare
They, since their first creation,
Through midnight cloud or morning's glittering air
Or the deep deluge blindness, toward the place
Whence thrilled the mystic word's creative grace,
And whence again shall come
The word that uncreates,
Have lift their brows in voiceless expectation.
It is not from the places that entomb
Man's dead—though common Silence there dilates
Her soul to grand proportions, worthily
To fill life's vacant room.
Not there—not there!
Not yet within those chambers lieth He,
A dead One in His living world! His south
And west winds blowing over earth and sea,
And not a breath on that creating Mouth.
But now,—a silence keeps
(Not death's, nor sleep's)
The lips whose whispered word
Might roll the thunders round reverberated.
Silent art Thou, O my Lord,
Bowing down Thy stricken head!
Fearest Thou, a groan of Thine
Would make the pulse of Thy creation fail
As Thine own pulse!—would rend the veil
Of visible things, and let the flood
Of the unseen Light, the essential God,
Rush in towhelm the undivine!—
Thy silence, to my thinking, is as dread.
Zerah. O silence!
Ador. Doth it say to thee—the NAME,
Slow-learning seraph?
Zerah. I have learnt.
Ador. The flame
Perishes in thine eyes.
Zerah. He opened His,
And looked. I cannot bear—

Ador. Their agony?
Zerah. Their love. God's depth is in them. From His brows White, terrible in meekness, didst thou see
The lifted eyes unclose?
He is God, seraph! Look no more on me, O God—I am not God.
Ador. The loving is Sublimed within them by the sorrowful. In heaven we could sustain them.
Zerah. Heaven is dull, Mine Ador, to man's earth. The light that burns
In fluent, refulgent motion
Along the crystal ocean;
The springing of the golden harps between
The bowery wings, in fountains of sweet sound;
The winding, wandering music that returns
Upon itself, exultingly self-bound
In the great spheric round
Of everlasting praises;
The God-thoughts in our midst that intervene,
Visibly flashing from the supreme throne
Full in seraphic faces
Till each astonishes the other, grown More beautiful with worship and delight!
My heaven! my home of heaven! my infinite
Heaven-choirs! what are ye to this dust and death,
This cloud, this cold, these tears, this failing breath,
Where God's immortal love now issueth
In this MAN'S woe?
Ador. His eyes are very deep yet calm.
Zerah. No more
On me, Jehovah-man—
Ador. Calm-deep. They show A passion which is tranquil. They are seeing
No earth, no heaven, no men that slay and curse,
No seraphs that adore;
Their gaze is on the invisible, the dread, The things we cannot view or think or speak,
Because we are too happy, or too weak,—
The sea of ill, for which the universe,

With all its piled space, can find no shore,
With all its life, no living foot to tread!
But He, accomplished in Jehovah-being,
Sustains the gaze adown,
Conceives the vast despair,
And feels the billowy griefs come up to drown,
Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails, till all be finished.

Zerah. Thus, do I find Thee thus?
My undiminished

And undiminishable God!—my God!
The echoes are still tremulous along
The heavenly mountains, of the latest song

Thy manifested glory swept abroad
In rushing past our lips! they echo ay
‘Creator, Thou art strong!—
Creator, Thou art blessed over all.’

By what new utterance shall I now recall,
Unteaching the heaven-echoes? Dare I say,

‘Creator, Thou art feeblower than Thy work!

Creator, Thou art sadder than Thy creature!

A worm, and not a man,
Yea, no worm, but a curse’!—

I dare not so mine heavenly phrase reverse.

Albeit the piercing thorn and thistle-fork
(Whose seed disordered ran

From Eve’s hand trembling when the curse did reach her)

Be garnered darklier in Thy soul, the rod
That smites Thee never blossoming, and Thou

Grief-bearer for Thy world, with unkinged brow—

I leave to men their song of Ichabod.
I have an angel-tongue—I know but praise.

Ador. Hereafter shall the blood-bought captives raise

The passion-song of blood.

Zerah. And we, extend Our holy vacant hands towards the

Throne,
Crying ‘We have no music!’

Ador. Rather, blend Both musics into one.

The sanctities and sanctified above

Shall each to each, with lifted looks serene,
Their shining faces lean,
And mix the adoring breath

And breathe the full thanksgiving.
Zerah. But the love—

The love, mine Ador!
Ador. Do we love not?
Zerah. Yea,

But not as man shall! not with life for death,

New-throbbing through the startled being! not

With strange astonished smiles, that ever may

Gush passionate like tears and fill their place!

Nor yet with speechless memories of what Earth’s winters were, enverduring the green

Of every heavenly palm
Whose windless, shadeless calm

Moves only at the breath of the Unseen.
Oh, not with this blood on us—and this face!—

Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it bore In our behalf, and tender evermore With nature all our own, upon us gazing!—

Nor yet with these forgiving hands up-raising

Their unreproachful wounds, alone to bless!

Alas, Creator! shall we love Thee less Than mortals shall?

Ador. Amen! so let it be.
We love in our proportion—to the bound Thine infinite our finite set around,

And that is finitely,—Thou, infinite And worthy infinite love! And our delight

Is watching the dear love poured out to Thee

From ever fuller chalice. Blessed they, Who love Thee more than we do! blessed we,

Viewing that love which shall exceed even this,

And winning in the sight a double bliss, For all so lost in love’s supremacy!

The bliss is better. Only on the sad

Cold earth there are who say It seemeth better to be great than glad.

The bliss is better. Love Him more,
O man,
Than sinless seraphs can.

Zerah. Yea, love Him more.
Voice of the angelic multitude. Yea, more.

Ador. The loving word
Is caught by those from whom we stand
apart.

For Silence hath no deepness in her heart
Where love's low name low breathed
would not be heard

By angels, clear as thunder.

Angelic voices. Love him more!

Ador. Sweet voices, swooning o'er
The music which ye make!
Albeit to love there were not ever
given
A mournful sound when uttered out
of heaven,
That angel-sadness ye would fitly
take.
Of love be silent now! we gaze
down
Upon the incarnate Love who wears
no crown.

Zerah. No crown! the woe instead
Is heavy on His head,
Pressing inward on His brain
With a hot and clinging pain,
Till all tears are prest away,
And clear and calm His vision may
Peruse the black abyss.

No rod, no sceptre is
Holden in His fingers pale;
They close instead upon the nail,
Concealing the sharp dole—

Never stirring to put by
The fair hair peaked with blood,
Drooping forward from the rood
Helplessly, heavily,

On the cheek that waxeth colder,
Whiter ever,—and the shoulder
Where the government was laid.
His glory made the heavens afraid;

Will He not unearth this cross from

its hole?

His pity makes His piteous state;
Will He be uncompassionate

Alone to His proper soul?

Yea, will He not lift up
His lips from the bitter cup,
His brows from the dreary weight,
His hand from the clenching cross,

Crying, 'My Father, give to Me
Again the joy I had with Thee,
Or ere this earth was made for loss?'—

No stir—no sound!
The love and woe being interwound
He cleaveth to the woe,
And putteth forth heaven's strength
below—

To bear.
Ador. And that creates His anguish
now,

Which made His glory there.

Zerah. Shall it indeed be so?
Awake, thou Earth! behold!
Thou, uttered forth of old
In all thy life-emotion,
In all thy vernal noises,
In the rollings of thine ocean,
Leaping founts, and rivers run-

ning,—
In thy woods' prophetic heaving
Ere the rains a stroke have given,
In thy winds' exultant voices
When they feel the hills afar,
In the firmamental sunning,
And the tempest which rejoices

Thy full heart with an awful cheer!

Thou, uttered forth of old,
And with all thy music rolled
In a breath abroad
By the breathing God,—
Awake! He is here! behold!
Even thou—

beseems it good
To thy vacant vision dim,
That the deadly ruin should,
For thy sake, encompass Him?
That the Master-word should lie
A mere silence, while His own
Processive harmony,

The faintest echo of His lightest tone,
Is sweeping in a choral triumph by?

Awake! emit a cry!
And say, albeit used
From Adam's ancient years
To falls of acrid tears,
To frequent sighs unloosed,
Caught back to press again
On bosoms zoned with pain—
To corses still and sullen
The shine and music dulling
With closed eyes and ears
That nothing sweet can enter,

Commoveing thee no less
 With that forced quietness
 Than the earthquake in thy centre—
 Thou hast not learnt to bear
 This new divine despair !
 These tears that sink into thee,
 These dying eyes that view thee,
 This dropping blood from lifted
 rood,
 They darken and undo thee !
 Thou canst not, presently, sustain this
 curse !
 Cry, cry, thou hast not force !
 Cry, thou wouldest fainer keep
 Thy hopeless chanells deep,
 Thyself a general tomb—
 Where the first and the second Death
 Sit gazing face to face
 And mar each other's breath,
 While silent bones through all the place
 Neath sun and moon do faintly glisten,
 And seem to lie and listen
 For the tramp of the coming Doom.
 Is it not meet
 That they who erst the Eden fruit did eat,
 Should champ the ashes ?
 That they who wrapt them in the
 thundercloud,
 Should wear it as a shroud,
 Perishing by its flashes ?
 That they who vexed the lion, should be
 rent ?
 Cry, cry—'I will sustain my punish-
 ment,
 The sin being mine ! but take away from
 me
 This visioned Dread—this Man—this
 Deity.'
The Earth. I have groaned—I have
 travailed—I am weary.
 I am blind with mine own grief, and
 cannot see,
 As clear-eyed angels can, His agony,
 And what I see I also can sustain,
 Because His power protects me from
 His pain.
 I have groaned—I have travailed—I am
 dreary,
 Harkening the thick sobs of my child-
 ren's heart.
 How can I say 'Depart'
 To that Atoner making calm and free ?
 Am I a God as He,

To lay down peace and power as will-
 ingly ?
Ador. He looked for some to pity.
 There is none.
 All pity is within Him, and not for Him.
 His earth is iron under Him, and o'er Him
 His skies are brass.
 His seraphs cry 'Alas'
 With hallelujah voice that cannot weep.
 And man, for whom the dreadful work is
 done—
Scornful voices from the Earth. If verily
 this be the Eternal's son—
Ador. Thou hearest !—man is grateful !
Zerah. Can I hear,
 Nor darken into man and cease for ever
 My seraph-smile to wear ?
 Was it for such,
 It pleased Him to overleap
 His glory with His love and sever
 From the God-light and the throne
 And all angels bowing down,
 For whom His every look did touch
 New notes of joy on the unworn
 string
 Of an eternal worshipping ?
 For such, He left His heaven ?
 There, though never bought by
 blood
 And tears, we gave Him gratitude !
 We loved Him there, though unfor-
 given !
Ador. The light is riven
 Above, around,
 And down in lurid fragments flung,
 That catch the mountain-peak and stream
 With momentary gleam,
 Then perish in the water and the ground.
 River and waterfall,
 Forest and wilderness,
 Mountain and city, are together wrung
 Into one shape, and that is shapelessness ;
 The darkness stands for all.
Zerah. The pathos hath the day undone :
 The death-look of His eyes
 Hath overcome the sun,
 And made it sicken in its narrow skies.
Ador. Is it to death ? He dieth.
Zerah. Through the dark
 He still, He only, is discernible—
 The naked hands and feet transfixèd stark,
 The countenance of patient anguish white,
 Do make themselves a light

More dreadful than the glooms which
round them dwell,
And therein do they shine.

Ador. God ! Father-God !
Perpetual Radiance on the radiant
throne !

Uplift the lids of inward Deity,
Flashing abroad
Thy burning Infinite !
Light up this dark, where there is nought
to see

Except the unimagined agony
Upon the sinless forehead of the Son.

Zerah. God, tarry not ! Behold, know
Hath He wandered as a stranger,
Sorrowed as a victim. Thou

Appear for Him, O Father !

Appear for Him, Avenger !

Appear for Him, just One and holy One,

For He is holy and just !

At once the darkness and dishonour
rather

To the ragged jaws of hungry chaos rake,
And hurl aback to ancient dust
These mortals that make blasphemies
With their made breath ! this earth and
skies

That only grow a little dim,
Seeing their curse on Him !

But Him, of all forsaken,
Of creature and of brother,

Never will thou forsake !

Thy living and Thy loving cannot slacken
Their firm essential hold upon each
other—

And well Thou dost remember how His
part

Was still to lie upon Thy breast and be
Partaker of the light that dwelt in Thee
Ere sun or seraph shone ;

And how while silence trembled round
the throne,
Thou countedst by the beatings of His
heart

The moments of Thine own eternity !
Awaken,

O right Hand with the lightnings !
Again gather

His glory to thy glory ! What estranger,
What ill supreme in evil, can be thrust
Between the faithful Father and the Son ?

Appear for Him, O Father !

Appear for Him, Avenger !

Appear for Him, just One and holy One,
For He is holy and just.

Ador. Thy face, upturned toward the
throne, is dark—
Thou hast no answer, Zerah.

Zerah. No reply,
O uns forsaking Father ?—

Ador. Hark !
Instead of downward voice, a cry
Is uttered from beneath.

Zerah. And by a sharper sound than
death

Mine immortality is riven.
The heavy darkness which doth tent the
sky

Floats backward as by a sudden wind—
But I see no light behind I

But I feel the farthest stars are all
Stricken and shaken,

And I know a shadow sad and broad
Doth fall—doth fall

On our vacant thrones in heaven.

Voice from the Cross. My God, my God,
WHY hast THOU ME FORSAKEN ?

The Earth. Ah me, ah me, ah me ! the
dreadful why !

My sin is on Thee, sinless One ! Thou art
God-orphaned, for my burden on Thy
head.

Dark sin, white innocence, endurance
dread !

Be still, within your shrouds, my buried
dead—

Nor work with this quick horror round
mine heart !

Zerah. He hath forsaken Him. I
perish—

Ador. Hold
Upon His name ! we perish not. Of old
His will—

Zerah. I seek His will. Seek, seraphim !
My God, my God ! where is it ? Doth
that curse

Reverberate spare us, seraph or universe ?
He hath forsaken Him.

Ador. He cannot fail.

Angel Voices. We faint, we droop—
Our love doth tremble like fear.

Voices of Fallen Angels from the earth.
Do we prevail ?

Or are we lost ?—Hath not the ill we did
Been heretofore our good ?

Is it not ill that One, all sinless, should

Hang heavy with all curses on a cross ?
Nathless, that cry !—With huddled faces
hid

Within the empty graves which men did
scoop

To hold more damned dead, we shudder
through

What shall exalt us or undo,—
Our triumph, or our loss.

Voice from the Cross. IT IS FINISHED.

Zerah. Hark, again !

Like a victor speaks the Slain.

Angel Voices. Finished be the trembling
vain !

Ador. Upward, like a well-loved Son,
Looketh He, the orphaned One.

Angel Voices. Finished is the mystic
pain !

Voices of Fallen Angels. His deathly
forehead at the word

Gleameth like a seraph sword.

Angel Voices. Finished is the demon
reign !

Ador. His breath, as living God,
createth,
His breath, as dying man, com-
pleteth.

Angel Voices. Finished work His hands
sustain !

The Earth. In mine ancient sepul-
chres

Where my kings and prophets
freeze,
Adam dead four thousand years,
Unwakened by the universe's
Everlasting moan,
Ay his ghastly silence, mocking—
Unwakened by his children's
knocking

At his old sepulchral stone,
'Adam, Adam, all this curse is
Thine and on us yet !'

Unwakened by the ceaseless tears
Wherewith they made his cere-
ment wet,

'Adam, must thy curse re-
main ?'

Starts with sudden life, and hears
Through the slow dripping of the
caverned eaves,—

Angel Voices. Finished is his bane !

Voice from the Cross. FATHER ! MY
SPIRIT TO THINE HANDS IS GIVEN !

Ador. Hear the wailing winds that be
By wings of unclean spirits made !
They, in that last look, surveyed
The love they lost in losing heaven,
And passionately flee,—
With a desolate cry that cleaves
The natural storms—though *they* are
lifting

God's strong cedar-roots like leaves,
And the earthquake and the thunder,
Neither keeping either under,
Roar and hurtle through the glooms !—
And a few pale stars are drifting
Past the Dark, to disappear,
What time, from the splitting tombs,
Gleamingly the Dead arise,
Viewing with their death-calmed eyes
The elemental strategies,
To witness, Victory is the Lord's.
Hear the wail o' the spirits ! hear.

Zerah. I hear alone the memory of His
words.

EPILOGUE

I

My song is done,
My voice that long hath faltered, shall
be still.
The mystic darkness drops from Calvary's
hill
Into the common light of this day's sun.

II

I see no more Thy cross, O holy Slain !
I hear no more the horror and the coil
Of the great world's turmoil,
Feeling thy countenance *too still*,—nor
yell
Of demons sweeping past to their prison.
The skies, that turned to darkness with
Thy pain,
Make now a summer's day ;
And on my changed ear that sabbath bell
Records how CHRIST IS RISEN.

III

And I—ah ! what am I
To counterfeit, with faculty earth-
darkened,
Seraphic brows of light,

THE SERAPHIM

And seraph language never used nor
hearkened?
Ah me! what word that seraphs say,
could come
From mouth so used to sighs—so soon
to lie
Sighless, because then breathless, in the
tomb?

Bright ministers of God and grace!—of
grace
Because of God!—whether ye bow
adown
In your own heaven, before the living
face
Of Him who died, and deathless wears
the crown—
Or whether at this hour ye haply are
Anear, around me, biding in the night
Of this permitted ignorance your light,
This feebleness to spare,—
Forgive me, that mine earthly heart
should dare
Shape images of unincarnate spirits,

And lay upon their burning lips a thought
Cold with the weeping which mine earth
inherits.
And though ye find in such hoarse music,
wrought
To copy yours, a cadence all the while
Of sin and sorrow—only pitying
smile!—
Ye know to pity, well.

v

I too may haply smile another day
At the far recollection of this lay,
When God may call me in your midst to
dwell,
To hear your most sweet music's miracle
And see your wondrous faces. May it be!
For His remembered sake, the Slain on
rood,
Who rolled His earthly garment red in
blood
(Treading the wine-press) that the weak,
like me,
Before His heavenly throne should walk
in white.

QUEEN ANNELIDA AND FALSE ARCITE¹

I

O THOU fierce God of armies, Mars the red,
Who in thy frosty country callèd Thrace,
Within thy grisly temples full of dread,
Art honoured as the patron of that place,
With the Bellona Pallas, full of grace!
Be present; guide, sustain this song of mine,
Beginning which, I cry toward thy shrine.

II

For deep the hope is sunken in my mind,
In piteous-hearted English to indite
This story old, which I in Latin find,
Of Queen Annelida and false Arcite:
Since Time, whose rust can all things fret and bite,
In fretting many a tale of equal fame,
Hath from our memory nigh devoured this same.

III

Thy favour, Polyhymnia, also deign,
Who, in thy sisters' green Parnassian glade,
By Helicon, not far from Cirrha's fane,
Singest with voice memorial in the shade,
Under the laurel which can never fade;
Now grant my ship, that some smooth haven win her!
I follow Statius first, and then Corinna.

IV

When Theseus by a long and deathly war
The hardy Scythian race had overcome,
He, laurel-crownèd, in his gold-wrought car,
Returning to his native city home,
The blissful people for his pomp make room,

And throw their shouts up to the stars,
and bring
The general heart out for his honouring.

V

Before the Duke, in sign of victory,
The trumpets sound, and in his banner large
Dilates the figure of Mars—and men may see,
In token of glory, many a treasure charge,
Many a bright helm, and many a spear and targe,
Many a fresh knight, and many a blissful rout
On horse and foot, in all the field about.

VI

Hippolyte, his wife, the heroic queen
Of Scythia, conqueress though conquer'd,
With Emily, her youthful sister sheen,
Fair in a car of gold he with him led.
The ground about her car she overspread
With brightness from the beauty in her face,
Which smiled forth largesses of love and grace.

VII

Thus triumphing, and laurel-crownèd thus,
In all the flower of Fortune's high providing,
I leave this noble prince, this Theseus,
Toward the walls of Athens bravely riding,—
And seek to bring in, without more abiding,
Something of that whereof I gan to write,
Of fair Annelida and false Arcite.

¹ From *The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer, Modernized*, 1841.

VIII

Fierce Mars, who in his furious course
of ire,
The ancient wrath of Juno to fulfil,
Had set the nations' mutual hearts on fire
In Thebes and Argos, (so that each
would kill
Either with bloody spears,) grew never
still—
But rushed now here, now there,
among them both,
Till each was slain by each, they were
so wroth.

IX

For when Parthenopaeus and Tydeus
Had perished with Hippomedon,—also
Amphiarus and proud Capaneus,—
And when the wretched Theban brethren
two
Were slain, and King Adrastus home
did go—
So desolate stood Thebes, her halls so
bare,
That no man's love could remedy his
care.

X

And when the old man, Creon, 'gan
espy
How darkly the blood royal was brought
down,
He held the city in his tyranny,
And forced the nobles of that region
To be his friends and dwell within the
town;
Till half for love of him, and half for fear,
Those princely persons yielded, and
drew near,—

XI

Among the rest the young Armenian
queen,
Annelida, was in that city living.
She was as beauteous as the sun was
sheen,
Her fame to distant lands such glory
giving,
That all men in the world had some
heart-striving
To look on her. No woman, sooth,
can be,
Though earth is rich in fairness, fair as
she.

XII

Young was this queen, but twenty-
summers old,
Of middle stature, and such wondrous
beauty,
That Nature, self-delighted, did behold
A rare work in her—while, in steadfast
duty,
Lucretia and Penelope would suit ye
With a worse model—all things under-
stood,
She was, in short, most perfect fair and
good.

XIII

The Theban knight eke, to give all their
due,
Was young, and therewithal a lusty
knight.
But he was double in love, and nothing
true,
Aye, subtler in that craft than any wight,
And with his cunning won this lady
bright;
So working on her simplicess of nature,
That she him trusted above every crea-
ture.

XIV

What shall I say? She lovèd Arcite so,
That if at any hour he parted from her,
Her heart seemed ready anon to burst
in two;
For he with lowliness had overcome her:
She thought she knew the heart which
did fore doom her.
But he was false, and all that softness
feigning,—
I trow men need not *learn* such arts of
paining.

XV

And ne'ertheless full mickle business
Had he, before he might his lady win,—
He swore that he should die of his
distress,
His brain would madden with the fire
within!
Alas, the while! for it was ruth and sin,
That she, sweet soul, upon his grief
should rue;
But little reckon false hearts as the true.

xvi

And she to Arcite so subjected her,
That all she did or had seemed his of
right :
No creature in her house met smile or
cheer,
Further than would be pleasant to Arcite :
There was no lack whereby she did
despite
To his least will—for hers to his was
bent,
And all things which pleased him made
her content.

xvii

No kind of letter to her fair hands came,
Touching on love, from any kind of
wight,
But him she showed it ere she burned
the same :
So open was she, doing all she might,
That nothing should be hidden from her
knight,
Lest he for any untruth should upbraid
her,—
The slave of his unspoken will she made
her.

xviii

He played his jealous fancies over her,
And if he heard that any other man
Spoke to her, would beseech her
straight to swear
— To each word—or the speaker had his
ban ;
And out of her sweet wits she almost ran
For fear ; but all was fraud and flattery,
Since without love he feignèd jealousy.

xix

All which with so much sweetness
suffered she,
Whate'er he willed she thought the
wisest thing ;
And evermore she loved him tenderly,
And did him honour as he were a king.
Her heart was wedded to him with
a ring,
So eager to be faithful and intent,
That wheresoe'er he wandered, there it
went.

xx

When she would eat he stole away her
thought,
Till little thought for food, I ween, was
kept ;
And when a time for rest the midnight
brought,
She always mused upon him till she
slept,—
When he was absent, secretly she wept ;
And thus lived Queen Annelida the fair,
For false Arcite, who worked her this
despair.

xxi

This false Arcite in his new-fangleness,
Because so gentle were her ways and
true,
Took the less pleasure in her steadfast-
ness,
And saw another lady proud and new,
And right anon he clad him in her
hue ;
I know not whether white, or red, or
green,
Betraying fair Annelida the Queen.

xxii

And yet it was no thing to wonder on,
Though he were false—It is the way of
man,
(Since Lamech was, who flourished
years agone,)
To be in love as false as any can ;
For he was the first father who began
To love two ; and I trow, indeed, that he
Invented tents as well as bigamy.

xxiii

And having so betrayed her, false Arcite
Feigned more, that primal wrong to
justify.
A vicious horse will snort besides his
bite ;
And so he taunted her with treachery,
Swearing he saw thro' her duplicity,
And how she was not loving, but false-
hearted—
The perjured traitor swore thus, and
departed.

XXIV

Alas, alas, what heart could suffer it,
For ruth, the story of her grief to tell?
What thinker hath the cunning and the
wit
To image it? what hearer, strength to
dwell
A room's length off, while I rehearse the
hell
Suffered by Queen Annelida the fair
For false Arcite, who worked her this
despair!

XXV

She weepeth, waileth, swooneth pite-
ously;
She falleth on the earth dead as a stone;
Her graceful limbs are cramped convul-
sively;
She speaketh out wild, as her wits were
gone.
No colour, but an ashen paleness—
none—
Touched cheek or lips; and no word
shook their white,
But 'Mercy, cruel heart! mine own
Arcite!'

XXVI

Thus it continued, till she pinèd so,
And grew so weak, her feet no more
could bear
Her body, languishing in ceaseless woe,
Whereof Arcite had neither ruth nor
care—
His heart had put out new-green shoots
elsewhere;
Therefore he deigned not on her grief
to think,
And reckoned little, did she float or sink.

XXVII

His fine new lady kept him in such narrow
Strict limit, by the bridle, at the end
O' the whip, he feared her least word as
an arrow,—
Her threatening made him, as a bow, to
bend,
And at her pleasure did he turn and wend;
Seeing she never granted to this lover
A single grace he could sing 'Ios' over.

XXVIII

She drove him forth—she scarcely
deigned to know
That he was servant to her ladyship:
But, lest he should be proud, she kept
him low,
Nor paid his service from a smiling lip:
She sent him now to land, and now to
ship;
And giving him all danger to his fill,
She thereby had him at her sovereign will.

XXIX

Be taught of this, ye prudent women all,
Warned by Annelida and false Arcite:
Because she chose, himself, 'dear heart'
to call
And be so meek, he loved her not aright.
The nature of man's heart is to delight
In something strange—moreover (may
Heaven save
The wronged) the thing they cannot,
they would have.

XXX

Now turn we to Annelida again,
Who pinèd day by day in languishment,
But when she saw no comfort met her
pain,
Weeping once in a woful unconstraint,
She set herself to fashion a complaint,
Which with her own pale hand she gan
to write,
And sent it to her lover, to Arcite.

THE COMPLAINT OF ANNELIDA TO
FALSE ARCITE

I

The sword of sorrow, whetted sharp for
me
On false delight, with point of memory
Stabbed so mine heart, bliss-bare and
black of hue,
That all to dread is turned my dance's
glee,
My face's beauty to despondency—
For nothing it availleth to be true—
And, whosoever is so, she shall rue
Obeying love, and cleaving faithfully
Alway to one, and changing for no new.

II

I ought to know it well as any wight,
For I loved one with all my heart and
might,
More than myself a hundred-thousand
fold,
And called him my heart's dear life, my
knight,
And was all his, as far as it was right;
His gladness did my blitheness make of
old,
And in his least disease my death was
told;
Who, on his side, had plighted lovers'
plight,
Me, evermore, his lady and love to hold.

III

Now is he false—alas, alas!—although
Unwronged! and acting such a ruthless
part,
That with a little word he will not deign
To bring the peace back to my mournful
heart.
Drawn in, and caught up by another's
art,
Right as he will, he laugheth at my pain;
While I—I cannot my weak heart re-
strain
From loving him—still, ay; yet none I
know
To whom of all this grief I can complain.

IV

Shall I complain (ah, piteous and harsh
sound!)
Unto my foe, who gave mine heart a
wound,
And still desireth that the harm be more?
Now certes, if I sought the whole earth
round,
No other help, no better leach were
found!
My destiny hath shaped it so of yore—
I would not other medicine, nor yet lore.
I would be ever where I once was bound;
And what I said, would say for evermore.

V

Alas! and where is gone your gentillesse?
Where gone your pleasant words, your
humbleness?

Where your devotion full of reverent fear,
Your patient loyalty, your busy address
To me, whom once you called nothing less
Than mistress, sovereign lady, i' the
sphere
O' the world? Ah me! no word, no look
of cheer,
Will you vouchsafe upon my heaviness!
Alas your love! I bought it all too dear.

VI

Now certes, sweet, howe'er you be
The cause so, and so causelessly,
Of this my mortal agony,
Your reason should amend the failing!
Your friend, your true love, do you flee,
Who never in time nor yet degree
Grieved you: so may the all-knowing
He
Save my lorn soul from future wailing.

VII

Because I was so plain, Arcite,
In all my doings, your delight,
Seeking in all things, where I might
In honour,—meek and kind and free;
Therefore you do me such despite.
Alas! howe'er through cruelty
My heart with sorrow's sword you
smite,
You cannot kill its love.—Ah me!

VIII

Ah, my sweet foe, why do you so
For shame?
Think you that praise, in sooth, will raise
Your name,
Loving anew, and being untrue
For ay?
Thus casting down your manhood's crown
In blame,
And working *me* adversity,
The same
Who loves you most—(O God, Thou
know'st!)
Always?
Yet turn again—be fair and plain
Some day;
And then shall this, that seems amiss,
Be game,
All being forgiven, while yet from heaven
I stay.

IX

Behold, dear heart, I write this to obtain
Some knowledge, whether I should pray
or 'plain :

Which way is best to force you to be true?
For either I must have you in my chain,
Or you, sweet, with the death must part
us twain;

There is no mean, no other way more
new:

And, that heaven's mercy on my soul
may rue

And let you slay me outright with this
pain,

The whiteness in my cheeks may prove
to you.

X

For hitherto mine own death have I
sought;

Myself I murder with my secret thought,
In sorrow and ruth of your unkindnesses!
I weep, I wail, I fast—all helpeth nought,
I flee all joy (I mean the name of aught),
I flee all company, all mirthfulness—
Why, who can make her boast of more
distress

Than I?—To such a plight you have me
brought,

Guiltless (I need no witness) ne'ertheless.

XI

Shall I go pray and wail my womanhood?
Compared to such a deed, death's self
were good.

What! ask for mercy, and guiltless—
where's the need?

And if I wailed my life so,—that you
would

Care nothing, is less feared than under-
stood:

And if mine oath of love I dared to plead
In mine excuse,—your scorn would be
its need.

Ah, love! it giveth flowers instead of
seed—

Full long ago I might have taken heed.

XII

And though I had you back to-morrow
again,
I might as well hold April from the rain

As hold you to the vows you vowed me
last.

Maker of all things, and truth's sovereign,
Where is the truth of man, who hath it
slain,

That she who loveth him should find
him fast

As in a tempest is a rotten mast?

Is that a tame beast which is ever fain
To flee us when restraint and fear are
past?

XIII

Now mercy, sweet, if I mis-say;—
Have I said aught is wrong to-day?
I do not know—my wit's astray—
I fare as doth the song of one who
weepeth;

For now I 'plain, and now I play—
I am so mazed, I die away—
Arcite, you have the key for ay
Of all my world, and all the good it
keepeth.

XIV

And in this world there is not one
Who walketh with a sadder moan,
And bears more grief than I have done;
And if light slumbers overcome me,
Methinks your image, in the glory
Of skyey azure, stands before me,
Revowing the old love you bore me,
And praying for new mercy from me.

XV

Through the long night, this wondrous
sight,

Bear I,
Which haunteth still, the daylight, till
I die:
But nought of this, your heart, I wis,
Can reach.

Mine eyes down-pour, they nevermore
Are dry.
While to your ruth, and eke your truth,
I cry—
But, weladay, too far be they

To fetch.
Thus destiny is holding me—
Ah, wretch!

And when I fain would break the chain,
And try—
Failleth my wit (so weak is it)
With speech.

xvi

Therefore I end thus, since my hope is
o'er—
I give all up both now and evermore;
And in the balance ne'er again will lay
My safety, nor be studious in love-lore.
But like the swan who, as I heard of yore,
Singeth life's penance on his deathly day,
So I sing here my life and woes away,—
Aye, how you, cruel Arcite, wounded
sore,
With memory's point, your poor Anne-
lida.

xvii

After Annelida, the woful queen,
Had written in her own hand in this
wise,
With ghastly face, less pale than white,
I ween,
She fell a-swooning; then she 'gan
arise,
And unto Mars voweth a sacrifice
Within the temple, with a sorrowful
bearing,
And in such phrase as meets your present
hearing.

POEMS, 1838—50

PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1844

THE collection here offered to the public consists of Poems which have been written in the interim between the period of the publication of my *Seraphim* and the present; variously coloured, or perhaps shadowed, by the life of which they are the natural expression, and, with the exception of a few contributions to English or American periodicals, are printed now for the first time.

As the first poem of this collection, the *Drama of Exile*, is the longest and most important work (to me!) which I ever trusted into the current of publication, I may be pardoned for entreating the reader's attention to the fact, that I decided on publishing it after considerable hesitation and doubt. The subject of the Drama rather fastened on me than was chosen; and the form, approaching the model of the Greek tragedy, shaped itself under my hand, rather by force of pleasure than of design. But when the excitement of composition had subsided I felt afraid of my position. My subject was the new and strange experience of the fallen humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of originating the Fall to her offence, appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man. There was room, at least, for lyrical emotion in those first steps into the wilderness,—in that first sense of desolation after wrath,—in that first audible gathering of the recriminating 'groan of the whole creation,'—in that first darkening of the hills from the recoiling feet of angels,—and in that first silence of the voice of God. And I took pleasure in driving in, like a pile, stroke upon stroke, the idea of EXILE,—admitting Lucifer as an extreme Adam, to represent the

ultimate tendencies of sin and loss,—that it might be strong to bear up the contrary idea of the Heavenly love and purity. But when all was done I felt afraid, as I said before, of my position. I had promised my own prudence to shut close the gates of Eden between Milton and myself, so that none might say I dared to walk in his footsteps. He should be within, I thought, with his Adam and Eve unfallen or falling,—and I, without, with my EXILES,—I also an exile! It would not do. The subject, and his glory covering it, swept through the gates, and I stood full in it, against my will, and contrary to my vow, till I shrank back fearing, almost desponding; hesitating to venture even a passing association with our great poet before the face of the public. Whether at last I took courage for the venture by a sudden revival of that love of manuscript which should be classed by moral philosophers among the natural affections, or by the encouraging voice of a dear friend, it is not interesting to the reader to inquire. Neither could the fact affect the question; since I bear, of course, my own responsibilities. For the rest, Milton is too high, and I am too low, to render it necessary for me to disavow any rash emulation of his divine faculty on his own ground; while enough individuality will be granted, I hope, to my poem, to rescue me from that imputation of plagiarism which should be too servile a thing for every sincere thinker. After all, and at the worst, I have only attempted, in respect to Milton, what the Greek dramatists achieved lawfully in respect to Homer. They constructed dramas on Trojan ground; they raised on the buskin and even clasped with the sock, the feet of Homeric heroes; yet they neither imitated their Homer nor emasculated him. The Agamemnon of Aeschylus, who died in the bath, did no

harm to, nor suffered any harm from, the Agamemnon of Homer who bearded Achilles. To this analogy—the more favourable to me from the obvious exception in it, that Homer's subject was his own possibly by creation, whereas Milton's was his own by illustration only—I appeal. To this analogy—not to this comparison, be it understood—I appeal. For the analogy of the stronger may apply to the weaker; and the reader may have patience with the weakest while she suggests the application.

On a graver point I must take leave to touch, in further reference to my dramatic poem. The divine Saviour is represented in vision towards the close, speaking and transfigured; and it has been hinted to me that the introduction may give offence in quarters where I should be most reluctant to give any. A reproach of the same class, relating to the frequent recurrence of a Great Name in my pages, has already filled me with regret. How shall I answer these things? Frankly, in any case. When the old mysteries represented the Holiest Being in a rude familiar fashion, and the people gazed on, with the faith of children in their earnest eyes, the critics of a succeeding age, who rejoiced in Congreve, cried out 'profane.' Yet Andreini's mystery suggested Milton's epic; and Milton, the most reverent of poets, doubting whether to throw his work into the epic form or the dramatic, left, on the latter basis, a rough ground-plan, in which his intention of introducing the 'Heavenly Love' among the persons of his drama is extant to the present day. But the tendency of the present day is to sunder the daily life from the spiritual creed,—to separate the worshippers from the acting man,—and by no means to 'live by faith.' There is a feeling abroad which appears to me (I say it with deference) nearer to superstition than to religion, that there should be no touching of holy vessels except by consecrated singers, nor any naming of holy names except in consecrated places. As if life were not a continual sacrament to man, since Christ brake the daily bread of it in His hands! As if the name of God did

not build a church, by the very naming of it! As if the word God were not, everywhere in His creation, and at every moment in His eternity, an appropriate word! As if it could be uttered unfitly, if devoutly! I appeal on these points, which I will not argue, from the conventions of the Christian to his devout heart; and I beseech him generously to believe of me that I have done that in reverence from which, through reverence, he might have abstained; and that where he might have been driven to silence by the principle of adoration, I, by the very same principle, have been hurried into speech.

It should have been observed in another place,—the fact, however, being sufficiently obvious throughout the drama,—that the time is from the evening into the night. If it should be objected that I have lengthened my twilight too much for the East, I might hasten to answer that we know nothing of the length of mornings or evenings before the Flood, and that I cannot, for my own part, believe in an Eden without the longest of purple twilights. The evening, *ঝ*, of Genesis signifies a 'mingling,' and approaches the meaning of our 'twilight' analytically. Apart from which considerations, my 'exiles' are surrounded, in the scene described, by supernatural appearances; and the shadows that approach them are not only of the night.

The next longest poem to the *Drama of Exile*, in the collection, is the *Vision of Poets*, in which I have endeavoured to indicate the necessary relations of genius to suffering and self-sacrifice. In the eyes of the living generation, the poet is at once a richer and poorer man than he used to be; he wears better broadcloth, but speaks no more oracles: and the evil of this social incrustation over a great idea is eating deeper and more fatally into our literature than either readers or writers may apprehend fully. I have attempted to express in this poem my view of the mission of the poet, of the self-abnegation implied in it, of the great work involved in it, of the duty and glory of what Balzac has beautifully and truly called '*la patience angélique du génie*';

and of the obvious truth, above all, that if knowledge is power, suffering should be acceptable as a part of knowledge. It is enough to say of the other poems, that scarcely one of them is unambitious of an object and a significance.

Since my *Seraphim* was received by the public with more kindness than its writer had counted on, I dare not rely on having put away the faults with which that volume abounded and was mildly reproached. Something indeed I may hope to have retrieved, because some progress in mind and in art every active thinker and honest writer must consciously or unconsciously make, with the progress of existence and experience: and, in some sort—since ‘we learn in suffering what we teach in song’—my songs may be fitter to teach. But if it were not presumptuous language on the lips of one to whom life is more than usually uncertain, my favourite wish for this work would be, that it be received by the public as a step in the right track, towards a future indication of more value and acceptability. I would fain do better—and I feel as if I might do better: I aspire to do better. It is no new form of the nympholepsy of poetry, that my ideal should fly before me: and if I cry out too hopefully at

sight of the white vesture receding between the cypresses, let me be blamed gently if justly. In any case, while my poems are full of faults—as I go forward to my critics and confess—they have my heart and life in them: they are not empty shells. If it must be said of me that I have contributed immemorable verses to the many rejected by the age, it cannot at least be said that I have done so in a light and irresponsible spirit. Poetry has been as serious a thing to me as life itself; and life has been a very serious thing: there has been no playing at skittles for me in either. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of poetry; nor leisure, for the hour of the poet. I have done my work, so far, as work—not as mere hand and head work, apart from the personal being, but as the completest expression of that being to which I could attain; and as work I offer it to the public—feeling its shortcomings more deeply than any of my readers, because measured from the height of my aspiration, but feeling also that the reverence and sincerity with which the work was done should give it some protection with the reverent and sincere.

LONDON, 50 WIMPOLE STREET, 1844.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE EDITION OF 1850

THIS edition, including my earlier and later writings, I have endeavoured to render as little unworthy as possible of the indulgence of the public. Several poems I would willingly have withdrawn, if it were not almost impossible to extricate what has been once caught and involved in the machinery of the press. The alternative is a request to the generous reader that he may use the weakness of those earlier verses, which no subsequent revision has succeeded in strengthening, less as a reproach to the writer, than as a means of marking some progress in her other attempts. One early failure, a translation of the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus—which, though happily free of the current of publication, may be

remembered against me by a few of my personal friends—I have replaced by an entirely new version, made for them and my conscience, in expiation of a sin of my youth, with the sincerest application of my mature mind. This collection includes, also, various poems hitherto unprinted, which I am glad to have the present opportunity of throwing behind me, so as to leave clear the path before, towards better aims and ends . . . may I hope? . . . than any which are attained here¹.

FLORENCE, January 1850.

¹ Three additional pieces were added in the fourth edition, 1856 (from which the ensuing Poems are printed)—‘A Denial,’ ‘Proof and Disproof,’ ‘Question and Answer.’

A DRAMA OF EXILE

SCENE.—*The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with cloud, from the depth of which revolves a sword of fire self-moved. Adam and Eve are seen in the distance flying along the glare.*

LUCIFER, alone.

Rejoice in the clefts of Gehenna,
My exiled, my host !
Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a
Heaven's empire was lost.
Through the seams of her shaken founda-
tions,
Smoke up in great joy !
With the smoke of your fierce exultations
Deform and destroy !
Smoke up with your lurid revenges,
And darken the face
Of the white heavens and taunt them
with changes
From glory and grace.
We, in falling, while destiny strangles,
Pull down with us all.
Let them look to the rest of their angels !
Who's safe from a fall ?
He saves not. Where's Adam ? Can
pardon
Requicken that sod ?
Unkinged is the King of the Garden,
The image of God.
Other exiles are cast out of Eden,—
More curse has been hurled.
Come up, O my locusts, and feed in
The green of the world.
Come up ! we have conquered by evil.
Good reigns not alone.
I prevail now, and, angel or devil,
Inherit a throne.

[In sudden apparition a watch of in-
numerable angels, rank above rank,
slopes up from around the gate to the
zenith. The angel GABRIEL descends.

Luc. Hail Gabriel, the keeper of the
gate !
Now that the fruit is plucked, prince
Gabriel,
I hold that Eden is impregnable
Under thy keeping.

Gab. Angel of the sin,
Such as thou standest,—pale in the drear
light
Which rounds the rebel's work with
Maker's wrath,—
Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls,
A monumental melancholy gloom
Seen down all ages, whence to mark
despair
And measure out the distances from good.
Go from us straightway.

Luc. Wherefore ?

Gab. Lucifer,
Thy last step in this place trod sorrow
up.

Recoil before that sorrow, if not this
sword.

Luc. Angels are in the world—where-
fore not I ?

Exiles are in the world—wherefore not I ?
The cursed are in the world—wherefore
not I ?

Gab. Depart.

Luc. And where's the logic of
'depart' ?

Our lady Eve had half been satisfied
To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt
To fix my postulate better. Dost thou
dream

Of guarding some monopoly in heaven
Instead of earth ? Why I can dream with
thee

To the length of thy wings.

Gab. I do not dream.
This is not Heaven, even in a dream, nor
earth,
As earth was once, first breathed among
the stars,

Articulate glory from the mouth divine,
To which the myriad spheres thrilled
audibly

Touched like a lute-string, and the sons
of God

Said AMEN, singing it. I know that this
Is earth not new created but new cursed—
This, Eden's gate not opened but built up
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I dream ?
Alas, not so ! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the serpent ! this the sword

(This sword alive with justice and with fire !)

That smote upon the forehead, Lucifer
The angel. Wherefore, angel, go—depart—

Enough is sinned and suffered.

Luc. By no means.

Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer on.
It holds fast still—it cracks not under curse ;

It holds like mine immortal. Presently
We'll sow it thick enough with graves
as green

Or greener certes, than its knowledge-tree—

We'll have the cypress for the tree of life,
More eminent for shadow :—for the rest
We'll build it dark with towns and pyramids,

And temples, if it please you :—we'll have feasts

And funerals also, merrymakes and wars,

Till blood and wine shall mix and run along

Righto'er the edges. And good Gabriel,
(Ye like that word in Heaven !) I too have strength—

Strength to behold Him and not worship
Him,

Strength to fall from Him and not cry on Him,

Strength to be in the universe and yet
Neither God nor His servant. The red sign

Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt me with,

Is God's sign that it bows not unto God,
The potter's mark upon his work, to show
It rings well to the striker. I and the earth

Can bear more curse.

Gab. O miserable earth,
O ruined angel !

Luc. Well, and if it be !
I CHOSE this ruin ; I elected it
Of my will, not of service. What I do,
I do volitent, not obedient,
And overtop thy crown with my despair.
My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back to Heaven,

And leave me to the earth which is mine own

In virtue of her ruin, as I hers
In virtue of my revolt ! turn thou from both

That bright, impassive, passive angel-hood,
And spare to read us backward any more
Of the spent hallelujahs.

Gab. Spirit of scorn,
I might say, of unreason ! I might say,
That who despairs, acts ; that who acts,
connives

With God's relations set in time and space ;

That who elects, assumes a something good

Which God made possible ; that who lives, obeys

The law of a Life-maker . . .

Luc. Let it pass.
Nomore, thou Gabriel ! Whatif I standup
And strike my brow against the crystalline
Roofing the creatures,—shall I say, for that,

My stature is too high for me to stand,—
Henceforward I must sit ! Sit thou.

Gab. I kneel.

Luc. A heavenly answer. Get thee to thy Heaven,

And leave my earth to me.

Gab. Through Heaven and earth
God's will moves freely, and I follow it,
As colour follows light. He overflows
The firmamental walls with deity,
Therefore with love ; His lightnings go abroad,

His pity may do so, His angels must,
Whene'er He gives them charges.

Luc. Verily,
I and my demons, whoare spirits of scorn,
Might hold this charge of standing with a sword

'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well
As the benigtest angel of you all.

Gab. Thou speakest in the shadow of thy change.

If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God
This morning for a moment, thou hadst known

That only pity fitly can chastise.
Hate but avenges.

Luc. As it is, I know
Something of pity. When I reeled in Heaven,

And my sword grew too heavy for my
grasp;
Stabbing through matter, which it could
not pierce
So much as the first shell of,—toward
the throne;
When I fell back, down,—staring up as
I fell,—
The lightnings holding open my scathed
lids,
And that thought of the infinite of God,
Hurled after to precipitate descent;
When countless angel faces still and
stern
Pressed out upon me from the level
heavens
Adown the abysmal spaces, and I fell
Trampled down by your stillness, and
struck blind
By the sight within your eyes,—'twas
then I knew
How ye could pity, my kind angelhood!
Gab. Alas, disrowned one, by the
truth in me
Which God keeps in me, I would give
away
All—save that truth and His love keeping
it,—
To lead thee home again into the light
And hear thy voice chant with the
morning stars,
When their rays tremble round them
with much song
Sung in more gladness!

Luc. Sing, my Morning Star!
Last beautiful, last heavenly, that I loved!
If I could drench thy golden locks with
tears,
What were it to this angel?
Gab. What love is.
And now I have named God.
Luc. Yet Gabriel,
By the lie in me which I keep myself,
Thou 'rt a false swearer. Were it other-
wise,
What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender
thoughts
To that earth-angel or earth-demon—
which,
Thou and I have not solved the problem
yet
Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam
there,—

That red-clay and a breath! who must,
forsooth,
Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
With beauty and music waving in his
trees
And running in his rivers, to make glad
His soul made perfect?—is it not for hope,
A hope within thee deeper than thy truth,
Of finally conducting him and his
To fill the vacant thrones of me and mine,
Which affront Heaven with their vacuity!
Gab. Angel, there are no vacant
thrones in Heaven
To suit thy empty words. Glory and life
Fulfil their own depletions; and if God
Sighed you far from Him, His next
breath drew in
A compensative splendour up the vast,
Flushing the starry arteries.
Luc. With a change!
So, let the vacant thrones and gardens too
Fill as may please you!—and be pitiful,
As ye translate that word, to the de-
thrond
And exiled, man or angel. The fact
stands,
That I, the rebel, the cast out and down,
Am here and will not go; while there,
along
The light to which ye flash the desert out,
Flies your adopted Adam, your red-clay
In two kinds, both being flawed. Why,
what is this?
Whose work is this? Whose hand was
in the work?
Against whose hand? In this last strife,
methinks,
I am not a fallen angel!
Gab. Dost thou know
Aught of those exiles?
Luc. Aye: I know they have fled
Silent all day along the wilderness:
I know they wear, for burden on their
backs,
The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,
And faces of the marshalled cherubim
Shining against, not for them; and I know
They dare not look in one another's
face,—
As if each were a cherub!
Gab. Dost thou know
Aught of their future?
Luc. Only as much as this:

That evil will increase and multiply
Without a benediction.

Gab. Nothing more?
Luc. Why so the angels taunt! What
should be more?

Gab. God is more.

Luc. Proving what?

Gab. That He is God,
And capable of saving. Lucifer,
I charge thee by the solitude He kept
Ere He created,—leave the earth to God!

Luc. My foot is on the earth, firm as
my sin.

Gab. I charge thee by the memory of
Heaven
Ere any sin was done,—leave earth to
God!

Luc. My sin is on the earth, to reign
thereon.

Gab. I charge thee by the choral song
we sang,
When up against the white shore of our
feet,
The depths of the creation swelled and
broke,—
And the new worlds, the beaded foam
and flower

Of all that coil, roared outward into space
On thunder-edges,—leave the earth to
God!

Luc. My woe is on the earth, to curse
thereby.

Gab. I charge thee by that mournful
Morning Star

Which trembles . . .

Luc. Enough spoken. As the pine
In norland forest drops its weight of
snows
By a night's growth, so, growing toward
my ends,

I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriel!
Watch out thy service; I achieve my will.
And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men shall bend their
spacious brows

Upon the storm and strife seen every-
where

To ruffle their smooth manhood and
break up

With lurid lights of intermittent hope
Their human fear and wrong,—they
may discern

The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS

(*Chanting from paradise, while ADAM and
EVE fly across the Sword-glare.*)

Hearken, oh hearken! let your souls
behind you

Turn, gently moved!

Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,
O lost, beloved!

Through the thick-shielded and strong-
marshalled angels,

They press and pierce:

Our requiems follow fast on our evan-
gels,—

Voice throbs in verse.

We are but orphaned spirits left in Eden
A time ago,

God gave us golden cups, and we were
bidden

To feed you so.

But now our right hand hath no cup
remaining,

No work to do,

The mystic hydromel is spilt, and stain-
ing

The whole earth through.

Most ineradicable stains, for showing
(Not interfused!)

That brighter colours were the world's
foregoing,

Than shall be used.

Hearken, oh hearken! ye shall hearken
surely

For years and years,

The noise beside you, dripping coldly,
purely,

Of spirits' tears.

The yearning to a beautiful denied you,
Shall strain your powers.

Ideal sweetesses shall over-glide you,
Resumed from ours.

In all your music, our pathetic minor
Your ears shall cross;

And all good gifts shall mind you of
diviner,

With sense of loss.

We shall be near you in your poet-
languors

And wild extremes,

What time ye vex the desert with vain
angers,

Or mock with dreams.

And when upon you, weary after roaming,
Death's seal is put;
By the foregone ye shall discern the
coming,
Through eyelids shut.

Spirits of the trees.

Hark! the Eden trees are stirring,
Soft and solemn in your hearing!
Oak and linden, palm and fir,
Tamarisk and juniper,
Each still throbbing in vibration
Since that crowning of creation
When the God-breath spake abroad,
Let us make man like to God!
And the pine stood quivering
As the awful word went by,
Like a vibrant music-string
Stretched from mountain-peak to sky.
And the platan did expand
Slow and gradual, branch and head;
And the cedar's strong black shade
Fluttered brokenly and grand.
Grove and wood were swept aslant
In emotion jubilant.

Voice of the same, but softer.

Which divine impulsion cleaves
In dim movements to the leaves
Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
In the sunlight and the moonlight
Greenly sifted through the trees.
Ever wave the Eden trees
In the nightlight and the moonlight,
With a ruffling of green branches
Shaded off to resonances,
Never stirred by rain or breeze.

Fare ye well, farewell!
The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door.
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye
heard before.
Farewell! the trees of Eden
Ye shall hear nevermore.

River-spirits.

Hark! the flow of the four rivers—
Hark the flow!
How the silence round you shivers,
While our voices through it go,
Cold and clear.

A softer voice.

Think a little, while ye hear,
Of the banks
Where the willows and the deer
Crowd in intermingled ranks,
As if all would drink at once
Where the living water runs!—
Of the fishes' golden edges
Flashing in and out the sedges;
Of the swans on silver thrones,
Floating down the winding streams
With impulsive eyes turned shoreward
And a chant of undertones,—
And the lotus leaning forward
To help them into dreams.
Fare ye well, farewell!
The river-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door.
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some murmur which ye
heard before.
Farewell! the streams of Eden,
Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale
That singeth in Eden after you;
And I am singing loud and true,
And sweet,—I do not fail.
I sit upon a cypress bough,
Close to the gate, and I fling my song
Over the gate and through the mail
Of the warden angels marshalled
strong,—

Over the gate and after you!
And the warden angels let it pass,
Because the poor brown bird, alas,
Sings in the garden, sweet and true.
And I build my song of high pure notes,
Note over note, height over height,
Till I strike the arch of the Infinite,
And I bridge abysmal agonies
With strong, clear calms of har-
monies,—
And something abides, and something
floats,
In the song which I sing after you.
Fare ye well, farewell!
The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
Expire at Eden's door.
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some cadence which ye
heard before.

Farewell! the birds of Eden,
Ye shall hear nevermore.

Flower-spirits.

We linger, we linger,
The last of the throng,
Like the tones of a singer
Who loves his own song.
We are spirit-aromas
Of blossom and bloom.
We call your thoughts home as
Ye breathe our perfume,—
To the amaranth's splendour
Afire on the slopes;
To the lily-bells tender,
And grey heliotropes;
To the poppy-plains keeping
Such dream-breath and blee
That the angels there stepping
Grew whiter to see:
To the nook, set with moly,
Ye jested one day in,
Till your smile waxed too holy
And left your lips praying:
To the rose in the bower-place,
That dripped o'er you sleeping;
To the asphodel flower-place,
Ye walked ankle-deep in!
We pluck at your raiment,
We stroke down your hair,
We faint in our lament
And pine into air.
Fare ye well, farewell!

The Eden scents, no longer sensible,
Expire at Eden's door.
Each footstep of your treading
Treads out some fragrance which ye
knew before.

Farewell! the flowers of Eden,
Ye shall smell nevermore.

[There is silence. ADAM and EVE fly on, and never look back. Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark Angel passing quickly, is cast upon the Sword-glare.

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

ADAM. Pausing a moment on this outer edge
Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in light
The dark exterior desert,—hast thou strength,

Beloved, to look behind us to the gate?
EVE. Have I not strength to look up
to thy face?

ADAM. We need be strong: yon spectacle of cloud

Which seals the gate up to the final doom,
Is God's seal manifest. There seem to lie
A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead;
The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless;

And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword

Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire
From side to side, in pendulous horror slow,
Across the stagnant, ghastly glare thrown flat

On the intermediate ground from that to this.

The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps, Thrones, dominations, princedoms, rank on rank,

Rising sublimely to the feet of God,
On either side and overhead the gate, Show like a glittering and sustained smoke

Drawn to an apex. That their faces shine Betwixt the solemn clasping of their wings

Clasped high to a silver point above their heads,—

We only guess from hence, and not discern.

EVE. Though we were near enough to see them shine,

The shadow on thy face was awfuller, To me, at least,—to me—than all their light.

ADAM. What is this, EVE! thou droppest heavily

In a heap earthward, and thy body heaves Under the golden floodings of thine hair!

EVE. O Adam, Adam! by that name of EVE—

Thine EVE, thy life—which suits me little now,

Seeing that I now confess myself thy death

And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—

I do adjure thee, put me straight away, Together with my name. Sweet, punish me!

O Love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond
The light cast outward by the fiery sword,
Into the dark which earth must be to us,
Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the
curse said

My seed shall the first tempter's!
strike with curse,
As God struck in the garden ! and as he,
Being satisfied with justice and with
wrath,
Did roll His thunder gentler at the
close,—

Thou, peradventure, mayst at last recoil
To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my
lord !

I, also, after tempting, writhe on the
ground,
And I would feed on ashes from thine
hand,
As suits me, O my tempted !

Adam. My beloved,
Mine Eve and life—I have no other name
For thee or for the sun than what ye are,
My utter life and light ! If we have fallen,
It is that we have sinned,—we : God is
just ;
And, since His curse doth comprehend
us both,
It must be that His balance holds the
weights

Of first and last sin on a level. What !
Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight
Among the hills of Eden, here assume
To mend the justice of the perfect God,
By piling up a curse upon His curse,
Against thee—thee—

Eve. For so, perchance, thy God
Might take thee into grace for scorning me ;
Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof
Of inward abrogation of the sin.

And so, the blessed angels might come
down

And walk with thee as erst,—I think
they would,—

Because I was not near to make them sad
Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

Adam. They know me. I am deepest
in the guilt,
If last in the transgression.

Eve. Thou !
Adam. If God,
Who gave the right and joyaunce of the
world

Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to me.
The best gift last, the last sin was the
worst,
Which sinned against more complement
of gifts

And grace of giving. God ! I render back
Strong benediction and perpetual praise
From mortal feeble lips (as incense-
smoke,
Out of a little censer, may fill heaven),
That Thou, in striking my benumbed
hands

And forcing them to drop all other boons
Of beauty and dominion and delight,—
Hast left this well-beloved Eve, this life
Within life, this best gift between their
palms,

In gracious compensation !
Eve. Is it thy voice ?
Or some saluting angel's—calling home
My feet into the garden ?

Adam. O my God !
I, standing here between the glory and
dark,—
The glory of thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall, the dark of our distress
Which settles a step off in that drear
world—

Lift up to Thee the hands from whence
hath fallen
Only creation's sceptre,—thanking Thee
That rather Thou hast cast me out with her
Than left me lorn of her in paradise,
With angel looks and angel songs around
To show the absence of her eyes and voice,
And make society full desertness
Without her use in comfort !

Eve. Where is loss ?
Am I in Eden ? can another speak
Mine own love's tongue ?

Adam. Because with her, I stand
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
And look away from heaven which doth
accuse,
And look away from earth which doth
convict,
Into her face, and crown my disrowned
brow

Out of her love, and put the thought of her
Around me, for an Eden full of birds,
And lift her body up—thus—to my heart,
And with my lips upon her lips,—thus,
thus,—

Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath
Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides
But overtops this grief!

Eve. I am renewed.
My eyes grow with the light which is in thine;

The silence of my heart is full of sound.
Hold me up—so! Because I comprehend This human love, I shall not be afraid Of any human death; and yet because I know this strength of love, I seem to know

Death's strength by that same sign.
Kiss on my lips,

To shut the door close on my rising soul,—
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment And leave thee lonely.

Adam. Yet thou liest, Eve,
Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,
Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Aye! and the tears Running, as it might seem, my life from me,

They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so, And weep so, as if in a dream or prayer, Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard, tight thought

Which clipped my heart and showed me evermore

Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,

And as the pure ones loathe our sin.

To-day,
All day, beloved, as we fled across This desolating radiance cast by swords Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless to myself,

Striking against each other—'O Lord God!'

('Twas so I prayed) 'I ask Thee by my sin, And by thy curse, and by thy blameless heavens,
Make dreadful haste to hide me from thy face

And from the face of my beloved here For whom I am no helpmeet, quick away Into the new dark mystery of death; I will lie still there, I will make no plaint, I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word, Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun

Where peradventure I might sin anew Against Thy mercy and his pleasure.

Death,
O death, whate'er it be, is good enough For such as I am.—While for Adam here

No voice shall say again, in heaven or earth,
It is not good for him to be alone.

Adam. And was it good for such a prayer to pass,

My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives? If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

Eve. 'Twas an ill prayer: it shall be prayed no more;

And God did use it like a foolishness, Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown

Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer;
Love makes it strong: and since I was the first

In the transgression, with a steady foot I will be first to tread from this sword-glare

Into the outer darkness of the waste,— And thus I do it.

Adam. Thus I follow thee, As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds! what sounds!

I feel a music which comes straight from Heaven,

As tender as a watering dew.

Eve. I think That angels—not those guarding Paradise,—

But the love-angels, who came erst to us, And when we said 'God,' fainted unaware

Back from our mortal presence unto God, (As if He drew them inward in a breath)

His name being heard of them,—I think that they

With sliding voices lean from heavenly towers,

Invisible but gracious. Hark—how soft!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

Faint and tender.

Mortal man and woman,
Go upon your travel!
Heaven assist the Human
Smoothly to unravel

All that web of pain
 Wherein ye are holden.
 Do ye know our voices
 Chanting down the Golden ?
 Do ye guess our choice is,
 Being unbehoden,
 To be hearkened by you yet again ?
 This pure door of opal
 God hath shut between us,—
 Us, his shining people,
 You, who once have seen us
 And are blinded new !
 Yet, across the doorway,
 Past the silence reaching,
 Farewells evermore may,
 Blessing in the teaching,
 Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.

Think how erst your Eden,
 Day on day succeeding,
 With our presence glowed.
 We came as if the Heavens were bowed
 To a milder music rare.
 Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
 Treading down the steps of cloud,
 While our wings, outspreading
 Double calms of whiteness,
 Dropped superfluous brightness
 Down from stair to stair.

Second semichorus.

Or oft, abrupt though tender,
 While ye gazed on space,
 We flashed our angel-splendour
 In either human face.
 With mystic lilies in our hands,
 From the atmospheric bands
 Breaking with a sudden grace,
 We took you unaware !
 While our feet struck glories
 Outward, smooth and fair,
 Which we stood on floorwise,
 Platformed in mid air.

First semichorus.

Or oft, when Heaven-descended,
 Stood we in your wondering sight
 In a mute apocalypse !
 With dumb vibrations on our lips
 From hosannas ended,
 And grand half-vanishings
 Of the empyreal things
 Within our eyes belated,

Till the heavenly Infinite
 Falling off from the Created,
 Left our inward contemplation
 Opened into ministration.

Chorus.

Then upon our axle turning
 Of great joy to sympathy,
 We sang out the morning
 Broadening up the sky.
 Or we drew
 Our music through
 The noontide's hush and heat and shine,
 Informed with our intense Divine !
 Interrupted vital notes
 Palpitating hither, thither,
 Burning out into the ether,
 Sensible like fiery motes.
 Or, whenever twilight drifted
 Through the cedar masses,
 The globed sun we lifted,
 Trailing purple, trailing gold
 Out between the passes
 Of the mountains manifold,
 To anthems slowly sung !
 While he, aweary, half in swoon
 For joy to hear our climbing tune
 Transpierce the stars' concentric rings,—
 The burden of his glory flung
 In broken lights upon our wings.

[The chant dies away confusedly, and
 LUCIFER appears.

Luc. Now may all fruits be pleasant
 to thy lips,
 Beautiful Eve ! The times have somewhat
 changed
 Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree,
 Albeit ye are not gods yet.

Eve. Adam ! hold
 My right hand strongly. It is Lucifer—
 And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God,
 Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer !
 And leave us to the desert thou hast
 made
 Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-
 slime
 Athwart this path kept holy to our tears,
 Or we may curse thee with their bitter-
 ness.

Luc. Curse freely ! curses thicken.
 Why, this Eve

Who thought me once part worthy of
her ear
And somewhat wiser than the other
beasts,—
Drawing together her large globes of eyes,
The light of which is throbbing in and out
Their steadfast continuity of gaze,—
Knot her faire eyebrows in so hard a knot,
And down from her white heights of
womanhood
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should
fear
To wager such an apple as she plucked,
Against one riper from the tree of life,
That she could curse too—as a woman
may—
Smooth in the vowels.

Eve. So—speak wickedly!
I like it best so. Let thy words be
wounds,—
For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt.
Trench on the forms of good by open ill—
For, so, I shall wax strong and grand
with scorn,
Scorning myself for ever trusting thee
As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust,
He could speak wisdom.

Luc. Our new gods, it seems,
Deal more in thunders than in courtesies.
And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which
anon
I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery
From all the wandering visions of the
world,

May show worse railing than our lady Eve
Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.
But why should this be? Adam pardoned
Eve.

Adam. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah
pardon both.

Eve. Adam forgave Eve — because
loving Eve.

Luc. So, well. Yet Adam was un-
done of Eve,
As both were by the snake. Therefore
forgive,

In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor
snake—

Who stung there, not so poorly! [*Aside.*]

Eve. Hold thy wrath,
Beloved Adam! let me answer him;
For this time he speaks truth, which
we should hear,

And asks for mercy, which I most should
grant,
In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise!
And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,
As freely as the streams of Eden flowed
When we were happy by them. So,
depart;
Leave us to walk the remnant of our time
Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek
To harm us any more or scoff at us,
Or ere the dust be laid upon our face,
To find there the communion of the dust
And issue of the dust.—Go.

Adam. At once, go.

Luc. Forgive! and go! Ye images
of clay,

Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what
jest is this?
What words are these to use? By what
a thought
Conceive ye of me! Yesterday — a snake!
To-day — what?

Adam. A strong spirit.

Eve. A sad spirit.

Adam. Perhaps a fallen angel.—Who
shall say!

Luc. Who told thee, Adam?

Adam. Thou! The prodigy
Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes
Which comprehend the heights of some
great fall.

I think that thou hast one day worn a
crown
Under the eyes of God.

Luc. And why of God?

Adam. It were no crown else.
Verily, I think

Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday
Said it so surely, but I know to-day
Grief by grief, sin by sin!

Luc. A crown, by a crown.

Adam. Aye, mock me! now I know
more than I knew:

Now I know thou art fallen below hope
Of final re-ascent.

Luc. Because?

Adam. Because
A spirit who expected to see God,
Though at the last point of a million
years,

Could dare no mockery of a ruined man
Such as this Adam.

Luc. Who is high and bold—

Be it said passing!—of a good red clay
Discovered on some top of Lebanon,
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
Of the black eagle's wing! A furlong
lower

Had made a meeker king for Eden. Soh!
Is it not possible, by sin and grief
(To give the things your names) that
spirits should rise
Instead of falling?

Adam. Most impossible.
The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,
Whoever rises must approach delight
And sanctity in the act.

Luc. Ha, my clay-king!
Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long
The after generations. Earth, methinks,
Will disinherit thy philosophy
For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs,
And class these present dogmas with the
rest

Of the old-world traditions, Eden fruits
And Saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with him,
Beloved! it is not good to speak with him.
Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more!
We have no pardon which thou dost not

scorn,
Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,
We would be alone.—Go.

Luc. Ah! ye talk the same,
All of you—spirits and clay—go, and
depart!

In Heaven they said so; and at Eden's
gate,—
And here, reiterant, in the wilderness.
None saith, Stay with me, for thy face
is fair!

None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice
is sweet!

And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.
Look on me, woman! Am I beautiful?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness.

Luc. Nothing more?

Eve. I think, no more.

Luc. False Heart—
thou thinkest more!
Thou canst not choose but think, as
I praise God,
Unwillingly but fully, that I stand
Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves
Were fashioned very good at best, so we

Sprang very beauteous from the creant
Word
Which thrilled behind us, God Himself
being moved

When that august work of a perfect shape
His dignities of sovran angel-hood
Swept out into the universe,—divine
With thunderous movements, earnest
looks of gods,

And silver-solem clash of cymbal wings!
Whereof was I, in motion and in form,
A part not poorest. And yet,—yet,
perhaps,

This beauty which I speak of, is not here,
As God's voice is not here, nor even my
crown—
I do not know. What is this thought
or thing
Which I call beauty? is it thought, or
thing?

Is it a thought accepted for a thing?
Or both? or neither?—a pretext—a word?
Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
Under my own breath: my perceptions
reel

For evermore around it, and fall off,
As if it too were holy.

Eve. Which it is.

Adam. The essence of all beauty,
I call love.

The attribute, the evidence, and end,
The consummation to the inward sense,
Of beauty apprehended from without,
I still call love. As form, when colour-
less,
Is nothing to the eye,—that pine-tree
there,
Without its black and green, being all
a blank,—

So, without love, is beauty undiscerned
In man or angel. Angel! rather ask
What love is in thee, what love moves
to thee,

And what collateral love moves on with
thee;

Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

Luc. Love! what is love? I lose it.
Beauty and love

I darken to the image. Beauty—love!

[He fades away, while a low music sounds.

Adam. Thou art pale, Eve.

Eve. The precipice of ill

Down this colossal nature, dizzies me—
And, hark! the starry harmony remote
Seems measuring the heights from
whence he fell.

Adam. Think that we have not fallen
so. By the hope

And aspiration, by the love and faith,
We do exceed the stature of this angel.

Eve. Happier we are than he is, by
the death.

Adam. Or rather, by the life of the
Lord God!
How dim the angel grows, as if that
blast
Of music swept him back into the dark.

[The music is stronger, gathering itself
into uncertain articulation.

Eve. It throbs in on us like a plaintive
heart,
Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative,
Its gradual sweetness through the yield-
ing air,
To such expression as the stars may use,
Most starry-sweet and strange! With
every note
That grows more loud, the angel grows
more dim,
Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

Adam. Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

*He fades utterly away and vanishes,
as it proceeds.*

Mine orbèd image sinks
Back from thee, back from thee,
As thou art fallen, methinks.
Back from me, back from me.
O my light-bearer,
Could another fairer
Lack to thee, lack to thee?
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!
I loved thee with the fiery love of stars
Wholovebyburning, and by loving move,
Too near the throned Jehovah not to love.
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!
Their brows flash fast on me from gliding
cars,
Pale-passioned for my loss.
Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Mine orbèd heats drop cold
Down from thee, down from thee,
As fell thy grace of old
Down from me, down from me.
O my light-bearer,
Is another fairer
Won to thee, won to thee?
Ah, ah, Heosphoros,
Great love preceded loss,
Known to thee, known to thee.

Ah, ah!

Thou, breathing thy communicable grace
Of life into my light,
Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,
Hast inly fed,
And flooded me with radiance overmuch
From thy pure height.

Ah, ah!

Thou, with calm, floating pinions both
ways spread.
Erect, irradiated,
Didst sting my wheel of glory
On, on before thee
Along the Godlight by a quickening touch!
Ha, ha!

Ha, ha!

Around, around the firmamental ocean
I swam expanding with delirious fire!
Around, around, around, in blind desire
To be drawn upward to the Infinite—

Ha, ha!

Until, the motion flinging out the motion
To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,
To a dim whirl of languor and delight,
I wound in girant orbits smooth and
white

With that intense rapidity.

Around, around,
I wound and interwound,
While all the cyclic heavens about me
spun.
Stars, planets, suns, and moons dilated
broad,
Then flashed together into a single sun,
And wound, and wound in one,
And as they wound I wound,—around,
In a great fire I almost took for God!
Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks

Down from me, down from me—
My beauty falls, methinks,
Down from thee, down from thee!

O my light-bearer,
O my path-preparer,
Gone from me, gone from me !
 Ah, ah, Heosphorus !
I cannot kindle underneath the brow
Of this new angel here, who is not thou.
All things are altered since that time
 ago,—
And if I shine at eve, I shall not know.
 I am strange—I am slow.
 Ah, ah, Heosphorus !
Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,
With tears between the looks raised up
 to me.
 Ah, ah !
When, having wept all night, at break
 of day
Above the folded hills they shall survey
My light, a little trembling, in the grey.
 Ah, ah !
And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,
Through all my piteous pomp at morn
 or even
And melancholy leaning out of heaven,
That love, their own divine, may change
 or end,
 That love may close in loss !
 Ah, ah, Heosphorus !

SCENE.—Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.

Adam. How doth the wide and
 melancholy earth
Gather her hills around us, grey and
 ghast,
And stare with blank significance of loss
Right in our faces ! Is the wind up ?

Eve. Nay.

Adam. And yet the cedars and the
 junipers
Rock slowly through the mist, without a
 sound,
And shapes which have no certainty of
 shape
Drift dusky in and out between the pines,
And loom along the edges of the hills,
And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—
Shadows without a body, which con-
tract

And lengthen as we gaze on them.
Eve. Oh life
Which is not man's nor angel's ! What
 is this ?
Adam. No cause for fear. The circle
 of God's life
Contains all life beside.
Eve. I think the earth
Is crazed with curse, and wanders from
 the sense
Of those first laws affixed to form and
 space
Or ever she knew sin.
Adam. We will not fear :
We were brave sinning.
Eve. Yea, I plucked the fruit
With eyes upturned to heaven and see-
 ing there
Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,—
 not God.
My heart, which beat then, sinks. The
 sun hath sunk
Out of sight with our Eden.
Adam. Night is near.
Eve. And God's curse, nearest. Let
 us travel back
And stand within the sword-glare till
 we die,
Believing it is better to meet death
Than suffer desolation.
Adam. Nay, beloved !
We must not pluck death from the
 Maker's hand,
As erst we plucked the apple : we must
 wait
Until He gives death as He gave us life,
Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift
Because we spoilt its sweetness with
 our sin.
Eve. Ah, ah ! dost thou discern what
 I behold ?
Adam. I see all. How the spirits in
 thine eyes
From their dilated orbits bound before
To meet the spectral Dread !
Eve. I am afraid—
Ah, ah ! the twilight bristles wild with
 shapes
Of intermittent motion, aspect vague
And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep
 the earth,
Keeping slow time with horrors in the
 blood.

How near they reach . . . and far! How grey they move—
Treading upon the darkness without feet,
And fluttering on the darkness without wings!
Some run like dogs, with noses to the ground;
Some keep one path, like sheep; some rock like trees;
Some glide like a fallen leaf; and some flow on
Copious as rivers.

Adam. Some spring up like fire—
And some coil . . .

Eve. Ah, ah! dost thou pause to say
Like what?—coil like the serpent, when he fell
From all the emerald splendour of his height
And writhed, and could not climb against the curse,
Not a ring's length. I am afraid—afraid—

I think it is God's will to make me afraid,—

Permitting THESE to haunt us in the place
Of His beloved angels—gone from us
Because we are not pure. Dear Pity of God,

That didst permit the angels to go home
And live no more with us who are not pure,

Save us too from a loathly company—
Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,
As we are in the purest! Pity us—
Us too! nor shut us in the dark, away
From verity and from stability,
Or what we name such through the precedence

Of earth's adjusted uses,—leave us not
To doubt betwixt our senses and our souls,

Which are the more distraught and full of pain

And weak of apprehension.

Adam. Courage, Sweet!
The mystic shapes ebb back from us,
and drop
With slow concentric movement, each on each,—

Expressing wider spaces,—and collapsed
In lines more definite for imagery
And clearer for relation, till the throng

Of shapeless spectra merge into a few
Distinguishable phantasms vague and grand

Which sweep out and around us vastly
And hold us in a circle and a calm.

Eve. Strange phantasms of pale shadow! there are twelve.
Thou who didst name all lives, hast names for these?

Adam. Methinks this is the zodiac of the earth,

Which rounds us with a visionary dread,
Responding with twelve shadowy signs of earth,

In fantasque apposition and approach,
To those celestial, constellated twelve
Which palpitate adown the silent nights
Under the pressure of the hand of God
Stretched wide in benediction. At this hour,

Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of heaven!

But, girdling close our nether wilderness,
The zodiac-figures of the earth loom slow,—

Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and time,

In twelve colossal shades instead of stars,
Through which the ecliptic line of mystery

Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting scope,

Foreshowing life and death.

Eve. By dream or sense,
Do we see this?

Adam. Our spirits have climbed high
By reason of the passion of our grief,
And, from the top of sense, looked over sense,

To the significance and heart of things
Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the din twelve . . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the creature-life

As earth contains it. Gaze on them, beloved!

By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall assuage
The terror of the shadows,—what is known

Subduing the unknown and taming it
From all prodigious dread. That phantasm, there,

Presents a lion, albeit twenty times
As large as any lion—with a roar
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horrorstirring in his mane.
And, there, a pendulous shadow seems
to weigh—

Good against ill, perchance ; and there,
a crab
Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all
the ground,
Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself.
A bull stands horned here with gibbous
glooms ;
And a ram likewise ! and a scorpion
writhes
Its tail in ghastly slime and stings the
dark.
This way a goat leaps with wild blank
of beard ;
And here, fantastic fishes duskly float,
Using the calm for waters, while their fins
Throb out quick rhythms along the
shallow air.
While images more human—

Eve. How he stands,
That phantasm of a man—who is not thou!
Two phantasms of two men !

Adam. One that sustains,
And one that strives,—resuming, so, the
ends
Of manhood's curse of labour¹. Dost
thou see
That phantasm of a woman ?—

Eve. I have seen,
But look off to those small humanities²
Which draw me tenderly across my
fear.—
Lesser and fainter than my womanhood
Or yet thy manhood—with strange
innocence
Set in the misty lines of head and hand.
They lean together ! I would gaze on
them

¹ Adam recognizes in *Aquarius*, the water-bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combating,—the passive and active forms of human labour. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of *Aries*, *Taurus*, *Cancer*, *Leo*, *Libra*, *Scorpio*, *Capricornus*, and *Pisces*, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

² Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

Longer and longer, till my watching
eyes,
As the stars do in watching anything,
Should light them forward from their
outline vague
To clear configuration.

[*Two Spirits, of organic and inorganic
nature, arise from the ground.*

But what Shapes

Rise up between us in the open space,
And thrust me into horror, back from
hope !

Adam. Colossal Shapes—twin sovereign
images,
With a disconsolate, blank majesty
Set in their wondrous faces ! with no look,
And yet an aspect—a significance
Of individual life and passionate ends,
Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound,
O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin
sound !

How it comes, wheeling as the pale
moth wheels,
Wheeling and wheeling in continuous
wail
Around the cyclic zodiac, and gains
force,
And gathers, settling coldly like a moth,
On the wan faces of these images
We see before us,—whereby modified,
It draws a straight line of articulate song
From out that spiral faintness of lament,
And, by one voice, expresses many griefs.

First Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless earth.
God spake me softly out among the
stars,
As softly as a blessing of much worth ;
And then, His smile did follow un-
awares,
That all things fashioned so for use and
duty
Might shine anointed with His chrism
of beauty—

Yet I wail !
I drove on with the worlds exultingly,
Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual
fall ;
Individual aspect and complexity
Of giratory orb and interval

Lost in the fluent motion of delight
Toward the high ends of Being beyond
sight—

Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless beasts,
Of flying things, and creeping things,
and swimming;

Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,
That found the love-kiss on the goblet
brimming,
And tasted in each drop within the
measure

The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's
good pleasure—

Yet I wail!

What a full hum of life around His lips
Bore witness to the fullness of creation!
How all the grand words were full-laden
ships

Each sailing onward from enunciation
To separate existence,—and each bearing
The creature's power of joying, hoping,
fearing!

Yet I wail!

Eve. They wail, beloved! they speak
of glory and God,
And they wail—wail. That burden of
the song
Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls
Into the lap of silence.

Adam. Hark, again!

First Spirit.

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,
My joy stood up within me bold to add
A word to God's,—and, when His work
was full,

To 'very good,' responded 'very glad!'
Filtered through roses, did the light
enclose me,
And bunches of the grape swam blue
across me—

Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

I bounded with my panthers! I rejoiced
In my young tumbling lions rolled
together!

My stag, the river at his fetlocks, poised
Then dipped his antlers through the
golden weather

In the same ripple which the alligator
Left, in his joyous troubling of the
water—

Yet I wail!

First Spirit.

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,
What wordless triumph did your voices
render!

O mountain-summits, where the angels
stood

And shook from head and wing thick
dews of splendour!

How, with a holy quiet, did your Earthy
Accept that Heavenly, knowing ye were
worthy!

Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

O my wild wood-dogs, with your listen-
ing eyes!

My horses—my ground-eagles, for
swift fleeing!

My birds, with viewless wings of
harmonies,

My calm cold fishes of a silver being,
How happy were ye, living and possess-
ing,

O fair half-souls capacious of full bless-
ing!

Yet I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Now hear my charge
to-day,

Thou man, thou woman, marked as
the misdoers

By God's sword at your backs! I lent
my clay

To make your bodies, which had grown
more flowers:

And now, in change for what I lent, ye
give me

The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to
cleave me—

And I wail!

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Behold ye that I fasten
My sorrow's fang upon your souls
dishonoured?

Accursed transgressors! down the steep
ye hasten,—

Your crown's weight on the world, to
drag it downward

Unto your ruin. Lo! my lions, scenting
The blood of wars, roar hoarse and un-
reenting—
And I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Do you hear that I wail?
I had no part in your transgression—
none.
My roses on the bough did bud not pale,
My rivers did not loiter in the sun;
I was obedient. Wherefore in my centre
Do I thrill at this curse of death and
winter?—
Do I wail?

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! I wail in the assault
Of undeserved perdition, sorely
wounded!
My nightingale sang sweet without a
fault,
My gentle leopards innocently bounded.
We were obedient. What is this con-
vulses
Our blameless life with pangs and fever
pulses?
And I wail!

Eve. I choose God's thunder and His
angels' swords
To die by, Adam, rather than such words.
Let us pass out and flee.

Adam. We cannot flee.
This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
Curls round us, like a river cold and
drear,
And shuts us in, constraining us to hear.

First Spirit.

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners,
strike
A sense of death to me, and undug
graves!
The heart of earth, once calm, is trem-
bling like
The ragged foam along the ocean-
waves:
The restless earthquakes rock against
each other;
The elements moan 'round me—'Mother,
mother!—
And I wail!

Second Spirit.

Your melancholy looks do pierce me
through;
Corruption swathes the paleness of
your beauty.
Why have ye done this thing? What
did we do
That we should fall from bliss as ye
from duty?
Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for
their jesses,
Fierce howl the wolves along the wilder-
nesses—
And I wail!

Adam. To thee, the Spirit of the
harmless earth,
To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless
lives,
Inferior creatures but still innocent,
Be salutation from a guilty mouth
Yet worthy of some audience and respect
From you who are not guilty. If we
have sinned,
God hath rebuked us, who is over us
To give rebuke or death, and if ye wail
Because of any suffering from our sin,
Ye who are under and not over us,
Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
And pass out from our presence in such
peace

As we have left you, to enjoy revenge
Such as the Heavens have made you.

Verily,
There must be strife between us, large
as sin.

Eve. No strife, mine Adam! Let us
not stand high
Upon the wrong we did to reach disdain,
Who rather should be humbler evermore
Since self-made sadder. Adam! shall
I speak—

I who spake once to such a bitter end—
Shall I speak humbly now, who once
was proud?

I, schooled by sin to more humility
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my
king—

My king, if not the world's?

Adam. Speak as thou wilt.

Eve. Thus, then—my hand in thine—

... Sweet, dreadful Spirits!
I pray you humbly in the name of God,

Not to say of these tears, which are impure—
 Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth
 From clean volitions toward a spotted will,
 From the wronged to the wronger, this and no more;
 I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed, That absolute pardon is impossible From you to me, by reason of my sin,— And that I cannot evermore, as once, With worthy acceptation of pure joy, Behold the trances of the holy hills Beneath the leaning stars, or watch the vales Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy,— Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between Two grassy uplands,—and the river-wells Work out their bubbling mysteries under ground,— And all the birds sing, till for joy of song, They lift their trembling wings as if to heave The too-much weight of music from their heart And float it up the ether. I am 'ware That these things I can no more apprehend With a pure organ into a full delight,— The sense of beauty and of melody Being no more aided in me by the sense Of personal adjustment to those heights Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned, But rather coupled darkly and made ashamed By my percipency of sin and fall In melancholy of humiliant thoughts. But, oh! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this Your accusation must confront my soul, And your pathetic utterance and full gaze Must evermore subdue me, be content— Conquer me gently—as if pitying me, Not to say loving! let my tears fall thick As watering dews of Eden, unapproached; And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth, Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof, And peradventure better while more sad. For look to it, sweet Spirits, look well to it,

It will not be amiss in you who kept The law of your own righteousness, and keep The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves,— To pity me twice fallen, from that, and this, From joy of place, and also right of wail, 'I wail' being not for me—only 'I sin.' Look to it, O sweet Spirits!— For was I not, At that last sunset seen in Paradise, When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs Of sudden angel-faces, face by face, All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God Held them suspended,—was I not, that hour, The lady of the world, princess of life, Mistress of feast and favour? Could I touch A rose with my white hand, but it became Redder at once? Could I walk leisurely Along our swarded garden, but the grass Tracked me with greenness? Could I stand aside A moment underneath a cornel-tree, But all the leaves did tremble as alive With songs of fifty birds who were made glad Because I stood there? Could I turn to look With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast, Now good for only weeping,—upon man, Angel, or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced Because I looked on him? Alas, alas! And is not this much woe, to cry 'alas!' Speaking of joy? And is not this more shame, To have made the woe myself, from all that joy? To have stretched my hand, and plucked it from the tree, And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is not this Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit, And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have, Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy! Adam. I will not hear thee speak so. Hearken, Spirits! Our God, who is the enemy of none

But only of their sin, hath set your hope
And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.
Show reverence, then, and never bruise
her more
With unpermitted and extreme re-
proach,—
Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling
down
Beneath your trampling feet, God's gift
to us

Of sovrainty by reason and free will,
Sinning against the province of the Soul!
Torule the soulless. Reverence her estate,
And pass out from her presence with no
words.

Eve. O dearest Heart, have patience
with my heart!
O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of
reverence,
And let me speak, for, not being innocent,
It little doth become me to be proud,
And I am prescient by the very hope
And promisest upon me, that henceforth
Only my gentleness shall make me great,
My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spirits,
Be witness that I stand in your reproof
But one sun's length off from my happi-
ness—

Happy, as I have said, to look around,
Clear to look up!—And now! I need
not speak—

Ye see me what I am; ye scorn me so,
Because ye see me what I have made
myself

From God's best making! Alas,—peace
foregone,
Love wronged, and virtue forfeit, and
tears wept
Upon all, vainly! Alas, me! alas,
Who have undone myself from all that
best,
Fairest and sweetest, to this wretchedest,
Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast
down—

What word metes absolute loss? let
absolute loss

Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who lived
Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
Wander to-day beneath the roofless
world!

I, reigning the earth's empress yesterday,
Put off from me, to-day, your hate with
prayers!

I, yesterday, who answered the Lord
God,
Composed and glad as singing-birds the
sun,
Might shriek now from our dismal
desert, 'God,'
And hear Him make reply, 'What is
thy need,
Thou whom I cursed to-day?'

Adam.

Eve!

Eve. *I*, at last,
Who yesterday was helpmate and delight
Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief
And curse-mete for him! And, so, pity us.
Yegentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,
And let some tender peace, made of our
pain,
Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow,
With boughs on both sides. In the shade
of which,
When presently ye shall behold us
dead,—
For the poor sake of our humility,
Breathe out your pardon on our breath-
less lips,
And drop your twilight dews against our
brows,
And stroking with mild airs our harm-
less hands
Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love
Distilling through your pity over us,
And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass,

LUCIFER rises in the circle.

Luc. Who talks here of a complement
of grief?
Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?
Of hate subduable to pity? *Eve?*
Take counsel from thy counsellor the
snake,
And boast no more in grief, nor hope
from pain,
My docile Eve! I teach you to despond,
Who taught you disobedience. Look
around;—
Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you
talk unmoved,
As if ye were red clay again and talked
What are your words to them? your
grief to them?
Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the
hand pause
For their sake, in the plucking of the fruit,

That they should pause for you, in hating
you?

Or will your grief or death, as did yours in,
Bring change upon their final doom?
Behold,

Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,
And cannot expiate for it.

Adam. That is true.

Luc. Aye, that is true. The clay-king
testifies

To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—
very true.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Luc. And certes, that is true.
Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I
Could wail among you. O thou universe,
That holdest sin and woe,—more room
for wail!

Distant starry voice. Ah, ah, Heos-
phorus! Heosphorus!

Adam. Mark Lucifer. He changes
awfully.

Eve. It seems as if he looked from
grief to God
And could not see Him!—wretched
Lucifer!

Adam. How he stands—yet an angel!
Earth Spirits. We all wail!

Luc. (after a pause.) Dost thou re-
member, Adam, when the curse
Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak
Half-sheathed in primal woods and
glittering

In spasms of awful sunshine at that hour,
A lion couched, parraised upon his paws,
With his calm, massive face turned full
on thine,

And his mane listening. When the
ended curse

Lest silence in the world, right suddenly
He sprang up rampant and stood straight
and stiff,

As if the new reality of death
Were dashed against his eyes, and
roared so fierce
(Such thick carnivorous passion in his
throat

Tearing a passage through the wrath
and fear)

And roared so wild, and smote from all
the hills

Such fast, keen echoes crumbling down
the vales

Precipitately,—that the forest beasts,
One after one, did mutter a response
Of savage and of sorrowful complaint
Which trailed along the gorges. Then,
at once,
He fell back, and rolled crashing from
the height
Into the dusk of pines.

Adam. It might have been.
I heard the curse alone.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Luc. That lion is the type of what I am.
And as he fixed thee with his full-faced
hate,

And roared, O Adam, comprehending
doom,

So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,
I cry out here between the Heavens and
Earth

My conscience of this sin, this woe, this
wrath,
Which damn me to this depth.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Eve. I wail—O God!

Luc. I scorn you that ye wail,
Who use your pretty griefs for pedestals
To stand on, beckoning pity from without,
And deal in pathos of antithesis
Of what ye were forsooth, and what ye
are;—

I scorn you like an angel! Yet, one cry
I, too, would drive up like a column erect,
Marble to marble, from my heart to
Heaven,

A monument of anguish to transpierce
And overtop your vapory complaints
Expressed from feeble woes.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Luc. For, O ye Heavens, ye are my
witnesses,

That I, struck out from nature in a blot,
The outcast and the mildew of things
good,

The leper of angels, the excepted dust
Under the common rain of daily gifts,—
I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
To whom the highest and the lowest alike
Say, ‘Go from us—we have no need of
thee,’—

Was made by God like others. Good
and fair,

He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair!
Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly

His blessing for chief angels on my head
Until it grew there, a crown crystallized!
Ask, if He never called me by my name,
Lucifer—kindly said as ‘*Gabriel*’—
Lucifer—soft as ‘*Michael*’ while serene
I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
Answered ‘my Father,’ innocent of
shame

And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye
think,

White angels in your niches,—I repent,
And would tread down my own offences
back

To service at the footstool? that’s read
wrong!

I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—
Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep,
Against the sides of this prodigious pit
I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of wail
On each side, to meet anguish every-
where,

And to attest it in the ecstasy
And exaltation of a woe sustained
Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along
Your wilderness, vain mortals! Puny
griefs

In transitory shapes, be henceforth
dwarfed

To your own conscience, by the dread
extremes

Of what I am and have been. If ye have
fallen,

It is but a step’s fall,—the whole ground
beneath

Strewn woolly soft with promise! if ye
have sinned,

Your prayers tread high as angels! if
ye have grieved,

Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,
The power to die disproves the right to
grieve.

Go to! ye call this ruin? I half scorn
The ill I did you! Were ye wronged
by me,

Hated and tempted and undone of me,—
Still, what’s your hurt to mine of doing
hurt,

Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?
This sword’s *hilt* is the sharpest, and
cuts through

The hand that wields it.
Go—I curse you all.

Hate one another—feeble—as ye can;
I would not certes cut you short in hate:
Far be it from me! hate on as ye can!
I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth,
As wintry blast may breathe on wintry
leaves

And lifting up their brownness show
beneath

The branches bare. — Beseech you,
spirits, give

To Eve, who beggarly entreats your love
For her and Adam when they shall be
dead,

An answer rather fitting to the sin
Than to the sorrow—as the Heavens, I
trow,
For justice’ sake gave theirs.

I curse you both,
Adam and Eve! Say grace as after meat,
After my curses. May your tears fall hot
On all the hissing scorns o’ the creatures
here,—

And yet rejoice. Increase and multiply,
Ye in your generations, in all plagues,
Corruptions, melancholies, povertyes,
And hideous forms of life and fears of
death,—

The thought of death being alway
imminent,

Immovable and dreadful in your life,
And deafly and dumbly insignificant
Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,
Whichever of you lieth dead the first,
Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice!
My curse catch at you strongly, body
and soul,

And His find no redemption—nor the wing
Of seraph move your way; and yet
rejoice!

Rejoice,—because ye have not, set in you,
This hate which shall pursue you—this
fire-hate

Which glares without, because it burns
within—

Which kills from ashes—this potential
hate,

Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
To God and his reflex beatitudes,
Moan ever in the central universe
With the great woe of striving against
Love—

And gasp for space amid the Infinite,
And toss for rest amid the Desertness,

Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect
To kingship of resistant agony
Toward the Good round me—hating
 good and love,
And willing to hate good and to hate love,
And willing to will on so evermore,
Scorning the past and damning the To
 come—
Go and rejoice! I curse you.

[LUCIFER vanishes.]

Earth Spirits.

And we scorn you! there's no pardon
 Which can lean to you aright.
When your bodies take the gerdon
 Of the death-curse in our sight,
Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall
 transcend you:
Then ye shall not move an eyelid
 Though the stars look down your
 eyes;
And the earth which ye defiled,
 Shall expose you to the skies,—
'Lo! these kings of ours, who sought
 to comprehend you.'

First Spirit.

And the elements shall boldly
 All your dust to dust constrain.
Unresistedly and coldly
 I will smite you with my rain.
From the slowest of my frosts is no
 receding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
 To assume a royal part,
He shall reign, crowned and anointed,
 O'er the noble human heart.
Give him counsel against losing of that
 Eden!

Adam.

Do ye scorn us? Back your scorn
Towards your faces grey and lorn,
As the wind drives back the rain,
Thus I drive with passion-strife,
I who stand beneath God's sun,
Made like God, and, though undone,
Not unmade for love and life.
Lo! ye utter threats in vain.
By my free will that chose sin,
By mine agony within
Round the passage of the fire,
By the pinings which disclose

That my native soul is higher
 Than what it chose,
We are yet too high, O Spirits, for your
 disdain.

Eve.

Nay, beloved! If these be low,
We confront them from no height.
We have stooped down to their level
By infecting them with evil,
And their scorn that meets our blow
 Scathes aright.

Amen. Let it be so.

Earth Spirits.

We shall triumph—triumph greatly
 When ye lie beneath the sward.
There, our lily shall grow stately
 Though ye answer not a word,
And her fragrance shall be scornful of
 your silence:
While your throne ascending calmly
 We, in heirdom of your soul,
Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,
 The dilated ocean roll
By the thoughts that throbbed within
 you, round the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit
 Your significance of will,
And the grandeur of your spirit
 Shall our broad savannahs fill;
In our winds, your exultations shall be
 springing.
Even your parlance which inveigles,
 By our rudeness shall be won.
Hearts poetic in our eagles
 Shall beat up against the sun
And strike downward in articulate clear
 singing.

Your bold speeches, our Behemoth
 With his thunderous jaw shall wield.
Your high fancies, shall our Mammoth
 Breathe sublimely up the shield
Of Saint Michael at God's throne, who
 waits to speed him!
Till the heaven's smooth-grooved
 thunder
 Spinning back, shall leave them clear,
And the angels smiling wonder
 With dropt looks from sphere to
 sphere,
Shall cry, 'Ho, ye heirs of Adam! ye
 exceed him!'

Adam. Root out thine eyes, Sweet,
from the dreary ground.

Beloved, we may be overcome by God,
But not by these.

Eve. By God, perhaps, in these.

Adam. I think, not so. Had God
foredoomed despair,
He had not spoken hope. He may destroy
Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose!
I plucked it in our bower of Paradise
This morning as I went forth, and my
heart
Has beat against its petals all the day.
I thought it would be always red and full
As when I plucked it—Is it?—ye may
see!

I cast it down to you that ye may see,
All of you!—count the petals lost of it,
And note the colours fainted! ye may see!
And I am as it is, who yesterday
Grew in the same place. Oh ye spirits
of earth,
I almost, from my miserable heart,
Could here upbraid you for your cruel
heart,
Which will not let me, down the slope
of death,
Draw any of your pity after me,
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
As my flower, there, in mine.

[*A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct
human voices, spins around the earth-
sodiac, filling the circle with its pre-
sence; and then wailing off into the
east, carries the rose away with it.*
EVE falls upon her face. *ADAM*
stands erect.

Adam. So, verily,
The last departs.

Eve. So Memory follows Hope,
And Life both. Love said to me, 'Do
not die,'
And I replied, 'O Love, I will not die.
I exiled and I will not orphan Love.'
But now it is no choice of mine to die—
My heart throbs from me.

Adam. Call it straightway back.
Death's consummation crowns com-
pleted life,
Or comes too early. Hope being set on
thee

For others, if for others then for thee,—
For thee and me.

[*The wind revolves from the east, and
round again to the east, perfumed by
the Eden-rose, and full of voices which
sweep out into articulation as they pass.*

Let thy soul shake its leaves
To feel the mystic wind—hark!

Eve. I hear life.

Infant voices passing in the wind.

Oh we live, oh we live—
And this life that we receive
Is a warm thing and a new,
Which we softly bud into
From the heart and from the brain,—
Something strange that overmuch is
Of the sound and of the sight,
Flowing round in trickling touches,
With a sorrow and delight,—
Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Youthful voices passing.

Oh we live, oh we live—
And this life that we achieve
Is a loud thing and a bold,
Which with pulses manifold
Strikes the heart out full and faint—
Active doer, noble liver,
Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,
Though the vessel's prow will quiver
At the lifting of the anchor :
Yet do we strive in vain?

Infant voices passing.
Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Poet voices passing.
Oh we live, oh we live—
And this life that we conceive
Is a clear thing and a fair,
Which we set in crystal air
That its beauty may be plain !
With a breathing and a flooding
Of the heaven-life on the whole,
While we hear the forests budding
To the music of the soul—
Yet is it tuned in vain ?

A DRAMA OF EXILE

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Philosophic voices passing.

Oh we live, oh we live—
And this life that we perceive,
Is a great thing and a grave.
Which for others' use we have,
Duty-laden to remain.
We are helpers, fellow creatures,
Of the right against the wrong,
We are earnest-hearted teachers
Of the truth which maketh strong—
Yet do we teach in vain !

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Revel voices passing.

Oh we live, oh we live—
And this life that we reprieve,
Is a low thing and a light,
Which is jested out of sight,
And made worthy of disdain !
Strike with bold electric laughter
The high tops of things divine—
Turn thy head, my brother, after,
Lest thy tears fall in my wine ;—
For is all laughed in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life—of life like ours—

Of laughter and of wailing, of grave speech,
Of little plaintive voices innocent,
Of life in separate courses flowing out
Like our four rivers to some outward main.

I hear life—life !

Adam. And, so, thy cheeks have snatched

Scarlet to paleness, and thine eyes drink fast
Of glory from full cups, and thy moist lips
Seem trembling, both of them, with earnest doubts
Whether to utter words or only smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the coming life ?

Hear the steep generations, how they fall
Adown the visionary stairs of Time
Like supernatural thunders—far, yet near,—
Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills.
Am I a cloud to these—mother to these !
Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

[Eve sinks down again

Poet voices passing.

Oh we live, oh we live—
And this life that we conceive,
Is a noble thing and high,
Which we climb up loftily
To view God without a stain ;
Till, recoiling where the shade is,
We retread our steps again,
And descend the gloomy Hades
To resume man's mortal pain.
Shall it be climbed in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Love voices passing.

Oh we live, oh we live—
And this life we would retrieve,
Is a faithful thing apart
Which we love in, heart to heart,
Until one heart fitteth twain.
'Wilt thou be one with me ?'
'I will be one with thee.'
'Ha, ha !—we love and live !'
Alas ! ye love and die.
Shriek—who shall reply ?
For is it not loved in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Though it be all in vain.

Aged voices passing.

Oh we live, oh we live—
And this life we would survive,
Is a gloomy thing and brief,
Which, consummated in grief,
Leaveth ashes for all gain.
Is it not all in vain ?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Though it be all in vain. —

[Voices die away.]
Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse
upon all these.

Eve. The voices of foreshown Hu-
manity

Die off;—so let me die.

Adam. So let us die,
When God's will soundeth the right
hour of death.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the
curse upon all these.

Eve. O spirits! by the gentleness ye use
In winds at night, and floating clouds at
noon,
In gliding waters under lily-leaves,
In chirp of crickets, and the settling hush
A bird makes in her nest with feet and
wings,—
Fulfil your natures now!

Earth Spirits.

Agreed, allowed!
We gather out our natures like a cloud,
And thus fulfil their lightnings! Thus,
and thus!

Hearken, O hearken to us!

First Spirit.

As the storm-wind blows bleakly from
the norland,
As the snow-wind beats blindly on the
moorland,
As the simoom drives hot across the
desert,
As the thunder roars deep in the Un-
measured,
As the torrent tears the ocean-world to
atoms,
As the whirlpool grinds it fathoms below
fathoms,
Thus,—and thus!

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its poison
chilly,
As the tiger, in the jungle crouching stilly,
As the wild boar, with ragged tusks of
anger,
As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering
clangour,

As the vultures, that scream against the
thunder,

As the owlets, that sit and moan asunder,
Thus,—and thus!

Eve. Adam! God!

Adam. Cruel, unrelenting spirits!
By the power in me of the sovereign soul
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with the
angel's march,

I charge you into silence—trample you
Down to obedience.—I am king of you!

Earth Spirits.

Ha, ha! thou art king!

With a sin for a crown,

And a soul undone!

.Thou, the antagonized.

Tortured and agonized,

Held in the ring

Of the zodiac!

Now, king, beware!

We are many and strong

Whom thou standest among,—

And we press on the air,

And we stifle thee back,

And we multiply where

Thou wouldest trample us down

From rights of our own

To an utter wrong—

And, from under the feet of thy scorn,

O forlorn,

We shall spring up like corn,

And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in Thee!

I make appeal

Unto Thy kingship.

Eve. There is pity in THEE,

O sinned against, great God!—My seed,

my seed,

There is hope set on THEE—I cry to Thee,

Thou mystic seed that shalt be!—leave

us not

In agony beyond what we can bear,
Fallen in debasement below thunder-
mark,

A mark for scorning—taunted and per-
plexed

By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,
Whom Thou, Lord, rulest alway. O my

Seed,

Through the tempestuous years that rain
so thick

Betwixt my ghostly vision and Thy face,

Let me have token! for my soul is bruised
Before the serpent's head is.

[*A vision of CHRIST appears in the midst of the zodiac, which pales before the heavenly light. The Earth Spirits grow greyer and fainter.*

CHRIST. I AM HERE!
Adam. This is God!—Curse us not,
God, any more.

Eve. But gazing so—so—with omnific
eyes,
Lift my soul upward till it touch Thy feet!
Or lift it only,—not to seem too proud,—
To the low height of some good angel's
feet,

For such to tread on when he walketh
straight

And Thy lips praise him.

CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,
I meet you with rebuke for the reproach
And cruel and unmitigated blame
Ye cast upon your masters. True, they
have sinned;
And true their sin is reckoned into loss
For you the sinless. Yet, your innocence,
Which of you praises? since God made
your acts

Inherent in your lives, and bound your
hands

With instincts and imperious sanctities
From self-defacement? Which of you
disdains

These sinners who in falling proved
their height

Above you by their liberty to fall?

And which of you complains of loss by
them,

For whose delight and use ye have your
life

And honour in creation? Ponder it!
This regent and sublime Humanity,
Though fallen, exceeds you! this shall

film your sun,
Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of
cloud,

Turn back your rivers, footpath all your
seas,

Lay flat your forests, master with a look
Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down
Your eagle flying. Nay, without this law
Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by
beast

Devouring,—tree by tree, with strangling roots

And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would
gaze on God
With imperceptive blankness up the stars,
And mutter, 'Why, God, hast Thou made
us thus?'

And pining to a sallow idiocy
Stagger up blindly against the ends of
life,

Then stagnate into rottenness and drop
Heavily—poor, dead matter—piecemeal
down

The abysmal spaces—like a little stone
Let fall to chaos. Therefore over you
Receive man's sceptre,—therefore be
content

To minister with voluntary grace
And melancholy pardon, every rite
And function in you, to the human hand.
Be ye to man as angels are to God,
Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,
Suggesters to his soul of higher things
Than any of your highest. So at last,
He shall look round on you with lids too
straight

To hold the grateful tears, and thank you
well,

And bless you when he prays his secret
prayers,

And praise you when he sings his open
songs

For the clear song-note he has learnt in
you

Of purifying sweetness, and extend
Across your head his golden fantasies
Which glorify you into soul from sense!
Go, serve him for such price. That not
in vain

Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place
My word here for an oath, mine oath for
act

To be hereafter. In the name of which
Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,
I bless you through the hope and through
the peace

Which are mine,—to the Love, which is
myself.

Eve. Speak on still, Christ. Albeit Thou
bless me not

In set words, I am blessed in hearkening
Thee—

Speak, Christ.

CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless the woman, man—
It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,
Take heart before this Presence. Lo,
 my voice,
Which, naming erst the creatures, did express
(God breathing through my breath) the attributes
And instincts of each creature in its name,
Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and heaves
Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,
A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,
Outfairly and wide. Henceforward, rise,
 aspire

To all the calms and magnanimities,
The lofty uses and the noble ends,
The sanctified devotion and full work,
To which thou art elect for evermore,
First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin.

Adam. And also the sole bearer of the Seed
Whereby sin dieth! raise the majesties
Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,
And front with level eyclids the To come,
And all the dark o' the world. Rise,

woman, rise
To thy peculiar and best altitudes
Of doing good and of enduring ill,
Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,
And reconciling all that ill and good
Unto the patience of a constant hope,—
Rise with thy daughters! If sin came by thee,

 And by sin, death,—the ransom-righteousness,

The heavenly life and compensative rest
Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee
Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
An angel of the woe thou didst achieve,
Found acceptable to the world instead
Of others of that name, of whose bright

steps

Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied;

Something thou hast to bear through

womanhood,

Peculiar suffering answering to the sin,—

Some pang paid down for each new human life,
Some weariness in guarding such a life,
Some coldness from the guarded, some mistrust
From those thou hast too well served, from those beloved
Too loyally some treason; feebleness
Within thy heart, and cruelty without,
And pressures of an alien tyranny
With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
And stronger sinews. But, go to! thy love
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes
After its own life-working. A child's kiss
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad;
A poor man served by thee, shall make thee rich;
A sick man helped by thee, shall make thee strong;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown
I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing
With looks of prompting love—to keep thee clear
Of all reproach against the sin foregone,
From all the generations which succeed.
Thy hand which plucked the apple, I clasp close,
Thy lips which spake wrong counsel,
 I kiss close,
I bless thee in the name of Paradise
And by the memory of Edenic joys
Forfeit and lost,—by that last cypress tree,
Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out,
And by the blessed nightingale which threw
Its melancholy music after us,—
And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells
Did follow softly, plucking us behind
Back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers
And fourfold river-courses.—By all these,
I bless thee to the contraries of these,
I bless thee to the desert and the horns,
To the elemental change and turbulence,
And to the roar of the estranged beasts,
And to the solemn dignities of grief,—

To each one of these ends,—and to their
END

Of Death and the hereafter!

Eve. I accept
For me and for my daughters this high
part

Which lowly shall be counted. Noble
work

Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest,
And in the place of Eden's lost delight
Worthy endurance of permitted pain;
While on my longest patience there shall
wait

Death's speechless angel, smiling in the
east

Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow
myself

Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,
That humbleness may keep it in the
shade.

Shall it be so? shall I smile, saying so?
O seed! O King! O God, who *shall* be
seed—

What shall I say? As Eden's fountain
swelled

Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells
my soul

Betwixt thy love and power!
And, sweetest thoughts

Offforegone Eden! now, for the first time
Since God said 'Adam,' walking through
the trees,

I dare to pluck you as I plucked erewhile
The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope.
So pluck I you—so largely—with both
hands,

And throw you forward on the outer earth
Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

Adam. As Thou, Christ, to illume it,
holdest Heaven

Broadly above our heads.

[*The CHRIST is gradually transfigured
during the following phrases of dia-
logue, into humanity and suffering.*

Eve. O Saviour Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun.

Adam. We worship in Thy silence,
Saviour Christ.

Eve. Thy brows grow grander with a
forecast woe,—
Diviner, with the possible of death!

We worship in Thy sorrow, Saviour
Christ.

Adam. How do Thy clear, still eyes
transpierce our souls,
As gazing through them toward the
Father-throne

In a pathetical, full Deity,
Serenely as the stars gaze through the air
Straight on each other.

Eve. O pathetic Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the
moon.

CHRIST. Eternity stands alway fronting
God;

A stern colossal image, with blind eyes
And grand dim lips that murmur ever-
more

God, God, God! while the rush of life
and death,
The roar of act and thought, of evil and
good,

The avalanches of the ruining worlds
Tolling down space,—the new worlds'
genesis
Budding in fire,—the gradual humming
growth

Of the ancient atoms and first forms of
earth,
The slow procession of the swathing seas
And firmamentals waters,—and the noise
Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—
All these flow onward in the intervals
Of that reiterated sound of—God!

Which word, innumerable angels straight-
way lit
Wide on celestial altitudes of song
And choral adoration, and then drop
The burden softly, shutting the last notes
In silver wings. Howbeit in the noon
of time

Eternity shall wax as dumb as Death,
While a new voice beneath the spheres
shall cry,

'God! why hast Thou forsaken me, my
God?'

And not a voice in Heaven shall answer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*
Adam. Thy speech is of the Heaven-
lies, yet, O Christ,
Awfully human are Thy voice and face.

Eve. My nature overcomes me from
Thine eyes.

CHRIST. In the set noon of time, shall
one from Heaven,
An angel fresh from looking upon God,
Descend before a woman, blessing her
With perfect benediction of pure love,
For all the world in all its elements,
For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea,
For all men in the body and in the soul,
Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I wor-
ship Thee!

I thank Thee for that woman!

CHRIST. Then, at last,
I, wrapping round me your humanity,
Which being sustained, shall neither
break nor burn
Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread
earth,
And ransom you and it, and set strong
peace
Betwixt you and its creatures. With
my pangs
I will confront your sins; and since
those sins
Have sunken to all Nature's heart from
yours,

The tears of my clean soul shall follow
them

And set a holy passion to work clear
Absolute consecration. In my brow
Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned
anew

Your disrowned human nature. Look
on me!

As I shall be uplifted on a cross
In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread,
So shall I lift up in my pierced hands,
Not into dark, but light—not unto death,
But life,—beyond the reach of guilt and
grief,

The whole creation. Henceforth in my
name

Take courage, O thou woman,—man,
take hope!

Your grave shall be as smooth as Eden's
sward,

Beneath the steps of your prospective
thoughts,

And, one step past it, a new Eden-gate
Shall open on a hinge of harmony
And let you through to mercy. Yeshall
fall

No more, within that Eden, nor pass out

Any more from it. In which hope, move
on,

First sinners and first mourners. Live
and love,—
Doing both nobly, because lowlily.
Live and work, strongly, because
patiently.

And, for the deed of death, trust it to God
That it be well done, unrepented of,
And not to loss. And thence, with con-
stant prayers

Fasten your souls so high, that constantly
The smile of your heroic cheer may float
Above all floods of earthly agonies,
Purification being the joy of pain.

[The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM
and EVE stand in an ecstasy. The
earth-sodiacpalesawayshad by shade,
as the stars, star by star, shine out in
the sky; and the following chant from
the two Earth Spirits (as they sweep
back into the zodiac and disappear
with it) accompanies the process of
change.

Earth Spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken
Both for living and for dying,
We, our homage-oath once broken,
Faster back again in sighing,
And the creatures and the elements renew
their covenanting.

Here, forgive us all our scorning;
Here, we promise milder duty:
And the evening and the morning
Shall reorganize in beauty
A sabbath day of sabbath joy, for uni-
versal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
May be strong to overcome us,
If this mortal and unholy
We still fail to cast out from us,—
If we turn upon you, unaware, your own
dark influences,—

If ye tremble when surrounded
By our forest pine and palm-trees,
If we cannot cure the wounded
With our gum-trees and our balm-
trees,
And if your souls all mournfully sit down
among your senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,
We are gentle in our languor;
Much more good ye shall have near us
Than any pain or anger,
And our God's refracted blessing in our
blessing shall be given.

By the desert's endless vigil
We will solemnize your passions,
By the wheel of the black eagle
We will teach you exaltations,
When he sails against the wind, to the
white spot up in Heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
To your weariness of nature,
And our hands shall stroke the curse's
Dreary furrows from the creature,
Till your bodies shall lie smooth in death,
and straight and slumberful.

Then, a couch we will provide you
Where no summer heats shall dazzle,
Strewing on you and beside you
Thyme and rosemary and basil—
And the yew-tree shall grow overhead
to keep all safe and cool.

Till the Holy Blood awaited
Shall be chrism around us running,
Whereby, newly-consecrated
We shall leap up in God's sunning,
To join the spheric company which
purer worlds assemble.

While, renewed by new evangel,
Soul-consummated, made glorious,
Ye shall brighten past the angels,
Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious,
And the rays around His feet beneath
your sobbing lips shall tremble.

[The fantastic vision has all passed; the earth-zodiac has broken like a belt, and is dissolved from the desert. The Earth Spirits vanish, and the stars shine out above.]

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS

while ADAM and EVE advance into the
desert, hand in hand.

Hear our heavenly promise
Through your mortal passion!
Love, ye shall have from us,
In a pure relation.

As a fish or bird
Swims or flies, if moving,
We unseen are heard
To live on by loving.
Far above the glances
Of your eager eyes,
Listen! we are loving!
Listen, through man's ignorances,
Listen, through God's mysteries,
Listen down the heart of things,
Ye shall hear our mystic wings

Murmurous with loving.
Through the opal door
Listen evermore
How we live by loving.

First semichorus.
When your bodies therefore
Reach the grave their goal,
Softly will we care for
Each enfranchised soul.
Softly and unloathly
Through the door of opal
Toward the Heavenly people,
Floated on a minor fine
Into the full chant divine,
We will draw you smoothly,—
While the human in the minor
Makes the harmony diviner.
Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.
There, a sough of glory
Shall breathe on you as you come,
Ruffling round the doorway
All the light of angel-dom.
From the empyrean centre
Heavenly voices shall repeat,
'Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter,
For the chrism on you is sweet.'
And every angel in the place
Lowly shall bow his face,
Folded fair on softened sounds,
Because upon your hands and feet
He images his Master's wounds.
Listen to our loving!

First semichorus.
So, in the universe's
Consummated undoing,
Our seraphs of white mercies
Shall hover round the ruin!
Their wings shall stream upon the flame
As if incorporate of the same

In elemental fusion,
And calm their faces shall burn out
With a pale and mastering thought,
And a steadfast looking of desire
From out between the clefts of fire,—
While they cry, in the Holy's name,
To the final Restitution.
Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.

So, when the day of God is
To the thick graves accompted,
Awaking the dead bodies
The angel of the trumpet
Shall split and shatter the earth
To the roots of the grave
Which never before were slackened,
And quicken the charnel birth
With his blast so clear and brave,
That the Dead shall start and stand
erect,
And every face of the burial-place
Shall the awful, single look reflect,
Wherewith he them awakened.
Listen to our loving!

First semichorus.

But wild is the horse of Death.
He will leap up wild at the clamour
Above and beneath.
And where is his Tamer
On that last day,
When he crieth, Ha, ha!
To the trumpet's blare,
And paweth the earth's Aceldama?
When he tosseth his head,
The drear-white steed,
And ghastily champeth the last moon-ray,—
What angel there
Can lead him away,
That the living may rule for the Dead?

Second semichorus.

Yet a TAMER shall be found!
One more bright than seraph crowned,
And more strong than cherub bold,
Elder, too, than angel old,
By his grey eternities.
He shall master and surprise
The steed of Death.
For He is strong, and He is fain.

He shall quell him with a breath,
And shall lead him where He will,
With a whisper in the ear,
Full of fear—
And a hand upon the mane,
Grand and still.

First semichorus.

Through the flats of Hades where the
souls assemble
He will guide the Death-steed calm
between their ranks,
While, like beaten dogs, they a little
moan and tremble
To see the darkness curdle from the
horse's glittering flanks.
Through the flats of Hades where the
dreary shade is,
Up the steep of Heaven, will the Tamer
guide the steed,—
Up the spheric circles—circle above
circle,
We who count the ages, shall count the
tolling tread—
Every hoof-falstriking a blinder, blanker
sparkle
From the stony orbs, which shall show
as they were dead.

Second semichorus.

All the way the Death-steed with tolling
hoofs shall travel,
Ashen grey the planets shall be motion-
less as stones,
Loosely shall the systems eject their
parts coeval,—
Stagnant in the spaces, shall float the
pallid moons.
Suns that touch their apogees, reeling
from their level,
Shall run back on their axles, in wild,
low, broken tunes.

Chorus.

Up against the arches of the crystal
ceiling,
From the horse's nostrils shall steam the
blunting breath.
Up between the angels pale with silent
feeling,
Will the Tamer, calmly, lead the horse
of Death.

Semichorus.

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all
that glory,
Will the Tamer lead him straightway to
the Throne;
'Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring
before Thee
With a hand nail-pierced,—I, who am
Thy Son.'
Then the Eye Divinest, from the Deepest,
flaming,
On the mystic courser, shall look out in
fire.
Blind the beast shall stagger where It
overcame him,
Meek as lamb at pasture—bloodless in
desire.
Down the beast shall shiver,—slain amid
the taming,—
And, by Life essential, the phantasm
Death expire.

Chorus.

Listen, man, through life and death,
Through the dust and through the breath,
Listen down the heart of things!
Ye shall hear our mystic wings
Murmurous with loving.

A Voice from below. Gabriel, thou
Gabriel!

A Voice from above. What wouldst
thou with me?

First Voice. I heard thy voice sound
in the angels' song,
And I would give thee question.

Second Voice. Question me.

First Voice. Why have I called thrice
to my Morning Star
And had no answer? All the stars are
out,

And answer in their places. Only in vain
I cast my voice against the outer rays
Of my Star, shut in light behind the
sun.

No more reply than from a breaking
string,
Breaking when touched. Or is she not
my Star?

Where is my Star—my Star? Have ye
cast down

Her glory like my glory? has she waxed
Mortal, like Adam? has she learnt to
hate

Like any angel?

Second Voice. She is sad for thee.
All things grow sadder to thee, one by
one.

Angel Chorus.

Live, work on, O Earthy!
By the Actual's tension,
Speed the arrow worthily
Of a pure ascension.
From the low earth round you,
Reach the heights above you!
From the stripes that wound you,
Seek the loves that love you!
God's divinest burneth plain
Through the crystal diaphane
Of our loves that love you.

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel!

Second Voice. What wouldst thou
with me?

First Voice. Is it true, O thou Gabriel,
that the crown
Of sorrow which I claimed, another
claims?

That He claims THAT too?

Second Voice. Lost one, it is true.

First Voice. That He will be an exile
from His Heaven,

To lead those exiles homeward?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That He will be an exile
by His will,

As I by mine election?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That I shall stand sole
exile finally,—

Made desolate for fruition?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Gabriel!

Second Voice. I hearken.

First Voice. Is it true besides—
A right true—that mine orient Star will
give

Her name of 'Bright and Morning-Star'
to Him,—

And take the fairness of His virtue
back,

To cover loss and sadness?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Untrue, Untrue! O
Morning-Star, O MINE,
Who sittest secret in a veil of light
Far up the starry spaces, say—*Untrue*.

Speak but so loud as doth a wasted moon
To Tyrrhene waters. I am Lucifer.

[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*
All things grow sadder to me, one by one.]

Angel Chorus.

Exiled human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger
Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight.
From this chain of Nature's
God is the Discharger,
And the Actual's prison
Opens to your sight.

Semichorus.

Calm the stars and golden,
In a light exceeding :
What their rays have measured,
Let your feet fulfil !
These are stars beholden
By your eyes in Eden,
Yet, across the desert,
See them shining still.

Chorus.

Future joy and far light
Working such relations,
Hear us singing gently
Exiled is not lost.
God, above the starlight,
God, above the patience,
Shall at last present ye
Guerdons worth the cost.
Patiently enduring,
Painfully surrounded,
Listen how we love you,
Hope the uttermost.
Waiting for that curing
Which exalts the wounded,
Hear us sing above you—
EXILED, BUT NOT LOST !

[*The stars shine on brightly, while
ADAM and EVE pursue their way into
the far wilderness. There is a sound
through the silence, as of the falling
tears of an angel.*

PROMETHEUS BOUND

FROM THE GREEK OF AESCHYLUS

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1838

ALTHOUGH, among the various versions which have appeared of various ancient writers, we may recognize the dead, together with much of the living letter; a literal version, together with a transfusion of poetical spirit;—why should we, on that account, consider ourselves charmed away from attempting another translation? A mirror may be held in different lights by different hands; and, according to the position of those hands, will the light fall. A picture may be imitated in different ways,—by steel engraving, or stone engraving; and, according to the vocation of the artist, will the copy be. According to Dr. Bentley, Pope's translation of Homer is not Homer; it is Spondanus: he might have said, it is not even Spondanus—it is Pope. Cowper's translation is a different

Homer altogether; not Spondanus, nor Pope, nor the right Homer either. We do not blame Pope and Cowper for not having faithfully represented Homer: we do not blame Pope and Cowper for being Pope and Cowper. It is the nature of the human mind to communicate its own character to whatever substance it conveys, whether it convey metaphysical impressions from itself to another mind, or literary compositions from one to another language. It is therefore desirable that the same composition should be conveyed by different minds, that the character of the medium may not be necessarily associated with the thing conveyed. All men, since Aesop's time and before it, have worn various-coloured spectacles. They cannot part with their colour, which is

their individuality; but they may correct the effects of that individuality by itself. If Potter show us Aeschylus through green spectacles, and another translator, though in a very inferior manner, show us Aeschylus through yellow ones, it will become clear to the English reader that green and yellow are not inherent properties of the Greek poet: and in this respect, both the English reader and the Greek poet are benefited.

But the present age says, it has no need of translations from classic authors. It is, or it would be, an original age: it will not borrow thoughts with long genealogies, nor walk upon a *pavé*, nor wear a costume, like Queen Anne's authors and the French dramatists. Its poetry shall not be cold and polished and imitative poetry; but shall dream undreamt of dreams, and glow with an unearthly frenzy. If its dreams be noble dreams, may they be dreamt on; if its frenzy be the evidence of inspiration, 'may I,' as Prometheus says, 'be mad.' But let the age take heed: there is one step from dreaming nobly to sleeping inertly; and one, from frenzy to imbecility.

I do not ask, I would not obtain, that our age should be servilely imitative of any former age. Surely it may think its own thoughts and speak its own words, yet not turn away from those who have thought and spoken well. The contemplation of excellence produces excellence, if not similar, yet parallel. We do not turn from green hills and waving forests, because we build and inhabit palaces; nor do we turn towards them, that we may model them in painted wax. We make them subjects of contemplation, in order to abstract from them those ideas of beauty, afterwards embodied in our own productions; and, above all, in order to consider their and our Creator under every manifestation of His goodness and His power. All beauties, whether in nature or art, whether in physics or morals, whether in composition or abstract reasoning, are multiplied reflections, visible in different distances and under different positions, of one archetypal beauty. If we owe gratitude to Him

who created and unveiled its form, should we refuse to gaze upon those reflections? Because they rest even upon heathen scrolls, should we turn away from those scrolls? Because thorns and briars are the product of the earth, should we avert our eyes from that earth? The mind of man and the earth of man are cursed alike.

But the age would not be 'classical.' 'Oh, that profaned name!' What does it mean, and what is it made to mean? It does not mean what it is made to mean: it does not mean what is necessarily regular, and polished, and unimpassioned. The ancients, especially the ancient Greeks, felt, and thought, and wrote antecedently to rules: they felt passionately, and thought daringly; and wrote because they felt and thought. Shakespeare is a more classical writer than Racine.

Perhaps, of all the authors of antiquity, no one stands so forward to support this hypothesis as Aeschylus: and of all the works of Aeschylus, no one stands more forward to support it than his work of the *Prometheus Bound*. He is a fearless and impetuous, not a cautious and accomplished poet. His excellences could not be acquired by art, nor could his defects exist separately from genius. It would be nearly equally impossible for the mere imitator to compass either; for if we would stand in the mist, we must stand also on the mountain. His excellences consist chiefly in a vehement imaginativeness, a strong but repressed sensibility, a high tone of morality, a fervency of devotion, and a rolling energetic diction: and as sometimes his fancy rushes in, where his judgement fears to tread, and language, even the most copious and powerful of languages, writhes beneath its impetuosity; an occasional mixing of metaphor, and frequent obscurity of style, are named among his chief defects. He is pompous too, sometimes; but his pomposity has not any modern, any rigid, frigid effect. When he walks, like his actors, on cothurni, we do not say 'how stiff he is!' but 'how majestic!'

Whether the *Prometheus* be, or be not, the finest production of its author, it will

not, I think, be contested, that Prometheus himself is the character in the conception and development of which its author has concentrated his powers in the most full and efficient manner. There is more gorgousness of imagery in the *Seven Chiefs* and more power in the *Eumenides*; and I should tremble to oppose any one scene in *Prometheus* to the Cassandra scene in *Agamemnon*. The learned Mr. Boyd, who, in addition to many valuable and well-known translations, has furnished the public with an able version of that obscure tragedy, considers the scene in question to be ‘unapproached and unapproachable by any rival.’ But I would rest the claims of the *Prometheus* upon one fulcrum, the conception of character. It is not in the usual manner of Aeschylus to produce upon his canvas any very prominent figure, to which every other is made subordinate, and to which the interest of the spectator is very strongly and almost exclusively attached. Agamemnon’s πληγὴν ἔχω we do not feel within our hearts. In the *Seven Chiefs*, there is a clear division of interest; and the reader willingly agrees with Antigone, that Polynices should be as honourably buried as Eteocles. In the *Supplices* we are called upon to exercise universal charity towards fifty heroines. In the *Persae*, we cannot weep with Atossa over the misfortunes of Xerxes; not even over what she most femininely considers to be his greatest misfortune—μάλιστα δ' ἡδε συμφορά δάκρει—his wearing a tattered garment. Perhaps we know more of Orestes than of any personage, always excepting Prometheus, introduced by Aeschylus: and yet both in the *Choëphoroe* and *Eumenides* we are interested in his calamities, rather from their being calamities than from their being his. But Prometheus stands eminent and alone; one of the most original, and grand, and attaching characters ever conceived by the mind of man. That conception sank deeply into the soul of Milton, and, as has been observed, rose from thence in the likeness of his Satan. But the Satan of Milton and the Prometheus of Aeschylus stand upon ground as unequal as do the

sublime of sin and the sublime of virtue. Satan suffered from his ambition; Prometheus from his humanity: Satan for himself; Prometheus for mankind: Satan dared perils which he had not weighed; Prometheus devoted himself to sorrows which he had foreknown. ‘Better to rule in hell,’ said Satan; ‘Better to serve this rock,’ said Prometheus. But in his hell, Satan yearned to associate man; while Prometheus preferred a solitary agony: nay, he even permitted his zeal and tenderness for the peace of others to abstract him from that agony’s intenseness.

Aeschylus felt the force of his own portraiture: he never removes his Prometheus from the spectator’s sight. The readers of Aeschylus feel it: they are impatient at Io’s long narrations; not because those narrations are otherwise than beautiful, but because they would hear Prometheus speak again: they are impatient even at Prometheus’s prophetic replies to Io, because they would hear him speak only of Prometheus. From the moment of the first dawning of his character upon their minds, its effect is electrifying. He is silent: he disdains as much to answer the impotent and selfish compassion of Vulcan, as to murmur beneath the brutal cruelty of Strength. It was not thus that he pitied in his days of joy: it was not thus that he acted in his days of power: and his spirit is above them, and reck not of them; and when their pity and their scoffs pollute his ears no more, he pours out his impassioned sorrows to the air, and winds, and waters, and earth, and sun, whom he had never visited with benefits, and ‘taxed not with unkindness.’ The striking nature of these, our first ideas of Prometheus, is not enfeebled by any subsequent ones. We see him daring and unflinching beneath the torturing and dishonouring hand, yet keenly alive to the torture and dis honour; for himself fearless and rash, yet for others considerate and wary; himself unpitied, yet to others pitiful. And when, at the last, he calls no longer upon the sun, and earth, and waters, from whom the Avenger is secluding him; but demands of Aether, who is rolling light to all

eyes excepting his, whether he beholds how he suffers by injustice;—our hearts rise up within us, and bear witness that the suffering is indeed unjust.

It is apparent with what bitter feeling the conceiver of this character must have regarded the transferred praise and love of Athens—of his country. ‘Are you not ashamed,’ said Menander to Philemon, ‘to conquer me in comedy?’ Such a reproach might Aeschylus have used to his dramatic rival, and extracted as deep a blush as ever stained Philemon’s cheek. But he did not. Silent as his own Prometheus, he left for ever the Athens on whom he had conferred the immortality of his name and works; and went to Sicily, to die. In that place of exile he wrote his epitaph instead of tragedies, calling with his dying voice on the grove of Marathon¹ and the conquered Persians, as the only witnesses of his glory. ‘If thorns be in thy path,’ said Marcus Antoninus², ‘turn aside.’ But where should he turn, who would avoid the ingatitude and changefulness of man?

Among those who have passed judgement upon Aeschylus, it is remarkable how many have passed a similar one to that of the Athenians, when, according to Suidas, they ‘broke down the benches’ previous to his departure for Sicily;—a phrase interpreted by Scaliger to signify a final condemnation of his work. He is ‘damned by faint praise’; by an alternate acknowledgement of his genius, and censure of his taste; and by an invidious opposition to Sophocles and Euripides. Of the three great critics of antiquity,—Longinus, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Quintilian,—Dionysius alone does not measure his criticism to twice the length of his commendation. Quintilian calls him ‘rudit in plerisque et incompositus,’ which

my sense of justice almost gives me courage to call a false criticism. Longinus—Longinus!! uses similar language:—*ἐνιοτε μέντοι ἀκατεργάτους καὶ οὐλεῖ ποκοειδεῖς τὰς ἐννοιας καὶ ἀμαλάκτους φέρουσιν.* Now there are, undeniably, some things in Aeschylus, which, like the expressions of Callisthenes, would properly fall under the censure of Longinus, as being *οὐχ ἴψηλά, ἀλλὰ μετέωρα*. But according to every principle by which he himself could urge his immortal claim upon posterity, the Homer of criticism should have named with less of coldness and more of rapture, the Homer of dramatic poetry.

With regard to the execution of this attempt, it is not necessary for me to say many words. I have rendered the iambics into blank verse, their nearest parallel; and the choral odes and other lyric intermixtures, into English lyrics, irregular and rimed. Irregularity I imagined to be indispensable to the conveyance of any part of the effect of the original measure, of which little seems to be understood by modern critics, than that it is irregular. To the literal sense I have endeavoured to bend myself as closely as was poetically possible: but if, after all,—and it is too surely the case,—‘quantum mutatus’ must be applied; may the reader say so rather sorrowfully than severely, and forgive my English for not being Greek, and myself for not being Aeschylus.

And will Aeschylus forgive, among my many other offences against him, the grave offence of profaning his Prometheus, by attaching to it some miscellaneous poems by its translator³? Will he not rather reft upon me, his chorus’s strongly expressed disapprobation of *unequal unions*? And how can I defend myself? *ἄπολεμος οὐδὲ γ’ ἡ πόλεμος.*

¹ See the epitaph which is attributed to him.

² Lib. viii. cap. 5.

³ Printed in this edition among the ‘Early Poems,’ pp. 60–77.

PROMETHEUS BOUND

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

PROMETHEUS.

OCEANUS.

HERMES.

CHORUS of Ocean Nymphs.

HEPHAESTUS.

Io, daughter of Inachus.

STRENGTH and FORCE.

SCENE.—STRENGTH and FORCE, HEPHAESTUS and PROMETHEUS, at the Rocks.

Strength. We reach the utmost limit
of the earth,
The Scythian track, the desert without
man,
And now, Hephaestus, thou must needs
fulfil
The mandate of our Father, and with links
Indissoluble of adamantine chains,
Fasten against this beetling precipice
This guilty god. Because he filched away
Thine own bright flower, the glory of
plastic fire,
And gifted mortals with it,—such a sin
It doth behove he expiate to the gods,
Learning to accept the empery of Zeus
And leave off his old trick of loving man.

Hephaestus. O Strength and Force,—
for you, our Zeus's will
Presents a deed for doing, no more!—
but I,
I lack your daring, up this storm-rent
chasm
To fix with violent hands a kindred god,—
Howbeit necessity compels me so
That I must dare it—and our Zeus com-
mands
With a most inevitable word. Ho, thou!
High-thoughted son of Themis who is
sage!
Thee loath, I loath must rivet fast in chains
Against this rocky height unclimb by
man,
Where never human voice nor face shall
find
Out thee who lov'st them, and thy
beauty's flower,
Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall
fade away.
Night shall come up with garniture of
stars

To comfort thee with shadow, and the
sun
Disperse with retrickt beams the morning-
frosts,
But through all changes, sense of present
woe
Shall vex thee sore, because with none
of them
There comes a hand to free. Such fruit
is plucked
From love of man!—and in that thou, a
god,
Didst brave the wrath of gods and give
away
Undue respect to mortals, for that crime
Thou art adjudged to guard this joyless
rock,
Erect, unslumbering, bending not the
knee,
And many a cry and unavailing moan
To utter on the air. For Zeus is stern,
And new-made kings are cruel.
Strength. Be it so.
Why loiter in vain pity? Why not hate
A god the gods hate?—one too who be-
trayed
Thy glory unto men?
Hephaestus. An awful thing
Is kinship joined to friendship.
Strength. Grant it be;
Is disobedience to the Father's word
A possible thing? Dost quail not more
for that?
Hephaestus. Thou, at least, art a stern
one! ever bold.
Strength. Why, if I wept, it were no
remedy.
And do not thou spend labour on the air
To bootless uses.
Hephaestus. Cursed handicraft!

I curse and hate thee, O my craft!

Strength. Why hate
Thy craft most plainly innocent of all
These pending ills?

Hephaestus. I would some other hand
Were here to work it!

Strength. All work hath its pain,
Except to rule the gods. There is none
free

Except King Zeus.

Hephaestus. I know it very well:
I argue not against it.

Strength. Why not, then,
Make haste and lock the fetters over HIM,
Lest Zeus behold thee lagging?

Hephaestus. Here be chains.
Zeus may behold these.

Strength. Seize him,—strike a main!
Strike with the hammer on each side his
hands—

Rivet him to the rock.

Hephaestus. The work is done,
And thoroughly done.

Strength. Still faster grapple him,—
Wedge him in deeper,—leave no inch
to stir!

He's terrible for finding a way out
From the irremediable.

Hephaestus. Here's an arm, at least,
Grappled past freeing.

Strength. Now, then, buckle me
The other securely. Let this wise one
learn

He's duller than our Zeus.

Hephaestus. Oh, none but he
Accuse me justly!

Strength. Now, straight through
the chest,
Take him and bite him with theclenching
tooth

Of the adamantine wedge, and rivethim.

Hephaestus. Alas, Prometheus, what
thou sufferest here
I sorrow over.

Strength. Dost thou flinch again,
And breathe groans for the enemies of
Zeus?

Beware lest thine own pity find thee out.

Hephaestus. Thou dost behold a spec-
tacle that turns

The sight o' the eyes to pity.

Strength. I behold
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty.

But lash the thongs about his sides.

Hephaestus. So much
I must do. Urge no farther than I must.

Strength. Aye, but I will urge!—and,
with shout on shout,
Will hound thee at this quarry. Get
thee down

And ring amain the iron round his legs.

Hephaestus. That work was not long
doing.

Strength. Heavily now
Let fall the strokes upon the perforant
gyves:

For He who rates the work has a heavy
hand.

Hephaestus. Thy speech is savage as
thy shape.

Strength. Be thou
Gentle and tender! but revile not me
For the firm will and the untrucking
hate.

Hephaestus. Let us go. He is netted
round with chains.

Strength. Here, now, taunt on! and
having spoiled the gods
Of honours, crown withal thy mortal men
Who live a whole day out. Why how
could they

Draw off from thee one single of thy
griefs?

Methinks the Daemons gave theeawrong
name,
Prometheus, which means Providence,—
because

Thou dost thyself need providence to see
Thy roll and ruin from the top of doom.

Prometheus (*alone*). O holy Aether,
and swift-winged Winds,
And River-wells, and laughter innumer-
ous

Of yon sea-waves! Earth, mother of us
all,
And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on
you,—

Behold me a god, what I endure from
gods!

Behold, with throe on throe,
How, wasted by this woe,

I wrestle down the myriad years of time!

Behold, how fast around me,
The new King of the happy ones sublime
Hasflung the chain heforged, has shamed
and bound me!

Woe, woe ! to-day's woe and the coming
morrow's,
I cover with one groan. And where is
found me

A limit to these sorrows ?
And yet what word do I say ? I have
foreknown
Clearly all things that should be; nothing
done
Comes sudden to my soul—and I must
bear
What is ordained with patience, being
aware
Necessity doth front the universe
With an invincible gesture. Yet this curse
Which strikes me now, I find it hard to
brave

In silence or in speech. Because I gave
Honour to mortals, I have yoked my soul
To this compelling fate. Because I stole
The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles
went
Over the ferule's brim, and manward sent
Art's mighty means and perfect rudiment,
That sin I expiate in this agony,
Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanching
sky.

Ah, ah me ! what a sound,
What a fragrance sweeps up from a
pinion unseen
Of a god, or a mortal, or nature between,
Sweeping up to this rock where the earth
has her bound,
To have sight of my pangs, or some
gurdon obtain—
Lo, a god in the anguish, a god in the
chain !

The god, Zeus hateth sore
And his gods hate again,
As many as tread on his glorified floor,
Because I loved mortals too much ever-
more.
Alas me ! what a murmur and motion I
hear,
As of birds flying near I
And the air undersings
The light stroke of their wings—
And all life that approaches I wait for
in fear.

Chorus of Sea Nymphs, first strophe.

Fear nothing ! our troop
Floats lovingly up

With a quick-oaring stroke
Of wings steered to the rock,
Having softened the soul of our father
below !
For the gales of swift-bearing have sent
me a sound,
And the clang of the iron, the maledict
blow,
Smote down the profound
Of my caverns of old,
And struck the red light in a blush from
my brow,—
Till I sprang up unsandalled, in haste to
behold,
And rushed forth on my chariot of wings
manifold.

Prometheus. Alas me !—alas me !
Ye offspring of Tethys who bore at her
breast
Many children, and eke of Oceanus,—he,
Coiling still around earth with perpetual
unrest !

Behold me and see
How transfix'd with the fang
Of a fetter I hang
On the high-jutting rocks of this fissure,
and keep
An uncoveted watch o'er the world and
the deep.

Chorus, first antistrophe.
I behold thee, Prometheus—yet now,
yet now,
A terrible cloud whose rain is tears
Sweeps over mine eyes that witness how
Thy body appears
Hung awaste on the rocks by infrangible
chains !
For new is the Hand and the rudder that
steers
The ship of Olympus through surge and
wind—
And of old things passed, no track is
behind.

Prometheus. Under earth, under Hades
Where the home of the shade is,
All into the deep, deep Tartarus,
I would he had hurled me adown !
I would he had plunged me, fastened thus
In the knotted chain with the savage
clang,

All into the dark, where there should be
none,
Neither god nor another, to laugh and
see!
But now the winds sing through and
shake
The hurtling chains wherein I hang,—
And I, in my naked sorrows, make
Much mirth for my enemy.

Chorus, second strophe.

Nay! who of the gods hath a heart so
stern

As to use thy woe for a mock and mirth?
Who would not turn more mild to learn
Thy sorrows? who of the heaven and
earth,

Save Zeus? But he

Right wrathfully

Bears on his sceptral soul unbent,
And rules thereby the heavenly seed,
Nor will he pause till he content
His thirsty heart in a finished deed;
Or till Another shall appear,
To win by fraud, to seize by fear
The hard-to-be-captured government.

Prometheus. Yet even of me he shall
have need,

That monarch of the blessed seed,
Of me, of me, who now am cursed

By his fetters dire,—

To wring my secret out withal

And learn by whom his sceptre shall
Be filched from him—as was, at first,

His heavenly fire.

But he never shall enchant me

With his honey-lipped persuasion!
Never, never shall he daunt me

With the oath and threat of passion,
Into speaking as they want me,

Till he loose this savage chain,

And accept the expiation

Of my sorrow, in his pain.

Chorus, second antistrophe.

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,

And, for all thou hast borne

From the stroke of the rod,

Nought relaxest from scorn!

But thou speakest unto me

Too free and unworn;

And a terror strikes through me

And festers my soul
And I fear, in the roll
Of the storm, for thy fate
In the ship far from shore!
Since the son of Saturnius is hard in
his hate
And unmoved in his heart evermore.

Prometheus. I know that Zeus is stern.
I know he metes his justice by his will.
And yet, his soul shall learn
More softness when once broken by this
ill,—

And curbing his unconquerable vaunt
He shall rush on in fear to meet with me
Who rush to meet with him in agony,
To issues of harmonious covenant.

Chorus. Remove the veil from all
things and relate
The story to us,—of what crime accused,
Zeus smites thee with dishonourable
pangs.
Speak! if to teach us do not grieve thy
self.

Prometheus. The utterance of these
things is torture to me,
But so, too, is their silence! each way lies
Woe strong as fate.

When gods began with wrath,
And war rose up between their starry
brows,
Some choosing to cast Chronos from his
throne
That Zeus might king it there, and some
in haste
With opposite oaths that they would
have no Zeus

To rule the gods for ever,—I, who brought
The counsel I thought meetest, could not
move
The Titans, children of the Heaven and
Earth,

What time, disdaining in their rugged
souls
My subtle machinations, they assumed
It was an easy thing for force to take
The mastery of fate. My mother, then,
Who is called not only Themis but Earth
too,

(Her single beauty joys in many names)
Did teach me with reiterant prophecy
What future should be,—and how con-
quering gods

Should not prevail by strength and violence,
But by guile only. When I told them so,
They would not deign to contemplate the truth
On all sides round,—whereat I deemed it best
To lead my willing mother upwardly,
And set my Themis face to face with Zeus
As willing to receive her. Tartarus,
With its abysmal cloister of the Dark,
Because I gave that counsel, covers up
The antique Chronos and his siding hosts,
And, by that counsel helped, the king of gods
Hath recompensed me with these bitter pangs!
For kingship wears a cancer at the heart,—
Distrust in friendship. Do ye also ask,
What crime it is for which he tortures me—
That shall be clear before you. When at first
He filled his father's throne, he instantly
Made various gifts of glory to the gods,
And dealt the empire out. Alone of men,
Of miserable men, he took no count,
But yearned to sweep their track off from the world,
And plant a newer race there. Not a god
Resisted such desire except myself!
I dared it! *I drew mortals back to light,*
From meditated ruin deep as hell!—
For which wrong, I am bent down in these pangs
Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,—
And I, who pitied man, am thought myself
Unworthy of pity,—while I render out
Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand
That strikes me thus!—a sight to shame your Zeus!

Chorus. Hard as thy chains, and cold as all these rocks,
Is he, Prometheus, who withholds his heart
From joining in thy woe. I yearned before
To fly this sight—and, now I gaze on it, I sicken inwards.

Prometheus. To my friends, indeed, I must be a sad sight.
Chorus. And didst thou sin No more than so?
Prometheus. I did restrain besides My mortals from premeditating death.
Chorus. How didst thou medicine the plague-fear of death?
Prometheus. I set blind Hopes to inhabit in their house.
Chorus. By that gift, thou didst help thy mortals well.
Prometheus. I gave them also,—fire.
Chorus. And have they now, Those creatures of a day, the red-eyed fire?
Prometheus. They have! and shall learn by it, many arts.
Chorus. And, truly, for such sins Zeus tortures thee,
And will remit no anguish? Is there set No limit before thee to thine agony?
Prometheus. No other! only what seems good to HIM.
Chorus. And how will it seem good? what hope remains?
Seest thou not that thou hast sinned? But that thou hast sinned It glads me not to speak of, and grieves thee—
Then let it pass from both! and seek thyself Some outlet from distress.
Prometheus. It is in truth An easy thing to stand aloof from pain And lavish exhortation and advice On one vexed sorely by it. I have known All in prevision. By my choice, my choice, I freely sinned—I will confess my sin— And helping mortals, found mine own despair.
I did not think indeed that I should pine Beneath such pangs against such skyey rocks, Doomed to this drear hill and no neighbouring Of any life!—but mourn not ye for griefs I bear to-day!—hear rather, dropping down To the plain, how other woes creep on to me,

And learn the consummation of my doom.
Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you,
grieve for me

Who now am grieving!—for Grief walks
the earth,

And sits down at the foot of each by turns.

Chorus. We hear the deep clash of thy
words,

Prometheus, and obey!

And I spring with a rapid foot away
From the rushing car and the holy air,
• The track of birds—

And I drop to the rugged ground and
there

Await the tale of thy despair.

Enter OCEANUS.

Oceanus. I reach the bourne of my weary
road

Where I may see and answer thee,
Prometheus, in thine agony!

On the back of the quick-winged bird I
glode,

And I bridled him in
With the will of a god!

Behold, thy sorrow aches in me,
Constrained by the force of kin.

Nay, though that tie were all undone,
For the life of none beneath the sun
Would I seek a larger benison

Than I seek for thine!

And thou shalt learn my words are
truth,—

That no fair parlance of the mouth
Grows falsely out of mine.

Now give me a deed to prove my faith,—
For no faster friend is named in breath

Than I, Oceanus, am thine.

Prometheus. Ha! what has brought
thee! Hast thou also come
To look upon my woe? How hast thou
dared

To leave the depths called after thee,
the caves

Self-hewn and self-roofed with spontaneus rock,

To visit earth, the mother of my chain?
Hast come indeed to view my doom and
mourn

That I should sorrow thus? Gaze on,
and see

How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,—
how I,

The erector of the empire in his hand,—
Am bent beneath that hand, in this despair!

Oceanus. Prometheus, I behold,—and
I would fain

Exhort thee, though already subtle
enough,

To a better wisdom. Titan, knowthyselv,
And take new softness to thy manners
since

A new king rules the gods. If words
like these,

Harsh words and trenchant, thou wilt
fling abroad,

Zeus haply, though he sit so far and high,
May hear thee do it, and so this wrath
of his,

Which now affects thee fiercely, shall
appear

A mere child's sport at vengeance.
Wretched god,

Rather dismiss the passion which thou
hast,

And seek a change from grief. Perhaps
I seem

To address thee with old saws and out-
worn sense,—

Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely
waits

On lips that speak too proudly!—thou,
meantime,

Art none the meeker, nor dost yield a jot
To evil circumstance, preparing still
To swell the account of grief with other
grieves

Than what are borne. Beseech thee,
use me then

For counsel! do not spurn against the
pricks,—

Seeing that who reigns, reigns by cruelty
Instead of right. And now, I go from
hence,

And will endeavour if a power of mine
Can break thy fetters through. For thee,
—be calm,

And smooth thy words from passion.
Knowest thou not

Of perfect knowledge, thou who knowest
too much,

That where the tongue wags, ruin never
lags?

Prometheus. I gratulate thee who hast
shared and dared

All things with me, except their penalty!
Enough so! leave these thoughts. It
cannot be
That thou shouldst move HIM. He may
not be moved;
And thou, beware of sorrow on this road.
Oceanus. Aye! everwiser for another's
use
Than thine! the event, and not the
prophecy,
Attesteth it to me. Yet where now I rush,
Thy wisdom hath no power to drag me
back;
Because I glory, glory, to go hence
And win for thee deliverance from thy
pangs,
As a free gift from Zeus.

Prometheus. Why there, again,
I give thee gratulation and applause!
Thou lackest no goodwill. But, as for
deeds,
Do nought! 'twere all done vainly;
helping nought,
Whatever thou wouldest do. Rather take
rest,
And keep thyself from evil. If I grieve,
I do not therefore wish to multiply
The griefs of others. Verily, not so!
For still my brother's doom doth vex
my soul,—
My brother Atlas, standing in the west,
Shouldering the column of the heaven
and earth,
A difficult burden! I have also seen,
And pitied as I saw, the earth-born one,
The inhabitant of old Cilician caves,
The great war-monster of the hundred
heads
(All taken and bowed beneath the violent
Hand),
Typhon the fierce, who did resist the
gods,
And, hissing slaughter from his dreadful
jaws,
Flash out ferocious glory from his eyes,
As if to storm the throne of Zeus!
Whereat,
The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew straight
at him,—
The headlong bolt of thunder breathing
flame,
And struck him downward from his
eminence

Of exultation! Through the very soul
It struck him, and his strength was
withered up
To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now, he lies
A helpless trunk supinely, at full length
Beside the strait of ocean, spurred into
By roots of Aetna—high upon whose tops
Hephaestus sits and strikes the flashing
ore.

From thence the rivers of fire shall burst
away
Hereafter, and devour with savage jaws
The equal plains of fruitful Sicily,
Such passion he shall boil back in hot darts
Of an insatiate fury and sough of flame,
Fallen Typhon,—howsoever struck and
charred

By Zeus's bolted thunder! But for thee,
Thou art not so unlearned as to need
My teaching—let thy knowledge save
thyself.

I quaff the full cup of a present doom,
And wait till Zeus hath quenched his
will in wrath.

Oceanus. Prometheus, art thou ignorant of this,—

That words do medicine anger?

Prometheus. If the word
With seasonable softness touch the soul,
And, where the parts are ulcerous, sear
them not
By any rudeness.

Oceanus. With a noble aim
To dare as nobly—is there harm in that?
Dost thou discern it? Teach me.

Prometheus. I discern
Vain aspiration,—unresolute work.

Oceanus. Then suffer me to bear the
brunt of this!
Since it is profitable that one who is
wise

Should seem not wise at all.

Prometheus. And such would seem
My very crime.

Oceanus. In truth thine argument
Sends me back home.

Prometheus. Lest any lament for me
Should cast thee down to hate.

Oceanus. The hate of Him,
Who sits a new king on the absolute
throne!

Prometheus. Beware of him,—lest
thine heart grieve by him.

Oceanus. Thy doom, Prometheus, be
my teacher !

Prometheus. Go !

Depart—beware!—and keep the mind
thou hast.

Oceanus. Thy words drive after, as I
rush before—

Lo ! my four-footed Bird sweeps smooth
and wide

The flats of air with balanced pinions,
glad

To bend his knee at home in the ocean-
stall.

[*Exit Oceanus.*

Chorus, first strophe.

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,
Prometheus ! From my eyes to tender,
Drop after drop incessantly
The tears of my heart's pity render
My cheeks wet from their fountains
free,—

Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,
Whose law is taken from his breast,
Uplifts his sceptre manifest
Over the gods of old.

First antistrophe.

All the land is moaning
With a murmured plaint to-day ;
All the mortal nations,
Having habitations
In the holy Asia,
Are a dirge intoning
For thine honour and thy brothers',
Once majestic beyond others
In the old belief,—
Now are groaning in the groaning
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

Second strophe.

Mourn the maids inhabitant
Of the Colchian land,
Who with white, calm bosoms, stand
In the battle's roar !
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt
The verge of earth, Maeotis' shore.

Second antistrophe.

Yea ! Arabia's battle crown,
And dwellers in the beetling town

Mount Caucasus sublimely nears,—
An iron squadron, thundering down
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before, have I seen to
remain,
By invincible pain
Bound and vanquished,—one Titan !—
'twas Atlas, who bears
In a curse from the gods, by that
strength of his own
Which he evermore wears,
The weight of the heaven on his
shoulder alone,
While he sighs up the stars !
And the tides of the ocean wail bursting
their bars,—

Murmurs still the profound,—
And black Hades roars up through the
chasm of the ground,—
And the fountains of pure-running rivers
moan low
In a pathos of woe.

Prometheus. Beseech you, think not
I am silent thus
Through pride or scorn ! I only gnaw
my heart
With meditation, seeing myself so
wronged.
For so—their honours to these new-
made gods,
What other gave but I,—and dealt them
out
With distribution ? Aye—but here I am
dumb !
For here, I should repeat your know-
ledge to you,
If I spake aught. List rather to the deeds
I did for mortals !—how, being fools
before,
I made them wise and true in aim of soul.
And let me tell you—not astounding men,
But teaching you the intention of my gifts,
How, first beholding, they beheld in vain,
And hearing, heard not, but, like shapes
in dreams,
Mixed all things wildly down the tedious
time,
Nor knew to build a house against the
sun
With wicketed sides, nor any woodcraft
knew,

But lived, like silly ants, beneath the ground
In hollow caves unsunned. There, came to them
No steadfast sign of winter, nor of spring
Flower-perfumed, nor of summer full of fruit,
But blindly and lawlessly they did all things,
Until I taught them how the stars do rise
And set in mystery, and devised for them Number, the inducer of philosophies, The synthesis of Letters, and, beside, The artificer of all things, Memory, That sweet Muse-mother. I was first to yoke
The servile beasts in couples, carrying An heirdom of man's burdens on their backs.
I joined to chariots, steeds, that love the bit
They champ at—the chief pomp of golden ease!
And none but I originated ships, The seaman's chariots, wandering on the brine
With linen wings. And I—oh, miserable!—
Who did devise for mortals all these arts, Have no device left now to save myself From the woe I suffer.

Chorus. Most unseemly woe Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from the sense, Bewildered! Like a bad leech falling sick Thou art faint at soul, and canst not find the drugs

Required to save thyself.

Prometheus. Harken the rest, And marvel further—what more arts and means

I did invent,—this, greatest!—if a man Fell sick, there was no cure, nor esculent Nor chrism nor liquid, but for lack of drugs

Men pined and wasted, till I showed them all

Those mixtures of emollient remedies Whereby they might be rescued from disease.

I fixed the various rules of mantic art, Discerned the vision from the common dream,

Instructed them in vocal auguries Hard to interpret, and defined as plain The wayside omens,—flights of crook-clawed birds,— Showed which are, by their nature, fortunate, And which not so, and what the food of each, And what the hates, affections, social needs, Of all to one another,—taught what sign Of visceral lightness, coloured to a shade, May charm the genial gods, and what fair spots Command the lung and liver. Burning so The limbs encased in fat, and the long chine, I led my mortals on to an art abstruse, And cleared their eyes to the image in the fire, Erst filmed in dark. Enough said now of this. For the other helps of man hid underground, The iron and the brass, silver and gold, Can any dare affirm he found them out Before me? none, I know! unless he choose To lie in his vaunt. In one word learn the whole,— That all arts came to mortals from Prometheus.

Chorus. Give mortals now no inexpedient help, Neglecting thine own sorrow! I have hope still To see thee, breaking from the fetter here, Stand up as strong as Zeus.

Prometheus. This ends not thus, The oracular Fate ordains. I must be bowed By infinite woes and pangs, to escape this chain. Necessity is stronger than mine art.

Chorus. Who holds the helm of that Necessity?

Prometheus. The threefold Fates and the unforgetting Furies.

Chorus. Is Zeus less absolute than these are?

Prometheus. Yea, And therefore cannot fly what is ordained.

Chorus. What is ordained for Zeus,
except to be
A king for ever?

Prometheus. 'Tis too early yet
For thee to learn it : ask no more.

Chorus. Perhaps
Thy secret may be something holy?

Prometheus. Turn
To another matter! this, it is not time
To speak abroad, but utterly to veil
In silence. For by that same secret kept,
I 'scape this chain's dishonour and its
woe.

Chorus, first strophe.

Never, oh never,
May Zeus, the all-giver,
Wrestle down from his throne
In that might of his own
To antagonize mine!
Nor let me delay
As I bend on my way
Toward the gods of the shrine,
Where the altar is full
Of the blood of the bull,
Near the tossing brine
Of Ocean my father!
May no sin be sped in the word that is
said,
But my vow be rather
Consummated,
Nor evermore fail, nor evermore pine.

First antistrophe.

'Tis sweet to have
Life lengthened out
With hopes proved brave
By the very doubt,
Till the spirit enfold
Those manifest joys which were foretold!
But I thrill to behold
Thee, victim doomed,
By the countless cares
And the drear despairs,
For ever consumed,—
And all because thou, who art fearless
now
Of Zeus above,
Didst overflow for mankind below
With a free-souled, reverent love.

Ah friend, behold and see!
What's all the beauty of humanity?
Can it be fair?

What's all the strength?—is it strong?
And what hope can they bear,
These dying livers—living one day long?
Ah, seest thou not, my friend,
How feeble and slow
And like a dream, doth go
This poor blind manhood, drifted from
its end?
And how no mortal wranglings can
confuse
The harmony of Zeus?

Prometheus, I have learnt these things
From the sorrow in thy face.

Another song did fold its wings
Upon my lips in other days,
When round the bath and round the bed
The hymeneal chant instead
I sang for thee, and smiled,—
And thou didst lead, with gifts and
vows,
Hesione, my father's child,
To be thy wedded spouse.

Io enters.

Io. What land is this? what people is
here?
And who is he that writhes, I see,
In the rock-hung chain?
Now what is the crime that hath brought
thee to pain?
Now what is the land—make answer
free—
Which I wander through, in my wrong
and fear?
Ah! ah! ah me!
The gad-fly stingeth to agony!
O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale
Of earth-born Argus!—ah!—I quail
When my soul desciess
That herdsman with the myriad eyes
Which seem, as he comes, one crafty eye.
Graves hide him not, though he should
die,
But he doggeth me in my misery
From the roots of death, on high—on
high—
And along the sands of the siding deep,
All famine-worn, he follows me,
And his waxen reed doth undersound
The waters round,
And giveth a measure that giveth sleep.

Woe, woe, woe!
Where shall my weary course be done?—
What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's
son?
And in what have I sinned, that I should
go
Thus yoked to grief by thine hand for
ever?
Ah! ah! dost vex me so
That I madden and shiver,
Stung through with dread?
Flash the fire down, to burn me!
Heave the earth up, to cover me!
Or plunge me in the deep, with the salt
waves over me,
That the sea-beasts may be fed!
O king, do not spurn me
In my prayer!
For this wandering everlonger, ever-
more,
Hath overworn me,—
And I know not on what shore
I may rest from my despair.

Chorus. Hearest thou what the ox-
horned maiden saith?

Prometheus. How could I choose but
hearken what she saith,
The frenzied maiden? — Inachus's
child? —
Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and now
is lashed
By Heré's hate along the unending ways?

Io. Who taught thee to articulate that
name,—
My father's? Speak to his child,
By grief and shame defiled!
Who art thou, victim, thou—who dost
acclaim
Mine anguish in true words, on the wide
air?
And callest too by name the curse that
came
From Heré unaware,
To waste and pierce me with its mad-
dening goad?
Ah—ah—I leap
With the pang of the hungry—I bound
on the road—
I am driven by my doom—
I am overcome

By the wrath of an enemy strong and
deep!
Are any of those who have tasted pain,
Alas! as wretched as I?
Now tell me plain, doth aught remain
For my soul to endure beneath the sky?
Is there any help to be holpen by?
If knowledge be in thee, let it be said!
Cry aloud—cry
To the wandering, woful maid.

Prometheus. Whatever thou wouldst
learn I will declare,—
No riddle upon my lips, but such straight
words
As friends should use to each other
when they talk.
Thou seest Prometheus, who gave
mortals fire.
Io. O common Help of all men, known
of all,
O miserable Prometheus,—for what
cause
Dost thou endure thus?

Prometheus. I have done with wail
For my own griefs—but lately.

Io. Wilt thou not
Vouchsafe the boon to me?

Prometheus. Say what thou wilt,
For I vouchsafe all.

Io. Speak then, and reveal
Who shut thee in this chasm.

Prometheus. The will of Zeus,
The hand of his Hephaestus.

Io. And what crime,
Dost expiate so?

Prometheus. Enough for thee I have
told,
In so much only.

Io. Nay—but show besides
The limit of my wandering, and the time
Which yet is lacking to fulfil my grief.

Prometheus. Why, not to know were
better than to know,
For such as thou.

Io. Beseech thee, blind me not
To that which I must suffer.

Prometheus. If I do,
The reason is not that I grudge a boon.

Io. What reason, then, prevents thy
speaking out?

Prometheus. No grudging! but a fear
to break thine heart.

Io. Less care for me, I pray thee!
Certainty,
I count for advantage.

Prometheus. Thou wilt have it so,
And, therefore, I must speak. Now
hear—

Chorus. Not yet.
Give half the guerdon my way. Let us
learn
First, what the curse is that befell the
maid,—
Her own voice telling her own wasting
woes:

The sequence of that anguish shall await
The teaching of thy lips.

Prometheus. It doth behove
That thou, Maid *Io*, shouldst vouchsafe
to these

The grace they pray,—the more, be-
cause they are called
Thy father's sisters! since to open out
And mourn out grief where it is possible
To draw a tear from the audience, is a
work

That pays its own price well.

Io. I cannot choose
But trust you, nymphs, and tell you all
ye ask,
In clear words—though I sob amid my
speech

In speaking of the storm-curse sent from
Zeus,
And of my beauty, from which height
it took

Its swoop on me, poor wretch! left thus
deformed

And monstrous to your eyes. For ever-
more

Around my virgin-chamber, wandering
went

The nightly visions which entreated
me

With syllabled smooth sweetness.—
'Blessed maid,

Why lengthen out thy maiden hours
when fate

Permits the noblest spousal in the world?
When Zeus burns with the arrow of thy
love,

And fain would touch thy beauty?—

Maiden, thou
Despise not Zeus! depart to Lerne's
mead

That's green around thy father's flocks
and stalls,

Until the passion of the heavenly Eye
Be quenched in sight.' Such dreams
did all night long

Constrain me—me, unhappy!—till I
dared

To tell my father how they trod the dark
With visionary steps. Whereat he sent
His frequent heralds to the Pythian fane,
And also to Dodona, and inquired
How best, by act or speech, to please
the gods.

These same returning, brought back oracles
Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,
Dark to interpret; but at last there came
To Inachus an answer that was clear,—
Thrown straight as any bolt, and spoken
out—

This:—'he should drive me from my
home and land,
And bid me wander to the extreme
verge

Of all the earth—or, if he willed it not,
Should have a thunder with a fiery eye,
Leap straight from Zeus to burn up all
his race

To the last root of it.' By which Loxian
word

Subdued, he drove me forth, and shut
me out,

Heloath, meloath,—but Zeus's violent bit
Compelled him to the deed!—when
instantly

My body and soul were changed and
distraught,

And, horned as ye see, and spurred along
By the fanged insect, with a maniac leap
I rushed on to Cerchnea's limpid stream
And Lerne's fountain-water. There,
the earth-born,

The herdsman Argus, most immitigable
Of wrath, did find me out, and track me
out

With countless eyes, set staring at my
steps!—

And though an unexpected sudden doom
Drew him from life—I, curse-tormented
still,

Am driven from land to land before the
scourge

The gods hold o'er me. So, thou hast
heard the past,

And if a bitter future thou canst tell,
Speak on! I charge thee, do not flatter me
Through pity, with false words; for, in
my mind,
Deceiving works more shame than torturing doth.

Chorus.

Ah! silence here!
Nevermore, nevermore,
Would I languish for
The stranger's word
To thrill in mine ear!—

Nevermore for the wrong and the woe
and the fear
So hard to behold,
So cruel to bear,
Piercing my soul with a double-edged
sword
Of a sliding cold!
Ah Fate!—ah me!—
I shudder to see
This wandering maid in her agony.

Prometheus. Grief is too quick in thee,
and fear too full.

Be patient till thou hast learnt the rest.

Chorus. Speak—teach!
To those who are sad already, it seems
sweet,
By clear foreknowledge to make perfect
pain.

Prometheus. The boon ye asked me
first was lightly won,—

For first ye asked the story of this maid's
grief

As her own lips might tell it. Now
remains

To list what other sorrows she so young
Must bear from Heré!—Inachus's child,
O thou!—drop down thy soul my
weighty words,

And measure out the landmarks which
are set

To end thy wandering. Toward the
orient sun

First turn thy face from mine, and jour-
ney on

Along the desert flats, till thou shalt come
Where Scythia's shepherd peoples dwell

aloft,

Perched in wheeled wagons under
woven roofs,

And twang the rapid arrow past the
bow—

Approach them not; but siding in thy
course,
The rugged shore-rocks resonant to the
sea,

Depart that country. On the left hand
dwell

The iron-workers, called the Chalybes,
Of whom beware, for certes they are
uncouth,

And nowise bland to strangers. Reach-
ing so

The stream Hybristes (well the *scorner*
called),

Attempt no passage,—it is hard to pass,—
Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,
That highest of mountains, where the
river leaps

The precipice in his strength!—thou
must toil up

Those mountain-tops that neighbour
with the stars,
And tread the south way, and draw
near, at last,

The Amazonian host that hateth man,
Inhabitants of Themiscyra, close
Upon Thermodon, where the sea's rough
jaw

Doth gnash at Salmydessa and provide
A cruel host to seamen, and to ships
A stepdame. They with unreluctant hand
Shall lead thee on and on, till thou arrive
Just where the ocean-gates show nar-
rowest

On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leaving
which,
Behoves thee swim with fortitude of
soul

The strait Maeotis. Aye! and evermore
That traverse shall be famous on men's
lips,

That strait, called Bosphorus, the horned
one's road,

So named because of thee, who so wilt
pass

From Europe's plain to Asia's continent.
How think ye, nymphs? the king of

gods appears

Impartial in ferocious deeds? Behold!
The god desirous of this mortal's love

Hath cursed her with these wanderings.
Ah, fair child,

Thou hast met a bitter groom for bridal troth!

For all thou yest hast heard, can only prove
The incompleted prelude of thy doom.

Io. Ah, Ah!

Prometheus. Is't thy turn, now, to shriek and moan?

How wilt thou, when thou hast hearkened what remains?

Chorus. Besides the grief thou hast told, can aught remain?

Prometheus. A sea—offordoomedevil worked to storm.

Io. What boots my life, then? why not cast myself

Down headlong from this miserable rock, That, dashed against the flats, I may redeem

My soul from sorrow? Better once to die, Than day by day to suffer.

Prometheus. Verily, It would be hard for thee to bear my woe For whom it is appointed not to die. Death frees from woe: but I before mesee In all my far preview, not a bound To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall From being a king.

Io. And can it ever be That Zeus shall fall from empire?

Prometheus. Thou, methinks, Wouldst take some joy to see it.

Io. Could I choose? I, who endure such pangs, now, by that god!

Prometheus. Learn from me, therefore, that the event shall be.

Io. By whom shall his imperial sceptred hand

Be emptied so?

Prometheus. Himself shall spoil himself, Through his idiotic counsels.

Io. How! declare! Unless the word bring evil.

Prometheus. He shall wed—And in the marriage-bond be joined to grief.

Io. A heavenly bride—or human? Speak it out,

If it be utterable.

Prometheus. Why should I say which? It ought not to be uttered, verily.

Io. Then

It is his wife shall tear him from his throne!

Prometheus. It is his wife shall bear a son to him, More mighty than the father.

Io. From this doom Hath he no refuge?

Prometheus. None—or ere that I, Loosed from these fetters—

Io. Yea—but who shall loose, While Zeus is adverse?

Prometheus. One who is born of thee,—

It is ordained so.

Io. What is this thou sayest? A son of mine shall liberate thee from woe?

Prometheus. After ten generations, count three more, And find him in the third.

Io. The oracle Remains obscure.

Prometheus. And search it not to learn Thine own griefs from it.

Io. Point me not to a good, To leave me straight bereaved.

Prometheus. I am prepared To grant thee one of two things.

Io. But which two? Set them before me—grant me power to choose.

Prometheus. I grant it—choose now! shall I name aloud

What griefs remain to wound thee, or what hand

Shall save me out of mine?

Chorus. Vouchsafe, O god, The one grace of the twain to her who

prays, The next to me—and turn back neither prayer

Dishonour'd by denial. To herself Recount the future wandering of her feet;

Then point me to the looser of thy chain, Because I yearn to know him.

Prometheus. Since ye will, Of absolute will, this knowledge, I will set

No contrary against it, nor keep back A word of all ye ask for. *Io,* first To thee I must relate thy wandering course

Far winding. As I tell it, write it down
In thy soul's book of memories. When
 thou hast past
The refluent bound that parts two continents,
Track on the footsteps of the orient sun
In his own fire—across the roar of seas,—
Fly till thou hast reached the Gorgonaean flats
Beside Cisthene. There, the Phorcides,
Three ancient maidens, live, with shape
 of swan,
One tooth between them, and one common eye,
On whom the sun doth never look at all
With all his rays, nor evermore the moon,
When she looks through the night
 Anear to whom
Are the Gorgon sisters three, enclothed with wings,
With twisted snakes for ringlets, man-abhorred—
There is no mortal gazes in their face,
And gazing can breathe on. I speak of such
To guard thee from their horror. Aye! and list
Another tale of a dreadful sight! beware
The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of Zeus,
Those sharp-mouthed dogs!—and the Arimaspians host
Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting beside
The river of Pluto that runs bright with gold.
Approach them not, beseech thee.
 Presently
Thou'lt come to a distant land, a dusky tribe
Of dwellers at the fountain of the Sun,
Whence flows the river Aethiops; wind along
Its banks and turn off at the cataracts,
Just as the Nile pours from the Bybline hills
His holy and sweet wave!—his course shall guide
Thine own to that triangular Nile-ground
Where, Io, is ordained for thee and thine,
A lengthened exile. Have I said, in this,
Aught darkly or incompletely!—now repeat

The question, make the knowledge fuller!
 Lo,
I have more leisure than I covet, here.
Chorus. If thou canst tell us aught
 that's left untold,
Or loosely told, of her most dreary flight,
Declare it straight! but if thou hast uttered all,
Grant us that latter grace for which we prayed,
Remembering how we prayed it.
Prometheus. She has heard
The uttermost of her wandering. There it ends.
But that she may be certain not to have heard
All vainly, I will speak what she endured
Ere coming hither, and invoke the past
To prove my prescience true. And so—to leave
A multitude of words, and pass at once
To the subject of thy course!—When thou hadst gone
To those Molossian plains which sweep around
Dodona shouldering Heaven, whereby the fane
Of Zeus Thespriot keepeth oracle,
And, wonder past belief, where oaks do wave
Articulate adjurations—(aye, the same
Saluted thee in no perplexed phrase
But clear with glory, noble wife of Zeus
That shouldst be, there,—some sweetness took thy sense!)
Thou didst rush further onward,—stung along
The ocean-shore, toward Rhea's mighty bay,
And, lost back from it, was lost to it again
In stormy evolution!—and, know well,
In coming time that hollow of the sea
Shall bear the name Ionian, and present
A monument of Io's passage through,
Unto all mortals. Be these words the signs
Of my soul's power to look beyond the veil
Of visible things. The rest, to you and her,
I will declare in common audience,
 nymphs,
Returning thither where my speech brake off.

There is a town Canobus, built upon
The earth's fair margin, at the mouth of
 Nile,
And on the mound washed up by it!—
 Io, there
Shall Zeus give back to thee thy perfect
 mind,
And only by the pressure and the touch
Of a hand not terrible; and thou to Zeus
Shalt bear a dusky son whoshall be called
Thence, Epaphus, Touched! That son
 shall pluck the fruit
Of all that land wide-watered by the flow
Of Nile; but after him, when counting out
As far as the fifth full generation, then
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,
To fly the proffered nuptials of their kin,
Their father's brothers. These being
 passion-struck,
Like falcons bearing hard on flying doves,
Shall follow, hunting at a quarry of love
They should not hunt—till envious
 Heaven maintain
A curse betwixt that beauty and their
 desire,
And Greece receive them, to be overcome
In murtherous woman-war, by fierce
 red hands
Kept savage by the night. For every
 wife
Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep in blood
The sword of a double edge!—(I wish
 indeed
As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes!)
One bride alone shall fail to smite to death
The head upon her pillow, touched with
 love,
Made impotent of purpose, and impelled
To choose the lesser evil,—shame on
 her cheeks,
To blood-guilt on her hands. Which
 bride shall bear
A royal race in Argos. Tedious speech
Were needed to relate particulars
Of these things—'tis enough that, from
 her seed,
Shall spring the strong He, famous with
 the bow,
Whose arm shall break my fetters off.
 Behold,
My mother Themis, that old Titaness,
Delivered to me such an oracle,—

But how and when, I should be long to
 speak,
And thou, in hearing, wouldst not gain
 at all.
Io. Eleleu, eleleu!
 How the spasm and the pain
 And the fire on the brain
 Strike, burning me through!
How the sting of the curse, all afame
 as it flew,
 Pricks me onward again!
How my heart, in its terror, is spurning
 my brest,
And my eyes, like the wheels of a chariot,
 roll round!
I am whirled from my course, to the
 east, to the west,
In the whirlwind of frenzy all madly
 inwound—
And my mouth is unbridled for anguish
 and hate,
And my words beat in vain, in wild
 storms of unrest,
 On the sea of my desolate fate.
 [*To rushes out.*

Chorus. Strophe.

Oh, wise was he, oh, wise was he,
Who first within his spirit knew
And with his tongue declared it true,
That love comes best that comes unto
 The equal of degree!
And that the poor and that the low
Should seek no love from those above
Whose souls are fluttered with the flow
Of airs about their golden height,
Or proud because they see arow
 Ancestral crowns of light.

Antistrophe.

Oh, never, never, may ye, Fates,
Behold me with your awful eyes
Lift mine too fondly up the skies
Where Zeus upon the purple waits!—
 Nor let me step too near—too near—
To any suitor, bright from heaven!
 Because I see—because I fear
This loveless maiden vexed and laden
By this fell curse of Heré, driven
 On wanderings dread and drear.

Epoche.

Nay, grant an equal troth instead
 Of nuptial love, to bind me by!—

It will not hurt—I shall not dread
To meet it in reply.

But let not love from those above
Revert and fix me, as I said,
With that inevitable Eye!

I have no sword to fight that fight—
I have no strength to tread that path—
I know not if my nature hath
The power to bear,—I cannot see
Whither, from Zeus's infinite,
I have the power to flee.

Prometheus. Yet Zeus albeit most absolute of will,
Shall turn to meekness—such a marriage rite
He holds in preparation, which anon
Shall thrust him headlong from his gerent seat
Adown the abysmal void, and so the curse
His father Chronos muttered in his fall,
As he fell from his ancient throne and cursed,
Shall be accomplished wholly. No escape
From all that ruin shall the filial Zeus
Find granted to him from any of his gods,
Unless I teach him. I, the refuge, know,
And I, the means.—Now, therefore, let him sit
And brave the imminent doom, and fix his faith
On his supernal noises, hurtling on
With restless hand the bolt that breathes out fire—
For these things shall not help him, none of them,
Nor hinder his perdition when he falls
To shame, and lower than patience.—
Such a foe

He doth himself prepare against himself,
A wonder of unconquerable Hate,
An organizer of sublimer fire
Than glares in lightnings, and of grander sound
Than aught the thunder rolls, out-thundering it,
With power to shatter in Poseidon's fist
The trident-spear, which, while it plagues the sea,
Doth shake the shores around it. Aye, and Zeus,
Precipitated thus, shall learn at length

The difference betwixt rule and servitude.

Chorus. Thou makest threats for Zeus
of thy desires.

Prometheus. I tell you, all these things
shall be fulfilled,
Even so as I desire them.

Chorus. Must we then
Look out for one shall come to master
Zeus?

Prometheus. These chains weigh lighter
than his sorrows shall.

Chorus. How art thou not afraid to
utter such words?

Prometheus. What should I fear, who
cannot die?

Chorus. But he
Can visit thee with dreader woe than
death's.

Prometheus. Why let him do it!—I
am here, prepared
For all things and their pangs.

Chorus. The wise are they
Who reverence Adrasteia.

Prometheus. Reverence thou,
Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever reigns,

Whene'er reigning! but for me, your
Zeus

Is less than nothing. Let him act and
reign

His brief hour out according to his will—
He will not, therefore, rule the gods
too long.

But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,
That new-made menial of the new-crowned king.

He doubtless comes to announce to us
something new.

HERMES enters.

Hermes. I speak to thee, the sophist,
the talker down
Of scorn by scorn, the sinner against gods,
The reverencer of men, the thief of fire,—
I speak to thee and adjure thee! Zeus
requires

Thy declaration of what marriage rite
Thus moves thy vaunt and shall hereafter
cause

His fall from empire. Do not wrap thy
speech
In riddles, but speak clearly! Never cast

Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for my feet,
Since Zeus, thou may'st perceive, is scarcely won
To mercy by such means.

Prometheus. A speech well-mouthed
In the utterance, and full-minded in the sense,

As doth befit a servant of the gods!
New gods, ye newly reign, and think forsooth

Ye dwell in towers too high for any dart
To carry a wound there!—have I not stood by

While two kings fell from thence? and shall I not

Behold the third, the same who rules you now,

Fall, shamed to sudden ruin!—Do I seem To tremble and quail before your modern gods?

Far be it from me!—For thyself, depart,
Re-tread thy steps in haste. To all thou hast asked

I answer nothing.

Hermes. Such a wind of pride Impelled thee of yore full sail upon these rocks.

Prometheus. I would not barter—learn thou soothly that!—

My suffering for thy service. I maintain It is a nobler thing to serve these rocks Than live a faithful slave to father Zeus. Thus upon scorers I retort their scorn.

Hermes. It seems that thou dost glory in thy despair.

Prometheus. I glory! would my foes did glory so, And I stood by to see them!—Naming whom

Thou art not unremembered.

Hermes. Dost thou charge Me also with the blame of thy mischance?

Prometheus. I tell thee I loathe the universal gods, Who for the good I gave them rendered back

The ill of their injustice.

Hermes. Thou art mad— Thou art raving, Titan, at the fever-height.

Prometheus. If it be madness to abhor my foes

May I be mad!

Hermes. If thou wert prosperous, Thou wouldest be unendurable.

Prometheus. Alas!

Hermes. Zeus knows not that word.

Prometheus. But maturing Time Teaches all things.

Hermes. Howbeit, thou hast not learnt

The wisdom yet thou needest.

Prometheus. If I had, I should not talk thus with a slave like thee.

Hermes. No answer thou vouchsafest, I believe, To the great Sire's requirement.

Prometheus. Verily I owe him grateful service,—and should pay it.

Hermes. Why, thou dost mock me, Titan, as I stood

A child before thy face.

Prometheus. No child, forsooth, But yet more foolish than a foolish child, If thou expect that I should answer aught Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from his hand

Nor any machination in the world Shall force mine utterance, ere he loose, himself,

These cankerous fetters from me! For the rest,

Let him now hurl his blanching lightnings down,

And with his white-winged snows and mutterings deep

Of subterranean thunders, mix all things, Confound them in disorder. None of this Shall bend my sturdy will, and make me speak

The name of his dethroner who shall come.

Hermes. Can this avail thee? Look to it!

Prometheus. Long ago It was looked forward to—precounselled of.

Hermes. Vain god, take righteous courage!—dare for once To apprehend and front thine agonies With a just prudence.

Prometheus. Vainly dost thou chase My soul with exhortation, as yonder sea

Goes beating on the rock. Oh! think no more
That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a woman's mind.

Will supplicate him, loathed as he is,
With feminine uprisings of my hands,
To break these chains. Far from me be the thought!

Hermes. I have indeed, methinks, said much in vain,—
For still thy heart, beneath my showers of prayers,
Lies dry and hard,—nay, leaps like a young horse
Who bites against the new bit in his teeth,
And tugs and struggles against the new-tried rein,—

Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of all,
Which sophism is,—since absolute will disjoined

From perfect mind is worse than weak.
Behold,
Unless my words persuade thee, what a blast
And whirlwind of inevitable woe
Must sweep persuasion through thee!

For at first

The Father will split up this jut of rock
With the great thunder and the bolted flame,

And hide thy body where a hinge of stone
Shall catch it like an arm ;—and when thou hast passed

A long black time within, thou shalt come out

To front the sun while Zeus's winged hound,
The strong carnivorous eagle, shall wheel down

To meet thee, self-called to a daily feast,
And set his fierce beak in thee, and tear off
The long rags of thy flesh, and batten deep
Upon thy dusky liver. Do not look
For any end moreover to this curse,
Or ere some god appear, to accept thy

pangs

On his own head vicarious, and descend
With unreluctant step the darks of hell
And gloomy abysses around Tartarus.

Then ponder this!—this threat is not a growth

Of vain invention; it is spoken and meant!
King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,

Consummating the utterance by the act—
So, look to it, thou!—take heed,—and nevermore

Forget good counsel, to indulge self-will.
Chorus. Our Hermes suits his reasons to the times;

At least I think so,—since he bids thee drop

Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield to him!

When the wise err, their wisdom makes their shame.

Prometheus. Unto me the foreknower, this mandate of power

He cries, to reveal it.

What's strange in my fate, if I suffer from hate

At the hour that I feel it?

Let the locks of the lightning, all bristling and whitening,

Flash, coiling me round,

While the ether goes surging 'neath thunder and scouring
Of wild winds unbound!

Let the blast of the firmament whirl from its place

The earth rooted below,

And the brine of the ocean, in rapid emotion,

Be it driven in the face

Of the stars up in heaven, as they walk to and fro !

Let him hurl me anon, into Tartarus—on—

To the blackest degree,

With Necessity's vortices strangling me down;

But he cannot join death to a fate meant for me!

Hermes. Why the words that he speaks and the thoughts that he thinks

Are maniacal!—add,

If the Fate who hath bound him, should loose not the links,

He were utterly mad.

Then depart ye who groan with him,
Leaving to moan with him,—
Go in haste! lest the roar of the thunder anearing

Should blast you to idiocy, living and hearing.

Chorus. Change thy speech for another, thy thought for a new,

If to move me and teach me indeed
be thy care!
For thy words swerve so far from the
loyal and true
That the thunder of Zeus seems more
easy to bear.
How! couldst teach me to venture such
vileness? behold!
I choose, with this victim, this anguish
foretold!
I recoil from the traitor in hate and
distrust,—
And I know that the curse of the
treason is worse
Than the pang of the chain.
Hermes. Then remember, O nymphs,
what I tell you before,
Nor, when pierced by the arrows that
Ate will throw you,
Cast blame on your fate, and declare
evermore
That Zeus thrust you on anguish he
did not foreshow you.
Nay, verily, nay! for ye perish anon
For your deed—by your choice!—by
no blindness of doubt,
No abruptness of doom!—but by mad-
ness alone.

In the great net of Até, whence none
cometh out,
Ye are bound and undone!
Prometheus. Aye! in act, now—in
word, now, no more,
Earth is rocking in space!
And the thunders crash up with a roar
upon roar,
And the eddying lightnings flash fire
in my face,
And the whirlwinds are whirling the
dust round and round,
And the blasts of the winds universal,
leap free
And blow each upon each with a passion
of sound,
And ether goes mingling in storm
with the sea!
Such a curse on my head, in a manifest
dread,
From the hand of your Zeus has been
hurtled along.
O my mother's fair glory! O Aether,
enringing
All eyes with the sweet common light
of thy bringing,
Dost see how I suffer this wrong?

A LAMENT FOR ADONIS

FROM THE GREEK OF BION

I MOURN for Adonis—Adonis is dead,
Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves
are lamenting.
Sleep, Cyprus, no more on thy purple-
strewed bed!
Arise, wretch stoled in black,—beat
thy breast unrelenting,
And shriek to the worlds, 'Fair Adonis
is dead.'

II
I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are
lamenting.
He lies on the hills in his beauty and
death,—

The white tusk of a boar has trans-
pierced his white thigh.
Cytherea grows mad at his thin
gasping breath,
While the black blood drips down on
the pale ivory,
And his eye-balls lie quenched with
the weight of his brows,
The rose fades from his lips, and upon
them just parted
The kiss dies the goddess consents
not to lose,
Though the kiss of the Dead cannot
make her glad-hearted:
He knows not who kisses him dead
in the dews.

III

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.
 Deep, deep in the thigh, is Adonis's wound,
 But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom presenting.
 The youth lieth dead while his dogs howl around,
 And the nymphs weep aloud from the mists of the hill,
 And the poor Aphrodité, with tresses unbound,
 All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks mournful and shrill
 Through the dusk of the groves. The thorns, tearing her feet,
 Gather up the red flower of her blood which is holy,
 Each footstep she takes,—and the valleys repeat
 The sharp cry she utters, and draw it out slowly.
 She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian, on him
 Her own youth, while the dark blood spreads over his body,
 The chest taking hue from the gash in the limb,
 And the bosom once ivory, turning to ruddy.

IV

Ah, ah, Cytherea! the Loves are lamenting.
 She lost her fair spouse, and so lost her fair smile—
 When he lived she was fair by the whole world's consenting,
 Whose fairness is dead with him! woe worth the while!
 All the mountains above and the oaklands below
 Murmur, ah, ah Adonis! the streams overflow
 Aphrodité's deep wail,—river-fountains in pity
 Weep soft in the hills, and the flowers as they blow
 Redden outward with sorrow, while all hear her go
 With the song of her sadness through mountain and city.

V

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead,
 Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers, Adonis!
 Who weeps not for Cypris, when bowing her head
 She stares at the wound where it gapes and astonies?
 —When, ah, ah!—she saw how the blood ran away
 And empurpled the thigh, and, with wild hands flung out,
 Said with sobs, ‘Stay, Adonis! unhappy one, stay,
 Let me feel thee once more—let me ring thee about
 With the clasp of my arms, and press kiss into kiss!
 Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me again,
 For the last time, beloved,—and but so much of this
 That the kiss may learn life from the warmth of the strain!
 —Till thy breath shall exude from thy soul to my mouth,
 To my heart,—and the love-charm I, once more receiving,
 May drink thy love in it, and keep of a truth
 That one kiss in the place of Adonis the living.
 Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest me far,
 My Adonis, and seekest the Acheron portal,—
 To Hell's cruel King goest down with a scar,
 While I weep and live on like a wretched immortal,
 And follow no step!—O Persephone, take him,
 My husband!—thou'rt better and brighter than I,
 So all beauty flows down to thee! I cannot make him
 Look up at my grief,—there's despair in my cry,
 Since I wail for Adonis who died to me . . . died to me . . .
 —Then, I fear thee!—Art thou dead, my Adored?
 Passion ends like a dream in the sleep that's denied to me,—

Cypris is widowed,—the Loves seek
their lord
All the house through in vain! Charm
of cestus has ceased
With thy clasp!—oh, too bold in the
hunt past preventing,
Aye, mad, thou so fair . . . to have strife
with a beast!—
Thus the goddess wailed on—and the
Loves are lamenting.

VI

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead.
She wept tear after tear, with the
blood which was shed,—
And both turned into flowers for the
earth's garden-close,
Her tears, to the wind flower,—his
blood, to the rose.

VII

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead.
Weep no more in the woods, Cytherea,
thy lover!
So, well I make a place for his corse in
thy bed,
With the purples thou sleepest in,
under and over.
He's fair, though a corse—a fair corse . . .
like a sleeper.
Lay him soft in the silks he had
pleasure to fold,
When, beside thee at night, holy
dreams deep and deeper
Enclosed his young life on the couch
made of gold.
Love him still, poor Adonis! cast on
him together
The crowns and the flowers! since he
died from the place,
Why let all die with him—let the
blossoms go wither,
Rain myrtles and olive-buds down on
his face!
Rain the myrrh down, let all that is
best fall a-pining,
Since the myrrh of his life from thy
keeping is swept!—

—Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples
reclining,—
The Loves raised their voices around
him and wept.
They have shorn their bright curls off
to cast on Adonis;
One treads on his bow,—on his arrows,
another,—
One breaks up a well-feathered quiver,
and one is
Bent low at a sandal, untying the
strings,
And one carries the vases of gold
from the springs,
While one washes the wound,—and
behind them a brother
Fans down on the body sweet air
with his wings.

VIII

Cytherea herself, now, the Loves are
lamenting.
Each torch at the door Hymenaeus
blew out;
And, the marriage-wreath dropping its
leaves as repenting,
No more ‘Hymen, Hymen,’ is
chanted about,
But the *ai ai* instead—‘ai alas’ is
begun
For Adonis, and then follows ‘ai
Hymenaeus!’
The Graces are weeping for Cinyris’
son,
Sobbing low, each to each, ‘His fair
eyes cannot see us!—
Their wail strikes more shrill than the
sadder Dioné’s.
The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis,
Adonis,
Deep chanting; he hears not a word
that they say.
He *would* hear, but Persephone has
him in keeping.
—Cease moan, Cytherea—leave pomps
for to-day,
And weep new when a new year
refits thee for weeping.

A VISION OF POETS

O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
How may I lightly stile thy great power?
Echo. Power! but of whence? under the greenwood spraye?
Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.
Echo. In Heavens aye.
In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne
By aims, by fasting, prayer,—by paine?
Echo. By paine.
Show me the paine, it shall be undergone:
I to mine end will still go on.
Echo. Go on.

Britannia's Pastorals.

A POET could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night.

And thus he rose disquieted
With sweet rimes ringing through his
head,
And in the forest wandered,

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
The moon had drawn long colonnades,
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver,—pavement fair
The antique wood-nymphs scarce would
dare

To footprint o'er, had such been there,
And rather sit by breathlessly,
With fear in their large eyes, to see
The consecrated sight. But HE

The poet, who with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,—

Who also in his spirit bore
A Beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
Like a babe's hand without intent
Drawn down a seven-stringed instru-
ment.

Nor jarred it with his humour as,
With a faint stirring of the grass,
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,
But all things fair and strange did chime
With his thoughts then, as rime to
rime.

An angel had not startled him,
Alighted from Heaven's burning rim
To breathe from glory in the Dim;

Much less a lady riding slow
Upon a palfrey white as snow,
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,—
'What, ho, sir poet! dost thou pace
Our woods at night, in ghostly chace
'Of some fair Dryad of old tales,
Who chaunts between the nightingales,
And over sleep by song prevails?

She smiled; but he could see arise
Her soul from far adown her eyes,
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
From royal grace alone. 'Now, nay,'
He answered,—"slumber passed away

'Compeled by instincts in my head
That I should see to-night, instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread.'

She looked up quickly to the sky
And spake:—"The moon's regality
Will hear no praise! she is as I.

'She is in heaven, and I on earth;
This is my kingdom—I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.'

He brake in with a voice that mourned :
 'To their worth, lady ? They are scorned
 By men they sing for, till inurned.

'To their worth ? Beauty in the mind
 Leaves the hearth cold,—and love-refined
 Ambitions make the world unkind.

'The boor who ploughs the daisy down,
 The chief whose mortgage of renown
 Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

'Both these are happier, more approved
 Than poets !—why should I be moved
 In saying . . . both are more beloved ?'

'The south can judge not of the north,'
 She resumed calmly ; 'I come forth
 To crown all poets to their worth.

'Yea, verily, to anoint them all
 With blessed oils which surely shall
 Smell sweeter as the ages fall.'

'As sweet,' the poet said, and rung
 A low sad laugh, 'as flowers are, sprung
 Out of their graves when they die young.

'As sweet as window eglantine,
 Some bough of which, as they decline,
 The hired nurse gathers at their sign.

'As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud
 Which the gay Roman maidens sewed
 For English Keats, singing aloud.'

The lady answered, 'Yea, as sweet !
 The things thou namest, being complete
 In fragrance as I measure it.

'Since sweet the death-clothes and the
 knell
 Of him who having lived, dies well,—
 And holy sweet the asphodel

'Stirred softly by that foot of his,
 When he treads brave on all that is,
 Into the world of souls, from this.

'Since sweet the tears, dropped at the
 door
 Of tearless Death,—and even before.
 Sweet, consecrated evermore.

'What, dost thou judge it a strange thing,
 That poets, crowned for vanquishing,
 Should bear some dust from out the ring ?

'Come on with me, come on with me,
 And learn in coming ! let me free
 Thy spirit into verity.'

She ceased : her palfrey's paces sent
 No separate noises as she went ;
 'Twas a bee's hum, a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
 Along the drowsy noise so made,
 The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
 And the calm stars did far and spare
 O'er swim the masses everywhere ;

Save when the overtopping pines
 Did bar their tremulous light with lines
 All fixed and black. Now the moonshines

A broader glory. You may see
 The trees grow rarer presently :
 The air blows up more fresh and free.

Until they come from dark to light,
 And from the forest to the sight
 Of the large Heaven-heart, bare with
 night,—

A fiery throb in every star,
 Those burning arteries that are
 The conduits of God's life afar !

A wild brown moorland underneath,
 And four pools breaking up the heath
 With white low gleamings, blank as
 death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
 A dead tree in set horror stood,
 Pealed and disjointed, stark as rood,

Since thunder-stricken, years ago,
 Fixed in the spectral strain and throe
 Wherewith it struggled from the blow :

A monumental tree, alone,
 That will not bend in storms, nor groan,
 But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
 Upon the pool,—where, javelin-like,
 The star-rays quiver while they strike.

'Drink,' said the lady, very still—
 'Be holy and cold.' He did her will,
 And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto
Was bare of trees : there, only grew
Straight flags and lilies, just a few,

Which sullen on the water sate
And leant their faces on the flat,
As weary of the starlight-state.

'Drink,' said the lady, grave and slow,
'World's use behoveth thee to know.'
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes,
And flaunting weeds, and reeds and
rushes

That winds sang through in mournful
gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
By a slow slime : the starlight swound
Over the ghastly light it found.

'Drink,' said the lady, sad and slow,
'World's love behoveth thee to know.'
He looked to her, commanding so.

Her brow was troubled, but her eye
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
Beside the fourth pool and the last,
Where weights of shadow were down-
cast

From yew and alder, and rank trails
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-scales,
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew. Who dares to stoop
Where those dank branches overdroop,
Into his heart the chill strikes up ;

He hears a silent gliding coil,
The snakes strain hard against the soil,
His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,
Full in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek :
'Must I drink here ?' he seemed to seek
The lady's will with utterance meek.

'Aye, aye,' she said, 'it so must be'
(And this time she spake cheerfully)
'Behovest thou know World's cruelty.'

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloath,
As if from rivers of the south.

His lips sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like, rose and sank,

And he swooned backward to a dream,
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,
With Death and Life at each extreme.

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven
so grant

His spirit a sign of covenant ?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this :
His eyelids flew back for the bliss.

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair disspread.
The moonshine seemed dishevelled

In her sleek tresses manifold,
Like Danae's in the rain of old,
That dripped with melancholy gold.

But SHE was holy, pale, and high,
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

'Rise up !' said she, with voice where
song

Eddied through speech—'rise up ! be
strong !

And learn how right avenges wrong.'

The poet rose up on his feet :
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament, with vessels meet ;

And mystic altar-lights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames, that would not shrink or
pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and toward its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace,

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the archèd roof,
And, thence refracting, eddied off,
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,
Then, poising its white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave;

Where now in dark, and now in light,
The countless columns, glimmering
white,
Seemed leading out to the Infinite.

Plunged half-way up the shaft they
showed,
In that pale shifting incense-cloud,
Which flowed them by, and overflowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,
And the whole temple, at the end,
With its own incense to distend,—

The arches, like a giant's bow,
To bend and slacken,—and below,
The nichèd saints to come and go.

Alone, amid the shifting scene,
That central altar stood serene
In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
Of a chief angel standing there
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
That *they* saw God—his lips and jaw,
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's Law

They could enunciate and refrain
From vibratory after-pain,
And his brow's height was sovereign.

On the vast background of his wings
Rises his image, and he flings,
From each plumed arc, pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
Or less, the angel-heart) before
And round him, upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes;
While at his side, 'twixt lights and
glooms,
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left-way bent.
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar,—pale and bound
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot, nor to forget.

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified.

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirits seemed to sink in him,
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current. These were poets true,
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
These poets were; of iron rule,
The rugged clix, serge of wool.

Here, Homer, with the broad suspense
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There, Shakespeare, on whose forehead
climb
The crowns o' the world. Oh, eyes
sublime,
With tears and laughter for all time!

Here, Aeschylus, the women swooned
To see so awful, when he frowned
As the gods did!—he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
Scholastic lips,—that could be wild,
And laugh or sob out like a child

Even in the classes. Sophocles,
With that king's look which, down the
trees,
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,
Cared most for gods and bulls. And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
To hurtle past it in his soul.
And Sappho, with that gloriolé

Of ebon hair on calméd brows.
O poet-woman! none forgoes
The leap, attaining the repose!

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideway, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck

The hollow caves of Thought and woke
The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil : shade of Mantuan beech

Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high:
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius—nobler than his mood;
Who dropped his plummet down the broad

Deep universe, and said ‘No God,’

Finding no bottom: he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side

By grace of God! his face is stern,
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he would not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed:
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
(With languid sleep-smile you had said
From his own verse engendered)

On Ariosto’s, till they ran
Their curls in one.—The Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri; and fancy-willed
Boiardo,—who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
To sleek that storm. And, not without
The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso! bard and lover,
Whose visions were too thin to cover
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine,—and grave Corneille,
The orator of rimes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch
pale,

From whose brainlighted heart were
thrown
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
Compelling India’s Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,—

The murmurs of the storm-cape ocean
Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse. And, while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Under the tonsure blown upon
By airs celestial,—Calderon.

And bold De Vega,—who breathed quick
Verse after verse, till death’s old trick
Put pause to life and rhetoric.

And Goethe—with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front,
Worthy of Plutarch’s kiss upon ‘t,
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine:
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton’s eyes strike piercing-dim:
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there ;
Whose active fancy debonair
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne,—with smiles they
drew
From outward nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben—
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows
when

The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes. Deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
All statue-blind ! And Keats the real
Adonis, with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
His youthful curls, kissed straight and
sheen

In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron,—sad as grave,
And salt as life : forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drove.

And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings, with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced, and many more,
The lighted altar looming o'er
The clouds of incense dim and hoar :

And all their faces, in the lull
Of natural things, looked wonderful
With life and death and deathless rule.

All, still as stone, and yet intense ;
As if by spirit's vehemence
Thatstone were carved, and not bysense.

But where the heart of each should beat,
There seemed a wound instead of it,
From whence the blood dropped to their
feet,

Drop after drop—dropped heavily,
As century follows century
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady—and her word
Came distant, as wide waves were stirred
Between her and the ear that heard,

*'World's use is cold, world's love is vain,
World's cruelty is bitter bane,
But pain is not the fruit of pain.*

'Hearken, O poet, whom I led
From the dark wood. Dismissing dread,
Now hear this angel in my stead.

'His organ's clavier strikes along
These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,
They gave him without count of wrong,—

'A diapason whence to guide
Up to God's feet, from these who died,
An anthem fully glorified.

'Whereat God's blessing . . . IBARAK
(עֲבָרָק)

Breathes back this music—folds it back
About the earth in vapoury rack,

'And men walk in it, crying "Lo,
The world is wider, and we know
The very heavens look brighter so.

"The stars move statelier round the edge
Of the silver spheres, and give in pledge
Their light for nobler privilege.

"No little flower but joys or grieves,
Full life is rustling in the sheaves,
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves."

'So works this music on the earth,
God so admits it, sends it forth,
To add another worth to worth—

'A new creation-bloom that rounds
The old creation, and expounds
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

'Now hearken !' Then the poet gazed
Upon the angel glorious-faced,
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,
With no touch but with influences.

Then rose and fell (with swell and swound
Of shapeless noises wandering round
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys—the tones were
mixed,
Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbbed
betwixt
The incomplete and the unfixed :

And therein mighty minds were heard
In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word.

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,—

A Harmony, that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument—

Up, upward! like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,
And rises in apocalypse.

A harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain
Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplexed chords, and soared at once
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves as
It passed to God. The music was
Of divine stature—strong to pass,

And those who heard it, understood
Something of life in spirit and blood—
Something of nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great souls
Did thrill as racers at the goals,
And burn in all their aureoles.

But she, the lady, as vapour-bound,
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,—
Like Nature with the showers around.

And when it ceased, the blood which fell,
Again, alone grew audible,
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
His hand, and spake out sovrantly:
'Tried poets, hearken and reply!

'Give me true answers. If we grant
That not to suffer, is to want
The conscience of the jubilant,—

'If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance,—and mortals miss
Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

'If, as two colours must be viewed
In a visible image, mortals should
Need good and evil, to see good,—

'If to speak nobly, comprehends
To feel profoundly—if the ends
Of power and suffering, Nature blends,—

'If poets on the tripod must
Writhe like the Pythian, to make just
Their oracles, and merit trust,—

'If every vatic word that sweeps
To change the world, must pale their lips,
And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

'If to search deep the universe
Must pierce the searcher with the curse,—
Because that bolt (in man's reverse)

'Was shot to the heart o' the wood, and
lies
Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes
That look for visions and surprise

'From influent angels, must shut down
Their lids first, upon sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone,—

'If ONE who did redeem you back,
By His own loss, from final wrack,
Did consecrate by touch and track

'Those temporal sorrows, till the taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

'If all the crowns of earth must wound
With prickings of the thorns He found,—
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

'What say ye unto this!—refuse
This baptism in salt water!—choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour loose?

'Or, oh ye gifted givers! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to me,
To make the world this harmony,

'Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help?'—

The Spirits bent
Their awful brows and said—'Content.'

Content! it sounded like *amen*,
Said by a choir of mourning men;
An affirmation full of pain

And patience,—aye, of glorying
And adoration,—as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
Lightened abroad, until the place
Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white
And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off, and all
Stood in the noon-sun,—‘Lo! I call
To other hearts as liberal.

‘This pedal strikes out in the air:
My instrument has room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

‘Herein is room, and shall be room
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come
Consummating while they consume.

‘What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart, and help to lift
The tune?—The race is to the swift.’

So asked the angel. Straight the while,
A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted smile;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes,
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest,
As if the world were dispossessed;
And One did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid—an as he should faint.
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralized on worldly taint.

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
To think—O gods! or—not to think!

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow
If they walked to instead of fro.

And some, with conscious ambling free,
Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot, for harmony.

And some, composing sudden sighs
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear,
Submitted to a ghastly fear.

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
O' the lid, the wrinkling of the brow,
Exaggerate with mock and now,—

So mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
With Homer's forehead, though he lacked
An inch of any. And one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it. One, his smooth

Pink cheeks, did rumple passionate,
Like Aeschylus—and tried to prate
On trolling tongue, of fate and fate.

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
Any light woman's! one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard-shut lips. And one that drew
Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise.

So with the rest.—It was a sight
A great world-laughter would requite,
Or great world-wrath, with equal right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd
To speak for all—in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel.—‘Thus,
O angel who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous,—

Fit service from sufficient soul,
Hand-service, to receive world's dole,
Lip-service, in world's ear to roll

Adjusted concords—soft enow
To hear the wine-cups passing, through,
And not too grave to spoil the show.

‘Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel, leanest o'er
The window-sill of metaphor.

'To give our hearts up ! fie !—that rage
Barbaric antedates the age :
It is not done on any stage.

'Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back—must ours be bent ?

'We are not pilgrims, by your leave ;
No, nor yet martyrs ! if we grieve,
It is to rime to . . . summer eve.

'And if we labour, it shall be,
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie.'

More yet that speaker would have said,
Poising, between his smiles fair-fed,
Each separate phrase till finished.

But all the foreheads of those born
And dead true poets flashed with scorn
Betwixt the bay leaves round them
worn—

Aye, jetted such brave fire, that they,
The new-come, shrank and paled away,
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,
A presence known by power, at last
Took them up mutely—they had passed.

And *he*, our pilgrim-poet, saw
Only their places, in deep awe,—
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
The angel in the angel shone,
Revealing glory in benison.

Till, ripened in the light which shut
The poet in, his spirit mute
Dropped sudden, as a perfect fruit.

He fell before the angel's feet,
Saying— If what is true is sweet,
In something I may compass it.

'For, where my worthiness is poor,
My will stands richly at the door,
To pay shortcomings evermore.

'Accept me therefore. Not for price,
And not for pride, my sacrifice
Is tendered ! for my soul is nice

'And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn, if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

'I soar—I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud. So high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

'I ask no wages—seek no fame.
Sew me, for shroud round face and name,
God's banner of the oriflamme.

'I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood, if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use,

'I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance—but not in vain,
Upon the sweetness of that strain !

'Only project, beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice, and live on in its sound !

'Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends,—whereby to waste,
And light God's future with my past.'

The angel's smile grew more divine,
The mortal speaking—aye, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,
Till the broad glory round his brow
Did vibrate with the light below ;
But what he said, I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was
laid,—

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, one by one
Rejoicing in a worthy son.

My soul, which might have seen, grew
blind

By what it looked on : I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim, white, and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command
Straight through the haze. And so, as
erst,

A strain more noble than the first
Mused in the organ, and outburst.

With giant march, from floor to roof
Rose the full notes,—now parted off
In pauses massively aloof

Like measured thunders,—now rejoined
In concords of mysterious kind
Which fused together sense and mind,—

Now flashing sharp on sharp along
Exultant, in a mounting throng,—
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors!—wavelike sounds
Re-eddyng into silver rounds,
Enlarging liberty with bounds.

And every rhythm that seemed to close
Survived in confluent underflows
Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatness,—with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,—

Waved backward (as a wind might wave
A Brocken mist, and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared,—and drew up with it the whole
Of this said vision—as a soul
Is raised by a thought. And as a scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward, with a gradual gold,—
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnized and crowned,—
While the freed clouds of incense wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly, like the rack
O' the moon in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn Dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him
 first
Beyond the senses, now reversed
Its own law, and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
Sensual and present. Vanishings
Of glory, with Aeolian wings

Struck him and passed : the lady's face
Did melt back in the chrysopras
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark,—and there and so
She melted, as a star might do,
Still smiling as she melted—slow.

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
Her smile the last thing, gloriously,
Beyond her—far as memory.

Then he looked round : he was alone.
He lay before the breaking sun,
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being
 wound,
He knew the moorland of his swound,
And the pale pools that smeared the
 ground;

The far wood-pines, like offing ships—
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips,
World's cruelty attaints his lips,

And still he tastes it—bitter still—
Through all that glorious possible
He had the sight of present ill.

Yet rising calmly up and slowly
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
A mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the
 wood,
And prayed along the solitude,
Betwixt the pines,—‘O God, my God!’

The golden morning's open flowings
Did sway the trees to murmurous bow-
 ings,
In metric chant of blessed poems

And passing homeward through the
 wood,
He prayed along the solitude,—
‘Thou, Poet-God, art great and good!

‘And though we must have, and have had
Right reason to be earthly sad,—
Thou, Poet-God, art great and glad!’

CONCLUSION

Life treads on life, and heart on heart :
We press too close in church and mart
To keep a dream or grave apart.

And I was 'ware of walking down
That same green forest where had gone
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east
A red and tender radiance pressed
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round;
While up the leafiness profound
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way ; and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew sliding dropingly
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song. 'Twixt dew and
bird
So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word.

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun.

And no one looking round the wood
Could help confessing as he stood,
This Post-God is glad and good.

But hark ! a distant sound that grows !
A heaving, sinking of the boughs—
A rustling murmur, not of those !

A breezy noise, which is not breeze !
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees,

Fair little children, morning-bright,
With faces grave, yet soft to sight,
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within
reach,
And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs, and shake from each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go,
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed—but the laugh flew
From its own chirrup, as might do

A frightened song-bird; and a child
Who seemed the chief, said very mild,
'Hush ! keep this morning undefiled.'

His eyes rebuked them from calm
spheres ;
His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
'What are your palms for?'—'To be
spread,'
He answered, 'on a poet dead.

'The poet died last month, and now
The world which had been somewhat
slow
In honouring his living brow,'

'Commands the palms—they must be
strown
On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town.'

I sighed and said, 'Did he foresee
Any such honour?' 'Verily
I cannot tell you,' answered he.

'But this I know,—I fain would lay
Mine own head down, another day,
As he did,—with the same away.

'A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

'Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O'er hill and river, and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

'With the world's beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on their iris broad
The images of things bestowed

'By the chief Poet.—"God!" he cried,
"Be praised for anguish, which has
tried;
For beauty, which has satisfied :—

"For this world's presence, half within
And half without me—thought and
scene—

This sense of Being and Having been.

"I thank Thee that my soul hath room
For Thy grand world. Both guests
may come—

Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb.

"I am content to be so weak :
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

"I am content to be so bare
Before the archers, everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly
air.

"I laid my soul before Thy feet,
That Images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

"I am content to feel the step
Of each pure Image!—let those keep
To mandragore who care to sleep.

"I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

"Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter—Thou art kind,
And I am blessed to my mind.

"Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn, and its scent outgive :
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

"In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

"*I know*—is all the mourner saith,
Knowledge by suffering entereth ;
And Life is perfected by Death."

The child spake nobly. Strange to hear,
His infantine soft accents clear
Charged with high meanings, did appear;
And fair to see, his form and face,
Winged out with whiteness and pure
grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew :
An orient beam which pierced it through
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown
Traced on its brightness up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown.

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go
With holy words to saints below.

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

'And so he died,' I whispered.—' Nay,
Not so,' the childish voice did say—
' That poet turned him, first, to pray

'In silence, and God heard the rest
Twixt the sun's footsteps down the west.
Then he called one who loved him best,

Yea, he called softly through the room
(His voice was weak yet tender)—
"Come,"

He said, "come nearer ! Let the bloom
"Of Life grow over, undenied,
Thisbridge of Death, which is not wide—
I shall be soon at the other side.

"Come, kiss me!" So the one in truth
Who loved him best—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to
mouth.

"And, in that kiss of Love, was won
Life's manumission. All was done—
The mouth that kissed last, kissed alone.

"But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think, by His,
To words of truth and uprightness."

The child's voice trembled—his lips shook
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,
Which vibrates though it is not struck.

'And who,' I asked, a little moved
Yet curious-eyed, 'was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behoved ?'

'I,' softly said the child ; and then,
'I,' said he louder, once again ;
'His son,—my rank is among men.'

'And now that men exalt his name
I come to gather palms with them,
That holy Love may hallow Fame.

'He did not die alone, nor should
His memory live so, 'mid these rude
World-praisers—a worse solitude.

'Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and
bloom,
Saying, *come nearer!*—and I come.

'Glory to God!' resumed he,
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and
chin—

'That poet now has entered in
The place of rest which is not sin.

'And while he rests, his songs in troops
Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
Companionship by diviner Hopes.'

'But *thou*,' I murmured,—to engage
The child's speech farther—'hast an age
Too tender for this orphanage.'

'Glory to God—to God!' he saith,
'KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH.'

THE POET'S VOW

O be wiser thou,
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love.—WORDSWORTH.

PART THE FIRST

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW WAS MADE

I
Eve is a twofold mystery;
The stillness Earth doth keep,—
The motion wherewith human hearts
Do each to either leap,
As if all souls between the poles,
Felt 'Parting comes in sleep.'

II
The rowers lift their oars to view
Each other in the sea;
The landsmen watch the rocking boats
In a pleasant company;
While up the hill go gladlier still
Dear friends by two and three.

III
The peasant's wife hath looked without
Her cottage door and smiled,
For there the peasant drops his spade
To clasp his youngest child
Which hath no speech, but its hands
can reach
And stroke his forehead mild.

IV
A poet sate that eventide
Within his hall alone,
As silent as its ancient lords
In the coffined place of stone,
When the bat hath shrunk from the
praying monk,
And the praying monk is gone.

V
Nor wore the dead a stiller face
Beneath the cerement's roll:
His lips refusing out in words
Their mystic thoughts to dole,
His steadfast eye burnt inwardly,
As burning out his soul.

VI
You would not think that brow could
e'er
Ungentle moods express,
Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,
Too calm for gentleness;
When the very star that shines from
far
Shines trembling ne'ertheless.

vii

It lacked, all need, the softening light
Which other brows supply;
We should conjoin the scathed trunks
Of our humanity,
That each leafless spray entwining may
Look softer 'gainst the sky.

viii

None gazed within the poet's face,
The poet gazed in none;
He threw a lonely shadow straight
Before the moon and sun,
Afronting nature's heaven-dwelling
creatures
With wrong to nature done.

ix

Because this poet daringly—
The nature at his heart,
And that quick tune along his veins
He could not change by art—
Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
To a stagnant place apart.

x

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,
Or grief's fantastic whim,—
But, weights and shows of sensual things
Too closely crossing him,
On his soul's eyeld the pressure slid
And made its vision dim.

xi

And darkening in the dark he strove
'Twixt earth and sea and sky,
To lose in shadow, wave, and cloud,
His brother's haunting cry.
The winds were welcome as they swept,
God's five-day work he would accept,
But let the rest go by.

xii

He cried—"O touching, patient Earth,
That weepest in thy glee,
Whom God created very good,
And very mournful, we!
Thy voice of moan doth reach Histrone,
As Abel's rose from thee.

xiii

'Poor crystal sky, with stars astray!
Mad winds, that howling go
From east to west! perplexèd seas,
That stagger from their blow!

O motion wild! O wave defiled!
Our curse hath made you so.

xiv

'We! and our curse! do I partake
The desiccating sin?
Have I the apple at my lips?
The money-lust within?
Do I human stand with the wounding
hand,
To the blasting heart akin?

xv

'Thou solemn pathos of all things,
For solemn joy designed!
Behold, submissive to your cause
A holy wrath I find,
And, for your sake, the bondage break
That knits me to my kind.

xvi

'Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
His pleasant yea and no,
His riot on the piteous earth
Whereon his thistles grow!
His changing love—with stars above!
His pride—with graves below!

xvii

'Hear me forswear his roof by night,
His bread and salt by day,
His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,
His greetings by the way,
His answering looks, his systemed books,
All man, for ay and ay.

xviii

'That so my purged, once human heart,
From all the human rent,
May gather strength to pledge and drink
Your wine of wonderment,
While you pardon me, all blessingly,
The woe mine Adam sent.

xix

'And I shall feel your unseen looks
Innumerous, constant, deep,
And soft as haunted Adam once,
Though sadder, round me creep,—
As slumbering men have mystic ken
Of watchers on their sleep.

xx

'And ever, when I lift my brow
At evening to the sun,
No voice of woman or of child
Recording "Day is done,"
Your silences shall a love express,
More deep than such an one.'

PART THE SECOND

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS
DECLARED

I

THE poet's vow was inly sworn,
The poet's vow was told :
He shared among his crowding friends
The silver and the gold,
They clasping bland his gift,—his hand
In a somewhat slacker hold.

II

They wended forth, the crowding friends,
With farewells smooth and kind :
They wended forth, the solaced friends,
And left but twain behind :
One loved him true as brothers do,
And one was Rosalind.

III

He said—'My friends have wended forth
With farewells smooth and kind ;
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,
Ye need not stay behind.
Friend, wed my fair bride for my sake,
And let my lands ancestral make
A dower for Rosalind.

IV

'And when beside your wassail board
Ye bless your social lot,
I charge you that the giver be
In all his gifts forgot,
Or alone of all his words recall
The last,—Lament me not.'

V

She looked upon him silently,
With her large, doubting eyes,
Like a child that never knew but love,
Whom words of wrath surprise,

Till the rose did break from either cheek,
And the sudden tears did rise.

VI

She looked upon him mournfully,
While her large eyes were grown
Yet larger with the steady tears,
Till, all his purpose known,
She turned slow, as she would go—
The tears were shaken down.

VII

She turned slow, as she would go,
Then quickly turned again,
And gazing in his face to seek
Some little touch of pain—
'I thought,' she said,—but shook her
head,—
She tried that speech in vain.

VIII

'I thought—but I am half a child,
And very sage art thou—
The teachings of the heaven and earth
Should keep us soft and low :
They have drawn *my* tears in early years,
Or ere I wept—as now.

IX

'But now that in thy face I read
Their cruel homily,
Before their beauty I would fain
Untouched, unsoftened be,—
If I indeed could look on even
The senseless, loveless earth and heaven
As thou canst look on *me* !

X

'And couldest thou as coldly view
Thy childhood's far abode,
Where little feet kept time with thine
Along the dewy sod,
And thy mother's look from holy book,
Rose, like a thought of God ?

XI

'O brother,—called so, ere her last
Betrothing words were said !
O fellow-watcher in her room,
With hushed voice and tread !
Rememberest thou how, hand in hand,
O friend, O lover, we did stand,
And knew that she was dead ?

xii

'I will not live Sir Roland's bride,—
That dower I will not hold!
I tread below my feet that go,
These parchments bought and sold.
The tears I weep are mine to keep,
And worthier than thy gold.'

xiii

The poet and Sir Roland stood
Alone, each turned to each,
Till Roland brake the silence left
By that soft-throbbing speech—
'Poor heart!' he cried, 'it vainly tried
The distant heart to reach.

xiv

'And thou, O distant, sinful heart,
That climbest up so high,
To wrap and blind thee with the snows
That cause to dream and die—
What blessing can, from lips of man,
Approach thee with his sigh ?'

xv

'Aye, what from earth—create for man,
And moaning in his moan?
Aye, what from stars—revealed to man,
And man-named, one by one?
Aye, more! what blessing can be given,
Where the Spirits seven do show in
heaven
A MAN upon the throne?—

xvi

'A man on earth HE wandered once,
All meek and undefiled,
And those who loved Him, said "He
wept"—
None ever said He smiled;
Yet there might have been a smile unseen,
When He bowed His holy face, I ween,
To bless that happy child.

xvii

'And now HE pleadeth up in heaven
For our humanities,
Till the ruddy light on seraphs' wings
In pale emotion dies.
They can better bear His Godhead's glare
Than the pathos of His eyes.

xviii

'I will go pray our God to-day
To teach thee how to scan
His work divine, for human use
Since earth on axle ran !

To teach thee to discern as plain
His grief divine—the blood-drop's stain
He left there, MAN for man.

xix

'So, for the blood's sake, shed by Him
Whom angels God declare,
Tears, like it, moist and warm with love,
Thy reverent eyes shall wear,
To see i' the face of Adam's race
The nature God doth share.'

xx

'I heard,' the poet said, 'thy voice
As dimly as thy breath :
The sound was like the noise of life
To one anear his death,—
Or of waves that fail to stir the pale
Sere leaf they roll beneath.

xxi

'And still between the sound and me
White creatures like a mist
Did interfloat confusedly,—
Mysterious shapes unwist !
Across my heart and across my brow
I felt them droop like wreaths of snow,
To still the pulse they kist.

xxii

'The castle and its lands are thine—
The poor's—it shall be done.
Go, man, to love ! I go to live
In Courland hall, alone.
The bats along the ceilings cling,
The lizards in the floors do run,
And storms and years have worn and rest
The stain by human builders left
In working at the stone.'

PART THE THIRD

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT

i

He dwelt alone, and sun and moon
Were witness that he made
Rejection of his humanness
Until they seemed to fade :
His face did so ; for he did grow
Of his own soul afraid.

II

The self-poised God may dwell alone
With inward glorying,
But God's chief angel waiteth for
A brother's voice, to sing ;
And a lonely creature of sinful nature—
It is an awful thing.

III

An awful thing that feared itself
While many years did roll,
A lonely man, a feeble man,
A part beneath the whole—
He bore by day, he bore by night
That pressure of God's infinite
Upon his finite soul.

IV

The poet at his lattice sate,
And downward looked he ;
Three Christians wended by to prayers,
With mute ones in their ee :
Each turned above a face of love,
And called him to the far chapelle
With voice more tuneful than its bell—
But still they wended three.

V

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,
A bridegroom and his dame :
He speaketh low for happiness,
She blusheth red for shame ;
But never a tone of benison
From out the lattice came.

VI

A little child with inward song,
No louder noise to dare, .
Stood near the wall to see at play
The lizards green and rare—
Unblessed the while for his childish smile
Which cometh unaware.

PART THE FOURTH

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY
THE KEEPING OF THE VOW

I

In death-sheets lieth Rosalind,
As white and still as they ;
And the old nurse that watched her bed,
Rose up with 'Well-a-day !'

And oped the casement to let in
The sun, and that sweet doubtful din
Which droppeth from the grass and bough
Sans wind and bird, none knoweth how—
To cheer her as she lay.

II

The old nurse started when she saw
Her sudden look of woe ;
But the quick wan tremblings round her
mouth
In a meek smile did go,
And calm she said, 'When I am dead,
Dear nurse, it shall be so.

III

'Till then, shut out those sights and
sounds,
And pray God pardon me,
That I without this pain no more
His blessed works can see !
And lean beside me, loving nurse,
That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse,
What thy last love should be.'

IV

The loving nurse leant over her,
As white she lay beneath ;
The old eyes searching, dim with life,
The young ones dim with death,
To read their look if sound forsook
The trying, trembling breath.

V

'When all this feeble breath is done,
And I on bier am laid,
My tresses smoothed for never a feast,
My body in shroud arrayed,
Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
As if that still I prayed.

VI

'And heap beneath mine head the flowers
You stoop so low to pull,—
The little white flowers from the wood,
Which grow there in the cool,
Which he and I, in childhood's games,
Went plucking, knowing not their names,
And filled thine apron full.

VII

'Weep not ! I weep not. Death is
strong,
The eyes of Death are dry ! .
But lay this scroll upon my breast,
When hushed its heavings lie,

And wait awhile for the corpse's smile
Which shineth presently.

VIII

And when it shineth, straightway call
Thy youngest children dear,
And bid them gently carry me
All barefaced on the bier—
But bid them pass my kirkyard grass
That waveth long anear.

IX

'And up the bank where I used to sit
And dream what life would be,
Along the brook, with its sunny look
Akin to living glee,—
O'er the windy hill, through the forest
still,
Let them gently carry me.

X

'And through the piney forest still,
And down the open moorland—
Round where the sea beats mistily
And blindly on the foreland;
And let them chant that hymn I know,
Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,
To the ancient hall of Courland.

XI

'And when withal they near the hall,
In silence let them lay
My bier before the bolted door,
And leave it for a day.
For I have vowed, though I am proud,
To go there as a guest in shroud,
And not be turned away.'

XII

The old nurse looked within her eyes,
Whose mutual look was gone;
The old nurse stooped upon her mouth,
Whose answering voice was done;
And nought she heard, till a little bird
Upon the casement's woodbine
swinging,
Broke out into a loud sweet singing
For joy o' the summer sun.
'Alack! alack!'—she watched no
more—
With head on knee she wailed sore;
And the little bird sang o'er and o'er
For joy o' the summer sun.

PART THE FIFTH

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN

I

The poet oped his bolted door,
The midnight sky to view:
A spirit-feel was in the air
Which seemed to touch his spirit bare
Whenever his breath he drew;
And the stars a liquid softness had,
As alone their holiness forbade
Their falling with the dew.

II

They shine upon the steadfast hills,
Upon the swinging tide,
Upon the narrow track of beach,
And the murmuring pebbles pied;
They shine on every lovely place,
They shine upon the corpse's face,
As if were fair beside.

III

It lay before him, humanlike,
Yet so unlike a thing!
More awful in its shrouded pomp
Than any crowned king—
All calm and cold, as it did hold
Some secret, glorying.

IV

A heavier weight than of its clay
Clung to his heart and knee:
As if those folded palms could strike,
He staggered groaningly,
And then o'erhung, without a groan,
The meek close mouth that smiled alone,
Whose speech the scroll must be.

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL

'I LEFT thee last, a child at heart,
A woman scarce in years:
I come to thee, a solemn corpse,
Which neither feels nor fears.
I have no breath to use in sighs;
They laid the death-weights on mine
eyes,
To seal them safe from tears.
'Look on me with thine own calm look—
I meet it calm as thou!
No look of thine can change this smile,
Or break thy sinful vow.'

I tell thee that my poor scorned heart
Is of thine earth . . . thine earth, a part—
It cannot vex thee now.

'But out, alas ! these words are writ
By a living, loving One,
Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of life,
The warm quick tears do run.
Ah, let the unloving corpse control
Thy scorn back from the loving soul
Whose place of rest is won.

'I have prayed for thee with bursting sobs,
When passion's course was free.
I have prayed for thee with silent lips,
In the anguish none could see.
They whispered oft, "She sleepeth
soft"—
But I only prayed for thee.

'Go to ! I pray for thee no more—
The corpse's tongue is still :
Its folded fingers point to heaven,
But point there stiff and chill.
No farther wrong, no farther woe
Hath licence from the sin below
Its tranquil heart to thrill.

'I charge thee, by the living's prayer,
And the dead's silentness,
To wring from out thy soul a cry
Which God shall hear and bless !
Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my
hand,
And pale among the saints I stand,
A saint companionless.'

v

Bow lower down before the throne,
Triumphant Rosalind !
He boweth on thy corpse his face,
And weepeth as the blind.
'Twas a dread sight to see them so—
For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro
With the wail of his living mind.

vi

But drearer sight, could such be seen,
His inward mind did lie,
Whose long-subjected humanness
Gave out its lion cry,
And fiercely rent its tenement
In a mortal agony.

vii

I tell you, friends, had you heard his wail,
'Twould haunt you in court and mart,
And in merry feast, until you set
Your cup down to depart—
That weeping wild of a reckless child
From a proud man's broken heart.

viii

O broken heart, O broken vow,
That wore so proud a feature !
God, grasping as a thunderbolt
The man's rejected nature,
Smote him therewith, i' the presence
high
Of his so worshipped earth and sky
That looked on all indifferently—
A wailing human creature.

ix

A human creature found too weak
To bear his human pain !
(May Heaven's dear grace have spoken
peace
To his dying heart and brain !)
For when they came at dawn of day
To lift the lady's corpse away,
Her bier was holding twain.

x

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass,
For both, one dwelling deep,
To which, when years had mossed the
stone,
Sir Roland brought his little son
To watch the funeral heap.
And when the happy boy would rather
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
The wood-doves nodding from the tree—
'Nay, boy, look downward,' said his
father,
'Upon this human dust asleep.
And hold it in thy constant ken
That God's own unity compresses
(One into one) the human many,
And that his everlastingness is
The bond which is not loosed by any !—
That thou and I this law must keep,
If not in love, in sorrow then !
Though smiling not like other men,
Still, like them, we must weep.'

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS

THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET

Can my affections find out nothing best,
But still and still remove?
 QUARLES.

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
The yew-tree leaf will suit;
But when its shade is o'er you laid,
Turn round and pluck the fruit.
Now reach my harp from off the wall
Where shines the sun aslant!
The sun may shine and we be cold—
O hearken, loving hearts and bold,
Unto my wild romaut,
 Margret, Margret.

II

Sitteth the fair ladye
Close to the river side,
Which runneth on with a merry tone
Her merry thoughts to guide.
It runneth through the trees,
It runneth by the hill,
Nathless the lady's thoughts have found
A way more pleasant still.
 Margret, Margret.

III

The night is in her hair
And giveth shade to shade,
And the pale moonlight on her forehead
white
Like a spirit's hand is laid;
Her lips part with a smile
Instead of speakings done:
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,
Albeit uttering none.
 Margret, Margret.

IV

All little birds do sit
With heads beneath their wings:
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,
Absorbed from her living things.

That dream by that ladye
Is certes unpartook,
For she looketh to the high cold stars
With a tender human look.
 Margret, Margret.

V

The lady's shadow lies
Upon the running river;
It lieth no less in its quietness,
For that which resteth never:
Most like a trusting heart
Upon a passing faith,—
Or as, upon the course of life,
The steadfast doom of death.
 Margret, Margret.

VI

The lady doth not move,
The lady doth not dream,
Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid
In rest upon the stream.
It shaketh without wind,
It parteth from the tide,
It standeth upright in the cleft moonlight,
It sitteth at her side.
 Margret, Margret.

VII

Look in its face, ladye,
And keep thee from thy swound!
With a spirit bold, thy pulses hold,
And hear its voice's sound.
For so will sound thy voice,
When thy face is to the wall;
And such will be thy face, ladye,
When the maidens work thy pall.
 Margret, Margret.

VIII

'Am I not like to thee?'—
The voice was calm and low;
And between each word you might have
heard
The silent forests grow.
'The like may sway the like,'
By which mysterious law
Mine eyes from thine and my lips from
thine
The light and breath may draw.
 Margret, Margret.

IX

'My lips do need thy breath,
My lips do need thy smile,
And my pallid eyne, that light in thine
Which met the stars erewhile.
Yet go with light and life,
If that thou lovest one
In all the earth, who loveth thee
As truly as the sun,
Margret, Margret.'

X

Her cheek had waxed white
Like cloud at fall of snow ;
Then like to one at set of sun
It waxed red also ;
For love's name maketh bold,
As if the loved were near.
And then she sighed the deep long sigh
Which cometh after fear.
Margret, Margret.

XI

'Now, sooth, I fear thee not—
Shall never fear thee now !'
(And a noble sight was the sudden light
Which lit her lifted brow.)
'Can earth be dry of streams ?
Or hearts, of love ?' she said ;
'Who doubteth love, can know not love :
He is already dead.'
Margret, Margret.

XII

'I have . . . and here her lips
Some word in pause did keep,
And gave the while a quiet smile,
As if they paused in sleep,—
'I have . . . a brother dear,
A knight of knightly fame !
I broidered him a knightly scarf
With letters of my name.
Margret, Margret.

XIII

'I fed his grey goss-hawk,
I kissed his fierce bloodhound,
I sate at home when he might come
And caught his horn's far sound :
I sang him hunters' songs,
I poured him the red wine—
He looked across the cup and said,
I love thee, sister mine.
Margret, Margret.

XIV

IT trembled on the grass,
With a low, shadowy laughter ;
The sounding river which rolled for ever,
Stood dumb and stagnant after.
'Brave knight thy brother is !
But better loveth he
Thy chaliced wine than thy chanted song,
And better both, than thee,
Margret, Margret.'

XV

The lady did not heed
The river's silence while
Her own thoughts still ran at their will,
And calm was still her smile.
'My little sister wears
The look our mother wore :
I smooth her locks with a golden comb,
I bless her evermore,'
Margret, Margret.

XVI

'I gave her my first bird,
When first my voice it knew ;
I made her share my posies rare,
And told her where they grew.
I taught her God's dear name
With prayer and praise, to tell—
She looked from heaven into my face,
And said, *I love thee well.*'
Margret, Margret.

XVII

IT trembled on the grass
With a low, shadowy laughter :
You could see each bird as it woke and
stared.
Through the shrivelled foliage after.
'Fair child thy sister is !
But better loveth she
Thy golden comb than thy gathered
flowers,
And better both, than thee,
Margret, Margret.'

XVIII

The lady did not heed
The withering on the bough :
Still calm her smile, albeit the while
A little pale her brow.

'I have a father old,
The lord of ancient halls;
An hundred friends are in his court,
Yet only me he calls.
Margret, Margret.

XIX

'An hundred knights are in his court,
Yet read I by his knee;
And when forth they go to the tourney
show,
I rise not up to see.
'Tis a weary book to read,
My tryst's at set of sun,
But loving and dear beneath the stars
Is his blessing when I've done.'
Margret, Margret.

XX

IT trembled on the grass
With a low, shadowy laughter;
And moon and star, though bright and far,
Did shrink and darken after.
High lord thy father is!
But better loveth he
His ancient halls than his hundred friends,
His ancient halls, than thee.
Margret, Margret.'

XXI

The lady did not heed
That the far stars did fail:
Still calm her smile, albeit the while...
Nay, but she is not pale!
'I have a more than friend
Across the mountains dim:
No other's voice is soft to me,
Unless it nameth him.'
Margret, Margret.

XXII

'Though louder beats mine heart
I know his tread again,
And his far plume ay, unless turned
away,
For the tears do blind me then.
We brake no gold, a sign
Of stronger faith to be,—
But I wear his last look in my soul,
Which said, *I love but thee!*'
Margret, Margret.

XXIII

IT trembled on the grass
With a low, shadowy laughter;
And the wind did toll, as a passing soul
Were sped by church-bell after;
And shadows, 'stead of light,
Fell from the stars above,
In flakes of darkness on her face
Still bright with trusting love.
Margret, Margret.

XXIV

'He loved but only thee!
That love is transient too:
The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still
I' the mouth that vowed thee true.
Will he open his dull eyes,
When tears fall on his brow?
Behold, the death-worm to his heart
Is a nearer thing than thou,'
Margret, Margret.'

XXV

Her face was on the ground—
None saw the agony,
But the men at sea did that night agree
They heard a drowning cry;
And when the morning brake,
Fast rolled the river's tide,
With the green trees waving overhead,
And a white corse laid beside.
Margret, Margret.

XXVI

A knight's bloodhound and he
The funeral watch did keep;
With a thought o' the chase he stroked
its face
As it howled to see him weep.
A fair child kissed the dead,
But shrank before its cold;
And alone yet proudly in his hall
Did stand a baron old.
Margret, Margret.

XXVII

Hang up my harp again!
I have no voice for song:
Not song, but wail, and mourners pale,
Not bards, to love belong.
O failing human love!
O light, by darkness known!
O false, the while thou treadest earth!
O deaf beneath the stone!
Margret, Margret.

ISOBEL'S CHILD

So find we profit,
By losing of our prayers.

SHAKESPEARE.

I

To rest the weary nurse has gone,
An eight-day watch had watch'd she,
Still rocking beneath sun and moon
The baby on her knee,
Till Isobel its mother said,
'The fever waneth—wend to bed,
For now the watch comes round to me.'

II

Then wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
Of that sick room, and slept and
dreamed :
For, as the gusty wind did blow
The night-lamp's flare across her face,
She saw, or seemed to see, but dreamed,
That the poplars tall on the opposite
hill,
The seven tall poplars on the hill,
Did clasp the setting sun until
His rays dropped from him, pined and
still
As blossoms in frost !
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly
crossed,
To the colour of moonlight which doth
pass
Over the dank ridged churchyard grass.
The poplars held the sun, and he
The eyes of the nurse that they should
not see,
Not for a moment, the babe on her knee,
Though she shuddered to feel that it
grew to be
Too chill, and lay too heavily.

III

She only dreamed ; for all the while
'Twas Lady Isobel that kept
The little baby,—and it slept
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,
Laden with love's dewy weight,
And red as rose of Harpocrate
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed
Lashes to cheek in a sealed rest.

IV

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled.
Against the lattice, dull and wild
Drive the heavy droning drops,
Drop by drop, the sound being one—
As momently time's segments fall
On the ear of God, who hears through all
Eternity's unbroken monotone.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled.
The wind in intermission stops
Down in the beechen forest,
Then cries aloud
As one at the sorest,
Self-stung, self-driven,
And rises up to its very tops,
Stiffening erect the branches bowed,
Dilating with a tempest-soul
The trees that with their dark hands break
Through their own outline and heavily roll
Shadows as massive as clouds in heaven,
Across the castle lake.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well ;
She knew not that she smiled ;
She knew not that the storm was wild.
Through the uproar drear she could not

hear

The castle clock which struck anear—
She heard the low, light breathing of her
child.

V

O sight for wondering look !
While the external nature broke
Into such abandonment,
While the very mist heart-rent
By the lightning, seemed to eddy
Against nature, with a din,
A sense of silence and of steady
Natural calm appeared to come
From things without, and enter in
The human creature's room.

VI

So motionless she sat,
The babe asleep upon her knees,
You might have dreamed their souls had
gone
Away to things inanimate,

In such to live, in such to moan;
And that their bodies had ta'en back,
In mystic change, all silences
That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
In waters safe from their own sound.

Only she wore

The deepening smile I named before,
And *that* a deepening love expressed;
And who at once can love and rest?

vii

In sooth the smile that then was keeping
Watch upon the baby sleeping,
Floated with its tender light
Downward, from the drooping eyes,
Upward, from the lips apart,
Over cheeks which had grown white
With an eight-day weeping.
All smiles come in such a wise,
Where tears shall fall or have of old—
Like northern lights that fill the heart
Of heaven in sign of cold.

viii

Motionless she sate.
Her hair had fallen by its weight
On each side of her smile, and lay
Very blackly on the arm
Where the baby nestled warm,
Pale as baby carved in stone
Seen by glimpes of the moon
Up a dark cathedral aisle.
But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell
Upon the child of Isobel—
Perhaps you saw it by the ray
Alone of her still smile.

ix

A solemn thing it is to me
To look upon a babe that sleeps;
Wearing in its spirit-deeps
The undeveloped mystery
Of our Adam's taint and woe,
Which, when they developed be,
Will not let it slumber so!
Lying new in life beneath
The shadow of the coming death,
With that soft, low, quiet breath,
As if it felt the sun!
Knowing all things by their blooms,
Not their roots, yea, sun and sky,
Only by the warmth that comes
Out of each,—earth, only by

The pleasant hues that o'er it run,—
And human love, by drops of sweet
White nourishment still hanging round
The little mouth so slumber-bound.
All which broken sentience
And conclusion incomplete,
Will gather and unite and climb
To an immortality
Good or evil, each sublime,
Through life and death to life again.
O little lids, now folded fast,
Must ye learn to drop at last
Our large and burning tears?
O warm quick body, must thou lie,
When the time comes round to die,
Still, from all the whirl of years,
Bare of all the joy and pain?—
O small frail being, wilt thou stand
At God's right hand,
Lifting up those sleeping eyes
Dilated by great destinies,
To an endless waking? thrones and
seraphim,
Through the long ranks of their solemnities,
Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's surprise,
But thine alone on Him?—
Or else, self-willed, to tread the Godless place
(God keep thy will!), feel thine own energies
Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead man's clasp,
The sleepless deathless life within thee, grasp,—
While myriad faces, like one changeless face,
With woe *not* love's, shall glass thee everywhere,
And overcome thee with thine own despair?

x

More soft, less solemn images
Drifted o'er the lady's heart,
Silently as snow.
She had seen eight days depart
Hour by hour, on bended knees,
With pale-wrung hands and prayings slow
And broken, through which came the sound
Of tears that fell against the ground,

Making sad stops:—‘Dear Lord, dear
Lord!’
She still had prayed (the heavenly
word,
Broken by an earthly sigh),
—‘Thou, who didst not erst deny
The mother-joy to Mary mild,
Blessed in the blessed child,
Which hearkened in meek babyhood
Her cradle-hymn, albeit used
To all that music interfused
In breasts of angels high and good!
Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—
Oh, take not to Thy songful heaven
The pretty baby Thou hast given,
Or ere that I have seen him play
Around his father’s knees and known
That *he* knew how my love has gone
From all the world to him.
Think, God among the cherubim,
How I shall shiver every day
In Thy June sunshine, knowing where
The grave-grass keeps it from his fair
Still cheeks! and feel at every tread
His little body which is dead
And hidden in the turf-y fold,
Doth make thy whole warm earth a-cold!
O God, I am so young, so young—
I am not used to tears at nights
Instead of slumber—not to prayer
With sobbing lips and hands out-wrung!
Thou knowest all my prayings were
“I bless Thee, God, for past delights—
Thank God!” I am not used to bear
Hard thoughts of death; the earth cloth
cover
No face from me of friend or lover.
And must the first who teaches me
The form of shrouds and funerals, be
Mine own first-born beloved? he
Who taught me first this mother-love?
Dear Lord, who spreadest out above
Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet
All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,—
Pierce not my heart, my tender heart;
Thou madest tender! Thou who art
So happy in Thy heaven alway!
Take not mine only bliss away!

xi

She so had prayed: and God, who hears
Through seraph-songs the sound of tears,

From that beloved babe had ta’en
The fever and the beating pain.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well
(She knew not that she smiled, I wis),
Until the pleasant gradual thought
Which near her heart the smile en-
wrought,
Now soft and slow, itself, did seem
To float along a happy dream,
Beyond it into speech like this.

xii

‘I prayed for thee, my little child,
And God has heard my prayer!
And when thy babyhood is gone,
We two together, undefiled
By men’s repnings, will kneel down
Upon His earth which will be fair
(Not covering thee, sweet!) to us twain,
And give Him thankful praise.’

xiii

Dully and wildly drives the rain:
Against the lattices drives the rain.

xiv

‘I thank Him now, that I can think
Of those same future days,
Nor from the harmless image shrink
Of what I there might see—
Strange babies on their mothers’ knee,
Whose innocent soft faces might
From off mine eyelids strike the light,
With looks not meant for me!’

xv

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,
As against the lattices drives the rain.

xvi

‘But now, O baby mine, together
We turn this hope of ours again
To many an hour of summer weather,
When we shall sit and intertwine
Our spirits, and instruct each other
In the pure loves of child and mother!
Two human loves make one divine.’

xvii

The thunder tears through the wind and
the rain,
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

XVIII

' My little child, what wilt thou choose?
 Now let me look at thee and ponder.
 What gladness, from the gladnesses
 Futurity is spreading under
 Thy gladsome sight? Beneath the trees
 Wilt thou lean all day, and lose
 Thy spirit with the river seen
 Intermittently between
 The winding beechen alleys,—
 Half in labour, half repose,
 Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
 Thou, with only thoughts to keep
 Which never a bound will overpass,
 And which are innocent as those
 That feed among Arcadian valleys
 Upon the dewy grass! '

XIX

The large white owl that with age is
 blind,
 That hath sate for years in the old tree
 hollow,
 Is carried away in a gust of wind!
 His wings could bear him not as fast
 As he goeth now the lattice past—
 He is borne by the winds; the rains do
 follow:
 His white wings to the blast out-flowing,
 He hooteth in going,
 And still, in the lightnings, coldly glitter
 His round unblinking eyes.

XX

' Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
 To be eloquent and wise,—
 One upon whose lips the air
 Turns to solemn verities,
 For men to breathe anew, and win
 A deeper-seated life within?
 Wilt be a philosopher,
 By whose voice the earth and skies
 Shall speak to the unborn?
 Or a poet, broadly spreading
 The golden immortalities
 Of thy soul on natures born
 And poor of such, them all to guard
 From their decay,—beneath thy treading,
 Earth's flowers recovering hues of
 Eden,—
 And stars, drawn downward by thy looks,
 To shine ascendant in thy books? '

XXI

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,
 How it screams to the lightning, with
 its wet
 Jagged plumes overhanging the parapet!
 And at the lady's door the hound
 Scratches with a crying sound.

XXII

' But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
 Close, fast upon thy cheek,—
 And not a dream of power and sheen
 Can make a passage up between;
 Thy heart is of thy mother's made,
 Thy looks are very meek;
 And it will be their chosen place
 To rest on some beloved face,
 As these on thine—and let the noise
 Of the whole world go on, nor drown
 The tender silence of thy joys!
 Or when that silence shall have grown
 Too tender for itself, the same
 Yearning for sound,—to look above
 And utter its one meaning, Love,
 That *He* may hear His name! '

XXIII

No wind, no rain, no thunder!
 The waters had trickled not slowly,
 The thunder was not spent,
 Nor the wind near finishing.
 Who would have said that the storm
 was diminishing?

No wind, no rain, no thunder!
 Their noises dropped asunder
 From the earth and the firmament,
 From the towers and the lattices,
 Abrupt and echoless
 As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken
 wholly—

As life in death!
 And sudden and solemn the silence fell,
 Startling the heart of Isobel
 As the tempest could not.
 Against the door went panting the breath
 Of the lady's hound whose cry was still,
 And she, constrained howe'er she would
 not,
 Lifted her eyes, and saw the moon
 Looking out of heaven alone
 Upon the poplared hill,—
 A calm of God, made visible
 That men might bless it at their will.

xxiv

The moonshine on the baby's face
Falleth clear and cold.
The mother's looks have fallen back
To the same place;
Because no moon with silver rack,
Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies,
Has power to hold
Our loving eyes,
Which still revert, as ever must
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the dust.

xxv

The moonshine on the baby's face
Cold and clear remaineth:
The mother's looks do shrink away,—
The mother's looks return to stay,
As charméd by what paineth.
Is any glamour in the case?
Is it dream or is it sight?
Hath the change upon the wild
Elements, that signs the night,
Passed upon the child?
It is not dream, but sight!—

xxvi

The babe has awakened from sleep,
And unto the gaze of its mother
Bent over it, lifted another!
Not the baby-looks that go
Unaimingly to and fro,
But an earnest gazing deep,
Such as soul gives soul at length,
When, by work and wail of years,
It winneth a solemn strength,
And mourneth as it wears.
A strong man could not brook
With pulse un hurried by fears
To meet that baby's look
O'er glazed by manhood's tears—
The tears of a man full grown,
With a power to wring our own,
In the eyes all undefiled
Of a little three-months' child!
To see that babe-brow wrought
By the witnessing of thought,
To judgement's prodigy!
And the small soft mouth unweaned,
By mother's kiss o'er leaned
(Putting the sound of loving
Where no sound else was moving,
Except the speechless cry),

Quickened to mind's expression,
Shaped to articulation,
Yea, uttering words—yea, naming woe,
In tones that with it strangely went,
Because so baby-innocent,
As the child spake out to the mother so.—

xxvii

'O mother, mother, loose thy prayer!
Christ's name hath made it strong.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
With its most loving cruelty,
From floating my new soul along
The happy heavenly air.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
In all this dark, upon this dull
Low earth, by only weepers trod!—
It bindeth me, it holdeth me!—
Mine angel looketh sorrowful
Upon the face of God¹.

xxviii

'Mother, mother, can I dream
Beneath your earthly trees?
I had a vision and a gleam—
I heard a sound more sweet than these
When rippled by the wind.
Did you see the Dove with wings
Bathed in golden glisternings
From a sunless light behind,
Dropping on me from the sky
Soft as mother's kiss, until
I seemed to leap, and yet was still
Saw you how His love-large eye
Looked upon me mystic calms,
Till the power of His divine
Vision was indrawn to mine?

xxix

'Oh, the dream within the dream!
I saw celestial places even.
Oh, the vistas of high palms,
Making finites of delight
Through the heavenly infinite—
Lifting up their green still tops
To the heaven of Heaven!
Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
Shade like light across the river
Glorified in its for-ever
Flowing from the Throne!

¹ For I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.—Matt. xviii. 10.

Oh, the shining holinesses
 Of the thousand, thousand faces
 God-sunned by the thronèd ONE !
 And made intense with such a love,
 That though I saw them turned above,
 Each loving seemed for also me !
 And, oh, the Unspeakable, the He,
 The manifest in secreties,
 Yet of mine own heart partaker,—
 With the overcoming look
 Of One who hath been once forsook,
 And blesseth the forsaker.
 Mother, mother, let me go
 Toward the Face that looketh so.
 Through the mystic, winged Four
 Whose are inward, outward eyes
 Dark with light of mysteries,
 And the restless evermore
 "Holy, holy, holy,"—through
 The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view
 Of cherubim and seraphim,—
 Through the four-and-twenty crowned
 Stately elders, white around,
 Suffer me to go to Him !

xxx

"Is your wisdom very wise,
 Mother, on the narrow earth,
 Very happy, very worth
 That I should stay to learn ?
 Are these air-corrupting sighs
 Fashioned by unlearnèd breath ?
 Do the students' lamps that burn
 All night, illumine death ?
 Mother, albeit this be so,
 Loose thy prayer and let me go
 Where that bright chief angel stands
 Apart from all his brother bands,
 Too glad for smiling, having bent
 In angelic wilderment
 O'er the depths of God, and brought
 Reeling thence, one only thought
 To fill his whole eternity.
 He the teacher is for me !—
 He can teach what I would know—
 Mother, mother, let me go !

xxxI

'Can your poet make an Eden
 No winter will undo,
 And light a starry fire while heeding
 His hearth's is burning too ?
 Drown in music the earth's din,

And keep his own wild soul within
 The law of his own harmony ?—
 Mother, albeit this be so,
 Let me to my Heaven go !
 A little harp me waits thereby—
 A harp whose strings are golden all,
 And tuned to music spherical,
 Hanging on the green life-tree
 Where no willows ever be.
 Shall I miss that harp of mine ?
 Mother, no !—the Eye divine
 Turned upon it, makes it shine ;
 And when I touch it, poems sweet
 Like separate souls shall fly from it
 Each to an immortal sytle.
 We shall all be poets there,
 Gazing on the chieftest Fair.

xxxII

'Love ! earth's love ! and can we love
 Fixedly where all things move ?
 Can the sinning love each other ?

Mother, mother,
 I tremble in thy close embrace,
 I feel thy tears adown my face,
 Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—

O dreary earthly love !
 Loose thy prayer and let me go
 To the place which loving is
 Yet not sad ; and when is given
 Escape to *thee* from this below.
 Thou shalt behold me that I wait
 For thee beside the happy Gate,
 And silence shall be up in heaven
 To hear our greeting kiss.'

xxxIII

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,
 And starts to see beside her bed
 The lady with a grandeur spread
 Like pathos o'er her face,—as one
 God-satisfied and earth-undone.

The babe upon her arm was dead !
 And the nurse could utter forth no cry,—
 She was awed by the calm in the mother's
 eye.

xxxIV

'Wake, nurse !' the lady said ;
 'We are waking—he and I—
 I, on earth, and he, in sky !
 And thou must help me to o'erlay
 With garment white, this little clay
 Which needs no more our lullaby.'

xxxv

'I changed the cruel prayer I made,
And bowed my meekened face, and
prayed
That God would do His will ! and thus
He did it, nurse ! He parted us.
And His sun shows victorious
The dead calm face,—and I am calm,
And Heaven is hearkening a new psalm.

xxxvi

'This earthly noise is too anear,
Too loud, and will not let me hear
The little harp. My death will soon
Make silence.'

And a sense of tune,
A satisfied love meanwhile
Which nothing earthly could despoil,
Sang on within her soul.

xxxvii

Oh you,
Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to entrust your love
To Him so named, who guards above
Its ends and shall fulfil!
Breaking the narrow prayers that may
Befit your narrow hearts, away
In His broad, loving will.

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE

I

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds
And a young page at his side,
From the holy war in Palestine
Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer and told for beads
The dews of the eventide.

II

'O young page,' said the knight,
'A noble page art thou !
Thou fearest not to steep in blood
The curls upon thy brow ;
And once in the tent, and twice in the
fight,
Didst ward me a mortal blow.'

III

'O brave knight,' said the page,
'Or ere we hither came,
We talked in tent, we talked in field,
Of the bloody battle-game ;
But here, below this greenwood bough,
I cannot speak the same.

IV

'Our troop is far behind,
The woodland calm is new,
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled
hoofs,
Tread deep the shadows through ;
And in my mind some blessing kind
Is dropping with the dew.

V

'The woodland calm is pure—
I cannot choose but have
A thought from these, o' the beechen-
trees
Which in our England wave,
And of the little finches fine
Which sang there, while in Palestine
The warrior-hilt we drove.

VI

'Methinks, a moment gone,
I heard my mother pray !
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for me
Wherin she passed away ;
And I know the heavens are leaning
down
To hear what I shall say.'

VII

The page spake calm and high,
As of no mean degree ;
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
Full heart, his own was free :
And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
Then answered smilingly :—

VIII

'Sir page, I pray your grace !
Certes, I meant not so
To cross your pastoral mood, sir page,
With the crook of the battle-bow :
But a knight may speak of a lady's face,
I ween, in any mood or place,
If the grasses die or grow.'

IX

'And this I meant to say,—
My lady's face shall shine
As ladies' faces use, to greet
My page from Palestine;
Or, speak she fair or prank she gay,
She is no lady of mine.

X

'And this I meant to fear,—
Her bower may suit thee ill!
For, sooth, in that same field and tent,
Thy talk was somewhat still;
And fitter thy hand for my knightly spear,
Than thy tongue for my lady's will.'

XI

Slowly and thankfully
The young page bowed his head:
His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
Until he blushed instead,
And no lady in her bower, pardie,
Could blush more sudden red.
'Sir Knight,—thy lady's bower to me
Is suited well,' he said.

XII

Beati, beati, mortui!
From the convent on the sea,
One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
Swells the dirge as clear and high
As if that, over brake and lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of Saint Mary,
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,
And the lady Abbess dead before it,
And the chanting nuns whom yester-
week

Her voice did charge and bless,—
Chanting steady, chanting meek,
Chanting with a solemn breath
Because that they are thinking less
Upon the Dead than upon death!
Beati, beati, mortui!
Now the vision in the sound
Wheeleth on the wind around,
Now it sleepeth back, away—
The uplands will not let it stay
To dark the western sun.
Mortui!—away at last,—
Or ere the page's blush is past!
And the knight heard all, and the page
heard none.

XIII

'A boon, thou noble knight,
If ever I servèd thee!
Though thou art a knight and I am a page,
Now grant a boon to me;
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
If little loved or loved aright
Be the face of thy ladye.'

XIV

Gloomily looked the knight;—
'As a son thou hast servèd me,
And would to none I had granted boon
Except to only thee!
For haply then I should love aright,
For then I should know if dark or bright
Were the face of my ladye.'

XV

'Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue
To grudge that granted boon!
That heavy price from heart and life
I paid in silence down.
The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
My father's fame: I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won.'

XVI

'Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
He was my father's friend;
And while I rode the lists at court
And little guessed the end,
My noble father in his shroud,
Against a slanderer lying loud,
He rose up to defend.'

XVII

'Oh, calm, below the marble grey
My father's dust was strown!
Oh, meek, above the marble grey
His image prayed alone!
The slanderer lied—the wretch was
brave,—
For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone.'

XVIII

'Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it,
And dashed the lie back in the mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit!'

The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon the traitor's corse
Was yielded the true spirit.

xxii

'I would mine hand had fought that fight
And justified my father!
I would mine heart had caught that wound
And slept beside him rather!
I think it were a better thing
Than murthered friend and marriage-ring
Forced on my life together.

xxiii

'Wail shook Earl Walter's house;
His true wife shed no tear;
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier:
Till—"Ride, ride fast," she said at last,
"And bring the avengèd's son anear!
Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can flee,
For white of blee with waiting for me
Is the corse in the next chamb're."

xxiv

'I came—I knelt beside her bed—
Her calm was worse than strife;
"My husband, for thy father dear,
Gave freely, when thou wert not here,
His own and eke my life.
A boon! Of that sweet child we make
An orphan for thy father's sake,
Make thou, for ours, a wife."

xxv

'I said, "My steed neighs in the court,
My bark rocks on the brine,
And the warrior's vow I am under now
To free the pilgrim's shrine;
But fetch the ring and fetch the priest
And call that daughter of thine,
And rule she wide from my castle on Nyde
While I am in Palestine."

xxvi

'In the dark chamb're, if the bride was
fair,
Ye wis, I could not see,
But the steed thrice neighed, and the
priest fast prayed,
And wedded fast were we.

Her mother smiled upon her bed
As at its side we kneit to wed,
And the bride rose from her knee
And kissed the smile of her mother dead,
Or ever she kissed me.

xxvii

'My page, my page, what grieves thee so,
That the tears run down thy face!—
'Alas, alas! mine own sistèr
Was in thy lady's case!
But *she* laid down the silks she wore
And followed him she wed before,
Disguised as his true servitor,
To the very battle-place.'

xxviii

And wept the page, but laughed the
knight,—
A careless laugh laughed he:
'Well done it were for thy sistèr,
But not for my lady!
My love, so please you, shall requite
No woman, whether dark or bright,
Unwomaned if she be.'

xxix

The page stopped weeping and smiled
cold—
'Your wisdom may declare
That womanhood is proved the best
By golden brooch and glossy vest
The mincing ladies wear;
Yet is it proved, and was of old,
Anear as well, I dare to hold,
By truth, or by despair.'

xxx

He smiled no more, he wept no more,
But passionate he spake,—
'Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,
When none beside did wake!
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,
For one belovèd's sake!—
And her little hand defiled with blood,
Her tender tears of womanhood
Most woman-pure did make!'

xxxi

—'Well done it were for thy sistèr,
Thou tellest well her tale!
But for my lady, she shall pray
I' the kirk of Nydesdale.

Not dread for me but love for me
 Shall make my lady pale;
 No casque shall hide her woman's tear—
 It shall have room to trickle clear
 Behind her woman's veil.'

xxxix

—‘But what if she mistook thy mind
 And followed thee to strife,
 Then kneeling, did entreat thy love,
 As Paynims ask for life?’
 —‘I would forgive, and evermore
 Would love her as my servitor,
 But little as my wife.

xxx

‘Look up—there is a small bright cloud
 Alone amid the skies!
 So high, so pure, and so apart,
 A woman's honour lies.’
 The page looked up—the cloud was
 sheen—
 A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
 Betwixt it and his eyes:

xxxi

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
 From welkin unto hill—
 Hal! who rides there?—the page is ware,
 Though the cry at his heart is still!
 And the page seeth all and the knight
 seeth none,
 Though banner and spear do fleck the
 sun,
 And the Saracens ride at will.

xxxii

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
 ‘Ride fast, my master, ride,
 Or ere within the broadening dark
 The narrow shadows hide.’
 ‘Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,
 And keep thou at my side.’

xxxiii

‘Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
 Thy faithful page precede,
 For I must loose on saddle-bow
 My battle-casque that galls, I trow,
 The shoulder of my steed;
 And I must pray, as I did vow,
 For one in bitter need.

xxxiv

‘Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
 Now ride, my master, ride!
 Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
 To mortals too beloved to leave,
 I shall be at thy side.’
 The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
 And adown the dell did ride.

xxxv

Had the knight looked up to the page's
 face,
 No smile the word had won:
 Had the knight looked up to the page's
 face,
 I ween he had never gone:
 Had the knight looked back to the page's
 geste,
 I ween he had turned anon!
 For dread was the woe in the face so
 young,
 And wild was the silent geste that flung
 Casque, sword to earth—as the boy down-
 sprung,
 And stood—alone, alone.

xxxvi

He clenched his hands as if to hold
 His soul's great agony—
 ‘Have I renounced my womanhood,
 For wifehood unto *thee*,
 And is this the last, last look of thine
 That ever I shall see?’

xxxvii

‘Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have—
 A lady to thy mind,
 More woman-proud and half as true
 As one thou leav'st behind!
 And God me take with HIM to dwell—
 For HIM I cannot love too well,
 As I have loved my kind.’

xxxviii

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,
 The hopeful heavens to seek:
 That little cloud still floatheth there,
 Whereof her loved did speak.
 How bright the little cloud appears!
 Her eyelids fall upon the tears,
 And the tears down either cheek.

XXXIX

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
The Paynims round her coming!
The sound and sight have made her
calm,—

False page, but truthful woman!
She stands amid them all unmoved:
A heart once broken by the loved
Is strong to meet the foeman.

XL

'Ho, Christian page! art keeping sheep,
From pouring wine-cups resting?'—
'I keep my master's noble name,
For warring, not for feasting;
And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
Ye would not stay to question.'

XLI

'Where is thy master, scornful page,
That we may slay or bind him?'—
'Now search the lea and search the wood,
And see if ye can find him!
Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your Paynim heroes faster ride
Before him than behind him.'

XLII

'Give smoother answers, lying page,
Or perish in the lying.'—
'I trow that if the warior brand
Beside my foot, were in my hand,
'Twere better at replying.'
They cursed her deep, they smote her low,
They cleft her golden ringlets through;
The Loving is the Dying.

XLIII

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
And met it from beneath
With smile more bright in victory—
Than any sword from sheath,—
Which flashed across her lip serene,
Most like the spirit-light between
The darks of life and death.

XLIV

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
From the convent on the sea,
Now it sweepeth solemnly!
As over wood and over lea

Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of Saint Mary,
And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
And the weary nuns with hearts that

faintly

Beat along their voices saintly—

Ingemisco, ingemisco!

Dirge for abbess laid in shroud
Sweepeth o'er the shroudless dead,
Page or lady, as we said,
With the dews upon her head,
All as sad if not as loud.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!

Is ever a lament begun
By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but one?

THE LAY OF THE BROWN
ROSARY

FIRST PART

'ONORA, ONORA,'—her mother is calling,
She sits at the lattice and hears the dew
falling
Drop after drop from the sycamores
laden
With dew as with blossom, and calls
home the maiden,
'Night cometh, Onora.'

She looks down the garden-walk cav-
erned with trees,
To the limes at the end where the green
arbour is—
'Some sweet thought or other may keep
where it found her,
While forgot or unseen in the dreamlight
around her
Night cometh—Onora!'

She looks up the forest whose alleys
shoot on
Like the mute minster-aisles when the
"anthem is done,
And the choristers sitting with faces
asland
Feel the silence to consecrate more than
the chant—
'Onora, Onora!'

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
 ‘Onora, art coming?’—what is it she seeth?

Nought, nought, but the grey border-stone that is wist
 To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—
 ‘My daughter!’—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so,
 She is ‘ware of her little son playing below:
 ‘Now where is Onora?’—He hung down his head
 And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—
 ‘At the tryst with her lover.’

But his mother was wroth. In a sternness quoth she,
 ‘As thou play’st at the ball, art thou playing with me?
 When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
 And the saints know above that she loveth but one
 And will ne’er wed another?’

Then the boy wept aloud. ‘Twas a fair sight yet sad
 To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:
 He stamped with his foot, said—‘The saints know I lied
 Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide!
 Must I utter it, mother?’

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,
 And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin;
 But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
 ‘Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,
 At nights in the ruin!

‘The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,
 Where the owl hoots by day, and the toad is sun-proof;

Where no singing-birds build, and the trees gaunt and grey
 As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way—
 But is this the wind’s doing?

‘A nun in the east wall was buried alive,
 Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,—
 And shrieked such a curse, as the stone took her breath,
 The old abbess fell backward and swooned unto death
 With an Ave half-spoken.

‘I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
 Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground.
 A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
 And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her throat
 In the pass of the Brocken.

‘At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there,
 With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?
 Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,
 What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
 At dawn and at even!

‘Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
 Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?
 O sweetest my sister, what doeth with thee,
 The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary
 And a face turned from heaven?

‘Saint Agnes o’erwatcheth my dreams, and erewhile
 I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile;
 But last night, as a sadness like pity came o’er her,
 She whispered—“Say two prayers at dawn for Onora!
 The Tempted is sinning.”

'Onora, Onora!' they heard her not coming—
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming ;
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
And a smile just beginning.

It touches her lips—but it dares not arise
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes ;
And the large inusing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
Sing on like the angels in separate glory
Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured, till stirred Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word ; While—O soft!—her speaking is so interwound Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound And floats through the chamber.

'Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,' said she, 'I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me ; And I know by the hills that the battle is done— That my lover rides on—will be here with the sun, 'Neath the eyes that behold thee.

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis, Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss ; But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-wrought,— 'O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought ! If he cometh, who told thee ?'

'I know by the hills,' she resumed, calm and clear, 'By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear :

Did they ever look so since he bade me adieu ? Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true As Saint Agnes in sleeping.'

Half-ashamed and half-softened the boy did not speak, And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek : She bowed down to kiss him—dear saints, did he see Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY, That he shrank away weeping ?

SECOND PART

A bed.—ONORA sleeping. Angels, but not near.

First Angel. Must we stand so far, and she So very fair ?

Second Angel. As bodies be.

First Angel.

And she so mild ?

Second Angel. As spirits when They meeken, not to God, but men.

First Angel.

And she so young,—that I who bring Good dreams for saintly children, might Mistake that small soft face to-night, And fetch her such a blessed thing, That at her waking she would weep For childhood lost anew in sleep. How hath she sinned ?

Second Angel. In bartering love; God's love—for man's.

First Angel. We may reprove The world for this, not only her. Let me approach to breathe away This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off ! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her ?

Second Angel. Aye, a child,— Who never, praying, wept before : While, in a mother undefiled Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not willed.

First Angel.

One word: is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more!

The place is filled. [Angels vanish.

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream! too near to Heaven it leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis but a dream, sweet fiend!

Evil Spirit.

It is a thought.

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good.

It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot, if it would.

I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work, I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimed from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me dream at least. That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast.

I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn-sun,

With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go. I never more can walk with him, oh, never more but so.

For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirkyard stone, Oh, deep and straight, oh, very straight! they move at nights alone:

And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,

'Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields with me!'

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied! my word shall answer thine.

I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was praying, I see the poppies in the corn I used to sport away in.—

What shall I do—tread down the dew, and pull the blossoms blowing?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the rowan?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where thou dost stand Among the fields of Dreamland with thy father hand in hand, And clear and slow, repeat the vow— declare its cause and kind, Which, not to break, in sleep or wake, thou bearest on thy mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause:

I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—the spirits laughed applause:

The spirits trailed along the pines low laughter like a breeze, While, high between their swinging tops, the stars appeared to freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free,—speak out to me, why such a vow was made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death, and I shrank back afraid.

Have patience, O dead father mine! I did not fear to die;

I wish I were a young dead child, and had thy company!

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,

And wearing only a kiss of thine upon my lips that smiled!

The linden-tree that covers thee might so have shadowed twain,

For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes the pain.

Love feareth death. I was no child—I was betrothed that day;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.

How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,

And feel mine own betrothed go by— alas! no more mine own,—

Go leading by in wedding pomp some
lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose,
while mine were white in grave?
How could I bear to sit in Heaven, on
e'er so high a throne,
And hear him say to her—to *her!* that
else he loveth none?

Though e'er so high I sate above, though
e'er so low he spake,
As clear as thunder I should hear the
new oath he might take,
That hers, forsooth, were heavenly
eyes—ah, me! while very dim
Some heavenly eyes (indeed of Heaven!)
would darken down to *him*.

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wast called to death?
Onora in sleep.

I sate all night beside thee—
The grey owl on the ruined wall shut
both his eyes to hide thee,
And ever he flapped his heavy wing all
brokenly and weak,
And the long grass waved against the
sky, around his gasping beak.
I sate beside thee all the night, while
the moonlight lay forlorn,
Strewn round us like a dead world's
shroud, in ghastly fragments torn.
And through the night, and through
the hush, and over the flapping
wing,

We heard beside the Heavenly Gate the
angels murmuring :—
We heard them say, ‘Put day to day,
and count the days to seven,
And God will draw Onora up the
golden stairs of Heaven;
And yet the Evil ones have leave that
purpose to defer,
For if she has no need of Him, He has
no need of her.’—

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.
Onora in sleep.

And then I heard thee say,
‘I count upon my rosary brown the
hours thou hast to stay!
Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by
that decree,
Since if thou hast no need of Him, He
has no need of thee—

And if thou wilt forgo the sight of
angels, verily
Thy true love gazing on thy face, shall
guess what angels be;
Nor bride shall pass, save thee’ . . .
Alas!—my father's hand's acold,
The meadows seem—
Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the
vow be told!

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this
string of antique beads,
By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank
among the weeds,
This rosary brown, which is thine own,—
lost soul of buried nun,
Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now
all souls alike undone,—
I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and,
till such vow should break,
A pledge always of living days, 'twas
hung around my neck—
I vowed to thee on rosary (dead father,
look not so!),
*I would not thank God in my weal, nor
seek God in my woe.*

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove—

Onora in sleep.

O love—my love!
I felt him near again!
I saw his steed on mountain-head, I
heard it on the plain!
Was this no weal for me to feel!—is
greater weal than this?
Yet when he came, I wept his name—
and the angels heard but *his*.

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done!

Onora in sleep.

Aye me! the sun . . . the dreamlight 'gins
to pine,—
Aye me! how dread can look the Dead!—
Aroint thee, father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth
upright,
And her breath comes in sobs while she
stares through the night.
There is nought. The great willow, her
lattice before,

Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on
the floor.
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses,
and, free
From the death-clasp, close over—the
BROWN ROSARY.

THIRD PART

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry
bride-bell
Rings clear through the green-wood
that skirts the chapelle,
And the priest at the altar awaiteth the
bride,
And the sacristsans slyly are jesting aside
At the work shall be doing;

While down through the wood rides that
fair company,
The youths with the courtship, the
maids with the glee,
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and
at once
All the maids sigh demurely and think
for the nonce,
'And so endeth a wooing!'

And the bride and the bridegroom are
leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a word
yet to say:
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft
answers beneath,
And the little quick smiles come and go
with her breath,
When she sightheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off
unaware
From an Ave, to think that her daughter
is fair,
Till in nearing the chapel and glancing
before
She seeth her little son stand at the
door:
Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play? when his eyes wander
innocent-wild,
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a
child?

He trembles not, weeps not—the passion
is done,
And calmly he kneels in their midst,
with the sun
On his head like a glory.

'O fair-featured maids, ye are many!'
he cried,—
'But, in fairness and vileness, who
matcheth the bride?
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many!
but whom,
For the courage and woe, can ye match
with the groom,
As ye see them before ye?'

Out spake the bride's mother, 'The
vileness is thine,
If thou shame thine own sister, a bride
at the shrine!'
Out spake the bride's lover, 'The vile-
ness be mine,
If he shame mine own wife at the hearth
or the shrine,
And the charge be unproved.'

'Bring the charge, prove the charge,
brother! speak it aloud:
Let thy father and hers, hear it deep in
his shroud!'
—'O father, thou seest—for dead eyes
can see—
How she wears on her bosom a *brown*
rosary,
O my father beloved!'

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and
outlaughed withal
Both maidens and youths, by the old
chapel-wall.
'So she wear eth no love-gift, kind
brother,' quoth he,
'She may wear an she listeth a brown
rosary,
Like a pure-hearted lady.'

Then swept through the chapel the long
bridal train.
Though he spake to the bride she replied
not again:
On, as one in a dream, pale and stately
she went
Where the altar-lights burn o'er the
great sacrament,
Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between
them and her,
And calmly knelt down on the high-altar
stair—
Of an infantine aspect so stern to the
view
That the priest could not smile on the
child's eyes of blue
As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured
and white,
That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb
of a knight,
With a look taken up to each iris of stone
From the greatness and death where he
kneeleth, but none
From the face of a mother.

'In your chapel, O priest, ye have
wedded and shiven
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair
sinners for Heaven!
But this fairest my sister, ye think now
to wed,
Bid her kneel where she standeth, and
shrive her instead :
O shrink her and wed not!'

In tears, the bride's mother,—'Sir priest,
unto thee .
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair
company.'
In wrath, the bride's lover,—'The lie
shall be clear!
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their
niches shall hear :
Be the charge proved or said not.'

Then serene in his childhood he lifted
his face,
And his voice sounded holy and fit for
the place :
'Look down from your niches, ye still
saints, and see
How she wears on her bosom a *brown*
rosary!
Is it used for the praying?'

The youths looked aside—to laugh there
were a sin—
And the maidens' lips trembled from
smiles shut within.

Quoth the priest, 'Thou art wild, pretty
boy! Blessed she
Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary
To a worldly arraying!'

The bridegroom spake low and led
onward the bride,
And before the high altar they stood
side by side :
The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun,
They have knelt down together to rise
up as one.
Who laughed by the altar?

The maidens looked forward, the youths
looked around,
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his
prayer at the sound ;
And each saw the bride, as if no bride
she were,
Gazing cold at the priest without gesture
of prayer,
As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so,
but still
He felt a power on him too strong for
his will,
And whenever the Great Name was
there to be read,
His voice sank to silence—THAT could
not be said,
Or the air could not hold it.

'I have sinnèd,' quoth he, 'I have
sinnèd, I wot—'
And the tears ran adown his old cheeks
at the thought.
They dropped fast on the book, but he
read on the same,
And ay was the silence where should
be the NAME,—
As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite
being done
They who knelt down together arise
up as one.
Fair riseth the bride—oh, a fair bride
is she,—
But, for all (think the maidens) that
brown rosary,
No saint at her praying!

What aileth the bridegroom? He glares
blank and wide—
Then suddenly turning he kisseth the
bride—
His lip stung her with cold; she glanced
upwardly mute :
'Mine own wife,' he said, and fell stark
at her foot
In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his head
sinks away,
And his face sheweth bleak in the
sunshine and grey.
Leave him now where he lieth—for oh,
never more
Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a
floor!
Let his bride gaze upon him.

Long and still was her gaze, while they
chafed him there
And breathed in the mouth whose last
life had kissed her,
But when they stood up—only *they!*
with a start
The shriek from her soul struck her
pale lips apart—
She has lived, and forgone him!

And low on his body she droppeth
adown—
'Didst call me thine own wife, belovèd—
thine own?
Then take thine own with thee! thy
coldness is warm
To the world's cold without thee! Come,
keep me from harm
In a calm of thy teaching.'

She looked in his face earnest-long, as
in sooth
There were hope of an answer,—and
then kissed his mouth,
And with head on his bosom, wept,
wept bitterly,—
'Now, O God, take pity—take pity on
me!—
God, hear my beseeching!'

She was 'ware of a shadow that crossed
where she lay,
She was 'ware of a presence that withered
the day—

Wild she sprang to her feet,—'I sur-
render to *thee*
The broken vow's pledge,—the accursed
rosary,—
I am ready for dying !'

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-
paved ground
Where it fell mute as snow, and a weird
music-sound
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long
and dim,—
As the fiends tried to mock at the
choristers' hymn
And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the
garden walk:
'I am weary, O my mother, of thy
tender talk;
I am weary of the trees a-waving to and
fro,
Of the steadfast skies above, the running
brooks below.
All things are the same but I,—only I
am dreary,
And, mother, of my dreariness behold
me very weary.

'Mother, brother, pull the flowers I
planted in the spring
And smiled to think I should smile more
upon their gathering:
The bees will find out other flowers—
oh, pull them, dearest mine,
And carry them and carry me before
Saint Agnes' shrine.'
—Whereat they pulled the summer
flowers she planted in the spring,
And her and them all mournfully to
Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint and
gently shook her head—
'The picture is too calm for *me*—too
calm for *me*,' she said :
'The little flowers we brought with us,
before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at heaven,—
but *I* must turn away,

Because no sinner under sun can dare
or bear to gaze
On God's or angel's holiness, except in
Jesus' face.'

She spoke with passion after pause—
‘And were it wisely done,
If we who cannot gaze above, should
walk the earth alone?

If we whose virtue is so weak, should
have a will so strong,
And stand blind on the rocks, to choose
the right path from the wrong?

To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth,
instead of love and Heaven,—
A single rose, for a rose-tree, which
beareth seven times seven?

A rose that droppeth from the hand,
that fadeth in the breast,—
Until, in grieving for the worst, we
learn what is the best!

Then breaking into tears,—‘Dear God,’
she cried, ‘and must we see
All blissful things depart from us, or ere
we go to Thee?

We cannot guess Thee in the wood, or
hear Thee in the wind?

Our cedars must fall round us, ere we
see the light behind?

Aye sooth, we feel too strong in weal,
to need Thee on that road,
But woe being come, the soul is dumb
that crieth not on “God.”’

Her mother could not speak for tears;
she ever musèd thus,
‘The bees will find out other flowers,—
but what is left for us?’

But her young brother stayed his sobs
and knelt beside her knee,
—‘Thou sweetest sister in the world,
hast never a word for me?’

She passed her hand across his face,
she pressed it on his cheek,
So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed
not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day,
at vespers bloomed no more:
The woman fair who placed it there had
died an hour before.

Both perished mute, for lack of root,
earth's nourishment to reach.
O reader, breathe (the ballad saith)
some sweetness out of each!

A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES

I

SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight
Stand near the river-sea,
Whose water sweepeth white around
The shadow of the tree.
The moon and earth are face to face,
And earth is slumbering deep;
The wave-voices seem the voice of dreams
That wander through her sleep.
The river floweth on.

II

What bring they 'neath the midnight,
Beside the river-sea?
They bring the human heart wherein
No nightly calm can be,—
That droppeth never with the wind,
Nor drieth with the dew:
Oh, calm it, God! Thy calm is broad
To cover spirits, too.
The river floweth on.

III

The maidens lean them over
The waters, side by side,
And shun each other's deepening eyes.
And gaze adown the tide;
For each within a little boat
A little lamp hath put,
And heaped for freight some lily's weight
Or scarlet rose half shut.
The river floweth on.

IV

Of shell of coco carven,
Each little boat is made:
Each carries a lamp, and carries a flower,
And carries a hope unsaid;
And when the boat hath carried the lamp
Unquenched, till out of sight,
The maiden is sure that love will endure,—
But love will fail with light.
The river floweth on.

v

Why, all the stars are ready
To symbolize the soul,
The stars untroubled by the wind,
Unwearied as they roll;
And yet the soul by instinct sad
Reverts to symbols low—
To that small flame, whose very name
Breathed o'er it, shakes it so!
The river floweth on.

vi

Six boats are on the river,
Seven maidens on the shore,
While still above them steadfastly
The stars shine evermore.
Go, little boats, go soft and safe,
And guard the symbol spark!—
The boats aright go safe and bright
Across the waters dark.
The river floweth on.

vii

The maiden Luti watcheth
Where onwardly they float:
That look in her dilating eyes
Might seem to drive her boat!
Her eyes still mark the constant fire,
And kindling unawares
That hopeful while, she lets a smile
Creep silent through her prayers.
The river floweth on.

viii

The smile—where hath it wandered?
She riseth from her knee,
She holds her dark, wet locks away—
There is no light to see!
She cries a quick and bitter cry—
'Nuleeni, launch me thine!
We must have light abroad to-night,
For all the wreck of mine.'
The river floweth on.

ix

'I do remember watching
Beside this river-bed,
When on my childish knee was laid
My dying father's head;
I turned mine own, to keep the tears
From falling on his face:
What doth it prove when Death and Love
Choose out the self-same place?'
The river floweth on.

x

'They say the dead are joyful
The death-change here receiving:
Who say—ah, me!—who dare to say
Where joy comes to the living?
Thy boat, Nuleeni! look not sad—
Light up the waters rather!
I weep no faithless lover where
I wept a loving father.'
The river floweth on.

xi

'My heart foretold his falsehood
Ere my little boat grew dim:
And though I closed mine eyes to dream
That one last dream of him,
They shall not now be wet to see
The shining vision go:
From earth's cold love I look above
To the holy house of snow'.
The river floweth on.

xii

'Come thou—thou never knewest
A grief, that thou shouldst fear one!
Thou wearest still the happy look
That shines beneath a dear one;
Thy humming-bird is in the sun¹,
Thy cuckoo in the grove,
And all the three broad worlds, for thee
Are full of wandering love.'
The river floweth on.

xiii

'Why, maiden, dost thou loiter?
What secret wouldst thou cover?
That peepul cannot hide thy boat,
And I can guess thy lover.
I heard thee sob his name in sleep...
It was a name I knew;
Come, little maid, be not afraid,
But let us prove him true!'
The river floweth on.

¹ The Hindoo heaven is localized on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmaleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, the abode of snow, winter, or coldness.

² Himadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

xiv

The little maiden cometh,
She cometh shy and slow,
I ween she seeth through her lids,
They drop adown so low;
Her tresses meet her small bare feet—
She stands and speaketh nought,
Yet blusheth red, as if she said
The name she only thought.
The river floweth on.

xv

She knelt beside the water,
She lighted up the flame,
And o'er her youthful forehead's calm
The fitful radiance came:—
'Go, little boat, go, soft and safe,
And guard the symbol spark!'
Soft, safe, doth float the little boat
Across the waters dark.
The river floweth on.

xvi

Glad tears her eyes have blinded,
The light they cannot reach;
She turneth with that sudden smile
She learnt before her speech—
'I do not hear his voice! the tears
Have dimmed my light away!
But the symbol light will last to-night,
The love will last for ay.'
The river floweth on.

xvii

Then Luti spake behind her,
Outspake she bitterly,
'By the symbol light that lasts to-night,
Wilt vow a vow to me?'—
Nuleeni gazeth up her face,
Soft answer maketh she:
'By loves that last when lights are past,
I vow that vow to thee!'
The river floweth on.

xviii

An earthly look had Luti
Though her voice was deep as prayer:
'The rice is gathered from the plains
To cast upon thine hair'.

¹ The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

But when he comes, his marriage-band
Around thy neck to throw,
Thy bride-smile raise to meet his gaze,
And whisper,—*There is one betrays,*
While Luti suffers woe.

The river floweth on.

xix

'And when in seasons after,
Thy little bright-faced son
Shall lean against thy knee and ask
What deeds his sire hath done,
Press deeper down thy mother-smile
His glossy curls among—
View deep his pretty childish eyes,
And whisper,—*There is none denies,*
While Luti speaks of wrong.'

The river floweth on.

xx

Nuleeni looked in wonder,
Yet softly answered she:
'By loves that last when lights are past,
I vowed that vow to thee.
But why glads it thee that a bride-day be
By a word of *woe* defiled?
That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-song
From the ear of a sinless child?'—
'Why?' Luti said, and her laugh was
dread,
And her eyes dilated wild—
'That the fair new love may her bride-
groom prove,
And the father shame the child.'

The river floweth on.

xxi

'Thou flowest still, O river,
Thou flowest 'neath the moon!
Thy lily hath not changed a leaf¹,
Thy charmèd lute a tune!
He mixed his voice with thine—and his
Was all I heard around;
But now, beside his chosen bride,
I hear the river's sound.'

The river floweth on.

xxii

'I gaze upon her beauty
Through the tresses that enwreathes it;
The light above thy wave, is hers—
My rest, alone beneath it.'

¹ The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water-lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.

Oh, give me back the dying look
 My father gave thy water!
 Give back I—and let a little love
 O'erwatch his weary daughter!—
 The river floweth on.

xxiii

'Give back!' she hath departed—
 The word is wandering with her;
 And the stricken maidens hear afar
 The step and cry together.
 Frail symbols! None are frail enow
 For mortal joys to borrow!—
 While bright doth float Nuleeni's boat,
 She weepeth, dark with sorrow.
 The river floweth on.

RIME OF THE DUCHESS MAY

I

To the belfry, one by one, went the
 ringers from the sun,
Toll slowly.
 And the oldest ringer said, 'Ours is
 music for the Dead,
 When the rebecks are all done.'

II

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the
 northside in a row,
Toll slowly.
 And the shadows of their tops rock across
 the little slopes
 Of the grassy graves below.

III

On the south side and the west, a small
 river runs in haste,
Toll slowly.
 And between the river flowing and the
 fair green trees a-growing
 Do the dead lie at their rest.

IV

On the east I sate that day, up against
 a willow grey.
Toll slowly.
 Through the rain of willow-branches, I
 could see the low hill-ranges,
 And the river on its way.

v

There I sate beneath the tree, and the
 bell tolled solemnly,
Toll slowly.
 While the trees' and river's voices flowed
 between the solemn noises,—
 Yet death seemed more loud to me.

vi

There, I read this ancient rime, while
 the bell did all the time
Toll slowly.
 And the solemn knell fell in with the tale
 of life and sin,
 Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RIME

I

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the
 hills of Linteged—
Toll slowly.
 And three hundred years had stood mute
 adown each hoary wood,
 Like a full heart having prayed.

II

And the little birds sang east, and the
 little birds sang west,
Toll slowly.
 And but little thought was theirs of the
 silent antique years,
 In the building of their nest.

III

Down the sun dropt large and red, on
 the towers of Linteged,—
Toll slowly.
 Lance and spear upon the height,
 bristling strange in fiery light,
 While the castle stood in shade.

IV

There, the castle stood up black, with
 the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly.
 Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a
 top that flickers fire
 When the wind is on its track.

v

And five hundred archers tall did besiege
the castle wall,

Toll slowly.

And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen
days and nights had stood,
And to-night was near its fall.

vi

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three
months since, a bride did come,—

Toll slowly.

One who proudly trod the floors, and
softly whispered in the doors,
'May good angels bless our home.'

vii

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front
of constancies!

Toll slowly.

Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where the
untired smile of youth
Did light outward its own sighs.

viii

'Twas a Duke's fair orphan-girl, and her
uncle's ward, the Earl;

Toll slowly.

Who betrothed her twelve years old, for
the sake of dowry gold,
To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

ix

But what time she had made good all her
years of womanhood,

Toll slowly.

Unto both those lords of Leigh, spake
she out right sovrantly,
'My will runneth as my blood.'

x

And while this same blood makes red
this same right hand's veins,' she
said,—

Toll slowly.

'Tis my will as lady free, not to wed
a lord of Leigh,
But Sir Guy of Linteged.'

xi

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he
sighed for wilful youth,—

Toll slowly.

'Good my niece, that hand withal looketh
somewhat soft and small
For so large a will, in sooth.'

xii

She, too, smiled by that same sign,—but
her smile was cold and fine,—

Toll slowly.

'Little hand clasps muckle gold, or it
were not worth the hold
Of thy son, good uncle mine!'

xiii

Then the young lord jerked his breath,
and sware thickly in his teeth,

Toll slowly.

'He would wed his own betrothed, an
she loved him an she loathed,
Let the life come or the death.'

xiv

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her
father's child might rise,—

Toll slowly.

'Thy hound's blood, my lord of Leigh,
stains thy knightly heel,' quoth
she,

'And he moans not where he lies.

xv

'But a woman's will dies hard, in the
hall or on the sward!'

Toll slowly.

'By that grave, my lords, which made me
orphaned girl and dower'd lady,
I deny you wife and ward.'

xvi

Unto each she bowed her head, and
swept past with lofty tread.

Toll slowly.

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the
chapel had the priest
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

xvii

Fast and fain the bridal train along the
night-storm rode amain.

Toll slowly.

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck
their hoofs out on the turf,
In the pauses of the rain.

xviii

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along
the storm pursued amain—
Toll slowly.

Steed on steed-track, dashing off—
thickening, doubling, hoofon hoof,
In the pauses of the rain.

xix

And the bridegroom led the flight on his
red-roan steed of might,
Toll slowly.

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if
she feared no harm,
Smiling out into the night.

xx

'Dost thou fear?' he said at last.—'Nay,'
she answered him in haste,—
Toll slowly.

'Not such death as we could find—only
life with one behind—
Ride on fast as fear—ride fast!'

xxi

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—
girth to ground, and fetlocks
spread,—
Toll slowly.

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—
down he staggered, down the
banks,
To the towers of Linteged.

xxii

High and low the serfs looked out, red
the flambeaus tossed about,—
Toll slowly.

In the courtyard rose the cry—'Live the
Duchess and Sir Guy!'
But she never heard them shout.

xxiii

On the steed she drop't her cheek, kissed
his mane and kissed his neck.—
Toll slowly.

'I had happier died by thee, than lived
on, a Lady Leigh,'
Were the first words she did speak.

xxiv

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt
that moment and to-day,
Toll slowly.

When five hundred archers tall stand
beside the castle wall,
To recapture Duchess May.

xxv

And the castle standeth black, with the
red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly.

And a fortnight's siege is done—and,
except the duchess, none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

xxvi

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with
his eyes so grey of blee,
Toll slowly.

And thin lips that scarcely sheath the cold
white gnashing of his teeth,
Gnashed in smiling, absently,

xxvii

Cried aloud, 'So goesthe day, bridegroom
fair of Duchess May!'

Toll slowly.

'Look thy last upon that sun! if thou
seest to-morrow's one,
'Twill be through a foot of clay.'

xxviii

'Ha, fair bride! dost hear no sound, save
that moaning of the hound!'

Toll slowly.

'Thou and I have parted troth,—yet
I keep my vengeance-oath,
And the other may come round.'

xxix

'Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy
new love past compare,'

Toll slowly.

'Yet thine old love's faulchion brave is
as strong a thing to have
As the will of lady fair.'

xxx

'Peck on blindly, netted dove!—If a
wife's name thee behove,'

Toll slowly.

'Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow,
ere the grave has hid the sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love.'

xxxI

'O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou
and I will call back troth.'

Toll slowly.

'He shall altar be and priest,—and he
will not cry at least
"I forbid you—I am loath!"'

xxxII

'I will wring thy fingers pale in the
gauntlet of my mail.'

Toll slowly.

"Little hand and muckle gold" close
shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did, to prevail.'

xxxIII

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,

Toll slowly.

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and
her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

xxxIV

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low
to think of it,—

Toll slowly.

'Tower is strong and will is free—thou
canst boast, my lord of Leigh,
But thou boastest little wit.'

xxxV

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she
blushed right womanly.

Toll slowly.

She blushed half from her disdain—half,
her beauty was so plain,
—'Oath for oath, my lord of Leigh!'

xxxVI

Straight she called her maidens in—
'Since ye gave me blame herein,'

Toll slowly.

'That a bridal such as mine should lack
gauds to make it fine,
Come and shrive me from that sin.'

xxxVII

'It is three months gone to-day since
I gave mine hand away.'

Toll slowly.

'Bring the gold and bring the gem, we
will keep bride-state in them
While we keep the foe at bay.'

xxxVIII

'On your arms I loose mine hair!—comb
it smooth and crown it fair.'

Toll slowly.

'I would look in purple pall from this
lattice down the wall,
And throw scorn to one that's
there!'

xxxIX

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west.

Toll slowly.

On the tower the castle's lord leant in
silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

XL

With a spirit-laden weight, did he lean
down passionate.

Toll slowly.

They have almost sapped the wall,—they
will enter therewithal,
With no knocking at the gate.

XLI

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered,
snapped upon the stone,—

Toll slowly.

'Sword,' he thought, with inward laugh,
'ill thou servest for a staff
When thy nobler use is done!'

XLII

'Sword, thy nobler use is done!—tower
is lost, and shame begun!'

Toll slowly.

'If we met them in the breach, hilt to
hilt or speech to speech,
We should die there, each for one.'

XLIII

'If we met them at the wall, we should
singly, vainly fall!'

Toll slowly.

'But if I die here alone,—then I die,
who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.'

XLIV

' Five true friends lie for my sake, in the
moat and in the brake,'—
Toll slowly.

' Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a
black wound in the breast,
And not one of these will wake.

XLV

' So no more of this shall be!—heart-blood
weighs too heavily,'—
Toll slowly.

' And I could not sleep in grave, with the
faithful and the brave
Heaped around and over me.

XLVI

' Since young Clare a mother hath, and
young Ralph a plighted faith,'—
Toll slowly.

' Since my pale young sister's cheeks
blush like rose when Ronald
speaks,
Albeit never a word she saith—

XLVII

' These shall never die for me—life-blood
falls too heavily :'
Toll slowly.

' And if I die here apart,—o'er my dead
and silent heart
They shall pass out safe and free.

XLVIII

' When the foe hath heard it said—
" Death holds Guy of Linteged,"'
Toll slowly.

' That new corse new peace shall bring,
and a blessed, blessed thing
Shall the stone be at its head.

XLIX

' Then my friends shall pass out free, and
shall bear my memory,'—
Toll slowly.

' Then my foes shall sleek their pride,
soothing fair my widowed bride,
Whose sole sin was love of me.

L

' With their words all smooth and sweet,
they will front her and entreat,'
Toll slowly.

' And their purple pall will spread under-
neath her fainting head
While her tears drop over it.

LI

' She will weep her woman's tears, she
will pray her woman's prayers,'—
Toll slowly.

' But her heart is young in pain, and her
hopes will spring again
By the suntime of her years.

LII

' Ah, sweet May! ah, sweetest grief!—
once I vowed thee my belief,'
Toll slowly.

' That thy name expressed thy sweetness,
—May of poets, in completeness!
Now my May-day seemeth brief.'

LIII

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er
his eyes grown strange and dim,—
Toll slowly.

Till his true men in the place, wished
they stood there face to face
With the foe instead of him.

LIV

' One last oath, my friends that wear
faithful hearts to do and dare!'
Toll slowly.

' Tower must fall, and bride be lost!—
swear me service worth the cost!'
—Bold they stood around to swear.

LV

' Each man clasp my hand and swear, by
the deed we failed in there,'
Toll slowly.

' Not for vengeance, not for right, will
ye strike one blow to-night!'
—Pale they stood around to swear

LVI

' One last boon, young Ralph and Clare!
faithful hearts to do and dare!'
Toll slowly.

' Bring that steed up from his stall, which
she kissed before you all!
Guide him up the turret-stair.

LVII

'Ye shall harness him aright, and lead
upward to this height.'

Toll slowly.

'Once in love and twice in war hath he
borne me strong and far:
He shall bear me far to-night.'

LVIII

Then his men looked to and fro, when
they heard him speaking so.

Toll slowly.

— "Las! the noble heart," they thought,—
'he in sooth is grief-distraught:
Would we stood here with the foe!'

LIX

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt
their thought and their reply,—

Toll slowly.

'Have ye so much time to waste? We
who ride here, must ride fast,
As we wish our foes to fly.'

LX

They have fetched the steed with care,
in the harness he did wear,

Toll slowly.

Past the court, and through the doors,
across the rushes of the floors,
But they goad him up the stair.

LXI

Then from out her bower chambre, did
the Duchess May repair.

Toll slowly.

'Tell me now what is your need,' said
the lady, 'of this steed,
That ye goad him up the stair!'

LXII

Calm she stood; unbodkinethrough, fell
her dark hair to her shoe,—

Toll slowly.

And the smile upon her face, ere she
left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

LXIII

'Get thee back, sweet Duchess May!
hope is gone like yesterday,'—

Toll slowly.

One half-hour completes the breach;
and thy lord grows wild of speech!
Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

LXIV

In the east tower, high'st of all, loud
he cries for steed from stall.'

Toll slowly.

'He would ride as far,' quoth he, 'as
for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall.'

LXV

And we fetch the steed from stall, up
where never a hoof did fall.'—

Toll slowly.

'Wifely prayer meets deathly need!
may the sweet Heavens hear thee
plead
If he rides the castle-wall.'

LXVI

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till
her hair coiled on the floor,—

Toll slowly.

And tear after tear you heard fall dis-
tinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

LXVII

'Get thee in, thou soft lady!—here is
never a place for thee!'—

Toll slowly.

'Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown,
that thy beauty in its moan
May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.'

LXVIII

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale
yet steady face,

Toll slowly.

Like a statue thunderstruck, which,
though quivering, seems to look
Right against the thunder-place.

LXIX

And her foot trod in, with pride, her
own tears i' the stone beside.—

Toll slowly.

'Go to, faithful friends, go to!—judge
no more what ladies do,—
No, nor how their lords may ride!'

LXX

Then the good steed's rein she took, and
his neck did kiss and stroke :
Toll slowly.

Soft he neighed to answer her, and then
followed up the stair,
For the love of her sweet look.

LXXI

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the
narrow stair around !

Toll slowly.

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step
by step beside her treading,
Did he follow, meek as hound.

LXXII

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there,
where never a hoof did fall,—
Toll slowly.

Out they swept, a vision steady,—noble
steed and lovely lady,
Calm as if in bower or stall.

LXXIII

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and
she looked up silently,—
Toll slowly.

And he kissed her twice and thrice, for
that look within her eyes
Which he could not bear to see.

LXXIV

Quoth he, 'Get thee from this strife,—
and the sweet saints bless thy
life!'—
Toll slowly.

'In this hour, I stand in need of my
noble red-roan steed,
But no more of my noble wife.'

LXXV

Quoth she, 'Meekly have I done all thy
biddings under sun ;'
Toll slowly.

'But by all my womanhood, which is
proved so, true and good,
I will never do this one.'

LXXVI

'Now by womanhood's degree, and by
wifehood's verity,'
Toll slowly.

'In this hour if thou hast need of thy
noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of *me*.

LXXVII

'By this golden ring ye see on this
lifted hand, pardiè,
Toll slowly.

'If, this hour, on castle-wall, can be
room for steed from stall,
Shall be also room for *me*.

LXXVIII

'So the sweet saints with me be' (did
she utter solemnly)
Toll slowly.

'If a man, this eventide, on this castle
wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me*.

LXXIX

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he
laughed out bitter-well,—
Toll slowly.

'Wouldst thou ride among the leaves,
as we used on other eves,
To hear chime a vesper-bell ?'

LXXX

She clang closer to his knee—'Aye, be-
neath the cypress-tree !'
Toll slowly.

'Mock me not, for otherwher than along
the greenwood fair
Have I ridden fast with thee.

LXXXI

'Fast I rode with new-made vows, from
my angry kinsman's house.'
Toll slowly.

'What, and would you men should reck
that I dared more for love's sake
As a bride than as a spouse ?'

LXXXII

'What, and would you it should fall, as
a proverb, before all ?'
Toll slowly.

'That a bride may keep your side while
through castle-gate you ride,
Yet eschew the castle-wall !'

LXXXIII

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and
roars up against her suing,
Toll slowly.

With the inarticulate din, and the
dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

LXXXIV

Twice he wrung her hands in twain,
but the small hands closed again.
Toll slowly.

Back he reined the steed—back, back!
but she trailed along his track
With a frantic clasp and strain.

LXXXV

Evermore the foemen pour through the
crash of window and door,—
Toll slowly.

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and
the shrieks of 'kill!' and 'flee!'
Strike up clear amid the roar.

LXXXVI

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,—
but they closed and clung again,—
Toll slowly.

Wild she clung, as one, withstood,
clasps a Christ upon the rood,
In a spasm of deathly pain.

LXXXVII

She clung wild and she clung mute,
with her shuddering lip half-shut.
Toll slowly.

Her head fallen as half in swound,—
hair and knees wept on the ground,
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

LXXXVIII

Back he reined his steed back-thrown
on the slippery coping-stone:
Toll slowly.

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the
battlement behind
Whence a hundred feet went down.

LXXXIX

And his heel did press and goad on the
quivering flank bestrode,—
Toll slowly.

'Friends and brothers, save my wife!—
Pardon, sweet, in change for
life,—
But I ride alone to God.'

xc

Straight as if the Holy name had up-
breathed her like a flame,
Toll slowly.
She upsprang, she rose upright,—in his
selle she sate in sight,
By her love she overcame.

xci

And her head was on his breast, where
she smiled as one at rest,—
Toll slowly.

'Ring,' she cried, 'O vesper-bell, in the
beechwood's old chapelle!
But the passing-bell rings best.'

xcii

They have caught out at the rein, which
Sir Guy threw loose—in vain,—
Toll slowly.

For the horse in stark despair, with his
front hoofs poised in air,
On the last verge rears amain.

xciii

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and
his nostrils curdle in!—
Toll slowly.

Now he shivers head and hoof—and he
flakes of foam fall off,
And his face grows fierce and thin!

xciv

And a look of human woe from his
staring eyes did go,
Toll slowly.

And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold
agony
Of the headlong death below,—

xcv

And, 'Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,'
still she cried, 't'is the old chap-
elle!—
Toll slowly.

Then back-toppling, crashing back—
a dead weight flung out to wrack,
Horse and riders overfell.

I

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,
Toll slowly.

And I read this ancient Rime, in the
churchyard, while the chime
Slowly tolled for one at rest.

II

The abees moved in the sun, and the
river smooth did run,
Toll slowly.

And the ancient Rime rang strange,
with its passion and its change.
Here, where all done lay undone.

III

And beneath a willow tree, I a little
grave did see,
Toll slowly.

Where was graved,—HERE UNDEFILED,
LIETH MAUD, A THREE-YEAR CHILD,
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE.

IV

Then, O spirits, did I say, ye who rode
so fast that day,—
Toll slowly.

Did star-wheels and angel wings, with
their holy winnowings,
Keep beside you all the way ?

V

Though in passion ye would dash, with
a blind and heavy crash,
Toll slowly.

Up against the thick-bossed shield of
God's judgement in the field,—
Though your heart and brain were
rash,—

VI

Now, your will is all unwilling—now,
your pulses are all stilled!
Toll slowly.

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso
laid) as Maud the child,
Whose small grave was lately filled.

VII

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are
very patient now,
Toll slowly.

And the children might be bold to pluck
the kingcups from your mould
Ere a month had let them grow.

VIII

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder
near in spring,
Toll slowly.

Let her build her nest and sit all the
three weeks out on it,
Murmuring not at anything.

IX

In your patience ye are strong; cold
and heat ye take not wrong.
Toll slowly.

When the trumpet of the angel blows
eternity's evangeli,
Time will seem to you not long.

X

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,
Toll slowly.

And I said in underbreath,—All our life
is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best?

XI

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the
little birds sang west,
Toll slowly.

And I smiled to think God's greatness
flowed around our incomple-
ness,—
Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE ROMANCE OF THE
SWAN'S NEST

So the dreams depart,
So the fading phantoms flee,
And the sharp reality
Now must act its part.
WESTWOOD'S Beads from a Rosary.

I

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
Mid the beeches of a meadow,
By a stream-side on the grass,
And the trees are showering down
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
On her shining hair and face.

II

She has thrown her bonnet by,
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow;
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
While she rocketh to and fro.

III

Little Ellie sits alone,
And the smile she softly uses,
Fills the silence like a speech,
While she thinks what shall be done,—
And the sweetest pleasure chooses
For her future within reach.

IV

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooses . . . 'I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds!
He shall love me without guile,
And to him I will discover
The swan's nest among the reeds.

V

'And the steed shall be red-roan,
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath;
And the lute he plays upon,
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

VI

'And the steed it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the wind;
And the hoofs along the sod
Shall flash onward and keep measure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

VII

But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face.
He will say, "O Love, thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in,
And I kneel here for thy grace."

VIII

"Then, aye, then—he shall kneel low,
With the red-roan steed anear him,
Which shall seem to understand—
Till I answer, "Rise and go!
For the world must love and fear him
Whom I gift with heart and hand."

IX

"Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a yes I must not say.
Nathless maiden-brave, "Farewell,"
I will utter, and dissemble—
"Light to-morrow with to-day."

X

"Then he'll ride among the hills
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong,
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

XI

"Three times shall a young foot-page
Swim the stream and climb the mountain
And kneel down beside my feet—
"Lo, my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting!
What wilt thou exchange for it?"

XII

"And the first time, I will send
A white rosebud for a guerdon,—
And the second time, a glove;
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer—"Pardon,
If he comes to take my love."

XIII

"Then the young foot-page will run—
Then my lover will ride faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee:
"I am a duke's eldest son!
Thousand serfs do call me master,—
But, O Love, I love but *thee*!"

XIV

"He will kiss me on the mouth
Then, and lead me as a lover
Through the crowds that praise his
deeds:
And, when soul-tied by one troth,
Unto him I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds."

XV

Little Ellie, with her smile
Not yet ended, rose up gaily,

Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,
And went homeward, round a mile,
Just to see, as she did daily,
What more eggs were with the two.

xvi

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
Winding up the stream, light-hearted,
Where the osier pathway leads—
Past the boughs she stoops—and stops.
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,
And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

xvii

Ellie went home sad and slow.
If she found the lover ever,
With his red-roan steed of steeds,
Sooth I know not! but I know
She could never show him—never,
That swan's nest among the reeds!

BERTHA IN THE LANE

I

Put the broidery-frame away,
For my sewing is all done:
The last thread is used to-day,
And I need not join it on.
Though the clock stands at the noon
I am weary. I have sewn,
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

II

Sister, help me to the bed,
And stand near me, Dearest-sweet.
Do not shrink nor be afraid,
Blushing with a sudden heat!
No one standeth in the street?—
By God's love I go to meet,
Love I thee with love complete.

III

Lean thy face down! drop it in
These two hands, that I may hold
'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
Stroking back the curls of gold.
'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—
Larger eyes and redder mouth
Than mine were in my first youth.

IV
Thou art younger by seven years—
Ah!—so bashful at my gaze,
That the lashes, hung with tears,
Grow too heavy to upraise?
I would wound thee by no touch
Which thy shyness feels as such?
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

V

Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year,
Since our dying mother mild
Said with accents undefiled,
'Child, be mother to this child!'

VI

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand up on the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me,—
Hope that blessed me, bliss that
crowned,
Love, that left me with a wound,
Life itself, that turneth round!

VII

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
Thou art standing in the room,
In a molten glory shrined,
That rays off into the gloom!
But thy smile is bright and bleak
Like cold waves—I cannot speak,
I sob in it, and grow weak.

VIII

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
One hour longer from my soul—
For I still am thinking of
Earth's warm-beating joy and dole!
On my finger is a ring
Which I still see glittering,
When the night hides everything.

IX

Little sister, thou art pale!
Ah, I have a wandering brain—
But I lose that fever-bale,
And my thoughts grow calm again.
Lean down closer—closer still!
I have words thine ear to fill,—
And would kiss thee at my will.

X

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
 Thee and Robert—through the trees,—
 When we all went gathering
 Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
 Do not start so! think instead
 How the sunshine overhead
 Seemed to trickle through the shade.

XI

What a day it was, that day!
 Hills and vales did openly
 Seem to heave and throb away
 At the sight of the great sky;
 And the Silence, as it stood
 In the Glory's golden flood,
 Audibly did bud—and bud.

XII

Through the winding hedgerows green,
 How we wandered, I and you,—
 With the bowery tops shut in,
 And the gates that showed the view!
 How we talked there! thrushes soft
 Sang our praises out—or oft
 Bleatings took them from the croft:

XIII

Till the pleasure grown too strong
 Left me muter evermore,
 And, the winding road being long,
 I walked out of sight, before,
 And so, wrapt in musings fond,
 Issued (past the wayside pond)
 On the meadow-lands beyond.

XIV

I sat down beneath the beech
 Which leans over to the lane,
 And the far sound of your speech
 Did not promise any pain;
 And I blessed you full and free,
 With a smile stooped tenderly
 O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

XV

But the sound grew into word
 As the speakers drew more near—
 Sweet, forgive me that I heard
 What you wished me not to hear.
 Do not weep so—do not shake—
 Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
 Good true answers for my sake.

XVI

Yes, and HE too! let him stand
 In thy thoughts, untouched by blame.
 Could he help it, if my hand
 He had claimed with hasty claim?
 That was wrong perhaps—but then
 Such things be—and will, again.
 Women cannot judge for men.

XVII

Had he seen thee, when he swore
 He would love but me alone?
 Thou wert absent—sent before
 To our kin in Sidmouth town.
 When he saw thee who art best
 Past compare, and loveliest,
 He but judged thee as the rest.

XVIII

Could we blame him with grave words,
 Thou and I, Dear, if we might?
 Thy brown eyes have looks like birds,
 Flying straightway to the light:
 Mine are older.—Hush!—look out—
 Up the street! Is none without?
 How the poplar swings about.

XIX

And that hour—beneath the beech,
 When I listened in a dream,
 And he said in his deep speech,
 That he owed me all *esteem*,—
 Each word swam in on my brain
 With a dim, dilating pain,
 Till it burst with that last strain.

XX

I fell flooded with a dark,
 In the silence of a swoon.
 When I rose, still cold and stark,
 There was night,—I saw the moon.
 And the stars, each in its place,
 And the May-blooms on the grass,
 Seemed to wonder what I was.

XXI

And I walked as if apart
 From myself, when I could stand—
 And I pitied my own heart,
 As if I held it in my hand,
 Somewhat coldly,—with a sense
 Of fulfilled benevolence,
 And a ‘Poor thing’ negligence.

XXII

And I answered coldly too,
When you met me at the door;
And I only heard the dew
Dripping from me to the floor;
And the flowers I bade you see
Were too withered for the bee,—
As my life, henceforth, for me.

XXIII

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm!
All was best as it befell:
If I say he did me harm,
I speak wild,—I am not well.
All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me! Only, blood
Runs so faint in womanhood.

XXIV

Then I always was too grave,—
Liked the saddest ballad sung,—
With that look, besides, we have
In our faces, who die young.
I had died, Dear, all the same;
Life's long, joyous, jostling game
Is too loud for my meek shame.

XXV

We are so unlike each other,
Thou and I, that none could guess
We were children of one mother,
But for mutual tenderness.
Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
And meant, verily, to hold
Life's pure pleasures manifold.

XXVI

I am pale as crocus grows
Close beside a rose-tree's root;
Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
Treads the crocus underfoot.
I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree—
Thou, like merry summer-bee!
Fit, that I be plucked for thee.

XXVII

Yet who plucks me!—no one mourns,
I have lived my season out,
And now die of my own thorns
Which I could not live without.
Sweet, be merry! How the light
Comes and goes! If it be night,
Keep the candles in my sight.

XXVIII

Are there footsteps at the door?
Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?
Some one might be waiting for
Some last word that I might say.
Nay? So best!—so angels would
Stand off clear from deathly road,
Not to cross the sight of God.

XXIX

Colder grow my hands and feet.
When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
And the rosemary be spread,
That if any friend should come
(To see *thee*, sweet!) all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

XXX

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
On my hand this little ring,
Which at nights, when others sleep,
I can still see glittering:
Let me wear it out of sight,
In the grave,—where it will light
All the dark up, day and night.

XXXI

On that grave, drop not a tear!
Else, though fathom-deep the place,
Through the woollen shroud I wear
I shall feel it on my face.
Rather smile there, blessed one,
Thinking of me in the sun,
Or forget me—smiling on!

XXXII

Art thou near me? nearer? so!
Kiss me close upon the eyes,
That the earthly light may go
Sweetly, as it used to rise.
When I watched the morning-grey
Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
He was sure to come that day.

XXXIII

So,—no more vain words be said!—
The hosannas nearer roll.
Mother, smile now on thy Dead,
I am death-strong in my soul.
Mystic Dove alit on cross,
Guide the poor bird of the snows
Through the snow-wind above loss!

XXXIV

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
Love's divine self-abnegation,
Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
And absorb the poor libation!
Wind my thread of life up higher,
Up, through angels' hands of fire!
I aspire while I expire.

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE

A poet writes to his friend. PLACE—A room in Wycombe Hall. TIME—Late in the evening.

DEAR my friend and fellow student,
I would lean my spirit o'er you!
Down the purple of this chamber, tears
should scarcely run at will.
I am humbled who was humble. Friend,
—I bow my head before you.
You should lead me to my peasants,—
but their faces are too still.

There's a lady—an earl's daughter,—
she is proud and she is noble,
And she treads the crimson carpet, and
she breathes the perfumed air,
And a kingly blood sends glances up her
princely eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown
is softened in her hair.

She has halls among the woodlands,
she has castles by the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she
can threaten and command,
And the palpitating engines snort in
steam across her acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven
the measure of the land.

There are none of England's daughters
who can show a prouder presence;
Upon princely suitors praying, she has
looked in her disdain.
She was sprung of English nobles,
I was born of English peasants;
What was I that I should love her—
save for competence to pain?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing
at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while
she thought of other things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she
appeared to my abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an
angel clad in wings!

Many vassals bow before her as her
carriage sweeps their doorways;
She has blest their little children,—as a
priest or queen were she.
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her
smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile
which she used to smile on me.

She has voters in the Commons, she has
lovers in the palace;
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have
jewels half as fine;
Oft the prince has named her beauty
'twixt the red wine and the chalice.
Oh, and what was I to love her? my
beloved, my Geraldine!

Yet I could not choose but love her.
I was born to poet-uses,
To love all things set above me, all of
good and all of fair:
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we
• are wont to call the Muses
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets
pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because
the public praised me,
With a critical deduction for the modern
writer's fault,
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though
the courtesies that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the
pale spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence;
—'Will your book appear this
summer?'
Then returning to each other—'Yes,
our plans are for the moors.'
Then with whisper dropped behind me
—'There he is! the latest comer!
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is
over, she endures.

'Quite low-born! self-educated! somewhat gifted though by nature,—
And we make a point of asking him,—
of being very kind.
You may speak, he does not hear you!
and besides, he writes no satire,—
All these serpents kept by charmers
leave the natural sting behind.'

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I
stood up there among them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the
cold scorning scorched my brow;
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely
cadenced, over-rung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched
my inner nature through.

I looked upward and beheld her. With
a calm and regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids,
and said clear before them all—
'Have you such superfluous honour, sir,
that able to confer it
You will come down, Mister Bertram,
as my guest to Wycombe Hall?'

Here she paused,—she had been paler
at the first word of her speaking,
But because a silence followed it,
blushed somewhat, as for shame,
Then, as scorning her own feeling,
resumed calmly—'I am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen
think worthy of my claim.

'Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not
because I am a woman'
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain,
and, so, overflowed her mouth),
'But because my woods in Sussex have
some purple shades at gloaming
Which are worthy of a king in state, or
poet in his youth.

'I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no
scene for worldly speeches—
Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where
. God asked the thrushes first—
And if you will sing beside them, in the
covert of my beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands, . . .
for the human world, at worst.'

Then she smiled around right childly,
then she gazed around right
queenly,
And I bowed—I could not answer;
alternated light and gloom—
While as one who quells the lions, with
a steady eye serenely,
She, with level fronting eyelids, passed
out stately from the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can
hear them still around me,
With their leafy tide of greenery still
rippling up the wind.
Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex! where
the hunter's arrow found me,
When a fair face and a tender voice had
made me mad and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged
the numerous guests invited,
And the lovely London ladies trod the
floors with gliding feet;
And their voices low with fashion, not
with feeling, softly freighted
All the air about the windows, with
elastic laughter sweet.

For at eve, the open windows flung their
light out on the terrace,
Which the floating orbs of curtains did
with gradual shadow sweep,
While the swans upon the river, fed at
morning by the heiress,
Trembled downward through their
snowy wings at music in their
sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of
instrument and singing,
Till the finches of the shrubberies grew
restless in the dark;
But the cedars stood up motionless,
each in a moonlight ringing,
And the deer, half in the glimmer,
strewed the hollows of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me
with her silver-corded speeches
To commix my words and laughter with
the converse and the jest,
Oft I sate apart, and gazing on the river
through the beeches,
Heard, as pure the swans swam down
it, her pure voice o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof
of steed, and laugh of rider,
Spread out cheery from the court-yard
till we lost them in the hills,
While herself and other ladies, and her
suitors left beside her,
Went a-wandering up the gardens
through the laurels and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass,
bareheaded, with the flowing
Of the virginal white vesture gathered
closely to her throat,—
And the golden ringlets in her neck
just quickened by her going,
And appearing to breathe sun for air,
and doubting if to float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which
her right hand held above her,
And which trembled a green shadow in
betwixt her and the skies,
As she turned her face in going, thus,
she drew me on to love her,
And to worship the divineness of the
smile hid in her eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly :
her lips have serious sweetness,
And her front is calm—the dimple rarely
ripples on the cheek ;
But her deep blue eyes smile constantly,
as if they in discreetness
Kept the secret of a happy dream she
did not care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning,
out across into the garden,
And I walked among her noble friends
and could not keep behind.
Spake she unto all and unto me—
‘Behold, I am the warden
Of the song-birds in these lindens,
which are cages to their mind.

‘But within this swarded circle, into
which the lime-walk brings us,
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly,
stand away in reverent fear,
I will let no music enter, saving what
the fountain sings us,
Which the lilies round the basin may
seem pure enough to hear.

‘The live air that waves the lilies waves
the slender jet of water
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from
soul of fasting saint :
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping !
(Lough the sculptor wrought her)
So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush !
—a fancy quaint.

‘Mark how heavy white her eyelids !
not a dream between them lingers,
And the left hand’s index droppeth from
the lips upon the cheek ;
While the right hand,—with the sym-
bol rose held slack within the
fingers,—
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet
this Silence will not speak !

‘That the essential meaning growing
may exceed the special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it : it applies
more high and low.
Our true noblemen will often through
right nobleness grow humble,
And assert an inward honour by
denying outward show.’

‘Nay, your Silence,’ said I, ‘truly, holds
her symbol rose but slackly,
Yet she holds it—or would scarcely be a
Silence to our ken ;
And your nobles wear their ermine on
the outside, or walk blackly
In the presence of the social law as
mere ignoble men.

‘Let the poets dream such dreaming !
madam, in these British islands
‘Tis the substance that wanes ever, ‘tis
the symbol that exceeds.
Soon we shall have nought but symbol !
and, for statues like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose’s image—in another
case, the weed’s.’

‘Not so quickly,’ she retorted,—‘ I con-
fess, where’er you go, you
Find for things, names—shows for
actions, and pure gold for honour
clear ;
But when all is run to symbol in the
Social, I will throw you
The world’s book which now reads dryly,
and sit down with Silence here.’

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought,
and half in indignation;
Friends who listened, laughed her words
off, while her lovers deemed her
fair:

A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in
her noble-lighted station
Near the statue's white reposing—and
both bathed in sunny air!—

With the trees round, not so distant but
you heard their vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the
leaves in and outward move,
And the little fountain leaping toward
the sun-heart to be warmer,
Then recoiling in a tremble from the
too much light above.

'Tis a picture for remembrance. And
thus, morning after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me by the
spirit to her feet.
Why, her greyhound followed also!
dogs—we both were dogs for
scorning—
To be sent back when she pleased it and
her path lay through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite
of vows and spite of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the
week-days passed along,
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or
to see the fawns to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some
sweet Tuscan in a song.

Aye, for sometimes on the hill-side, while
we sat down in the gowans,
With the forest green behind us, and
its shadow cast before,
And the river running under, and across
it from the rowans
A brown partridge whirring near us,
till we felt the air it bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I
read aloud the poems
Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments
more various of our own;

Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or
the subtle interflowings
Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the
book—the leaf is folded down!

Or at times a modern volume,—Words-
worth's solemn-thoughted idyl,
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's
enchanted reverie,—
Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate,'
which, if cut deep down the
middle,
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured,
of a veined humanity.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some
new poem of my making:
Poets ever fail in reading their own
verses to their worth,—
For the echo in you breaks upon the
words which you are speaking,
And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate
through which you drive them
forth.

After, when we were grown tired of
books, the silence round us fling-
ing

A slow arm of sweet compression, felt
with beatings at the breast,
She would break out, on a sudden, in
a gush of woodland singing,
Like a child's emotion in a god—a naïad
tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing! scarce
I know which is divinest—
For her looks sing too—she modulates
her gestures on the tune;
And her mouth stirs with the song, like
song; and when the notes are
finest,
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light
and seem to swell them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked! her
voice, so cadenced in the talking,
Made another singing—of the soul!
a music without bars;
While the leafy sounds of woodlands,
humming round where we were
walking,
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—
as skies about the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always thought them ;
She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on branch,
Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought them
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she speaks lightly, Has a grace in being gay, which even mournful souls approve, For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck so rightly As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—we talked, rather ! upon all things, substance, shadow, Of the sheep that browsed the grasses, of the reapers in the corn, Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through the meadow— Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature, And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear ; So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature, Yet will lift the cry of ‘progress,’ as it trod from sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—‘The Age culls simples, With a broad clown’s back turned broadly to the glory of the stars. We are gods by our own reck’ning, and may well shut up the temples, And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars.

‘For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring, With, at every mile run faster,—“O the wondrous, wondrous age,” Little thinking if we work our souls as nobly as our iron, Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

‘Why, what is this patient entrance into nature’s deep resources, But the child’s most gradual learning to walk upright without bane ? When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestic white horses, Are we greater than the first men who led black ones by the mane ?

‘If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising, If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric breath, ‘Twere but power within our tether, no new spirit-power comprising, And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death.’

She was patient with my talking ; and I loved her, loved her, certes, As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands ! As I loved pure inspirations, loved the graces, loved the virtues, In a Love content with writing his own name on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely!—thought no idiot Hope was raising Any crown to crown Love’s silence— silent Love that sate alone. Out, alas ! the stag is like me—he, that tries to go on grazing With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled. I told you that her hand had many suitors ; But she smiles them down imperially, as Venus did the waves, And with such a gracious coldness, that they cannot press their futures On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning, as I sate alone within the inner chamber, With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought serene, For I had been reading Camoëns—that poem you remember, Which his lady’s eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought
flew from it, taking from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end
beyond its own,
As the branch of a green osier, when a
child would overcome it,
Springs up freely from his clasping and
goes swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew
deep as it grew longer—
Speakers using earnest language—
‘Lady Geraldine, you *would!*’
And I heard a voice that pleaded ever
on, in accents stronger
As a sense of reason gave it power to
make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's,
of soul that matched his station,
Soul completed into lordship—might and
right read on his brow;
Very finely courteous—far too proud to
doubt his domination
Of the common people, he atones for
grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle,
cold blue eyes, of less expression
Than resistance, coldly casting off the
looks of other men,
As steel, arrows,—unelastic lips, which
seem to taste possession,
And be cautious lest the common air
should injure or distract.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—
aye, and standing by his order
With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of
art and letters too;
Just a good man made a proud man,—as
the sandy rocks that border
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a
regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice—I heard it, and
I could not help the hearkening.
In the room I stood up blindly, and my
burning heart within
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till
they ran on all sides darkening,
And scorched, weighed, like melted metal
round my feet that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for
love's sake, for wealth, position,
For the sake of liberal uses, and great
actions to be done—
And she interrupted gently, ‘Nay, my
lord, the old tradition
Of your Normans, by some worthier hand
than mine is, should be won.’

‘Ah, that white hand!’ he said quickly,—
and in his he either drew it
Or attempted—for with gravity and
instance she replied,
‘Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain,
and we had best eschew it,
And pass on, like friends, to other points
less easy to decide.’

What he said again, I know not. It is
likely that his trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for
she answered in slow scorn,
‘And your lordship judges rightly.
Whom I marry, shall be noble,
Aye, and wealthy. I shall never blush
to think how he was born.’

There, I maddened! her words stung me.
Life swept through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished,
sprang, full-statured in an hour.
Know you what it is when anguish, with
apocalyptic NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you,—and
despair sublimes to power?

From my brain, the soul-wings budded,—
waved a flame about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes.
I felt self-drawn out, as man,
From amalgamate false natures, and I
saw the skies grow ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and
I knew what spirits can.

I was mad—inspired—say either!
(anguish worketh inspiration)
Was a man, or beast—perhaps so, for
the tiger roars, when speared;
And I walked on, step by step, along
the level of my passion—
Oh my soul! and passed the doorway
to her face, and never feared.

*He had left her, peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming—
But for her—she half arose, then sate—grew scarlet and grew pale.
Oh, she trembled!—tis so always with a worldly man or woman
In the presence of true spirits—what else can they do but quail?*

*Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-brothers
Far too strong for it; then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands—
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others:
I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.*

*I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though leaf-verdant,—
Trod them down with words of shaming, —all the purple and the gold,
All the 'landed stakes' and lordships, all, that spirits pure and ardent
Are cast out of love and honour because chancing not to hold.*

'For myself I do not argue,' said I, 'though I love you, madam,
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have trod;
And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam,
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

'Yet, O God,' I said, 'O grave,' I said, 'O mother's heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child!
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-closing;
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled.

'Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or wealth—that needs no learning,
That comes quickly—quick as sin does, aye, and culminates to sin;
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a clay above your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling breath within.

'What right have you, madam, gazing in your palace mirror daily,
Getting so by heart your beauty which all others must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to vow gaily
You will wed no man that's only good to God, and nothing more?

'Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God—the sweetest woman
Of all women He has fashioned—with your lovely spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so human,
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace,

'What right can you have, God's other works to scorn, despise, revile them
In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as noble men, forsooth,—
As mere Parias of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them
In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness of your mouth?

'Have you any answer, madam? If my spirit were less earthly,
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string,
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold me! I am worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee! I am worthy as a king.

'As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain upon her,
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you again,
Love you, madam—dare to love you—to my grief and your dishonour,
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain!

More mad words like these—mere madness! friend, I need not write them fuller,
For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of tears.

Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! why,
a beast had scarce been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints against
the shining of the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood
all vibrating with thunder
Which my soul had used. The silence
drew her face up like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered?
She looked up, as if in wonder,
With tears beaded on her lashes, and
said 'Bertram'!—it was all.

If she had cursed me, and she might have
—or if even, with queenly bearing
Which at need is used by women, she
had risen up and said,
'Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I
have given you a full hearing,
Now, beseech you, choose a name exact-
ing somewhat less, instead,'—

I had borne it!—but that 'Bertram'—
why it lies there on the paper
A mere word, without her accent,—and
you cannot judge the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion :
I seemed drowning in a vapour,—
And her gentleness destroyed me whom
her scorn made desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted by
that inward flow of passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing,
into forms of abstract truth,
By a logic agonizing through unseemly
demonstration,
And by youth's own anguish turning
grimly grey the hairs of youth,—

By the sense accursed and instant, that
if even I spake wisely
I spake basely—using truth, if what I
spake, indeed was true,
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who
sate there weighing nicely
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of
such deeds as I could do!—

By such wrong and woe exhausted—
what I suffered and occasioned,—
As a wild horse through a city runs with
lightning in his eyes,

And then dashing at a church's cold and
passive wall, impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain,
and blindly drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her! do
you blame me, friend, for weak-
ness?

'Twas my strength of passion slew me!
—fell before her like a stone.
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me,
on its roaring wheels of black-
ness—

When the light came, I was lying in this
chamber, and alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys
to bear out the sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight—
but not *beyond* the gate;
She is too kind to be cruel, and too
haughty not to pardon
Such a man as I—'twere something to
be level to her hate.

But for me—you now are conscious
why, my friend, I write this letter,
How my life is read all backward, and
the charm of life undone :
I shall leave her house at dawn ; I would
to-night, if I were better—
And I charge my soul to hold my body
strengthened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart,
with no last gazes,
No weak moanings (one word only, left
in writing for her hands),
Out of reach of all derision, and some
unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the
far and foreign lands.

Blame me not. I would not squander
life in grief—I am abstemious :
I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its
wing may soar again.
There's no room for tears of weakness in
the blind eyes of a Phemius!
Into work the poet kneads them,—and
he does not die till then.

CONCLUSION

Bertram finished the last pages, while
along the silence ever
Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell the
tears on every leaf:
Having ended he leans backward in his
chair, with lips that quiver
From the deep unspoken, aye, and deep
unwritten thoughts of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'tis a
dream—a dream of mercies!
'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how
she standeth still and pale!
'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to
soften his self-curses—
Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the
tossing of his wail.

'Eyes,' he said, 'now throbbing through
me! are ye eyes that did undo me?
Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in
Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead, are
ye ever burning torrid
O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart
and life undone?'

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the
air, the purple curtain
Swelletlih in and swelletlih out around her
motionless pale brows,
While the gliding of the river sends a
rippling noise for ever
Through the open casement whitened by
the moonlight's slant repose.

Said he—'Vision of a lady! stand there
silent, stand there steady!
Now I see it plainly, plainly; now I
cannot hope or doubt—
There, the brows of mild repression—
there, the lips of silent passion,
Curved like an archer's bow to send the
bitter arrows out.'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow
silence she kept smiling,
And approached him slowly, slowly, in
a gliding measured pace;

With her two white hands extended, as
if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest
in his face.

Said he—'Wake me by no gesture,—
sound of breath, or stir of vesture!
Let the blessed apparition melt not yet
to its divine!
No approaching—hush, no breathing! or
my heart must swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest—O thou
dream of Geraldine!'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow
silence she kept smiling—
But the tears ran over lightly from her
eyes, and tenderly;
'Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me?
Is no woman far above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart
than such a one as I?'

Said he—'I would dream so ever, like
the flowing of that river,
Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward
to the sea!
So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely
to a full completeness,—
Would my heart and life flow onward—
deathward—through this dream
of THEE!'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow
silence she kept smiling,
While the silver tears ran faster down
the blushing of her cheeks;
Then with both her hands enfolding both
of his, she softly told him,
'Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis
the vision only speaks.'

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his
knee he fell before her—
And she whispered low in triumph, 'It
shall be as I have sworn!
Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble—
noble, certes;
And I shall not blush in knowing that
men call him lowly born.'

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT
PILGRIM'S POINT

I

I STAND on the mark beside the shore
Of the first white pilgrim's bended
knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
And God was thanked for liberty ;
I have run through the night, my skin
is as dark,
I bend my knee down on this mark . . .
I look on the sky and the sea.

II

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you !
I see you come out proud and slow
From the land of the spirits pale as dew,
And round me and round me ye go !
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one
Who in your names works sin and woe.

III

And thus I thought that I would come
And kneel here where ye knelt before,
And feel your souls around me hum
In undertone to the ocean's roar ;
And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this land
Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore.

IV

I am black, I am black !
And yet God made me, they say ;
But if He did so, smiling back
He must have cast His work away
Under the feet of His white creatures,
With a look of scorn,—that the dusky
features
Might be trodden again to clay.

V

And yet He has made dark things
To be glad and merry as light :
There's a little dark bird sits and sings ;
There's a dark stream ripples out of
sight ;

And the dark frogs chant in the safe
morass,
And the sweetest stars are made to pass
O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI

But we who are dark, we are dark !
Ah God, we have no stars !
About our souls in care and cark
Our blackness shuts like prison-bars ;
The poor souls crouch so far behind
That never a comfort can they find
By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII

Indeed we live beneath the sky,
That great smooth Hand of God
stretched out
On all His children fatherly,
To save them from the dread and doubt
Which would be, if, from this low place,
All opened straight up to His face
Into the grand eternity.

VIII

And still God's sunshine and His frost,
They make us hot, they make us cold,
As if we were not black and lost ;
And the beasts and birds, in wood and
fold,
Do fear and take us for very men !
Could the whip-poor-will or the cat of
the glen
Look into my eyes and be bold ?

IX

I am black, I am black !—
But, once, I laughed in girlish glee,
For one of my colour stood in the track
Where the drivers drove, and looked
at me,
And tender and full was the look he
gave—
Could a slave look so at another slave ?—
I look at the sky and the sea.

X

And from that hour our spirits grew
As free as if unsold, unbought :
Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
To conquer the world, we thought !
The drivers drove us day by day ;
We did not mind, we went one way,
And no better a freedom sought.

xi

In the sunny ground between the canes,
He said 'I love you' as he passed :
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with
the rains,
I heard how he vowed it fast ;
While others shook he smiled in the hut,
As he carved me a bowl of the coco-nut
Through the roar of the hurricanes.

xii

I sang his name instead of a song,
Over and over I sang his name—
Upward and downward I drew it along
My various notes,—thesame, the same !
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
Might never guess from aught they could
hear,
It was only a name—a name.

xiii

I look on the sky and the sea.
We were two to love, and two to
pray,—
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
Though nothing didst Thou say.
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun !
And now I cry who am but one,
Thou wilt not speak to-day.—

xiv

We were black, we were black,
We had no claim to love and bliss,
What marvel, if each went to wrack ?
They wrung my cold hands out of his,—
They dragged him . . . where? . . . I
crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust! . . . not much,
Ye pilgrim-souls, . . . though plain as
this!

xv

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong !
Mere grief's too good for such as I ;
So the white men brought the shame
ere long
To strangle the sob of my agony.
They would not leave me for my dull
Wet eyes !—it was too merciful
To let me weep pure tears and die.

xvi

I am black, I am black !
I wore a child upon my breast . . .
An amulet that hung too slack,
And, in my unrest, could not rest.
Thus we went moaning, child and mother,
One to another, one to another,
Until all ended for the best.

xvii

For hark ! I will tell you low . . . low . . .
I am black, you see,—
And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
Was far too white . . . too white for me ;
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray
Beside me at church but yesterday,
Though my tears had washed a place
for my knee.

xviii

My own, own child ! I could not bear
To look in his face, it was so white;
I covered him up with a kerchief there ;
I covered his face in close and tight :
And he moaned and struggled, as well
might be,
For the white child wanted his liberty—
Ha, ha ! he wanted the master-right.

xix

He moaned and beat with his head and
feet,
His little feet that never grew—
He struck them out, as it was meet,
Against my heart to break it through.
I might have sung and made him mild—
But I dared not sing to the white-faced
child
The only song I knew.

xx

I pulled the kerchief very close :
He could not see the sun, I swear,
More, then, alive, than now he does
From between the roots of the mango
 . . . where ?
 . . . I know where. Close ! a child and
 mother
Do wrong to look at one another,
When one is black and one is fair.

xxi

Why, in that single glance I had
Of my child's face, . . . I tell you all,
I saw a look that made me mad !
The master's look, that used to fall
On my soul like his lash . . . or worse !—
And so, to save it from my curse,
I twisted it round in my shawl.

xxii

And he moaned and trembled from foot
to head,
He shivered from head to foot ;
Till, after a time, he lay instead
Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold :
I dared to lift up just a fold, . . .
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

xxiii

But my fruit . . . ha, ha !—there, had been
(I laugh to think on 't at this hour !)
Your fine white angels (who have seen
Nearest the secret of God's power)
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,
And sucked the soul of that child of mine,
As the humming-bird sucks the soul
of the flower.

xxiv

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white !
They freed the white child's spirit so.
I said not a word, but, day and night,
I carried the body to and fro,
And it lay on my heart like a stone . . .
as chill.
—The sun may shine out as much as he
will :
I am cold, though it happened a month
ago.

xxv

From the white man's house, and the
black man's hut,
I carried the little body on ;
The forest's arms did round us shut,
And silence through the trees did run.
They asked no question as I went,—
They stood too high for astonishment,—
They could see God sit on His throne.

xxvi

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
I bore it on through the forest . . . on ;
And when I felt it was tired at last,
I scooped a hole beneath the moon.
Through the forest-tops the angels far,
With a white sharp finger from every star,
Did point and mock at what was done.

xxvii

Yet when it was all done aright, . . .
Earth, 'twixt me and my baby,
strewed, . . .
All, changed to black earth, . . . nothing
white, . . .
A dark child in the dark !—ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew young;
I sate down smiling there and sung
The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

xxviii

And thus we two were reconciled,
The white child and black mother, thus;
For, as I sang it soft and wild,
The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate :
It was the dead child singing that,
To join the souls of both of us.

xxix

I look on the sea and the sky !
Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored
lay
The free sun rideth gloriously,
But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away
Through the earliest streaks of the morn :
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn
Which they dare not meet by day.

xxx

Ah !—in their 'stead, their hunter sons !
Ah, ah ! they are on me—they hunt in
a ring—
Keep off ! I brave you all at once—
I throw off your eyes like snakes that
sting !
You have killed the black eagle at nest,
I think :
Did you never stand still in your triumph,
and shrink
From the stroke of her wounded wing ?

XXXI

(Man, drop that stone you dared to
lift!—)
I wish you who stand there five
a-breast,
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
A little corpse as safely at rest
As mine in the mangos!—Yes, but she
May keep live babies on her knee,
And sing the song she likes the best.

XXXII

I am not mad : I am black.
I see you staring in my face—
I know you staring, shrinking back,
Ye are born of the Washington-race,
And this land is the free America,
And this mark on my wrist . . . (I prove
what I say)
Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-
place.

XXXIII

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound!
I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun;
I only cursed them all around
As softly as I might have done
My very own child.—From these sands
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV

Whips, curses; these must answer those!
For in this UNION you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
Each loathing each ; and all forget
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair,
While He sees gaping everywhere
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXXV

Our wounds are different. Your white
men
Are, after all, not gods indeed,
Nor able to make Christs again
Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed
(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!
We are too heavy for our cross,
And fall and crush you and your seed.

XXXVI

I fall, I swoon ! I look at the sky ;
The clouds are breaking on my brain .
I am floated along, as if I should die
Of liberty's exquisite pain.
In the name of the white child waiting
for me
In the death-dark where we may kiss
and agree,
White men, I leave you all curse-free
In my broken heart's disdain!

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

Φεῦ, φεῦ· τί προσδέρκεσθέ μι δύμασιν, τέκνα;
Medea.

I

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my
brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years!
They are leaning their young heads
against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the
meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the
nest,
The young fawns are playing with the
shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward
the west—
But the young, young children, O my
brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the
others,
In the country of the free.

II

Do you question the young children in
the sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago ;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost.

But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

III

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy.
'Your old earth,' they say, 'is very dreary;
Our young feet,' they say, 'are very weak!
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children;
For the outside earth is cold;
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.'

IV

'True,' say the children, 'it may happen
That we die before our time;
Little Alice died last year—her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, "Get up, little Alice! it is day."
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes:
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime!
It is good when it happens,' say the children,
'That we die before our time.'

V

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking Death in life, as best to have;
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck you handfuls of the meadow cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, 'Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

VI

'For oh,' say the children, 'we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow;
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground—
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

VII

'For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning,—
Their wind comes in our faces,—
Till our hearts turn,—our head, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.

And all-day, the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,
“O ye wheels” (breaking out in a mad
moaning),
“Stop! be silent for to-day!”

VIII

Aye! be silent! Let them hear each other
breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other's hands, in
a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic
motion
Is not all the life God fashions or
reveals:
Let them prove their living souls against
the notion
That they live in you, or under you,
O wheels!—
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God is
calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

IX

Now tell the poor young children, O my
brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the
others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, ‘Who is God that He
should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels
is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures
near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not
a word.
And we hear not (for the wheels in their
resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing
round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?

X

Two words, indeed, of praying we
remember,
And at midnight's hour of harm,

“Our Father,” looking upward in the
chamber,
We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words, except “Our
Father,”
And we think that, in some pause of
angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence
sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand
which is strong.
“Our Father!” If He heard us, He
would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world
very purely,
“Come and rest with Me, My child.”

XI

‘But, no! say the children, weeping
faster,
‘He is speechless as a stone;
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Goto! say the children,—‘upin Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are
all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us un-
believing—
We look up for God, but tears have
made us blind.’
Do you hear the children weeping and
disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His
world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

XII

And well may the children weep before
you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor
the glory
Which is brighter than the sun.

¹ A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his Commission. The name of the poet of *Orion* and *Cosmo de' Medici* has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still—however open to the reproach of being somewhat geld in our humanity. [1844.]

They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christ-
dom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm,—
Are worn, as if with age, yet unretriev-
ingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

XIII

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity!—
'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitat-
tion,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-
heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.'

A CHILD ASLEEP

I

How he sleepeth, having drunken
Weary childhood's mandragore!
From his pretty eyes have sunken
Pleasures to make room for more—
Sleeping near the withered nosegay
which he pulled the day before.

II

Nosegays! leave them for the waking;
Throw them earthward where they grew;
Dim are such, beside the breaking
Amaranths he looks unto:
Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

III

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
From the palms they sprang beneath,
Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath:
We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and of his breath.

IV

Vision unto vision calleth,
While the young child dreameth on;
Fair, O dreamer, thee befallenth
With the glory thou hast won!
Darker wert thou in the garden, yester-
morn by summer sun.

V

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee, were the clouds away;
'Tis the child-heart draws them, singing
In the silent-seeming clay:
Singing!—stars that seem the mutest, go in music all the way.

VI

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapour,
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood, as if drinking its repose.

VII

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen thee,
While thou smilest . . . not in sooth
Thy smile, but the oversfair one, dropt
from some ethereal mouth.

VIII

Haply it is angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made,
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or
the tomb shall see it fade.

IX

Softly, softly! make no noises!
Now he lieth dead and dumb;
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room;
Now he muses deep the meaning of the
Heaven-words as they come.

X

Speak not! he is consecrated;
Breathe no breath across his eyes:
Lifted up and separated
On the hand of God he lies,
In a sweetness beyond touching,—held
in cloistral sanctities.

XI

Could ye bless him—father—mother,
Bless the dimple in his cheek?
Dare ye look at one another,
And the benediction speak?
Would ye not break out in weeping, and
confess yourselves too weak?

XII

He is harmless—ye are sinful;
Ye are troubled—he, at ease;
From his slumber, virtue winful
Floweth outward with increase.
Dare not bless him! but be blessed by
his peace—and go in peace.

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT

I

WHEN ye stood up in the house
With your little childish feet,
And, in touching Life's first shows,
First the touch of Love did meet,—
Love and Nearness seeming one,
By the heartlight cast before,
And, of all Belovèds, none
Standing farther than the door!

Not a name being dear to thought,
With its owner beyond call;
Nor a face, unless it brought
Its own shadow to the wall;
When the worst recorded change
Was of apple dropt from bough,
When love's sorrow seemed more
strange

Than love's treason can seem now,—
Then, the Loving took you up
Soft, upon their elder knees,—
Telling why the statues droop
Underneath the churchyard trees,
And how ye must lie beneath them
Through the winters long and deep,
Till the last trump overbreatheth them,
And ye smile out of your sleep . . .
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed
as if they said
A tale of fairy ships
With a swan-wing for a sail!—
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
For the merry, merry tale!—
So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead.

II

Soon ye read in solemn stories
Of the men of long ago—
Of the pale bewildering glories
Shining farther than we know;
Of the heroes with the laurel,
Of the poets with the bay,
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
For that beauteous Helena;
How Achilles at the portal
Of the tent, heard footsteps nigh,
And his strong heart, half-immortal
Met the *ketai* with a cry;
How Ulysses left the sunlight
For the pale eidola race
Blank and passive through the dun
light,
Staring blindly in his face;
How that true wife said to Paetus,
With calm smile and wounded heart,
'Sweet, it hurts not!'—how Admetus
Saw his blessed one depart;
How King Arthur proved his mission,
And Sir Roland wound his horn,
And at Sangreal's moony vision
Swords did bristle round like corn.
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed
the while ye read,

That this Death, then, must be found
 A Valhalla for the crowned,
 The heroic who prevail :
 None, be sure, can enter in
 Far below a paladin
 Of a noble, noble tale !—
 So awfully ye thought upon the Dead.

III

Aye, but soon ye woke up shrieking,—
 As a child that wakes at night
 From a dream of sisters speaking
 In a garden's summer-light,—
 That wakes, starting up and bounding,
 In a lonely, lonely bed,
 With a wall of darkness round him,
 Stifling black about his head !—
 And the full sense of your mortal
 Rushed upon you deep and loud,
 And ye heard the thunder hurtle
 From the silence of the cloud !
 Funeral-torches at your gateway
 Threw a dreadful light within.
 All things changed ! you rose up
 straightway,
 And saluted Death and Sin.
 Since,—your outward man has rallied,
 And your eye and voice grown
 bold—
 Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
 With her saddest secret told.
 Happy places have grown holy :
 If ye went where once ye went,
 Only tears would fall down slowly,
 As at solemn sacrament.
 Merry books, once read for pastime,
 If ye dared to read again,
 Only memories of the last time
 Would swim darkly up the brain.
 Household names, which used to flutter
 Through your laughter unawares,—
 God's Divinest ye could utter
 With less trembling in your prayers !
 Ye have dropt adown your head, and it
 seems as if ye tread
 On your own hearts in the path
 Ye are called to in His wrath,—
 And your prayers go up in wail !
 —‘Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
 O Thou agonized on cross ?
 Art thou reading all its tale ?’
 So mournfully ye think upon the Dead.

IV

Pray, pray, thou who also weepest,
 And the drops will slacken so.
 Weep, weep,—and the watch thou
 keepest
 With a quicker count will go.
 Think,—the shadow on the dial
 For the nature most undone,
 Marks the passing of the trial,
 Proves the presence of the sun.
 Look, look up, in starry passion,
 To the throne above the spheres !
 Learn,—the spirit's gravitation
 Still must differ from the tear's.
 Hope,—with all the strength thou usest
 In embracing thy despair.
 Love,—the earthly love thou losest
 Shall return to thee more fair.
 Work,—make clear the forest-tangles
 Of the wildest stranger-land.
 Trust,—the blessed deathly angels
 Whisper, ‘ Sabbath hours at hand !’
 By the heart's wound when most gory,
 By the longest agony,
 Smile !—Behold, in sudden glory
 The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee*!
 And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed
 as if He said,
 ‘ My Beloved, is it so ?
 Have ye tasted of my woe ?
 Of my Heaven ye shall not fail ! ’—
 He stands brightly where the shade is,
 With the keys of Death and Hades,
 And there, ends the mournful tale.—
 So hopefully ye think upon the Dead.

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN

NIGHT

‘NEATH my moon what doest thou,
 With a somewhat paler brow
 Than she giveth to the ocean ?
 He, without a pulse or motion,
 Muttering low before her stands,
 Lifting his invoking hands,
 Like a seer before a sprite,
 To catch her oracles of light.
 But thy soul out-trembles now
 Many pulses on thy brow !
 Where be all thy laughter clear,
 Others laughed alone to hear ?

Where, thy quaint jests, said for fame ?
 Where, thy dances, mixed with game ?
 Where, thy festive companies,
 Mooned o'er with ladies' eyes,
 All more bright for thee, I trow ?
 'Neath my moon, what doest thou ?

THE MERRY MAN

I am digging my warm heart,
 Till I find its coldest part ;
 I am digging wide and low,
 Further than a spade will go ;
 Till that, when the pit is deep
 And large enough, I there may heap
 All my present pain and past
 Joy, dead things that look aghast
 By the daylight.—Now 'tis done.
 Throw them in, by one and one !
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden
 Treasures which my hands have holden,
 Till the chillness made them ache ;
 Of childhood's hopes, that used to wake
 If birds were in a singing strain,
 And for less cause, sleep again ;
 Of the moss-seat in the wood,
 Where I trusted solitude ;
 Of the hill-top, where the wind
 Used to follow me behind,
 Then in sudden rush to blind
 Both my glad eyes with my hair,
 Taken gladly in the snare ;
 Of the climbing up the rocks,—
 Of the playing 'neath the oaks,
 Which retain beneath them now
 Only shadow of the bough ;
 Of the lying on the grass
 While the clouds did overpass,
 Only they, so lightly driven,
 Seeming betwixt me and Heaven !
 Of the little prayers serene,
 Murmuring of earth and sin
 Of large-leaved philosophy
 Leaning from my childish knee ;
 Of poetic book sublime,
 Soul-kissed for the first dear time,—
 Greek or English,—ere I knew
 Life was not a poem too.
 Throw them in, by one and one !
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

Of the glorious ambitions,
 Yet unquenched by their fruitions ;
 Of the reading out the nights ;
 Of the straining at mad heights ;
 Of achievements, less desired
 By a dear few, than magnified ;
 Of praises, from the many earned,
 When praise from love was undiscerned ;
 Of the sweet reflecting gladness,
 Softened by itself to sadness.—
 Throw them in, by one and one !
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these ? more, more than these !
 Throw in, dearer memories !—
 Of voices—whereof but to speak,
 Makes mine own all sunk and weak ;
 Of smiles, the thought of which is
 sweeping

All my soul to floods of weeping ;
 Of looks, whose absence fain would weigh
 My looks to the ground for ay ;
 Of clasping hands—ah me ! I wring
 Mine, and in a tremble fling
 Downward, downward, all this paining !
 Partings, with the sting remaining ;
 Meetings, with a deeper thro'e,
 Since the joy is ruined so ;
 Changes, with a fiery burning—
 (Shadows upon all the turning) ;
 Thoughts of—with a storm they came—
 Them, I have not breath to name.
 Downward, downward, be they cast
 In the pit ! and now at last
 My work beneath the moon is done,
 And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover
 All my treasures darkly over.
 I will speak not in thine ears,
 Only tell my beaded tears
 Silently, most silently !
 When the last is calmly told,
 Let that same moist rosary
 With the rest sepulchred be.
 Finished now. The darksome mould
 Sealeth up the darksome pit.
 I will lay no stone on it :
 Grasses I will sow instead,
 Fit for Queen Titania's tread ;
 Flowers, encoloured with the sun,
 And a w^m written upon none.

Thus, whenever saileth by
The Lady World of dainty eye,
Not a grief shall here remain,
Silken shoon to damp or stain ;
And while she lisps, "I have not seen
Any place more smooth and clean" . . .
Here she cometh ! — Ha, ha ! — who
Laughs as loud as I can do ?

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS

I

THE Earth is old ;
Six thousand winters make her heart a-
cold ;
Thesceptre slanteth from her palsied hold.
She saith, "Las me ! — God's word that
I was "good"
Is taken back to heaven,
From whence when any sound comes, I
am riven
By some sharp bolt. And now no angel
would
Descend with sweet dew-silence on my
mountains,
To glorify the lovely river-fountains
That gush along their side.
I see, O weary change ! I see instead
This human wrath and pride,
These thrones, and tombs, judicial wrong,
and blood,
And bitter words are poured upon mine
head.—
"O Earth ! thou art a stage for tricks
unholie,
A church for most remorseful melancholy !
Thou art so spoilt, we should forget we had
An Eden in thee, — wert thou not so sad." —
Sweet children, I am old ! ye, every one,
Do keep me from a portion of my sun.
Give praise in change for brightness !
That I may shake my hills in infiniteness
Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,
To hear Earth's sons and daughters
praising Earth.'

II

Whereupon a child began,
With spirit running up to man,
As by angel's shining ladder
(May he find no cloud above !),

Seeming he had ne'er been sadder
All his days than now,—
Sitting in the chestnut grove,
With that joyous overflow
Of smiling from his mouth, o'er brow
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze
Leaning tricksy from the trees
To part his golden hairs, had blown
Into an hundred smiles that one.

III

'O rare, rare Earth ! ' he saith,
'I will praise thee presently ;
Not to-day ; I have no breath !
I have hunted squirrels three—
Two ran down in the furzy hollow,
Where I could not see nor follow ;
One sits at the top of the filbert-tree,
With a yellow nut, and a mock at me :
Presently it shall be done.
When I see which way those two
have run ;
When the mocking one at the filbert-top
Shall leap a-down, and beside me stop ;
Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,
Will I pause, having known thy worth,
To say all good of thee !'

IV

Next a lover, with a dream
'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,
And a frequent sigh unbidden,
And an idlesse all the day
Beside a wandering stream,
And a silence that is made
Of a word he dares not say,—
Shakes slow his pensive head.
'Earth, Earth ! ' saith he,
'If spirits, like thy roses, grew
On one stalk, and winds austere
Could but only blow them near,
To share each other's dew !
If, when summer rains agree
To beautify thy hills, I knew
Looking off them I might see
Some one very beauteous too,—
Then Earth,' saith he,
'I would praise . . . nay, nay—not thee.'

V

Will the pedant name her next ?
Crabbèd with a crabbèd text,
Sits he in his study nook,
With his elbow on a book,

And with stately crossed knees,
And a wrinkle deeply thrid
Through his lowering brow,
Caused by making proofs know
That Plato in 'Parmenides'
Meant the same Spinoza did,—
Or, that an hundred of the groping
Like himself, had made one Homer,
Homeros being a misnomer.
What hath he to do with praise
Of Earth, or aught? Whene'er the
sloping
Sunbeams through his window daze
His eyes off from the learned phrase,
Straightway he draws close the curtain.
May abstraction keep him dumb!
Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain
Derivatum est would come.

VI

Then a mourner moveth pale
In a silence full of wail,
Raising not his sunken head
Because he wandered last that way
With that one beneath the clay:
Weeping not, because that one,
The only one who would have said,
'Cease to weep, beloved!' has gone
Whence returneth comfort none.
The silence breaketh suddenly,—
'Earth, I praise thee!' crieth he,
'Thou hast a grave for also me.'

VII

Ha, a poet! know him by
The ecstasy-dilated eye,
Not uncharged with tears that ran
Upward from his heart of man;
By the cheek, from hour to hour,
Kindled bright or sunken wan
With a sense of lonely power;
By the brow uplifted higher
Than others, for more low declining;
By the lip which words of fire
Overboiling have burned white,
While they gave the nations light!
Aye, in every time and place
Ye may know the poet's face
By the shade, or shining.

VIII

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,
Spreading his impassioned hands.

'O God's Earth!' he saith, 'the sign
From the Father-soul to mine
Of all beauteous mysteries,
Of all perfect images,
Which, divine in His divine,
In my human only are
Very excellent and fair!—
Think not, Earth, that I would raise
Weary forehead in thy praise
(Weary, that I cannot go
Farther from thy region low)
If were struck no richer meanings
From thee than thyself. The leanings
Of the close trees o'er the brim
Of a sunshine-haunted stream,
Have a sound beneath their leaves,
Not of wind, not of wind,
Which the poet's voice achieves:
The faint mountains, heaped behind,
Have a falling on their tops,
Not of dew, not of dew,
Which the poet's fancy drops,
Viewless things his eyes can view;
Driftings of his dream do light
All the skies by day and night,
And the seas that deepest roll
Carry murmurings of his soul.
Earth, I praise thee! praise thou me!
God perfecteth His creation
With this recipient poet-passion,
And makes the beautiful to be.
I praise thee, O beloved sign,
From the God-soul unto mine!
Praise me, that I cast on thee
The cunning sweet interpretation,
The help and glory and dilation
Of mine immortality!'

IX

There was silence. None did dare
To use again the spoken air
Of that far-charming voice, until
A Christian resting on the hill,
With a thoughtful smile subdued
(Seeming learnt in solitude)
Which a weeper might have viewed
Without new tears, did softly say,
And looked up unto heaven alway
While he praised the Earth—

'O Earth,
I count the praises thou art worth,
By thy waves that move aloud,
By thy hills against the cloud,

By thy valleys warm and green,
By the copses' elms between,
By their birds which, like a sprite
Scattered by a strong delight
Into fragments musical,
Stir and sing in every bush ;
By thy silver founts that fall,
'As if to entice the stars at night
To thine heart ; by grass and rush,
And little weeds the children pull,
Mistook for flowers !

—Oh, beautiful
Art thou, Earth, albeit worse
Than in heaven is called good !
Good to us, that we may know
Meekly from thy good to go ;
While the holy, crying Blood,
Puts its music kind and low
'Twixt such ears as are not dull,
And thine ancient curse !

x

'Praised be the mosses soft
In thy forest pathways oft,
And the thorns, which make us think
Of the thornless river-brink,
Where the ransomed tread ;
Praised be thy sunny gleams,
And the storm, that worketh dreams
Of calm unfinished ;
Praised be thine active days,
And thy night-time's solemn need,
When in God's dear book we read
No right shall be therein ;
Praised be thy dwellings warm
By household faggot's cheerful blaze,
Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
Pauseth oft the merry din,
Save the babe's upon the arm,
Who croweth to the crackling wood ;
Yea,—and, better understood,
Praised be thy dwellings cold,
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,
Where the bodies of the saints,
Separate from earthly taints,
Lie asleep, in blessing bound,
Waiting for the trumpet's sound
To free them into blessing :—none
Weeping more beneath the sun,
Though dangerous words of human
love
Be graven very near, above.

xi

'Earth, we Christians praise thee thus,
Even for the change that comes,
With a grief, from thee to us !
For thy cradles and thy tombs,
For the pleasant corn and wine,
And summer-heat ; and also for
The frost upon the sycamore,
And hail upon the vine !'

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS

But see the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest.
MILTON'S Hymn on the Nativity.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One !
My flesh, my Lord !—what name ? I do
not know
A name that seemeth not too high or low,
Too far from me or heaven.
My Jesus, that is best ! that word being
given
By the majestic angel whose command
Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to stand
In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and head.
Sleep, sleep, my saving One !

ii

And art Thou come for saving, baby-
browed
And speechless Being—art Thou come
for saving ?
The palm that grows beside our door is
bowed
By treadings of the low wind from the
south,
A restless shadow through the chamber
waving :
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun ;
But Thou, with that close slumber on
Thy mouth,
Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.
Art come for saving. O my weary One !

iii

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out
the dreary
Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy
soul
High dreams on fire with God ;

High songs that make the pathways
where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs; and
visions new
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.
Suffer this mother's kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To glide the music and the glory through,
Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad up-
liftings
Of any seraph wing.
Thus noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep, my
dreaming One!

iv

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
Through my lips to mine heart,—to all
its shifting
Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness
In a great calm. I feel I could lie
down
As Moses did, and die¹,—and then live
most.
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,
That stand with your peculiar light un-
lost,
Each forehead with a high thought for
a crown,
Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am 'ware.
Ye throw
No shade against the wall! How motion-
less
Ye round me with your living statuary,
While through your whiteness, in and
outwardly,
Continual thoughts of God appear to go,
Like light's soul in itself. I bear, I bear,
To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,
Though their external shining testifies
To that beatitude within, which were
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.
I fall not on my sad clay face before ye,—
I look on His. I know
My spirit which dilateth with the woe
Of His mortality
May well contain your glory.
Yea, drop your lids more low.
Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me!
Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

¹ It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

v

We sat among the stalls at Bethlehem.
The dumb kine from their fodder turn-
ing them,
Softened their horned faces
To almost human gazes
Toward the newly Born:
The simple shepherds from the star-lit
brooks
Brought visionary looks,
As yet in their astonished hearing rung
The strange, sweet angel-tongue:
The magi of the East, in sandals worn,
Knelt reverent, sweeping round,
With long pale beards, their gifts upon the
ground,
The incense, myrrh, and gold
These baby hands were impotent to hold.
So, let all earthlies and celestials wait
Upon Thy royal state.
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

vi

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest
New meeknesses to hear such utterance
rest
On mortal lips,—‘I am not proud’—not
proud!
Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,
Albeit over Him my head is bowed
As others bow before Him, still mine
heart
Bows lower than their knees. O centuries
That roll, in vision, your futurities
My future grave athwart,—
Whose murmurs seem to reach me while
I keep
Watch o'er this sleep,—
Say of me as the Heavenly said—‘Thou
art
The blessedest of women! ’—blessedest,
Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,
Whose height misplaced may pierce me
like a shame,
When I sit meek in heaven!
For me, for me,
God knows that I am feeble like the
rest!—
I often wandered forth, more child than
maiden,
Among the midnight hills of Galilee
Whose summits looked heaven-laden,

Listening to silence as it seemed to be
God's voice, so soft yet strong—so faint to
press
Upon my heart as heaven did on the
height,
And waken up its shadows by a light,
And show its vileness by a holiness.
Then I knelt down most silent like the
night,
Too self-renounced for fears,
Raising my small face to the boundless
blue
Whose stars did mix and tremble in my
tears
God heard *them* falling after—with His
dew.

VII

So, seeing my corruption, can I see
This Incorruptible now born of me,
This fair new Innocence no sun did chance
To shine on (for even Adam was no child),
Created from my nature all defiled,
This mystery, from out mine ignorance,—
Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption,
more
Than others do, or *I* did heretofore!—
Can hands wherein such burden pure has
been,
Not open with thecry 'unclean, unclean,'
More oft than any else beneath the skies?
Ah King, ah Christ, ah son!
The kine, the shepherds, the abased wise,
Must all less lowly wait
Than I, upon thy state.—
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

VIII

Art Thou a King, then? Come, His
universe,
Come, crown me Him a King!
Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling
Their light where fell a curse,
And make a crowning for this kingly
brow!—
What is my word?—Each empyreal star
Sits in a sphere afar
In shining ambuscade.
The child-brow, crowned by none,
Keeps its unchildlike shade.
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One!

IX

Unchildlike shade!—No other babe doth
wear
An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou.—
No small babe-smiles, my watching heart
has seen,
To float like speech the speechless lips
between:
No dovelike cooing in the golden air,
No quick short joys of leaping babyhood.
Alas, our earthly good
In heaven thought evil, seemst too good for
Thee:
Yet, sleep, my weary One!

X

And then the drear sharp tongue of
prophecy,
With the dread sense of things which shall
be done,
Doth smite me inly, like a sword! a
sword!—
(*That 'smites the Shepherd.'*) Then, I
think aloud
The words 'despised,'—'rejected,'—
every word
Recoiling into darkness as I view
The DARLING on my knee.
Bright angels—move not!—lest ye stir
the cloud
Betwixt my soul and His futurity!
I must not die, with mother's work
to do,
And could not live—and see.

XI

It is enough to bear
This image still and fair—
This holier in sleep,
Than a saint at prayer;
This aspect of a child
Who never sinned or smiled;
This Presence in an infant's face,
This sadness most like love,
This love than love more deep,
This weakness like omnipotence
It is so strong to move.
Awful is this watching place.
Awful what I see from hence—
A king, without regalia,
A God, without the thunder,

A child, without the heart for play ;
 Aye, a Creator, rent asunder
 From His first glory and cast away
 On His own world, for me alone
 To hold in hands created, crying—SON !

XII

That tear fell not on Thee,
 Beloved, yet Thou stirrest in Thy slumber !
THOU, stirring not for glad sounds out of number
 Which through the vibratory palm-trees run
 From summer wind and bird,
 So quickly hast Thou heard
 A tear fall silently ?
 Wak'st Thou, O loving One ?

AN ISLAND

All goeth but Goddis will.—OLD POET.

I

My dream is of an island place
 Which distant seas keep lonely,
 A little island, on whose face
 The stars are watchers only.
 Those bright still stars ! they need not seem
 Brighter or stiller in my dream.

II

An island full of hills and dells,
 All rumpled and uneven
 With green recesses, sudden swells,
 And odorous valleys driven
 So deep and straight, that always there
 The wind is cradled to soft air.

III

Hills running up to heaven for light
 Through woods that half-way ran !
 As if the wild earth mimicked right
 The wilder heart of man :
 Only it shall be greener far
 And gladder than hearts ever are.

IV

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece
 Of Dante's paradise,
 Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
 In falling from the skies ;
 Bringing within it, all the roots
 Of heavenly trees and flowers and fruits.

V

For saving where the grey rocks strike
 Their javelins up the azure,
 Or where deep fissures, miser-like,
 Hoard up some fountain treasure
 (And e'en in them—stoop down and hear—
 Leaf sounds with water in your ear !),

VI

The place is all a wave with trees,
 Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,
 Acacias having drunk the lees
 Of the night-dew, faint-headed,
 And wan, grey olive-woods, which seem
 The fittest foliage for a dream.

VII

Trees, trees on all sides ! they combine
 Their plumy shades to throw ;
 Through whose clear fruit and blossom
 fine
 Whene'er the sun may go,
 The ground beneath he deeply stains,
 As passing through cathedral-panes.

VIII

But little needs this earth of ours
 That shining from above her,
 When many Pleiades of flowers
 (Not one lost) star her over,
 The rays of their unnumbered hues
 Being all refracted by the dews.

IX

Wide-petaled plants, that boldly drink
 The Amreeta of the sky ;
 Shut bells, that dull with rapture sink ;
 And lolling buds, half shy :
 I cannot count them, but between,
 Is room for grass and mosses green,

X

And brooks, that glass in different
 strengths
 All colours in disorder,
 Or gathering up their silver lengths
 Beside their winding border,
 Sleep, haunted through the slumber
 hidden,
 By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

xi

Nor think each archèd tree with each
Too closely interlaces,
To admit of vistas out of reach,
And broad moon-lighted places,
Upon whose sward the antlered deer
May view their double image clear.

xii

For all this island's creature-full
(Kept happy not by halves),
Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths pull,
Then low back at their calves
With tender lowings, to approve
The warm mouths milking them for love.

xiii

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
And harmless leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
And sheep unruly by shepherds ;
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers, mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

xiv

And birds that live there in a crowd,
Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks
proud,

Self-sphered in those grand tails;
All creatures glad and safe, I deem.
No guns nor springes in my dream !

xv

The island's edges are a-wing
With trees that overbranch
The sea with song-birds welcoming
The curlews to green change;
And doves from half-closed lids espy
The red and purple fish go by.

xvi

One dove is answering in trust
The water every minute,
Thinking so soft a murmur must
Have her mate's cooing in it :
So softly doth earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

xvii

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder
To meet the bounding waves;
Beside them straightway I repair,
To live within the caves;

And near me two or three may dwell
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

xviii

Long winding caverns, glittering far
Into a crystal distance !
Through clefts of which, shall many a star
Shine clear without resistance,
And carry down its rays the smell
Of flowers above invisible.

xix

I said that two or three might choose
Their dwelling near mine own :
Those who would change man's voice
and use,

For Nature's way and tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

xx

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,
Shall play a faithful part :
Her beautiful shall ne'er address
The monstrous at our heart ;
Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such.

xxi

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
As doth the moon of ocean,
Though gently as the moon she give
Our thoughts a light and motion :
More like a harp of many lays,
Moving its master while he plays.

xxii

No sod in all that island doth
Yawn open for the dead ;
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath ;
No earth, a mourner's tread :
We cannot say by stream or shade,
'I suffered here,—was here betrayed.'

xxiii

Our only 'farewell' we shall laugh
To shifting cloud or hour,
And use our only epitaph
To some bud turned a flower;
Our only tears shall serve to prove
Excess in pleasure or in love.

xxiv

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
From fairest island birds,
Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,
Born singing ! then our words
Unconsciously shall take the dyes
Of those prodigious fantasies.

xxv

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
Our smile-tuned lips shall reach ;
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth
Shall glide into our speech.
(What music, certes, can you find
As soft as voices which are kind ?)

xxvi

And often, by the joy without
And in us, overcome,
We, through our musing, shall let float
Such poems,—sitting dumb,—
As Pindar might have writ, if he
Had tended sheep in Arcady ;

xxvii

Or Aeschylus—the pleasant fields
He died in, longer knowing ;
Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
Been lost in Meles flowing ;
Or Poet Plato, had the undim
Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

xxviii

Choose me the cave most worthy choice
To make a place for prayer,
And I will choose a praying voice
To pour our spirits there.
How silvery the echoes run—
Thy will be done,—Thy will be done.

xxix

Gently yet strangely uttered words !—
They lift me from my dream :
The island sadeth with its swards
That did no more than seem :
The streams are dry, no sun could find—
The fruits are fallen, without wind.

xxx

So oft the doing of God's will
Our foolish wills undoeth !
And yet what idle dream breaks ill
Which morning-light subdueth ?
And who would murmur and misdoubt
When God's great sunrise finds him out ?

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING

**Ηδη νοερός
Περάσαι ταπερόν.—SYNEBIUS.*

I

I DWELL amid the city ever.
The great humanity which beats
Its life along the stony streets,
Like a strong and unsunned river
In a self-made course,
I sit and hearken while it rolls.
Very sad and very hoarse,
Certes, is the flow of souls :
Infinitest tendencies
By the finite prest and pent,
In the finite, turbulent,
How we tremble in surprise,
When sometimes, with an awful sound,
God's great plummet strikes the ground !

II

The champ of the steeds on the silver
bit,
As they whirl the rich man's carriage by;
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—
But it goes too fast for charity ;
The trail on the street of the poor man's
broom,
That the lady who walks to her palace-
home,
On her silken skirt may catch no dust ;
The tread of the business-men who must
Count their per-cent by the paces they
take ;
The cry of the babe unheard of its mother
Though it lie on her breast, while she
thinks of the other
Laid yesterday where it will not wake ;
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses
and pinks,
Held out in the smoke, like stars by day ;
The gin-door's oath that hollowly chinks
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon hate ;
The cabman's cry to get out of the way
The dustman's call down the area-grate,
The young maid's jest, and the old wife's
scold,
The haggling talk of the boys at a stall,
The fight in the street which is backed
for gold,

The plea of the lawyers in Westminster Hall;
 The drop on the stones of the blind man's staff
 As he trades in his own grief's sacredness;
 The brothel shriek, and the Newgate laugh,
 The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's grinding—
 The grinder's face being nevertheless Dry and vacant of even woe,
 While the children's hearts are leaping so At the merry music's winding;
 The black-plumed funeral's creeping train, Long and slow (and yet they will go As fast as Life, though it hurry and strain), Creeping the populous houses through, And nodding their plumes at either side,— At many a house where an infant, new To the sunshiny world, has just struggled and cried,—
 At many a house, where sitteth a bride Trying to-morrow's coronals With a scarlet blush to-day : Slowly creep the funerals, As none should hear the noise and say, 'The living, the living, must go away To multiply the dead.'
 Hark! an upward shout is sent! In grave strong joy from tower to steeple The bells ring out—
 The trumpets sound, the people shout, The young queen goes to her Parliament. She turneth round her large blue eyes, More bright with childish memories Than royal hopes, upon the people: On either side she bows her head Lowly, with a queenly grace, And smile most trusting-innocent, As if she smiled upon her mother; The thousands press before each other To bless her to her face;

And booms the deep majestic voice Through trump and drum,—' May the queen rejoice In the people's liberties!'

III

I dwell amid the city, And hear the flow of souls in act and speech, For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly;

I hear the confluence and sum of each, And that is melancholy!— Thy voice is a complaint, O crowned city, The blue sky covering thee like God's great pity.

IV

O blue sky! it mindeth me Of places where I used to see Its vast unbroken circle thrown From the far pale-peaked hill Out to the last verge of ocean, As by God's arm it were done Then for the first time, with the emotion Of that first impulse on it still. Oh, we spirits fly at will, Faster than the winged steed Whereof in old book we read, With the sunlight foaming back From his flanks to a misty wrack, And his nostril reddening proud As he breasteth the steep thundercloud,— Smoother than Sabrina's chair Gliding up from wave to air, While she smileth debonair Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly, Like her own mooned waters nightly, Through her dripping hair.

V

Very fast and smooth we fly, Spirits, though the flesh be by. All looks feed not from the eye, Nor all hearings from the ear; We can hearken and espy Without either; we can journey Bold and gay as knight to tourney, And though we wear no visor down To dark our countenance, the foe Shall never chafe us as we go.

VI

I am gone from peopled town! It passeth its street-thunder round My body which yet hears no sound: For now another sound, another Vision, my soul's senses have— O'er a hundred valleys deep, Where the hills' green shadows sleep Scarce known (because the valley-trees Cross those upland images), O'er a hundred hills, each other Watching to the western wave,

I have travelled,—I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

VII

I have found a grassy niche
Hollowed in a seaside hill,
As if the ocean-grandeur which
Is aspectable from the place
Had struck the hill as with a mace
Sudden and cleaving. You might fill
That little nook with the little cloud
Which sometimes lieth by the moon
To beautify a night of June.
A cavelike nook, which, opening all
To the wide sea, is disallowed
From its own earth's sweet pastoral;
Cavelike, but roofless overhead,
And made of verdant banks instead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread,
Instead of spar and stalactite,
Cowslips and daisies, gold and white:
Such pretty flowers on such greenward,
You think the sea they look toward
Doth serve them for another sky
As warm and blue as that on high.

VIII

And in this hollow is a seat,
And when you shall have crept to it,
Slipping down the banks too steep
To be o'erbrowsèd by the sheep,
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold
The line where earth and ocean meet.
You sit too much above to view
The solemn confluence of the two:
You can hear them as they greet;
You can hear that evermore
Distance-softened noise, more old
Than Nereid's singing,—the tide spent
Joining soft issues with the shore
In harmony of discontent,—
And when you hearken to the grave
Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in earth's communion,
Albeit you witness not the union.

IX

Except that sound, the place is full
Of silences, which when you call
By any word, it thrills you so
That presently you let them grow

To meditation's fullest length
Across your soul with a soul's strength
And as they touch your soul, they borrow
Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,
That deathly odour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness alway.

X

Alway! alway! must this be?
Rapid Soul from city gone,
Dost thou carry inwardly
What doth make the city's moan?
Must this deep sigh of thine own
Haunt thee with humanity?
Green-visioned banks that are too steep
To be o'erbrowsèd by the sheep,
May all sad thoughts adown you creep
Without a shepherd!—Mighty sea,
Can we dwarf thy magnitude,
And fit it to our straitest mood!—
O fair, fair Nature! are we thus
Impotent and querulous
Among thy workings glorious,
Wealth and sanctities,—that still
Leave us vacant and defiled,
And wailing like a soft-kissed child,
Kissed soit against his will?

XI

God, God!
With a child's voice I cry,
Weak, sad, confidingly—
God, God!

Thou knowest, eyelids, raised not
always up
Unto Thy love (as none of ours are), droop
As ours, o'er many a tear!
Thou knowest, though Thy universe is
broad,
Two little tears suffice to cover all:
Thou knowest, thou, who art so prodigal
Of beauty, we are oft but stricken deer
Expiring in the woods—that care for none
Of those delightsome flowers they die
upon.

XII

O blissful Mouth which breathed the
mournful breath
We name our souls, self-spoilt!—by
that strong passion
Which paled Thee once with sighs,—by
that strong death

Which made Thee once unbreathing—
from the wrack
Themselves have called around them,
call them back,
Back to Thee in continuous aspiration !
For here, O Lord,
For here they travel vainly,—vainly pass
From city pavement to untrodden sward,
Where the lark finds her deep nest in
the grass
Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea,
very vain
The greatest speed of all these souls of
men,
Unless they travel upward to the throne,
Where sittest Thou, the satisfying ONE,
With help for sins and holy perfectings
For all requirements—while the arch-
angel, raising
Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
Forgetsthe rushand rapture of his wings.

TO BETTINE
THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE

I have the second sight, Goethe!
Letters of a Child.

I

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second sight—
Upturning worship and delight
With such a loving duty
To his grand face, as women will,
The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still ?

II

Before his shrine to doom thee,
Using the same child's smile
That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile
For the first time, won from thee,
Ere star and flower grew dim and dead,
Save at his feet and o'er his head ?

III

Digging thine heart and throwing
Away its childhood's gold,
That so its woman-depth might hold
His spirit's overflowing ?

For surging souls, no worlds can bound,
Their channel in the heart have found.

IV

O child, to change appointed,
Thou hadst not second sight !
What eyes the future view aright,
Unless by tears anointed ?
Yea, only tears themselves can show
The burning ones that have to flow.

V

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second sight !
The star is very high and bright,
And none can see it moving.
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

VI

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope came back to thee
Without a leaf. Art laying
Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom secretly ?

VII

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,
I have the second sight !
The stone upon his grave is white,
The funeral stone between ye ;
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood.

VIII

Where's childhood? where is Goethe?
The tears are in thine eyes.
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganize
Thy maidenhood of beauty
In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles and sublime in youth.

IX

The poet's arms have wound thee,
He breathes upon thy brow,
He lifts thee upward in the glow
Of his great genius round thee,—
The childlike poet undefiled
Preserving evermore THE CHILD.

MAN AND NATURE

A sad man on a summer day
Did look upon the earth and say—

'Purple cloud, the hill-top binding,
Folded hills, the valleys wind in,
Valleys, with fresh streams among you,
Streams, with bosky trees along you,
Trees, with many birds and blossoms,
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms,
Blossoms, dropping dews that wreath
you

To your fellow flowers beneath you,
Flowers, that constellate on earth,
Earth, that shakest to the mirth
Of the merry Titan ocean,
All his shining hair in motion!
Why am I thus the only one
Who can be dark beneath the sun?'

But when the summer day was past,
He looked to heaven and smiled at last,
Self-answered so—

'Because, O cloud,
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
Heavily on mountain top,—
Hills, that almost seem to drop,
Stricken with a misty death
To the valleys underneath,—
Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—
Waters, streaked with branches hor-
rent,—
Branchless trees, that shake your head
Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
Where the common flowers are found,—
Flowers, with foreheads to the ground,—
Ground, that shriekest while the sea
With his iron smiteth thee—
I am, besides, the only one
Who can be bright *without* the sun.'

A SEASIDE WALK

I

We walked beside the sea
After a day which perished silently
Of its own glory—like the princess weird
Who, combating the Genius, scorched
and scared,

Uttered with burning breath, 'Ho!
victory!'
And sank adown a heap of ashes pale.
So runs the Arab tale.

II

The sky above us showed
A universal and unmoving cloud,
On which the cliffs permitted us to see
Only the outline of their majesty,
As master-minds when gazed at by the
crowd!
And, shining with a gloom, the water grey
Swang in its moon-taught way.

III

Nor moon nor stars were out:
They did not dare to tread so soon about,
Though trembling, in the footsteps of
the sun;
The light was neither night's nor day's,
but one
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt,
And Silence's impassioned breathings
round
Seemed wandering into sound.

IV

O solemn-beating heart
Of nature! I have knowledge that thou art
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot
sever—
And, what time they are slackened by
him ever,
So to attest his own supernal part,
Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong
The slackened cord along.

V

For though we never spoke
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,
Dark wave and stone unconsciously were
fused
Into the plaintive speaking that we used
Of absent friends and memories unfor-
sook;
And, had we seen each other's face, we
had
Seen haply, each was sad.

THE SEA-MEW

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO
M. E. H.

I

How joyously the young sea-mew
Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
Whereon our little bark had thrown
A little shade, the only one,—
But shadows ever man pursue.

II

Familiar with the waves and free
As if their own white foam were he,
His heart upon the heart of ocean
Lay learning all its mystic motion,
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

III

And such a brightness in his eye,
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.

IV

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
His white wing from the blue waves
under,
And bound it, while his fearless eyes
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
As deeming us some ocean wonder!

V

We bore our ocean bird unto
A grassy place, where he might view
The flowers that curtsy to the bees,
The waving of the tall green trees,
The falling of the silver dew.

VI

But flowers of earth were pale to him
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim;
And when earth's dew around him lay
He thought of ocean's wingèd spray,
And his eye waxed sad and dim.

VII

The green trees round him only made
A prison with their darksome shade;
And drooped his wing, and mourned he
For his own boundless glittering sea—
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

VIII

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move
And teach him what was human love—
He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

IX

He lay down in his grief to die
(First looking to the sea-like sky
That hath no waves!), because, alas!
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony.

FELICIA HEMANS

TO L. E. L.¹, REFERRING TO HER
MONODY ON THE POETESS²

I

Thou bay-crowned living One that o'er
the bay-crowned Dead art bowing,
And o'er the shadeless moveless brow
the vital shadow throwing,
And o'er the sightless songless lips the
wail and music wedding,
And dropping o'er the tranquil eys,
the tears not of their shedding!—

II

Take music from the silent Dead, whose
meaning is completer,
Reserve thy tears for living brows,
where all such tears are meeter,
And leave the violets in the grass to
brighten where thou treadest!
No flowers for her! no need of flowers—
albeit 'bring flowers,' thou saidst.

III

Yes, flowers, to crown the 'cup and
lute!' since both may come to
breaking;
Or flowers, to greet the 'bride!' the
heart's own beating works its
aching;
Or flowers, to soothe the 'captive's'
sight, from earth's free bosom
gathered,
Reminding of his earthly hope, then
withering as it withered.

¹ Letitia Elizabeth Landon, 1802-32.
² Mrs. Hemans died 1835.

IV

But bring not near the solemn corse,
a type of human seeming,
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the
dust undreaming;
And while the calm perpetual stars shall
look upon it solely,
Her spherèd soul shall look on them,
with eyes more bright and holy.

V

Nor mourn, O living One, because her
part in life was mourning.
Would she have lost the poet's fire for
anguish of the burning?—
The minstrel harp, for the strained string?
the tripod, for the afflited
Woe! or the vision, for those tears in
which it shone dilated?

VI

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's
cold hand her brow was wreathing,
But never wronged that mystic breath
which breathed in all her breathing,
Which drew from rocky earth and man,
abstractions high and moving,
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if
not the loving.

VII

Such visionings have paled in sight;
the Saviour she descrieth,
And little recks who wreathed the brow
which on His bosom lieth:
The whiteness of His innocence o'er all
her garments, flowing,
There, learneth she the sweet' new song,
she will not mourn in knowing.

VIII

Be happy, crowned and living One!
and, as thy dust decayeth,
May thine own England say for thee,
what now for Her it sayeth—
‘Albeit softly in our ears her silver song
was ringing,
The footfall of her parting soul is softer
than her singing!’

L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION

Do you think of me as I think of you?
*From her poem written during the
voyage to the Cape.*

I

‘Do you think of me as I think of you,
My friends, my friends?’—She said it
from the sea,
The English minstrel in her minstrelsy,
While, under brighter skies than erst
she knew,
Her heart grew dark, and groped there,
as the blind,
To reach across the waves friends left
behind—
‘Do you think of me as I think of you?’

II

It seemed not much to ask—as *I of you?*
We all do ask the same. No eyelids cover
Within the meekest eyes, that question
over.
And little in the world the Loving do
But sit (among the rocks!) and listen for
The echo of their own love evermore—
‘Do you think of me as I think of you?’

III

Love-learnèd she had sung of love and
love,—
And like a child that, sleeping with
dropt head
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
Whatever household noises round him
move,
Hears in his dream some elfin turbu-
lence,—
Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

IV

And when the glory of her dream with-
drew,
When knightly gestes and courtly
pageantries
Were broken in her visionary eyes
By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand
She asked not, ‘Do you praise me, O
my land?’—
But, ‘Think ye of me, friends, as I of
you?’

V

Hers was the hand that played for many
a year
Love's silver phrase for England,—
smooth and well.
Would God, her heart's more inward
oracle
In that lone moment might confirm her
dear!
For when her questioned friends in agony
Made passionate response, 'We think of
thee,'
Her place was in the dust, too deep to
hear.

VI

Could she not wait to catch their answer-
ing breath?
Was she content, content, with ocean's
sound,
Which dashed its mocking infinite around
One thirsty for a little love!—beneath
Those stars content, where last her song
had gone,—
They mute and cold in radiant life,—as
soon
Their singer was to be, in darksome
death'!

VII

Bring your vain answers—cry, 'We
think of thee!'
How think ye of her? warm in long ago
Delights!—or crowned with budding
bays! Not so.
None smile and none are crowned where
lieth she,
With all her visions unfulfilled save one,
Her childhood's—of the palm-trees in
the sun—
And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

VIII

'Do ye think of me as I think of you?'—
O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood
Of all the world! what are we, that we
should
For covenants of long affection sue?
Why press so near each other when the
touch
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet
too much,
Is this 'Think of me as I think of you.'

¹ Her lyric on the polar star came home with her latest papers.

IX

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
A sigh to mortal issues,—verily
Above the unshaken stars that see us
die,
A vocal pathos rolls; and He who drew
All life from dust, and for all, tasted
death,
By death and life and love, appealing,
saith,
Do you think of Me as I think of you?

CROWNED AND WEDDED

I

WHEN last before her people's face her
own fair face she bent,
Within the meek projection of that
shade she was content
To erase the child-smile from her lips,
which seemed as if it might
Be still kept holy from the world to
childhood still in sight—
To erase it with a solemn vow,—a
princely vow—to rule;
A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God
the pitiful;
A very godlike vow—to rule in right and
righteousness,
And with the law and for the land!—so
God the vower bless!

II

The minster was alight that day, but
not with fire, I ween,
And long-drawn glitterings swept adown
that mighty aisled scene;
The priests stood stoled in their pomp,
the sworded chiefs in theirs,
And so, the collared knights, and so, the
civil ministers,
And so, the waiting lords and dames—
and little pages best
At holding trains—and legates so, from
countries east and west.
So, alien princes, native peers, and high-
born ladies bright,
Along whose brows the Queen's, new
crowned, flashed coronets to light.

And so, the people at the gates, with
priestly hands on high,
Which bring the first anointing to all
legal majesty.
And so the DEAD—who lie in rows be-
neath the minster floor,
There, verily an awful state maintaining
evermore;
The statesman whose clean palm will
kiss no bribe, whate'er it be,
The courtier who, for no fair queen, will
rise up to his knee;
The court-dame who, for no court-tire,
will leave her shroud behind;
The laureate who no courtlier rime than
'dust to dust' can find;
The kings and queens who having made
that vow and worn that crown,
Descended unto lower thrones and
darker, deep adown!
Dieu et mon droit—what is 't to them?—
what meaning can it have?—
The King of kings, the right of death—
God's judgement and the grave.
And when betwixt the quick and
dead, the young fair queen had
vowed,
The living shouted 'May she live!
Victoria, live!' aloud.
And as the loyal shouts went up, true
spirits prayed between,
'The blessings happy monarchs have,
be thine, O crowned queen!'

III

But now before her people's face she
bendeth her's anew,
And calls them, while she vows, to be
her witness thereunto.
She vowed to rule, and, in that oath,
her childhood put away:
She doth maintain her womanhood, in
vowing love to-day.
O lovely lady!—let her vow!—such
lips become such vows,
And fairer goeth bridal wreath than
crown with vernal brows.
O lovely lady!—let her vow!—yea, let
her vow to love!—
And though she be no less a queen—
with purples hung above,

The pageant of a court behind, the royal
kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks turned
maidenly to ground,
Yet may the bride-veil hide from her
a little of that state,
While loving hopes, for retinues, about
her sweetness wait
She vows to love who vowed to rule—
(the chosen at her side)
Let none say, 'God preserve the queen!'—
—but rather, 'Bless the bride!'—
None blow the trump, none bend the
knee, none violate the dream
Wherein no monarch but a wife, she to
herself may seem.
Or if ye say, 'Preserve the queen!'—
oh, breathe it inward low—
She is a woman, and beloved!—and 'tis
enough but so.
Count it enough, thou noble prince, who
tak'st her by the hand,
And claimest for thy lady-love, our lady
of the land!
And since, Prince Albert, men have called
thy spirit high and rare,
And true to truth and brave for truth, as
some at Augsburg were,—
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts,
and by thy poet-mind
Which not by glory and degree takes
measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear for
sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood
to be the royal thing.

IV

And now, upon our queen's last vow,
what blessings shall we pray?
None, straitened to a shallow crown,
will suit our lips to-day.
Behold, they must be free as love—they
must be broad as free,
Even to the borders of heaven's light
and earth's humanity.
Long live she!—send up loyal shouts—
and true hearts pray between,—
'The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be
thine, O crowned queen!'

CROWNED AND BURIED

I

NAPOLEON!—years ago, and that great word
 Compact of human breath in hate and dread
 And exultation, skied us overhead—
 An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword
 Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
 In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

II

Napoleon! nations, while they cursed that name,
 Shook at their own curse; and while others bore
 Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
 Brass-fronted legions justified its fame;
 And dying men, on trampled battle-sods,
 Near their last silence, uttered it for God's.

III

Napoleon! sages, with high foreheads drooped,
 Did use it for a problem: children small
 Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call:
 Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
 By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows with a moan
 Spake it, when questioned why they sat alone.

IV

That name consumed the silence of the snows
 In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid;
 The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
 And over-rushed her mountainous repose
 In search of eyries; and the Egyptian river
 Mingled the same word with its grand 'For ever.'

V

That name was shouted near the pyramidal Nilotictombs, whose mummied habitants, Packed to humanity's significance, Motioned it back with stillness! shouts as idle As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

VI

The world's face changed to hear it Kingly men Came down in chidden babes' bewilderment From autocratic places, each content With sprinkled ashes for anointing.— Then The people laughed, or wondered for the nonce, To see one throne a composite of thrones.

VII

Napoleon! even the torrid vastitude Of India felt in throbings of the air That name which scattered by disastrous blare All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood. Napoleon—from the Russias, west to Spain! And Austria trembled—till ye heard her chain.

VIII

And Germany was 'ware; and Italy Oblivious of old fames—her laurcl-locked, High-ghosted Caesars passing uninvoked— Did crumble her own ruins with her knce, To serve a newer.—Aye! but Frenchmen cast A future from them nobler than her past.

IX

For, verily, though France augustly rose With that raised NAME, and did assume by such The purple of the world, none gave so much As she, in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—

Whose hands, toward freedom stretched,
dropped paralysed
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

x

King's crown to a great man's head. And
though along
Her Paris' streets, did float on frequent
streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled
dreams
Dreamt right by genius in a world gone
wrong,—
No dream, of all so won, was fair to see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

xi

Napoleon! 'twas a high name listed high!
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
Our compassing and covering atmosphere
And open a clear sight beyond the sky
Of supreme empire; this of earth's was
done—

And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

xii

The kings crept out—the peoples sate at
home,
And finding the long-invocated peace
(A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine) too scant to cover doom
Such as they suffered,—cursed the corn
that grew

Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

xiii

A deep gloom centred in the deep repose;
The nations stood up mute to count their
dead.
And he who owned the NAME which
vibrated
Through silence,—trusting to his noblest
foes

When earth was all too grey for chivalry,
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea.

xiv

O wild St. Helen! very still she kept him,
With a green willow for all pyramid,—
Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
A little more, if pilgrims overwept him,
Disparting the little boughs to see the clay
Which seemed to cover his for judgement-
day.

xv

Nay, not so long!—France kept her old
affection
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse,
Until, dilated by such love's remorse
To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried, 'Behold, thou England! I
would have
The dead whereof thou wottest, from
that grave.'

xvi

And England answered in the courtesy
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may
befit,—
'Take back thy dead! and when thou
buriest it,
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee
and me.'
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courteous
claim—
But ask a little room too... for thy shame!

xvii

Because it was not well, it was not well,
Nor tuneful with thy losty-chanted part
Among the Oceanides,—that Heart
To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.
I would, my noble England! men might
seek
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not
cheek!

xviii

I would that hostile fleets had scarred
Torbay,
Instead of the lone ship which waited
moored
Until thy princely purpose was assured,
Then left a shadow, not to pass away—
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-
morrow's sun!
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what
was done!

xix

But since it was done,—in sepulchral dust
We fain would pay back something of
our debt
To France, if not to honour, and forgot
How through much fear we falsified the
trust
Of a fallen foe and exile.—We return
Orestes to Electra... in his urn.

¹ Written at Torquay.

xx

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large earth,
albeit

To-day a four-years child might carry it
Sleek-browed and smiling, ‘Let the
burden ‘bide’!

Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

xxi

And run back in the chariot-marks of
time,
When all the people shall come forth to
meet

The passive victor, death-still in the street
He rode through ‘mid the shouting and
bell-chime

And martial music, under eagles which
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz.

xxii

Napoleon! he hath come again—borne
home

Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,

Majestically moaning. Give him room!—
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome
solemn

And grave-deep, ‘neath the cannon-
moulded column!

xxiii

There, weapon spent and warrior spent
may rest

From roar of fields,—provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts!—and this he may. For, dis-
possessed

Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do
harm.

xxiv

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered
name

Shakes the old casements of the world!
and we

Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his
claim

¹ It was the first intention to bury him under
the column.

To a French grave,—another kingdom
won,
The last, of few spans—by Napoleon.

xxv

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—
sooth;
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
Meridian light. He was a despot—
granted!

But the *airros* of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i’ the people’s French; he
magnified
The image of the freedom he denied.

xxvi

And if they asked for rights, he made reply
‘Ye have my glory!’—and so, drawing
round them

His ample purple, glorified and bound
them

In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true! but
none

Were ruled like slaves: each felt Napo-
leon.

xxvii

I do not praise this man: the man was
flawed

For Adam—much more, Christ!—his
knee unbent,

His hand unclean, his aspiration pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but
since he had

The genius to be loved, why, let him
have

The justice to be honoured in his grave.

xxviii

I think this nation’s tears thus poured
together

Better than shouts. I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope
bless all.

I think this grave stronger than thrones.
But whether

The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be worthier, I discern not. Angels may.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG

I

LOVING friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith has run
Through thy lower nature¹,
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow creature!

II

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast,
Shining out from all the rest
Of thy body purely.

III

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
Alchemize its dullness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold,
With a burnished fullness.

IV

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curveting,
Leaping like a charger.

V

Leap ! thy broad tail waves a light,
Leap ! thy slender feet are bright,
Canopied in fringes ;
Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
Down their golden inches.

VI

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is 't to such an end
That I praise thy rareness !
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears,
And this glossy fairness.

¹ This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Caesars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown. [1844.]

VII

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
Day and night unweary,—
Watched within a curtained room,
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
Round the sick and dreary.

VIII

Roses, gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
Beam and breeze resigning ;
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone
Love remains for shining.

IX

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
Sunny moor or meadow ;
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

X

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hieing ;
This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
Or a louder sighing.

XI

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears.
Or a sigh came double,—
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble.

XII

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

XIII

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blyther choice
Than such chamber-keeping,
'Come out !' praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

xiv

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favour :
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
Therefore, and for ever.

xv

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often, man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
Leaning from my Human.

xvi

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugar'd milk make fat thee !
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore, to pat thee !

xvii

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping !
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,
No man break thy purple cup,
Set for drinking deep in.

xviii

Whiskered cats arointed flee,
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
Cologne distillations ;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
Turn to daily rations !

xix

Mock I thee, in wishing weal ?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
Thou art made so straitly,
Blessing needs must straiten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
Thou who lovest *grately*.

xx

Yet be blessed to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature ;
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow creature !

THE DESERTED GARDEN

I MIND me in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite;
And whereso'er had struck the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature laid,
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
For no one entered there but I ;
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !
I crept beneath the boughs, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
Bedropt with roses waxen-white
Well satisfied with dew and light
And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,
When all the garden flowers were trim,
The grave old gardener prided him
On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the voice
That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and twined,
Half-smiling as it came to mind
That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud !—

Nor thought that gardener (full of scorns
For men unlearned and simple phrase),
A child would bring it all its praise
By creeping through the thorns !

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment,
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see
The trace of human step departed:
Because the garden was deserted,
The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sward :
We draw the moral afterward—
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
In silence at the rose-tree wall ;
A thrush made gladness musical
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms white ;
How should I know but roses might
Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-home complete,
I brought clear water from the spring
Praised in its own low murmuring,—
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew
(Without the melancholy tale)
To 'gentle hermit of the dale,'
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories ; till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,—
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees,—nor feel that childish heart
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,
My footstep from the moss which drew
Its fairy circle round : anew
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are ;
No more for me !—myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought.
I laughed unto myself and thought
‘The time will pass away.’

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that, whene'er was past away
The childish time, some happier play
My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
Did I look up to pray !

The time is past ;—and now that grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for Heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
That happy child again.

MY DOVES

O Weisheit ! Du red'st wie eine Taube!
GOETHE.

My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree,
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
Or motion from the sea ;
For, ever there, the sea-winds go
With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
The tropic stars looked down,
And there my little doves did sit,
With feathers softly brown,
And glittering eyes that showed their
right
To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
Of murmuring waves beyond,
And green leaves round, to interpose
Their choral voices fond,
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves,
Theirs hath the calmest fashion,
Their living voice the liklest moves
To lifeless intonation,
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds, and such insenate things.

My little doves were ta'en away
From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling grey,
And tempest-clouded airs:
My little doves,—who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and blue!

And now, within the city prison,
In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
For sounds of past content—
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion,
The triumph of the mart,
The gold and silver as they clash on
Man's cold metallic heart—
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,—
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
What human musings mean,
(Their eyes, with such a plaintive shine,
Are fastened upwardly to mine !)

Soft falls their chant as on the nest
Beneath the sunny zone;
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not a weary grown,
And 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills
With pastoral memories:
All echoings from out the hills,
All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
My little doves! to move
Along the city-ways with heart
Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—
More hard, in Babel's street!
But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls—let us begin,
Who wear immortal wings within!

To me, fair memories belong
Of scenes that used to bless,
For no regret, but present song,
And lasting thankfulness,
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields!
I will have humble thoughts instead
Of silent, dewy fields!
My spirit and my God shall be
My seaward hill, my boundless sea.

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN

I
NINE years old! The first of any
Seem the happiest years that come:
Yet when I was nine, I said
No such word!—I thought instead
That the Greeks had used as many
In besieging Ilium.

II
Nine green years had scarcely brought me
To my childhood's haunted spring:
I had life, like flowers and bees,
In betwixt the country trees,
And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth every thing.

III
If the rain fell, there was sorrow,
Little head leant on the pane,
Little finger drawing down it
The long trailing drops upon it,
And the 'Rain, rain, come to-morrow,'
Said for charm against the rain.

IV

Such a charm was right Canidian,
Though you meet it with a jeer!
If I said it long enough,
Then the rain hummed dimly off,
And the thrush with his pure Lydian
Was left only to the ear;

V

And the sun and I together
Went a-rushing out of doors!
We, our tender spirits, drew
Over hill and dale in view,
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,
In the footsteps of the showers.

VI

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
Through the grasses wet and fair,
Straight I sought my garden-ground
With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear-tree oversweeping
A side-shadow of green air.

VII

In the garden lay supinely
A huge giant wrought of spade!
Arms and legs were stretched at length
In a passive giant strength,—
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,
Round them laid and interlaid.

VIII

Call him Hector, son of Priam!
Such his title and degree:
With my rake I smoothed his brow,
Both his cheeks I weeded through,
But a rimer such as I am
Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
Staring, winking at the skies;
Nose of gillyflowers and box;
Scented grasses put for locks,
Which a little breeze, at pleasure,
Set a-waving round his eyes.

X

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
With a glitter toward the light;
Purple violets for the mouth,
Breathing perfumes west and south;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
Holden ready for the fight.

XI

And a breastplate made of daisies,
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf;
Periwinkles interlaced
Drawn for belt about the waist;
While the brown bees, humming praises,
Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII

And who knows (I sometimes wondered)
If the disembodied soul
Of old Hector, once of Troy,
Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered,
Rolling up the thunder-roll?

XIII

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
In this body rude and rife
Just to enter, and take rest
'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
His heroic heart to life!

XIV

Who could know? I sometimes started
At a motion or a sound!
Did his mouth speak—naming Troy,
With an *borororoi*?
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
Make the daisies tremble round?

XV

It was hard to answer, often:
But the birds sang in the tree—
But the little birds sang bold
In the pear-tree green and old,
And my terror seemed to soften
Through the courage of their glee.

XVI

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
And white blossoms, sleek with rain!
Oh, my garden, rich with pansies!
Oh, my childhood's bright romances!
All revive, like Hector's body,
And I see them stir again!

XVII

And despite life's changes—chances,
And despite the deathbell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming!
Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!
As the birds sang in the branches,
Sing God's patience through my soul!

XVIII

That no dreamer, no neglecter
Of the present's work unsped,
I may wake up and be doing,
Life's heroic ends pursuing,
Though my past is dead as Hector,
And though Hector is twice dead.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING

I

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,
Tired of all the playing!
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That, you dropped away in!
On your curls' full roundness, stand
Golden lights serenely;
One cheek, pushed out by the hand,
Folds the dimple inly.
Little head and little foot
Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lids half shut,
Slants the shining azure.—
Open-soul in noonday sun,
So, you lie and slumber!
Nothing evil having done,
Nothing can encumber.

II

I, who cannot sleep as well,
Shall I sigh to view you?
Or sigh further to foretell
All that may undo you?
Nay, keep smiling, little child,
Ere the sorrow neareth:
I will smile too! patience mild
Pleasure's token wear eth.
Nay, keep sleeping before loss:
I shall sleep though losing!
As by cradle, so by cross,
Sure is the reposing.

III

And God knows who sees us twain,
Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
As you seem of pleasure.
Very soon too, by His grace
Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
Shall I sleep as soundly.

Differing in this, that you
Clasp your playthings, sleeping,
While my hand shall drop the few
Given to my keeping:
Differing in this, that I
Sleeping shall be colder,
And in waking presently,
Brighter to beholder:
Differing in this beside
(Sleeper, have you heard me?
Do you move, and open wide
Eyes of wonder toward me?)—
That while you, I thus recall
From your sleep, I solely,
Me from mine an angel shall,
With reveillie holy.

SOUNDS

**Ηκουσας η ουκ ηκουσας;*
AESCHYLUS.

I

HEARKEN, hearken!
The rapid river carrieth
Many noises underneath
The hoary ocean:
Teaching his solemnity
Sounds of inland life and glee,
Learned beside the waving tree,
When the winds in summer prank
Toss the shades from bank to bank,
And the quick rains, in emotion
Which rather gladdens earth than grieves,
Count and visibly rehearse
The pulses of the universe
Upon the summer leaves—
Learned among the lilies straight,
When they bow them to the weight
Of many bees whose hidden hum
Seemeth from themselves to come—
Learned among the grasses green,
Where the rustling mice are seen
By the gleaming, as they run,
Of their quick eyes in the sun;
And lazy sheep are browsing through,
With their noses trailed in dew;
And the squirrel leaps adown,
Holding fast the filbert brown;
And the lark, with more of mirth
In his song than suits the earth.

Droppeth some in soaring high,
To pour the rest out in the sky ;
While the woodland doves, apart
In the copse's leafy heart,
Solitary, not ascetic,
Hidden and yet vocal, seem
Joining, in a lovely psalm,
Man's despondence, nature's calm,
Half mystical and half pathetic,
Like a sighing in a dream¹.
All these sounds the river telleth,
Softened to an undertone
Which ever and anon he swelleth
By a burden of his own,
In the ocean's ear.
Aye ! and Ocean seems to hear
With an inward gentle scorn,
Smiling to his caverns worn.

II

Hearken, hearken !
The child is shouting at his play
Just in the tramping funeral's way ;
The widow moans as she turns aside
To shun the face of the blushing bride,
While, shaking the tower of the ancient
church,
The marriage bells do swing ;
And in the shadow of the porch
An idiot sits, with his lean hands full
Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,
Laughing loud and gibbering,
Because it is so brown a thing,
While he stickeith the gaudy poppies red
In and out the senseless head
Where all sweet fancies grew instead.
And you may hear, at the self-same time,
Another poet who reads his rime,
Low as a brook in the summer air, —

¹ While floating up bright forms ideal,
Mistress, or friend, around me stream ;
Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
Like music mingling with a dream.

JOHN KENTON.

I do not doubt that the 'music' of the two concluding lines mingled, though very unconsciously, with my own 'dream,' and gave their form and pressure to the above distich. The ideas however being sufficiently distinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after my verses, and with acknowledging another obligation to the valued friend to whom I already owe so many. [1844.]

Sure when he droppeth his voice adown,
To dream of the amaranthine crown
His mortal brows shall wear ;
And a baby cries with a feeble sound
'Neath the weary weight of the life
new-found ;
And an old man groans,—with his
testament
Only half-signed,—for the life that's
spent ;
And lovers twain do softly say,
As they sit on a grave, 'For ay, for ay' ;
And foemen twain, while Earth their
mother
Looks greenly upward, curse each other.
A schoolboy drones his task, with looks
Cast over the page to the elm-tree rooks ;
A lonely student cries aloud
Eureka ! clasping at his shroud ;
A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing
To a little infant slumbering ;
A maid forgotten weeps alone,
Muffling her sobs on the trysting stone ;
A sickman wakes at his own mouth's wail,
A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale,
A muttering gamester shakes the dice,
A reaper foretells good luck from the skies,
A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to
them ;
A patriot leaving his native land to them,
Cries to the world against perfidious state,
A priest disserts upon linen skirts,
A sinner screams for one hope more,
A dancer's feet do palpitate
A piper's music out on the floor.
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,
Because he cannot hear !
And he who on that narrow bier
Has room enough, is closely wound
In a silence piercing more than sound. .

III

Hearken, hearken !
God speaketh to thy soul,
Using the supreme voice which doth
confound
All life with consciousness of Deity,
All senses into one,—
As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John
(For whom did backward roll
The cloud-gate of the future) turned to see
The Voice which spake. It speaketh now,

Through the regular breath of the calm creation,
Through the moan of the creature's desolation
Striking, and in its stroke, resembling
The memory of a solemn vow,
Which pierceth the din of a festival
To one in the midst,—and he letteh fall
The cup, with a sudden trembling.

IV

Hearken, hearken !
God speaketh in thy soul,
Saying, ' O thou that movest
With feeble steps across this earth of Mine,
To break beside the fount thy golden bowl
And spill its purple wine,—
Look up to heaven and see how, like a scroll,
My right hand hath thine immortality
In an eternal grasping ! thou, that lovest
The songful birds and grasses underfoot,
And also what change mars and tombs
pollute—
I am the end of love !—give love to Me !
O thou that sinnest, grace doth more
abound
Than all thy sin ! sit still beneath My rood,
And count the droppings of My victim-blood,
And seek none other sound !'

V

Hearken, hearken !
Shall we hear the lapsing river
And our brother's sighing ever,
And not the voice of God ?

THE LOST BOWER

I

In the pleasant orchard closes,
' God bless all our gains,' say we ;
But ' May God bless all our losses,'
Better suits with our degree.
Listen, gentle—aye, and simple ! listen,
children on the knee !

II
Green the land is where my daily Steps in jocund childhood played,
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade ;
Summer-snow of apple blossoms running up from glade to glade.

III

There is one hill I see nearer
In my vision of the rest ;
And a little wood seems clearer
As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland crest.

IV

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles
Thrills in leafy tremblement,
Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth quickly through content.

V

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hill-top's bound ;
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground :
You may walk beneath them smiling,
glad with sight and glad with sound.

VI

For you hearken on your right hand,
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight and
Out of reach and fear of all ;
And the squirrels crack the filberts through their cheerful madrigal.

VII

On your left, the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale,
And five apple-trees stand dropping
Separate shadows toward the vale,
Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you their ' All hail ! '

VIII

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

IX

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods also,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions
through the sunshine and the
snow'.
x

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and far survey :
'Twas a straight walk unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay ;
Up and down—as dull as grammar on
the eve of holiday.

xi

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over-branching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a
glamour past dispute.

xii

Few and broken paths showed through
it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced with snowy wool to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked* noses,
bleated back into the sun.

xiii

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow :
I could pierce them ! I could longer
Travel on, methought, than so.
Sheep for sheep-paths! braver children
climb and creep where they would
go.

xiv

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude :
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sate to meet him in a wood :
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out
pure with solitude.

* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's *Visions*, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

xv

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor marvelling
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving in their
island-citadel.

xvi

Thus I thought of the old singers,
And took courage from their song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me, and
the barrier branches strong.

xvii

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
I stood suddenly astonished—I was glad-
dened unaware.

xviii

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close,
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presencesigned
it worthily across.

xix

Here a linden-tree stood, bright'ning
All adown its silver rind ;
For as some trees draw the lightning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from
the sky where it was shrined.

xx

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew ;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that bower of beauty
which I sing of thus to you.

xxi

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide ;
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness,
as by garden-cunning plied.

xxii

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music than for
footsteps on the walk.

xxiii

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place ;
With such seeming art and travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the
summit from the base.

xxiv

And the ivy veined and glossy
Was enwrought with eglantine ;
And the wild hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window mullion, did
right sylvanly entwine.

xxv

Rose-trees either side the door were
Growing lithe and growing tall,
Each one set a summer warden
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose, lean-
ing, nodding at the wall.

xxvi

As I entered—mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot ;
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence very rare
and absolute.

xxvii

All the floor was paved with glory,
Greenly, silently inlaid
(Through quick motions made before
me),
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which
slanted overhead.

xxviii

'Is such pavement in a palace?'
So I questioned in my thought.
The sun, shining through the chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an
answer to my doubt.

xxix

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell!
Two white may-leaves, downward
winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of
sight yet blessing well.

xxx

Down to floor and up to ceiling
Quick I turned my childish face,
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place
To the trees, which surely knew it, in
partaking of the grace.

xxxi

Where's no foot of human creature,
How could reach a human hand ?
And if this be work of nature,
Why has nature turned so bland,
Breaking off from other wild work ? It
was hard to understand.

xxxii

Was she weary of rough-doing,—
Of the bramble and the thorn ?
Did she pause in tender rueing
Here of all her sylvan scorn ?
Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the
sudden mildness worn ?

xxxiii

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong.
Who, surviving all that chanced
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the
last true poet's song ?

xxxiv

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassailed by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,
And beyond Saint Catherine's chiming
on the blessed Sabbath days ?

xxxv

So, young muse, I satel listening
To my fancy's wildest word.
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which
was rather felt than heard.

XXXVI

Softly, finely, it enwound me ;
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain, falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little water Naiad sitting smilingly
within.

XXXVII

Whence the music came, who know-
eth ?

I know nothing. But indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters
at the oldest river-head.

XXXVIII

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness ! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like
an arrow to the mark.

XXXIX

Never nightingale so singeth :
Oh, she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet-song she flingeth
Over pain to victory !
Yet she never sings such music,—or
she sings it not to me.

XL

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the
bushes
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to
the summer heavens complete.

XLI

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd,
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dreamèd,
While it sate in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing
nigh her silent mouth.

XLII

If it *were* a bird !—ah, sceptic,
Give me 'yea' or give me 'nay'—

Though my soul were nympholeptic,
As I heard that virèlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon,
for my sin is far away.

XLIII

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion
Dropped the music to my feet
Like a garment rustling downwards :—
such a silence followed it.

XLIV

Heart and head beat through the quiet
Full and heavily, though slower.
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless,
then returned me to the Hour.

XLV

In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past,
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine I all
consciously was cast.

XLVI

Face to face with the true mountains
I stood silently and still,
Drawing strength from fancy's daunt-
ings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies, and
most debonair goodwill.

XLVII

Oh, the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things, with praises
Of the beauty of the truth,
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing
joyfully for both.

XLVIII

And I said within me, laughing,
I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus—fashioned half in
Chance, and half in Nature's play—
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will
nevermore missay.

XLIX

Henceforth, I will be the fairy
Of this bower not built by one ;
I will go there, sad or merry,
With each morning's benison,
And the bird shall be my harper in the
dream-hall I have won.

L

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—)
'Ware, O sceptic, of your scorning !
This is truth in its pure grace !
The next morning, all had vanished, or
my wandering missed the place.

LI

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew,
By the advent of the snowdrop, by the
rosemary and rue,—

LII

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches many
Missed the bower of my romance—
That I nevermore, upon it, turned my
mortal countenance.

LIII

I affirm that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair ;
Never garden-creeper crossed it
With so deft and brave an air—
Never bird sung in the summer, as I
saw and heard them there.

LIV

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith,
Under leaf and over brier,
Through the thickets, out of breath—
Like the prince who rescued Beauty
from the sleep as long as death.

LV

But his sword of mettle clashed,
And his arm smote strong, I ween,

And her dreaming spirit flashed
Through her body's fair white screen,
And the light thereof might guide him
up the cedar alleys green.

LVI

But for me, I saw no splendour—
All my sword was my child-heart ;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Oedipus's grave-place, 'mid
Colonos' olives swart.

LVII

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four-and-twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun ;
So, in wilderment of gazing I looked up,
and I looked down.

LVIII

Years have vanished since as wholly
As the little bower did then ;
And you call it tender folly
Thatsuch thoughts should come again ?
Ah, I cannot change this sighing for
your smiling, brother men !

LIX

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit-vigour,
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than
an arbour in a wood.

LX

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure,
Many a hope, and many a power—
Studio health, and merry leisure,
The first dew on the first flower !
But the first of all my losses was the
losing of the bower.

LXI

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done,
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompleteness, in the
face of what is won—

LXII

Exaltations in the far light
Where some cottage only is ;
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss ;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet for
the very shame of bliss.

LXIII

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break ;
Something too of the strong leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in
the road it ought to take.

LXIV

Some respect to social fictions
Has been also lost by me ;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of our
false humanity.

LXV

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye, perchance, would look away ;—
Ye would answer me, ‘ Farewell ! you
Make sad company to-day,
And your tears are falling faster than
the bitter words you say.’

LXVI

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground with power,
And my heart had for its trial
All the sun and all the shower !
And I suffered many losses,—and my
first was of the bower.

LXVII

Laugh you ? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy-seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the pine-tree
The young children laugh thereat ;
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and
the tempest shall be great.

LXVIII

One who knew me in my childhood
In the glamour and the game,

Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections, where
those changes overcame.

LXIX

By this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine,
I behold the bower arise.

LXX

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind ;
And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined ;
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they
have neither grown nor pined.

LXXI

From those overblown faint roses
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn’s-breadth more of red
For the winters and the summers which
have passed me overhead.

LXXII

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves :
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth ?
Fay or Faunus—who believes ?
But my heart still trembles in me to the
trembling of the leaves.

LXXIII

Is the bower lost, then ? who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost ?
Hark ! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the sunshine and the frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to
the last and uttermost.

LXXIV

Till another open for me
In God’s Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His Throne,
And a saint’s voice in the palm-trees,
singing—‘ All is lost... and won !’

A SONG AGAINST SINGING

TO E. J. H.

I

They bid me sing to thee,
 Thou golden-haired and silver-voiced
 child,—
 With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's
 defiled,
 With eyes unknowing how tears dim
 the sight,
 And feet all trembling at the new delight,
 Treaders of earth to be!

II

Ah no! the lark may bring
 A song to thee from out the morning cloud,
 The merry river from its lilies bowed,
 The brisk rain from the trees, the lucky
 wind,
 That half doth make its music, half doth
 find,—
 But I—I may not sing.

III

How could I think it right,
 New-comer on our earth as, Sweet,
 thou art,
 To bring a verse from out a human heart
 Made heavy with accumulated tears,
 And cross with such amount of weary
 years
 Thy day-sum of delight?

IV

Even if the verse were said,
 Thou, who wouldest clap thy tiny hands
 to hear
 The wind or rain, gay bird or river clear,
 Wouldest, at that sound of sad humanities,
 Upturn thy bright uncomprehending
 eyes
 And bid me play instead.

V

Therefore no song of mine,—
 But prayer in place of singing; prayer
 that would
 Commend thee to the new-creating God,
 Whose gift is childhood's heart without
 its stain
 Of weakness, ignorance, and changing
 vain—
 That gift of God be thine!

VI

So wilt thou ay be young,
 In lovelier childhood than thy shining
 brow
 And pretty winning accents make thee
 now:
 Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate
 sound
 (How sweet!) of 'father,' 'mother,'
 shall be found
 The ABBA on thy tongue.

VII

And so, as years shall chase
 Each other's shadows, thou wilt less
 resemble
 Thy fellows of the earth who toil and
 tremble,
 Than him thou seest not, thine angel bold
 Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold
 The Ever-loving's face.

WINE OF CYPRUS

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR
 OF 'SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE
 GREEK FATHERS,' ETC., TO WHOM
 THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED

I

If old Bacchus were the speaker
 He would tell you with a sigh,
 Of the Cyprus in this beaker
 I am sipping like a fly,—
 Like a fly or gnat on Ida
 At the hour of goblet-pledge,
 By queen Juno brushed aside, a
 Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

II

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler
 When the drink is so divine,
 And some deep-mouthed Greek example
 Would become your Cyprus wine:
 Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,
 While his one eye over-leered—
 Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
 Drinking rivers down his beard.

III

Pan might dip his head so deep in
 That his ears alone pricked out,
 Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,
 Each one pointing to his throat :
 While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
 Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
 Cry,—'O earth, that thou wouldest grant
 us
 Springs to keep, of such a taste !'

IV

But for me, I am not worthy
 After gods and Greeks to drink,
 And my lips are pale and earthy
 To go bathing from this brink :
 Since you heard them speak the last time
 They have faded from their blooms,
 And the laughter of my pastime
 Has learnt silence at the tombs.

V

Ab, my friend ! the antique drinkers
 Crowned the cup and crowned the
 brow.
 Can I answer the old thinkers
 In the forms they thought of, now ?
 Who will fetch from garden-closes
 Some new garlands while I speak,
 That the forehead, crowned with roses,
 May strike scarlet down the cheek ?

VI

Do not mock me ! with my mortal
 Suits no wreath again, indeed ;
 I am sad-voiced as the turtle
 Which Anacreon used to feed :
 Yet as that same bird demurely
 Wet her beak in cup of his,
 So, without a garland, surely
 I may touch the brim of this.

VII

Go,—let others praise the Chian !—
 This is soft as Muses' string,
 This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
 This is rapid as his spring,
 Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
 Light as ever trod her feet !
 And the brown bees of Hymettus
 Make their honey not so sweet.

VIII

Very copious are my praises,
 Though I sip it like a fly !—
 Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
 Change before me suddenly :
 As Ulysses' old libation
 Drew the ghosts from every part,
 So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
 Stirs the Hades of my heart.

IX

And I think of those long mornings
 Which my thought goes far to seek,
 When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
 Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek :
 Past the pane the mountain spreading,
 Swept the sheep-bell's tinkling noise,
 Whi a girlish voice was reading,
 Somewhat low for *ai's* and *oi's*.

X

Then, what golden hours were for us !—
 While we sate together there,
 How the white vests of the chorus
 Seemed to wave up a live air !
 How the cothurns trod majestic
 Down the deep iambic lines,
 And the rolling anapaestic
 Curled like vapour over shrines !

XI

Oh, our Aeschylus, the thunderous !
 How he drove the boited breath
 Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
 In the gnarled oak beneath.
 Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
 Who was born to monarch's place,
 And who made the whole world loyal,
 Less by kingly power than grace.

XII

Our Euripides, the human,
 With his droppings of warm tears,
 And his touches of things common
 Till they rose to touch the spheres !
 Our Theocritus, our Bion,
 And our Pindar's shining goals !—
 These were cup-bearers undying,
 Of the wine that's meant for souls.

xiii

And my Plato, the divine one,
If men know the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light!—
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last Greek!
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak.

xiv

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him
As a liberal mouth of gold;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old.
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies,—
Who forged first his linked stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

xv

And we both praised your Synesius
For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propitious
As he whistled dogs and gods.
And we both praised Nazianzen
For the fervid heart and speech:
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

xvi

Do you mind that deed of Atē
Which you bound me to so fast,—
Reading 'De Virginitate,'
From the first line to the last?
How I said at ending, solemn,
As I turned and looked at you,
That Saint Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do?

xvii

For we sometimes gently wrangled,
Very gently, be it said,
Since our thoughts were disentangled
By no breaking of the thread!
And I charged you with extortions
On the nobler fames of old—
Aye, and sometimes thought your Persons
Stained the purple they would fold.

xviii

For the rest—a mystic moaning
Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in,
And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
Turned to ocean and the sun.

xix

And Medea we saw burning
At her nature's planted stake:
And proud Oedipus fate-scoring
While the cloud came on to break—
While the cloud came on slow—slower,
Till he stood disrowned, resigned!—
But the reader's voice dropped lower
When the poet called him BLIND.

xx

Ah, my gossip! you were older,
And more learned, and a man!—
Yet that shadow, the enfolder
Of your quiet eyelids, ran
Both our spirits to one level,
And I turned from hill and lea
And the summer-sun's green revel,
To your eyes that could not see.

xxi

Now Christ bless you with the one light
Which goes shining night and day!
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
Shed their fragrance in your way!
Is it not right to remember
All your kindness, friend of mine,
When we two sat in the chamber,
And the poets pour'd us wine?

xxii

So, to come back to the drinking
Of this Cyprus,—it is well.
But those memories, to my thinking,
Make a better oenome;
And whoever be the speaker,
None can murmur with a sigh,
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
I am sipping like a fly.

A Rhapsody of Life's Progress

Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath.
CORNELIUS MATHEWS, *Poems of Man*¹.

I

We are borne into life—it is sweet, it is strange.
We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery,
Which smiles with a change!
But we doubt not of changes, we know
not of spaces,
The Heavens seem as near as our own
mother's face is,
And we think we could touch all the
stars that we see;
And the milk of our mother is white on
our mouth;
And, with small childish hands, we are
turning around
The apple of Life which another has
found;
It is warm with our touch, not with sun
of the south,
And we count, as we turn it, the red
side for four.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange ever-
more!

II

Then all things look strange in the pure
golden ether:
We walk through the gardens with hands
linked together,
And the lilies look large as the trees;
And as loud as the birds sing the bloom-
loving bees,
And the birds sing like angels, so
mystical-fine,
And the cedars are brushing the arch-
angels' feet,
And time is eternity, love is divine,
And the world is complete.
Now, God bless the child,—father,
mother, respond!
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

¹ A small volume, by an American poet—
as remarkable in thought and manner for a
vital sinewy vigour as the right arm of 'Path-
finder.' [1844.]

III

Then we leap on the earth with the
armour of youth,
And the earth rings again,
And we breathe out, 'O beauty,'—we
cry out, 'O truth,'
And the bloom of our lips drops with wine,
And our blood runs amazed 'neath the
calm hyaline,
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun
burns to the brain,—
What is this exultation? and what this
despair?
The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves
into pain,
And we drop from the Fair as we climb
to the Fair,
And we lie in a trance at its feet;
And the breath of an angel cold-piercing
the air
Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon,
And we think him so near he is this side
the sun,
And we wake to a whisper self-murmured
and fond,
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

IV

And the winds and the waters in pastoral
measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
Till the soul lies within in a circle of
pleasures
Which hideth the soul.
And we run with the stag, and we leap
with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through the
broad water-course,
And we strike with the falcon, and hunt
with the hound,
And the joy which is in us flies out by
a wound.
And we shout so aloud, 'We exult, we
rejoice,'
That we lose the low moan of our
brothers around;
And we shout so adeep down creation's
profound,
We are deaf to God's voice.
And we bind the rose-garland on fore-
head and ears

Yet we are not ashamed,
And the dew of the roses that runneth
unblamed
Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.
Help us, God, trust us, man, love us,
woman! 'I hold
Thy small head in my hands,—with its
grapelets of gold
Growing bright through my fingers,—
like altar for oath,
'Neath the vast golden spaces like wit-
nessing faces
That watch the eternity strong in the
troth—
I love thee; I leave thee,
Live for thee, die for thee!
I prove thee, deceive thee,
Undo evermore thee!
Help me, God, slay me, man!—one is
mourning for both.'
And we stand up, though young, near the
funeral-shriet
Which covers the Caesar and old Phara-
mond,
And death is so nigh us, life cools from
its heat.
O Life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair,—art thou sweet?

v

Then we act to a purpose—we spring up
erect:
We will tame the wild mouths of the
wilderness-steeds,
We will plough up the deep in the ships
double-decked,
We will build the great cities, and do
the great deeds,
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the
soul upon soul,
Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming
the dole,
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand
thunder-roll!
'While the eagle of Thought rides the
tempest in scorn,
Who cares if the lightning is burning
the corn?
Let us sit on the thrones
In a purple sublimity,
And grind down men's bones
To a pale unanimity.

Speed me, God!—serve me, man!—I am
god over men
When I speak in my cloud, none shall
answer again.
'Neath the stripe and the bond,
Lie and mourn at my feet!'—
O thou Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

vi

Then we grow into thought,—and with
inward ascensions
Touch the bounds of our Being.
We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly
around
With our sensual relations and social
conventions,
Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware
of a sound
Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all
sides
With its infinite tides
About and above us,—until the strong
arch
Of our life creaks and bends as if ready
for falling,
And through the dim rolling we hear
the sweet calling
Of spirits that speak in a soft under-tongue
The sense of the mystical march,
And we cry to them softly, 'Come
nearer, come nearer,
And lift up the lap of this Dark, and
speak clearer,
And teach us the song that ye sung.'
And we smile in our thought if they
answer or no,
For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as
to know.
Wonders breathe in our face
And we ask not their name;
Love takes all the blame
Of the world's prison-place.
And we sing back the songs as we guess
them, aloud;
And we send up the lark of our music
that cuts
Untired through the cloud,
To beat with its wings at the lattice
Heaven shuts;
Yet the angels look down and the mortals
look up

As the little wings beat,
And the poet is blessed with their pity
or hope.
'Twixt the heavens and the earth can a
poet despond?
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VII

Then we wring from our souls their
applicative strength,
And bend to the cord the strong bow of
our ken,
And bringing our lives to the level of
others
Hold the cup we have filled, to their
uses at length.
'Help me, God! love me, man! I am
man among men,
And my life is a pledge
Of the ease of another's!
From the fire and the water we drive
out the steam
With a rush and a roar and the speed of
a dream;
And the car without horses, the car with-
out wings,
Roars onward and flies
On its grey iron edge,
'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still
in our eyes:
And our hand knots in air, with the
bridge that it flings,
Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and
skies,
And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing
Thames,
Draws under the world with its turmoils
and pothers,
While the swans float on softly, un-
touched in their calms
By humanity's hum at the root of the
springs.
And with reachings of Thought we reach
down to the deeps
Of the souls of our brothers,—
We teach them full words with our slow-
moving lips,
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth,'—which they
hearken and think
And work into harmony, link upon link,

Till the silver meets round the earth gelid
and dense,
Shedding sparks of electric responding
intense
On the dark of eclipse.
Then we hear through the silence and
glory afar,
As from shores of a star
In aphelion, the new generations that cry
Disenthralled by our voice to harmonious
reply,
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth'!
We are glorious forsooth—
And our name has a seat,
Though the shroud should be donned.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VIII

Help me, God—help me, man! I am low,
I am weak—
Death loosens my sinews and creeps in
my veins:
My body is cleft by these wedges of pains
From my spirit's serene,
And I feel the externe and insensate
creep in
On my organized clay.
I sob not, nor shriek,
Yet I faint fast away!
I am strong in the spirit, — deep-
thoughted, clear-eyed,—
I could walk, step for step, with an
angel beside,
On the heaven-heights of truth!
Oh, the soul keeps its youth,
But the body faints sore, it is tired in
the race,
It sinks from the chariot ere reaching
the goal,
It is weak, it is cold,
The rein drops from its hold—
It sinks back, with the death in its face.
On, chariot—on, soul,
Ye are all the more fleet—
Be alone at the goal
Of the strange and the sweet!

IX

Love us, God, love us, man! we believe,
we achieve—
Let us love, let us live,

For the acts correspond ;
 We are glorious—and DIE !
 And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
 That smiles with a change,
 Here we lie.
 O DEATH, O BEYOND,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange !

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE

— discordance that can accord.
Romaunt of the Rose.

A ROSE once grew within
 A garden April-green,
 In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
 And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
 On a tall bough and straight :
 Early comer, early comer,
 Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
 South winds to let her in,
 In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
 All the fairer for that oneness.

'For if I wait,' said she,
 'Till time for roses be,—
 For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
 Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,—

'What glory then for me
 In such a company ?—
 Roses plenty, roses plenty,
 And one nightingale for twenty ?

'Nay, let me in,' said she,
 'Before the rest are free,—
 In my loneliness, in my loneliness,
 All the fairer for that oneness.

'For I would lonely stand
 Uplifting my white hand,
 On a mission, on a mission,
 To declare the coming vision.

'Upon which lifted sign,
 What worship will be mine ?
 What addressing, what caressing,
 And what thanks and praise and blessing !

'A windlike joy will rush
 Through every tree and bush,
 Bending softly in affection
 And spontaneous benediction.

'Insects, that only may
 Live in a sunbright ray,
 To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
 Shall be drawn, as to a brightness,—

'And every moth and bee,
 Approach me reverently,
 Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
 Coronals of motioned glory.

'Three larks shall leave a cloud,
 To my whiter beauty vowed,
 Singing gladly all the moontide,
 Never waiting for the suntide.

'Ten nightingales shall flee
 Their woods for love of me,
 Singing sadly all the suntide,
 Never waiting for the moontide.

'I ween the very skies
 Will look down with surprise,
 When low on earth they see me
 With my starry aspect dreamy.

'And earth will call her flowers
 To hasten out of doors ;
 By their curtseys and sweet-smelling,
 To give grace to my foretelling.'

So praying, did she win
 South winds to let her in,
 In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
 And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah,—alas for her !
 No thing did minister
 To her praises, to her praises,
 More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
 To boast a perfect green,
 Scarcely having, scarcely having
 One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
 Along the southern wall,
 Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
 Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so,
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas :
Guess him in the Happy Islands,
Learning music from the silence.

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both,
Doing honour, doing honour
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down
As on a royal crown ;
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the Earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose, ‘Ha, Snow !
And art thou fallen so ?
Thou, who wast enthroned stately
All along my mountains lately ?

‘ Holla, thou world-wide snow !
And art thou wasted so ?
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee ? ’

—Poor Rose, to be misknown !
Would she had ne’er been blown,
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
All the sadder for that oneness !

Some word she tried to say,
Some no . . . ah, wellaway !
But the passion did o’ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her.

Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet’s foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said, ‘Verily and thus
It chances too with us
Poets, singing sweetest snatches
While that deaf men keep the watches :

‘ Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore,
In a loneliness, in a loneliness,
And the nobler for that oneness.

‘ Holy in voice and heart,
To high ends, set apart !
All unmated, all unmated,
Just because so consecrated.

‘ But if alone we be,
Where is our empery ?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can mete our lofty nature ?

‘ What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone ?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimèd ringing ?

‘ What angel, but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim ?
And without assimilation,
Vain is interpenetration.

‘ And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unprepared season ?

‘ Drop leaf—be silent song !
Cold things we come among :
We must warm them, we must warm
them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

‘ Howbeit’ (here his face
Lightened around the place,—
So to mark the outward turning
Of his spirit’s inward burning)

‘ Something it is, to hold
In God’s worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty.

‘ Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be, in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty’s sign and shadow !

‘ Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us.

'Though none us deign to bless,
Blessèd are we, nathless;
Blessèd still and consecrated,
In that, rose, we were created.

'Oh, shame to poet's lays,
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that *obolum da mihi!*

'Shame, shame to poet's soul
Pining for such a dole,
When Heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit!

'Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones!
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass unchallenged by you!

'Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.
Self-contentedly approve you
Unto Him who sits above you,—

'In prayers—that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you.

'In faith—that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission,
With an unfulfilled fruition.

'In hope—that apprehends
An end beyond these ends,
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly.

'In thanks—for all the good
By poets understood—
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

'For sights of things away
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

'For life, so lovely-vain,
For death, which breaks the chain,—
For this sense of present sweetness,—
And this yearning to completeness!'

THE POET AND THE BIRD

A FABLE

I

SAID a people to a poet—"Go out from among us straightway!
While we are thinking earthly things,
thou singest of divine.
There's a little fair brown nightingale,
who, sitting in the gateway,
Makes fitter music to our ear than any
song of thine!"

II

The poet went out weeping—the nightingale ceased chanting,
'Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale,
is all thy sweetness done?'
—'I cannot sing my earthly things, the
heavenly poet wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes the
lowest under sun.'

III

The poet went out weeping,—and died
abroad, bereft there:
The bird flew to his grave and died
amid a thousand wails.
And, when I last came by the place,
I swear the music left there
Was only of the poet's song, and not
the nightingale's.

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN

I

'**T**HERE is no God,' the foolish saith,
But none 'There is no sorrow,'
And nature oft the cry of faith
In bitter need will borrow:
Eyes, which the preacher could not
school,
By wayside graves are raised,
And lips say 'God be pitiful,'
Who ne'er said 'God be praised.'
Be pitiful, O God'

II

The tempest stretches from the steep
The shadow of its coming,
The beasts grow tame, and near us creep,
As help were in the human ;
Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and
grind,
We spirits tremble under !—
The hills have echoes, but we find
No answer for the thunder.
Be pitiful, O God !

III

The battle hurtles on the plains,
Earth feels new scythes upon her ;
We reap our brothers for the wains,
And call the harvest—honour ;
Draw face to face, front line to line,
One image all inherit,—
Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
Clay, clay,—and spirit, spirit.
Be pitiful, O God !

IV

The plague runs festering through the
town,
And never a bell is tolling,
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
Nod to the dead-cart's rolling.
The young child calleth for the cup,
The strong man brings it weeping ;
The mother from her babe looks up,
And shrieks away its sleeping.
Be pitiful, O God !

V

The plague of gold strikes far and near,
And deep and strong it enters ;
This purple chimar which we wear
Makes madder than the centaur's :
Our thoughts grow blank, our words
grow strange,
We cheer the pale gold-diggers—
Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
And marked, like sheep, with figures.
Be pitiful, O God !

VI

The curse of gold upon the land
The lack of bread enforces ;
The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,
Like more of Death's white horses !

The rich preach 'rights' and future days,
And hear no angel scoffing,—
The poor die mute—with starving gaze
On corn-ships in the offing.
Be pitiful, O God !

VII

We meet together at the feast,
To private mirth betake us ;
We stare down in the winecup, lest
Some vacant chair should shake us.
We name delight, and pledge it round—
'It shall be ours to-morrow !'
God's seraphs, do your voices sound
As sad in naming sorrow ?
Be pitiful, O God !

VIII

We sit together, with the skies,
The steadfast skies, above us,
We look into each other's eyes,
'And how long will you love us ?'—
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices, low and breathless,—
'Till death us part !'—O words, to be
Our best, for love the deathless !
Be pitiful, O God !

IX

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed :
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night, 'Be stronger-hearted !'
O God,—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely !—
To see a light upon such brows,
Which is the daylight only ?
Be pitiful, O God !

X

The happy children come to us,
And look up in our faces :
They ask us—Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places ?—
We cannot speak ;—we see anew
The hills we used to live in,
And feel our mother's smile press through
The kisses she is giving.
Be pitiful, O God !

XI

We pray together at the kirk,
For mercy, mercy, solely :
Hands weary with the evil work,
We lift them to the Holy.

The corpse is calm below our knee,
Its spirit, bright before Thee—
Between them, worse than either, we—
Without the rest of glory!

Be pitiful, O God!

xii

We leave the communing of men,
The murmur of the passions,
And live alone, to live again
With endless generations.
Are we so brave?—The sea and sky
In silence lift their mirrors,
And, glassed therein, our spirits high
Recoil from their own terrors.

Be pitiful, O God!

xiii

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding :
Thesun strikes through the farthest mist,
The city's spire to golden.
The city's golden spire it was,
When hope and health were strongest,
But now it is the churchyard grass
We look upon the longest.

Be pitiful, O God!

xiv

And soon all vision waxeth dull—
Men whisper, 'He is dying':
We cry no more 'Be pitiful'
We have no strength for crying.
No strength, no need. Then, soul of mine,
Look up and triumph rather—
Lo, in the depth of God's Divine,
The Son adjures the Father,

Be PITIFUL, O God!

A PORTRAIT

One name is Elizabeth.—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her.
Ten times have the lilies blown,
Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear,
Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encoloured faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air :
And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient,—waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,
As young birds, or early wheat,
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures, for the rest,
Which come softly—just as she,
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks,—
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more far
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
He would sing of her with falls
Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round the hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper—'You have done a
Consecrated little Una.'

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
'Tis my angel, with a name !'

And a stranger, when he sees her
In the street even—smileth stilly,
Just as you would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
Soften, sleeken every word,
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth whereon she passes,
With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, 'God love her!'—
Aye, and always, in good sooth,
We may all be sure HE DOOTH.

CONFESSIONS

I

FACE to face in my chamber, my silent
chamber, I saw her :
God and she and I only, . . . there, I sate
down to draw her
Soul through the clefts of confession...
Speak, I am holding thee fast,
As the angels of resurrection shall do it
at the last.
'My cup is blood-red
With my sin,' she said,
'And I pour it out to the bitter lees,
As if the angels of judgement stood over
me strong at the last,
Or as thou wert as these !'

II

When God smote His hands together,
and struck out thy soul as a spark
Into the organized glory of things, from
depths of the dark,—
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn,
didst thou honour the power in
the form,
As the star does at night, or the fire-fly,
or even the little ground-worm?
'I have sinned,' she said,
'For my seed-light shed
Has shoudered away from His first
decrees!
The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the
ground-leaf praiseth the
worm,—
I am viler than these !'

III

When God on that sin had pity, and
did not trample thee straight
With His wild rains beating and drenching
thy light found inadequate;

When He only sent thee the north-winds, a little searching and chill,
To quicken thy flame . . . didst thou kindle
and flash to the heights of His
will ?

'I have sinned,' she said,
'Unquicken'd, unspread
My fire dropt down, and I wept on
my knees !
I only said of His winds of the north as
I shrank from their chill, . . .
What delight is in these ?'

IV

When God on that sin had pity, and did
not meet it as such,
But tempered the wind to thy uses, and
softened the world to thy touch,
At least thou wast moved in thy soul,
though unable to prove it afar,
Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel,
not giving it out like a star !
'I have sinned,' she said,
'And not merited
The gift He gives, by the grace Hesee's !
The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the
hillside praiseth the star;
I am viler than these.'

V

Then I cried aloud in my passion, . . .
Unthankful and impotent creature,
To throw up thy scorn unto God through
the rents in thy beggarly nature !
If He, the all-giving and loving, is
served so unduly, what then
Hast thou done to the weak and the false,
and the changing, . . . thy fellows
of men ?
'I have loved,' she said,
(Words bowing her head
As the wind the wet acacia-trees !)
'I saw God sitting above me,—but I . . .
I sate among men,
And I have loved these.'

VI

Again with a lifted voice, like a choral
trumpet that takes
The lowest note of a viol that trembles,
and triumphing breaks

On the air with it solemn and clear,—
 ‘Behold! I have sinned not in
 this!

Where I loved, I have loved much and
 well,—I have verily loved not
 amiss.

Let the living,’ she said,
 ‘Inquire of the Dead,

In the house of the pale-fronted Images:
 My own true dead will answer for me,
 that I have not loved amiss
 In my love for all these.

VII

‘The least touch of their hands in the
 morning, I keep it by day and
 by night;

Their least step on the stair, at the door,
 still throbs through me, if ever
 so light;

Their least gift, which they left to my
 childhood, far off, in the long-
 ago years,

Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and
 seen through the crystals of
 tears.

Dig the snow,’ she said,
 ‘For my churchyard bed,

Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,
 If one only of these my beloveds, shall
 love me with heart-warm tears,
 As I have loved these!

VIII.

‘If I angered any among them, from
 thenceforth my own life was
 sore;

If I fell by chance from their presence,
 I clung to their memory more.

Their tender I often felt holy, their
 bitter I sometimes called sweet;

And whenever their heart has refused
 me, I fell down straight at
 their feet.

I have loved,’ she said,—

‘Man is weak, God is dread,

Yet the weak man dies with his spirit
 at ease,

Having poured such an unguent of love
 but once on the Saviour’s feet,
 As I lavished for these.’

IX

‘Go,’ I cried, ‘thou hast chosen the
 Human, and left the Divine!

Then, at least, have the Human shared
 with thee their wild berry-wine!

Have they loved back thy love, and
 when strangers approached
 thee with blame,

Have they covered thy fault with their
 kisses, and loved thee the same?’

But she shrunk and said,
 ‘God, over my head,

Must sweep in the wrath of his judge-
 ment-seas,

If He shall deal with me sinning, but
 only indeed the same
 And no gentler than these.’

LOVED ONCE

I

I CLASSED, appraising once,
 Earth’s lamentable sounds,—the wella-
 day,

The jarring yea and nay,
 The fall of kisses on unanswered clay,
 The sobbed farewell, the welcome
 mournfuller,—

But all did leaven the air
 With a less bitter leaven of sure despair
 Than these words—‘I loved ONCE.’

II

And who saith ‘I loved ONCE’?
 Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love,
 love foresee,

Love, through eternity,
 And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
 Not God, called Lovz, His noble crown-
 name, casting

A light too broad for blasting!
 The great God changing not from ever-
 lasting,

Saith never ‘I loved ONCE.’

III

Oh, never is ‘Loved ONCE’
 Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, misprized
 friend!

Thy cross and curse may rend,
 But having loved Thou lovest to the end.

This is man's saying—man's. Too weak
to move
One spherèd star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-word
Love
By his No More, and Once.

IV

How say ye 'We loved once,'
Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold
now,
Mourners, without that snow?
Ah, friends! and would ye wrong each
other so?
And could ye say of some whose love is
known,
Whose prayers have met your own,
Whose tears have fallen for you, whose
smiles have shone
So long,—'We loved them once'?

V

Could ye 'We loved her once'
Say calm of me, sweet friends, when
out of sight?
When hearts of better right
Stand in between me and your happy
light?
Or when, as flowers kept too long in
the shade,
Ye find my colours fade,
And all that is not love in me, decayed?
Such words—Ye loved me once!

VI

Could ye 'We loved her once'
Say cold of me when further put away
In earth's sepulchral clay,—
When mute the lips which deprecate
to-day?
Not so! not then—least then. When
life is shriven,
And death's full joy is given,—
Of those who sit and love you up in
heaven,
Say not 'We loved them once.'

VII

Say never, ye loved once.
God is too near above, the grave, beneath,
And all our moments breathe
Too quick in mysteries of life and death,

For such a word. The eternities avenge
Affections light of range.
There comes no change to justify that
change,
Whatever comes—Loved once!

VIII

And yet that same word once
Is humanly acceptable. Kings have said,
Shaking a disrowned head,
'We ruled once,'—dotards, 'We once
taught and led.'
Cripples once danced i' the vines—and
bards approved
Were once by scorning moved:
But love strikes one hour—LOVE! those
never loved
Who dream that they loved once.

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS

I

I would build a cloudy House
For my thoughts to live in,
When for earth too fancy-loose,
And too low for heaven.
Hush! I talk my dream aloud;
I build it bright to see,—
I build it on the moonlit cloud
To which I looked with thee.

II

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,
Faced with amber column,
Crowned with crimson cupola
From a sunset solemn:
May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
Pale and glimmering,
With a sunbeam hid in each,
And a smell of spring.

III

Build the entrance high and proud,
Darkening and then brightening,
Of a riven thunder-cloud,
Veined by the lightning:
Use one with an iris-stain
For the door within,
Turning to a sound like rain
As I enter in.

IV

Build a spacious hall thereby,
Boldly, never fearing;
Use the blue place of the sky
Which the wind is clearing;
Branched with corridors sublime,
Flecked with winding stairs,
Such as children wish to climb,
Following their own prayers.

V

In the mutest of the house,
I will have my chamber:
Silence at the door shall use
Evening's light of amber;
Solemnizing every mood,
Softening in degree,
Turning sadness into good
As I turn the key.

VI

Be my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless,—glorified
When the sunbeams come here;
Wandering harpers, harping on
Waters stringed for such,
Drawing colour, for a tune,
With a vibrant touch.

VII

Bring a shadow green and still
From the chestnut forest,
Bring a purple from the hill,
When the heat is sorest;
Spread them out from wall to wall,
Carpet-wove around,
Whereupon the foot shall fall
In light instead of sound.

VIII

Bring fantastic cloudlets home
From the noontide zenith,
Ranged for sculptures round the room,
Named as Fancy weeneth.
Some be Junos, without eyes,
Naiads, without sources;
Some be birds of paradise,
Some, Olympian horses.

IX

Bring the dews the birds shake off,
Waking in the hedges,—
Those too, perfumed, for a proof,
From the lilies' edges;
From our England's field and moor,
Bring them calm and white in,
Whence to form a mirror pure
For Love's self-delighting.

X

Bring a grey cloud from the east
Where the lark is singing
(Something of the song at least
Unlost in the bringing):
That shall be a morning chair
Poet-dream may sit in,
When it leans out on the air,
Unrimed and unwritten.

XI

Bring the red cloud from the sun!
While he sinketh, catch it:
That shall be a couch,—with one
Sidelong star to watch it,—
Fit for Poet's finest thought
At the curfew-sounding;
Things unseen being nearer brought
Than the seen, around him.

XII

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh.
'Las, they come together!
Cloudy walls divide and fly,
As in April weather!
Cupola and column proud,
Structure bright to see,
Gone! except that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with thee.

XIII

Let them. Wipe such visionings
From the fancy's cartel:
Love secures some fairer things,
Dowered with his immortal.
The sun may darken, heaven be bowed,
But still unchanged shall be,—
Here, in my soul,—that moonlit cloud,
To which I looked with thee!

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA

I

THE ship went on with solemn face ;
 To meet the darkness on the deep,
 The solemn ship went onward.
 I bowed down weary in the place,
 For parting tears and present sleep
 Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

II

Thick sleep which shut all dreams from me,
 And kept my inner self apart
 And quiet from emotion,
 Then brake away and left me free,
 Made conscious of a human heart
 Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

III

The new sight, the new wondrous sight !
 The waters round me, turbulent,—
 The skies impassive o'er me,
 Calm, in a moonless, sunless light,
 Half glorified by that intent
 Of holding the day-glory !

IV

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
 The meeting line of sea and sky,
 With aspect still and mystic.
 I think they did foresee the sun,
 And rested on their prophecy
 In quietude majestic,

V

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,
 Like statues by the open tomb
 Of shining saints half risen.—
 The sun!—he came up to be viewed,
 And sky and sea made mighty room
 To inaugurate the vision.

VI

I oft had seen the dawnlight run,
 As red wine, through the hills, and break
 Through many a mist's inuring;

But, here, no earth profaned the sun !
 Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
 The sacrament of morning.

VII

Away with thoughts fantastical !
 I would be humble to my worth,
 Self-guarded as self-doubted :
 Though here no earthly shadows fall,
 I, joying, grieving without earth,
 May desecrate without it.

VIII

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves ;
 I would not praise the pageant high,
 Yet miss the dedicature.
 I, carried toward the sunless graves
 By force of natural things,—should I
 Exult in only nature ?

IX

And could I bear to sit alone
 'Mid nature's fixed benignities,
 While my warm pulse was moving !
 Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
 Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
 To satisfy the loving !

X

It seems a better lot than so,
 To sit with friends beneath the beech,
 And feel them dear and dearer ;
 Or follow children as they go
 In pretty pairs, with softened speech,
 As the church-bells ring nearer.

XI

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day !
 The sea sings round me while ye roll
 Afar the hymn unaltered,
 And kneel, where once I knelt to pray,
 And bless me deeper in the soul,
 Because the voice has faltered.

XII

And though this sabbath comes to me
 Without the stoléd minister
 Or chanting congregation,
 God's Spirit brings communion, He
 Who brooded soft on waters drear,
 Creator on creation.

XIII

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher,
 Where keep the saints with harp and
 song.
 An endless sabbath morning,
 And on that sea commixed with fire
 Oft drop their eyelids, raised too long
 To the full Godhead's burning.

A FLOWER IN A LETTER

I

My lonely chamber next the sea
 Is full of many flowers set free
 By summer's earliest duty :
 Dear friends upon the garden-walk
 Might stop amid their fondest talk
 To pull the least in beauty.

II

A thousand flowers—each seeming one
 That learnt by gazing on the sun
 To counterfeit his shining ;
 Within whose leaves the holy dew
 That falls from heaven, has won anew
 A glory, in declining.

III

Red roses, used to praises long,
 Contented with the poet's song,
 The nightingale's being over ;
 And lilies white, prepared to touch
 The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
 Of dreamer turned to lover.

IV

Deep violets, you liken to
 The kindest eyes that look on you,
 Without a thought disloyal ;
 And cactuses a queen might don,
 If weary of a golden crown,
 And still appear as royal.

V

Pansies for ladies all—(I wis
 That none who wear such brooches, miss
 A jewel in the mirror) ;
 And tulips, children love to stretch
 Their fingers down, to feel in each
 Its beauty's secret nearer.

VI

Love's language may be talked with
 these ;
 To work out choicest sentences
 No blossoms can be meeter ;
 And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
 Young maids may wonder if the flowers
 Or meanings be the sweeter.

VII

And such being strewn before a bride,
 Her little foot may turn aside,
 Their longer bloom decreeing,
 Unless some voice's whispered sound
 Should make her gaze upon the ground
 Too earnestly—for seeing.

VIII

And such being scattered on a grave,
 Whoever mourneth there, may have
 A type which seemeth worthy
 Of that fair body hid below,
 Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
 Then perished as the earthy.

IX

And such being wreathed for worldly
 feast,
 Across the brimming cup some guest
 Their rainbow colours viewing,
 May feel them, with a silent start,
 The covenant, his childish heart
 With nature made,—renewing.

X

No flowers our gardened England hath
 To match with these, in bloom and breath,
 Which from the world are hiding,
 In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
 A nunnery of cloistered hills,
 The elements presiding.

XI

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
 That meet one gifted lady's care
 With prodigal rewarding
(For Beauty is too used to run
 To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
 To light her through the garden).

XII

But, here, all summers are comprised—
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshine ;
And every wind with stolēd feet,
In wandering down the alleys sweet,
Steps lightly on the sunshine,

XIII

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses, that
No harm shall touch his daughters)
Gives quite away the rushing sound,
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters.

XIV

Yet, sun and wind ! what can ye do
But make the leaves more brightly show
In posies newly gathered ?
I look away from all your best,
To one poor flower unlike the rest,
A little flower half-withered.

XV

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened ;
And now it seems ashamed to be.
Alone, in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

XVI

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
Among the city shadows.
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 'twas only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows.

XVII

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall
In pale refraction driven !
How sadly, plashed upon its leaves,
The raindrops, losing in the eaves
The first sweet news of heaven !

XVIII

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea
And garden-blooms, to look on.

XLIX

But SHE, for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
Receiving what was given,—
Oh, if her face she turned then,
Let none say 'twas to gaze again
Upon the flowers of Devon !

XX

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies, warm oracles
For gardens brightly springing,—
The flower which grew beneath your
eyes,
Beloved friends, to mine supplies
A beauty worthier singing !

THE MASK.

I

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
I have a jest for all I meet,
I have a garland for my head
And all its flowers are sweet,—
And so you call me gay, she said.

II

Grief taught to me this smile, she said.
And Wrong did teach this jesting bold ;
These flowers were plucked from garden-
bed

While a death-chime was tolled.
And what now will you say ?—she said.

III

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
Live captives so uncomforted
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV

I know my face is bright, she said,—
Such brightness, dying suns diffuse ;
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,—
The ending of my day, she said.

V

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,—
It were the happier way, she said.

VI

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave.
How calmly, calmly, smile the Dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve!
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

VII

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear.
'Tis bought with pangs long nourished,
And rounded to despair.
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

VIII

Ye weep for those who weep? she said—
Ah fools! I bid you pass them by.
Go, weep for those whose hearts have
bled.
What time their eyes were dry.
Whom sadder can I say? she said.

CALLS ON THE HEART

I

FREE Heart, that singest to-day,
Like a bird on the first green spray,
Wilt thou go forth to the world,
Where the hawk hath his wing unfurled
To follow, perhaps, thy way?
Where the tamer, thine own will bind,
And, to make thee sing, will blind,
While the little hip grows for the free
behind?

Heart, wilt thou go?

—'No, no!

Free hearts are better so.'

II

The world, thou hast heard it told,
Has counted its robber-gold,
And the pieces stick to the hand.
The world goes riding it fair and grand,
While the truth is bought and sold!
World-voices east, world-voices west,
They call thee, Heart, from thine early
rest,
Come hither, come hither and be our
guest'
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Good hearts are calmer so.'

III

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's
Strife,
With a golden heft to his knife;
World's Mirth, with a finger fine
That draws on a board in wine
Her blood-red plans of life;
World's Gain, with a brow knit down;
World's Fame, with a laurel crown,
Which rustles most as the leaves turn
brown—
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Calm hearts are wiser so.'

IV

Hast heard that Proserpina
(Once fooling) was snatched away,
To partake the dark king's seat,—
And that the tears ran fast on her feet
To think how the sun shone yesterday!
With her ankles sunken in asphodel
She wept for the roses of earth which
fell
From her lap when the wild car drove
to hell.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Wise hearts are warmer so.'

V

And what is this place not seen,
Where Hearts may hide serene?
'Tis a fair still house well-kept,
Which humble thoughts have swept,
And holy prayers made clean.
There, I sit with Love in the sun,
And we two never have done
Singing sweeter songs than are guessed
by one.'
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Warm hearts are fuller so.'

VI

O Heart, O Love,—I fear
That Love may be kept too near.
Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,
How Love may be false and frail
To a heart once holden dear?
—'But this true Love of mine
Clings fast as the clinging vine,

And mingles pure as the grapes in wine.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —'No, no!
 Full hearts beat higher so.'

VII

O Heart, O Love, beware!—
 Look up, and boast not there,
 For who has twirled at the pin?
 'Tis the World, between Death and
 Sin,—
 The World, and the world's
 Despair!
 And Death has quickened his pace
 To the hearth, with a mocking face,
 Familiar as Love, in Love's own place—
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —'Still, no!
 High hearts must grieve even so.'

VIII

The house is waste to-day,—
 The leaf has dropt from the spray,
 The thorn, prickt through to the song,
 If summer doeth no wrong
 The winter will, they say.
 Sing, Heart! what heart replies?
 In vain we were calm and wise,
 If the tears unkissed stand on in oureyes.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —'Ah, no!
 Grieved hearts must break even so.'

IX

Howbeit all is not lost.
 The warm noon ends in frost,
 And worldly tongues of promise,
 Like sheep-bells, die off from us
 On the desert hills cloud-crossed!
 Yet, through the silence, shall
 Pierce the death-angel's call,
 And 'Come up hither,' recover all.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —'I go!
 Broken hearts triumph so.'

WISDOM UNAPPLIED

I

If I were thou, O butterfly,
 And poised my purple wing to spy
 The sweetest flowers that live and die,

II
 I would not waste my strength on those,
 As thou,—for summer has a close,
 And pansies bloom not in the snows.

III

If I were thou, O working bee,
 And all that honey-gold I see
 Could delve from roses easily,

IV

I would not hive it at man's door.
 As thou,—that heirdom of my store
 Should make him rich, and leave me poor.

V

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
 And screamed the thunder back aloud,
 And faced the lightning from the cloud,

VI

I would not build my eyrie-throne,
 As thou,—upon a crumbling stone,
 Which the next storm may trample down.

VII

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
 With pawing hoof, and dancing head,
 And eye outrunning thine own speed,

VIII

I would not meeken to the rein,
 As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain
 From the glad desert's snort and strain.

IX

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
 With song at shut-up window heard,
 Like Love's sweet yes too long deferred,

X

I would not overstay delight,
 As thou,—but take a swallow-flight,
 Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
 Upon my brow, whose pride did fade
 As thus, methought, an angel said,—

XII

'If I were thou who sing'st this song,
 Most wise for others, and most strong
 In seeing right while doing wrong,

xiii

'I would not waste my cares, and choose,
As thou,—to seek what thou must lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

xiv

'I would not work where none can win,
As thou,—half way 'twixt grief and sin,
But look above, and judge within.

xv

'I would not let my pulse beat high,
As thou,—towards fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

xvi

'I would not champ the hard cold bit,
As thou,—of what the world thinks fit,
But take God's freedom, using it.

xvii

'I would not play earth's winter out,
As thou,—but gird my soul about,
And live for life past death and doubt.

xviii

'Then sing, O singer!—but allow,
Beast, fly, and bird, called foolish now,
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as thou!'

MEMORY AND HOPE

I

BACK-LOOKING Memory

And prophet Hope both sprang from out
the ground;
One, where the flashing of Cherubic
sword
Fell sad, in Eden's ward,—
And one, from Eden earth, within the
sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,
What time the promise after curse was
said—
'Thy seed shall bruise his head.'

II

Poor Memory's brain is wild,
As moonstruck by that flaming atmo-
sphere
When she was born. Her deep eyes
shine and shone
With light that conquereth sun

And stars to wanner paleness year by
year.

With odorous gums, she mixeth things
defiled:

She trampleth down earth's grasses green
and sweet,

With her far-wandering feet.

III

She plucketh many flowers,
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness
killing:

She teacheth every melancholy sound
To winds and waters round:

She droppeth tears with seed where man
is tilling.

The rugged soil in his exhausted hours:
She smileth—ah me! in her smile doth go
A mood of deeper woe.

IV

Hope tripped on out of sight,
Crowned with an Eden wreath she saw
not wither,
And went a-nodding through the wilder-
ness

With brow that shone no less
Than a sea-gull's wing, brought nearer
by rough weather;
Searching the treeless rock for fruits of
light;

Her fair quick feet being armed from
stones and cold
By slippers of pure gold.

V

Memory did Hope much wrong
And, while she dreamed, her slippers
stole away;
But still she wended on with mirth un-
heeding,
Although her feet were bleeding,
Till Memory tracked her on a certain day,
And with most evil eyes did search her
long

And cruelly, whercat she sank to ground
In a stark deadly swound.

VI

And so my Hope were slain,
Had it not been that Thou wast standing
near,
O Thou, who saidest 'live,' to creatures
lying
In their own blood and dying!

For Thou her forehead to Thine heart didst
 rear
And make its silent pulses sing again,—
Pouring a new light o'er her darkened
 eyne,
With tender tears from Thine!

VII

Therefore my Hope arose
From out her swound and gazed upon
 Thy face,
And, meeting there that soft subduing
 look

Which Peter's spirit shook,
Sank downward in a rapture to embrace
Thy pierced hands and feet with kisses
 close,
And prayed Thee to assist her evermore
To 'reach the things before.'

VIII

Then gavest Thou the smile
Whence angel-wings thrill quick like
 summer lightning,
Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where she
 never

From Love and Faith may sever.—
Whereat the Eden crown she saw not
 whitening
A time ago, though whitening all the
 while,
Reddened with life, to hear the Voice
 which talked
To Adam as He walked.

HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY

I

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
We build the house where we may
 rest,
And then, at moments, suddenly,
We look up to the great wide sky,
Inquiring wherefore we were born . . .
For earnest, or for jest?

II

The senses folding thick and dark
About the stifled soul within,

We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond;
We strike out blindly to a mark
 Believed in, but not seen.

III

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twine about God's seat
While, freshening upward to His feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
 Expands from world to world.

IV

And, in the tumult and excess
 Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
 Through all things that are done.

V

God keeps His holy mysteries
Just on the outside of man's dream.
In diapason slow, we think
To hear their pinions rise and sink,
While they float pure beneath His eyes,
 Like swans adown a stream.

VI

Abstractions, are they, from the forms
 Of His great beauty!—exaltations
From His great glory!—strong previsions
Of what we shall be!—intuitions
Of what we are—in calms and storms,
 Beyond our peace and passions?

VII

Things nameless! which, in passing so,
Do stroke us with a subtle grace.
We say, 'Who passes?'—they are dumb.
We cannot see them go or come:
Their touches fall soft—cold—as snow
 Upon a blind man's face.

VIII

Yet, touching so, they draw above
 Our common thoughts to Heaven's
 unknown;
Our daily joy and pain, advance
To a divine significance,—
Our human love—O mortal love,
 That light is not its own!

ix

And, sometimes, horror chills our blood
 To be so near such mystic Things,
 And we wrap round us, for defence,
 Our purple manners, moods of sense—
 As angels, from the face of God,
 Stand hidden in their wings.

x

And, sometimes, through life's heavy
 swound
 We grope for them!—with strangled
 breath
 We stretch our hands abroad and try
 To reach them in our agony,—
 And widen, so, the broad life-wound
 Which soon is large enough for death.

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD

I

THEY say that God lives very high :
 But if you look above the pines
 You cannot see our God ; and why ?

II

And if you dig down in the mines
 You never see Him in the gold ;
 Though, from Him, all that's glory shines.

III

God is so good, He wears a fold
 Of heaven and earth across His face—
 Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

IV

But still I feel that His embrace
 Slides down by thrills, through all
 things made,
 Through sight and sound of every place.

V

As if my tender mother laid
 On my shut lids her kisses' pressure,
 Half-waking me at night, and said
 'Who kissed you through the dark,
 dear guesser ?'

THE CLAIM

I

GRIEF sat upon a rock and sighed one
 day,
 (Sighing is all her rest !)
 'Wellaway, wellaway, ah, wellaway !'
 As ocean beat the stone, did she her
 breast,
 'Ah, wellaway ! . . . ah me ! alas, ah me !'
 Such sighing uttered she.

II

A Cloud spake out of heaven, as soft as
 rain
 That falls on water,—'Lo,
 The Winds have wandered from me !
 I remain
 Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot go
 To lean my whiteness on the mountain
 blue
 Till wanted for more dew.

III

'The Sun has struck my brain to weary
 peace,
 Whereby constrained and pale
 I spin for him a larger golden fleece
 Than Jason's, yearning for as full a sail.
 Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighed to
 thy mind,
 Give me a sigh for wind,

IV

'And let it carry me adown the west.'
 But Love, who, prostrated,
 Lay at Grief's foot, his listed eyes
 possessed
 Of her full image, answered in her stead :
 'Now nay, now nay ! she shall not give
 away
 What is my wealth, for any Cloud that
 flieh.
 Where Grief makes moan,
 Love claims his own !
 And therefore do I lie here night and day,
 And eke my life out with the breath she
 sightheth.'

SONG OF THE ROSE

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO

(From Achilles Tatius)

If Zeus chose us a King of the flowers
in his mirth,
He would call to the rose and would
royally crown it,
For the rose, ho, the rose ! is the grace
of the earth,
Is the light of the plants that are
growing upon it.
For the rose, ho, the rose ! is the eye of
the flowers,
Is the blush of the meadows that feel
themselves fair,—
Is the lightning of beauty, that strikes
through the bowers
On pale lovers who sit in the glow
unaware.
Ho, the rose breathes of love ! ho, the
rose lifts the cup
To the red lips of Cypris invoked for
a guest !
Ho, the rose, having curled its sweet
eaves for the world,
Takes delight in the motion its petals
keep up,
As they laugh to the Wind as it laughs
from the west.

A DEAD ROSE

I
O ROSE, who dares to name thee ?
No longer roseate now, nor soft, nor
sweet,
But pale, and hard, and dry, as stubble-
wheat,—
Kept seven years in a drawer—thy
titles shame thee.

II

The breeze that used to blow thee
Between the hedgerow thorns, and take
away
An odour up the lane to last all day,—
If breathing now, — unsweetened
would forgo thee.

III

The sun that used to smite thee,
And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn
Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower
to burn,—
If shining now,—with not a hue
would light thee.

IV

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined,
because
It lay upon thee where the crimson
was,—
If dropping now,—would darken,
where it met thee.

V

The fly that lit upon thee,
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet
Along thy leaf's pure edges after heat,—
If lighting now,—would coldly over-
run thee.

VI

The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up his
hive,
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce
alive,—
If passing now,—would blindly over-
look thee.

VII

The heart doth recognize thee,
Alone, alone ! the heart doth smell thee
sweet,
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee
most complete,
Perceiving all those changes that dis-
guise thee.

VIII

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose, than to any roses
bold
Which Julia wears at dances, smiling
cold !—
Lie still upon this heart—which
breaks below thee !

THE EXILE'S RETURN

I

WHEN from thee, weeping I removed,
And from my land for years,
I thought not to return, Beloved,
With those same parting tears.
I come again to hill and lea,
Weeping for thee.

II

I clasped thine hand, when standing last
Upon the shore in sight.
The land is green, the ship is fast,
I shall be there to-night.
I shall be there—no longer now—
No more with thee!

III

Had I beheld thee dead and still,
I might more clearly know,
How heart of thine could turn as chill
As hearts by nature so;
How change could touch the falsehood-free
And changless *thee*.

IV

But now thy fervid looks last-seen
Within my soul remain;
'Tis hard to think that *they* have been,
To be no more again!
That I shall vainly wait—ah me!
A word from thee.

V

I could not bear to look upon
That mound of funeral clay,
Where one sweet voice is silence,—one
Ethereal brow decay;
Where all thy mortal I may see,
But never thee.

VI

For thou art where all friends are gone
Whose parting pain is o'er;
And I, who love and weep alone,
Where thou wilt weep no more,
Weep bitterly and selfishly,
For *me*, not *thee*.

VII

I know, Beloved, thou caust not know
That I endure this pain;
For saints in heaven, the Scriptures show,
Can never grieve again—
And grief known mine, even there,
would be
Still shared by thee.

THE SLEEP

He giveth His beloved sleep.—*Ps. cxvii. 2.*

I

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this—
'He giveth His beloved, sleep!'

II

What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart, to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,
The patriot's voice, to teach and rouse,
The monarch's crown, to light the
brows?—
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

III

What do we give to our beloved?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to overwep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake.
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

IV

'Sleep soft, beloved!' we sometimes say,
But have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids
creep.
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

V

O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men, with wailing in your voices!
O delvèd gold, the wailers heap!
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth His beloved, sleep.

VI

His dews drop mutely on the hill ;
His cloud above it saileth still,
Though on its slope men sow and reap.
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

VII

Aye, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man
Confirmed in such a rest to keep ;
But angels say, and through the word
I think their happy smile is heard—
‘ He giveth His beloved, sleep.’

VIII

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the mummers
leap,
Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on His love repose,
Who giveth His beloved, sleep.

IX

And, friends, dear friends,—when it
shall be
That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let One, most loving of you all,
Say, ‘ Not a tear must o'er her fall ;
He giveth His beloved, sleep.’

THE MEASURE

He comprehended the dust of the earth in a
measure (*וְיַע*).—*Isaiah xl. 12.*

Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure
(*רִבָּע*)¹.—*Psalms lxxx. 5.*

I

God, the Creator, with a pulseless hand
Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
The dust of earth and tears of man in one
Measure, and by one weight.
So saith His holy book.

II

Shall we, then, who have issued from
the dust,
And there return,—shall we, who toil
for dust,

¹ I believe that the word occurs in no other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

And wrap our winnings in this dusty life,
Say, ‘ No more tears, Lord God !
The measure runneth o'er ! ’

III

Oh, Holder of the balance, laughest Thou !
Nay, Lord ! be gentler to our foolishness,
For His sake who assumed our dust and
turns

On Thee pathetic eyes
Still moistened with our tears.

IV

And teach us, O our Father, while we
weep,
To look in patience upon earth and
learn—
Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at last
These tearful eyes be filled
With the dry dust of death.

COWPER'S GRAVE

I

It is a place where poets crowned may
feel the heart's decaying ;
It is a place where happy saints may
weep amid their praying.
Yet let the grief and humbleness, as low
as silence, languish :
Earth surely now may give her calm to
whom she gave her anguish.

II

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was
poured the deathless singing !
O Christians, at your cross of hope, a
hopeless hand was clinging !
O men, this man in brotherhood your
weary paths beguiling,
Groaned only while he taught you peace,
and died while ye were smiling !

III

And now, what time ye all may read
through dimming tears his story,
How discord on the music fell, and dark-
ness on the glory,
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds
and wandering lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so
broken-hearted.

IV

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's
high vocation,
. And bow the meekest Christian down in
meeker adoration;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise
or good forsaken,
Named softly as the household name of
one whom God hath taken.

V

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn
to think upon him,—
. With meekness that is gratefulness to
God whose heaven hath won him,
Who suffered once the madness-cloud to
His own love to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where
breath and bird could find him;

VI

And wrought within his shattered brain
such quick poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars,
harmonious influences.
The pulse of dew upon the grass, kept
his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees re-
freshed him like a slumber.

VII

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods
to share his home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan
tenderesses.
The very world, by God's constraint,
from falsehood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside
him, true and loving.

VIII

And though, in blindness, he remained
unconscious of that guiding,
And things provided came without the
sweet sense of providing,
He testified this solemn truth, while
frenzy desolated,
—Nor man nor nature satisfy whom only
God created.

IX

Like a sick child that knoweth not his
mother while she blesses
And drops upon his burning brow the
coolness of her kisses,—

That turns his fevered eyes around—‘My
mother! where's my mother?’—
As if such tender words and deeds could
come from any other!—

X

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he
sees her bending o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love, the
unweary love she bore him!—
Thus, woke the poet from the dream his
life's long fever gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes, which
closed in death to save him.

XI

Thus! oh, not *thus!* no type of earth can
image that awaking,
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of
seraphs, round him breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul
from body parted,
But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—
‘*My Saviour! not deserted!*’

XII

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when
the cross in darkness rested,
Upon the Victim's hidden face, no love
was manifested?
What frantic hands outstretched have
e'er the atoning drops averted?
What tears have washed them from the
soul, that *one* should be deserted?

XIII

Deserted! God could separate from His
own essence rather;
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the
righteous Son and Father.
Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His
universe hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, ‘*My God, I
am forsaken!*’

XIV

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His
lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those
words of desolation!
That earth's worst frenzies, marring
hope, should mar not hope's
fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see
his rapture in a vision.

THE WEAKEST THING

I

WHICH is the weakest thing of all
Mine heart can ponder?
The sun, a little cloud can pall
With darkness yonder?
The cloud, a little wind can move
Where'er it listeth?
The wind, a little leaf above,
Though sere, resisteth?

II

What time that yellow leaf was green,
My days were gladder;
But now, whatever Spring may mean,
I must grow sadder.
Ah me! a *leaf* with sighs can wring
My lips asunder?
Then is mine heart the weakest thing
Itself can ponder.

III

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are pined
And drop together,
And at a blast which is not wind
The forests wither,
Thou, from the darkening deathly curse,
To glory breakest,—
The Strongest of the universe
Guarding the weakest!

THE PET-NAME

— the name

Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress.
MISS MITFORD'S Dramatic Scenes.

I

I HAVE a name, a little name,
Uncadenced for the ear,
Unhonoured by ancestral claim,
Unsanctified by prayer and psalm
The solemn font anear.

II

It never did, to pages wove
For gay romance, belong;
It never dedicate did move
As 'Sacharissa,' unto love—
'Orinda,' unto song.

III
Though I write books it will be read
Upon the leaves of none,
And afterward, when I am dead,
Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,
Across my funeral-stone.

IV

This name, whoever chance to call,
Perhaps your smile may win.
Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes, and feel withal
The sudden tears within.

V

Is there a leaf that greenly grows
Where summer meadows bloom,
But gathereth the winter snows,
And changeth to the hue of those,
If lasting till they come?

VI

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time encrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the same?
And so to me my very name
Assumes a mournful sound.

VII

My brother gave that name to me
When we were children twain,—
When names acquired baptismally
Were hard to utter, as to see
That life had any pain.

VIII

No shade was on us then, save one
Of chestnuts from the hill—
And through the word our laugh did run
As part thereof. The mirth being done,
He calls me by it still.

IX

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it
What none of you can hear,—
The talk upon the willow seat,
The bird and wind that did repeat
Around, our human cheer.

X

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,
My sisters' woodland glee,—
My father's praise, I did not miss,
When stooping down he cared to kiss
The poet at his knee,—

XI

And voices, which, to name me, ay
 Their tenderest tones were keeping—
 To some I never more can say
 An answer, till God wipes away
 In heaven these drops of weeping.

XII

My name to me a sadness wears,
 No murmurs cross my mind.
 Now God be thanked for these thick tears,
 Which show, of those departed years,
 Sweet memories left behind.

XIII

Now God be thanked for years enwrought
 With love which softens yet.
 Now God be thanked for every thought
 Which is so tender it has caught
 Earth's guerdon of regret.

XIV

Earth saddens, never shall remove
 Affections purely given ;
 And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
 The immortality of love,
 And heighten it with Heaven.

THE MOURNING MOTHER

OF THE DEAD BLIND

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,
 For thy blind boy in grave ?
 That no more with each other
 Sweet counsel ye can have ?—
 That he, left dark by nature,
 Can never more be led
 By thee, maternal creature,
 Along smooth paths instead !
 That thou canst no more show him
 The sunshine, by the heat ;
 The river's silver flowing,
 By murmurs at his feet ?
 The foliage, by its coolness ;
 The roses, by their smell ;
 And all creation's fullness,
 By Love's invisible ?

Weepest thou to behold not
 His meek blind eyes again,—
 Closed doorways which were folded,
 And prayed against in vain—
 And under which sate smiling
 The child-mouth evermore,
 As one who watcheth, wiling
 The time by, at a door ?
 And weepest thou to feel not
 His clinging hand on thine—
 Which now, at dream-time, will not
 Its cold touch disentwine ?
 And weepest thou still after,
 Oh, never more to mark
 His low soft words, made softer
 By speaking in the dark ?
 Weep on, thou mourning mother !

II

But since to him when living
 Thou wast both sun and moon,
 Look o'er his grave, surviving,
 From a high sphere alone.
 Sustain that exaltation,
 Expand that tender light,
 And hold in mother-passion
 Thy Blessed in thy sight.
 See how he went out straightway
 From the dark world he knew,—
 No twilight in the gateway
 To mediate 'twixt the two,—
 Into the sudden glory,
 Out of the dark he trod,
 Departing from before thee
 At once to light and God !—
 For the first face, beholding
 The Christ's in its divine,
 For the first place, the golden
 And tideless hyaline ;
 With trees, at lasting summer,
 That rock to songful sound,
 While angels, the new-comer,
 Wrap a still smile around.
 Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
 His happy voice he tries,
 Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
 Than others, o'er his eyes !
 Yet still, in all the singing,
 Thinks haply of thy song
 Which, in his life's first springing,
 Sang to him all night long ;

And wishes it beside him,
With kissing lips that cool
And soft did overglide him,
To make the sweetness full.
Look up, O mourning mother,
Thy blind boy walks in light!
Ye wait for one another,
Before God's infinite.
But thou art now the darkest,
Thou mother left below—
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,
Content that it be so,—
Until ye two have meeting
Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
And he shall lead thy feet in,
As once thou leddest his.
Wait on, thou mourning mother.

A VALEDICTION

I

God be with thee, my beloved—God be
with thee!
Else alone thou goest forth,
Thy face unto the north,
Moor and pleasance all around thee and
beneath thee,
Looking equal in one snow;
While I who try to reach thee,
Vainly follow, vainly follow,
With the farewell and the hollo,
And cannot reach thee so.
Alas, I can but teach thee!
God be with thee, my beloved—God be
with thee.

II

Can I teach thee, my beloved—can I
teach thee?
If I said, 'Go left or right,'
The counsel would be light,
The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich
thee.
My right would show like left;
My raising would depress thee,
My choice of light would blind thee,
Of way, would leave behind thee,
Of end, would leave bereft.
Alas, I can but bless thee!
May God teach thee, my beloved—may
God teach thee.

III

Can I bless thee, my beloved—can I
bless thee?
What blessing word can I,
From mine own tears, keep dry?
What flowers grow in my field where-
with to dress thee?
My good reverts to ill;
My calmesses would move thee,
My softnesses would prick thee,
My bindings up would break thee,
My crownings, curse and kill.
Alas, I can but love thee!
May God bless thee, my beloved—may
God bless thee.

IV

Can I love thee, my beloved—can I love
thee?
And is this like love, to stand
With no help in my hand,
When strong as death I fain would watch
above thee?
My love-kiss can deny
No tear that falls beneath it;
Mine oath of love can swear thee
From no ill that comes near thee.—
And thou diest while I breathe it,
And I—I can but die!
May God love thee, my beloved—may
God love thee.

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE

To win the secret of a weed's plain heart.
LOWELL

I

MOUNTAIN gorse, ever-golden,
Cankered not the whole year long!
Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hillside of this life, as bleak as
where ye grow?

II

Mountain blossoms, shining blos-
soms,
Do ye teach us to be glad
When no summer can be had
Blooming in our inward bosoms?

Ye, whom God preserveth still,—
Set as lights upon a hill,
Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty
liveth still!

III

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair,
Canopied with azure air,
That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak?
Ye, who live on mountain peak,
Yet live low along the ground, beside
the grasses meek!

IV

Mountain gorses, since Linnaeus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,—
For your teaching, ye should see us
Bowing in prostration new!
Whence arisen,—if one or two
Drops be on our cheeks—O world, they
are not tears but dew.

THE LADY'S YES

I

'Yes,' I answered you last night;
'No,' this morning, sir, I say.
Colours seen by candle-light
Will not look the same by day.

II

When the viols played their best,
Lamps above, and laughs below,
Love me sounded like a jest,
Fit for yes or fit for no.

III

Call me false or call me free—
Vow, whatever light may shine,
No man on your face shall see
Any grief, for change on mine.

IV

Yet the sin is on us both;
Time to dance is not to woo;
Wooing light makes fickle troth,
Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

v
Learn to win a lady's faith
Nobly, as the thing is high,
Bravely, as for life and death—
With a loyal gravity.

VI

Lead her from the festive boards,
Point her to the starry skies,
Guard her, by your truthful words,
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

VII

By your truth she shall be true,
Ever true, as wives of yore;
And her yes, once said to you,
SHALL be Yes for evermore.

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS

I

SHE has laughed as softly as if she sighed,
She has counted six, and over,
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well
tried—

Oh, each a worthy lover!
They 'give her time'; for her soul must
slip
Where the world has set the grooving.
She will lie to none with her fair red
lip—

But love seeks truer loving.

II

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,
As her thoughts were beyond recalling,
With a glance for *one*, and a glance for
some,

From her eyelids rising and falling;
Speaks common words with a blushing air,
Hears bold words, unreproving;
But her silence says—what she never
will swear—

And love seeks better loving.

III

Go, lady, lean to the night-guitar,
And drop a smile to the bringer,
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
At the voice of an indoor singer.
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes;
Glance lightly, on their removing;
And join new vows to old perjuries—
But dare not call it loving.

IV

Unless you can think, when the song is done,
No other is soft in the rhythm;
Unless you can feel, when left by One,
That all men else go with him;
Unless you can know, when upraised by his breath,
That your beauty itself wants proving;
Unless you can swear, 'For life, for death!'
Oh, fear to call it loving!

V

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day
On the absent face that fixed you;
Unless you can love, as the angels may,
With the breadth of heaven betwixt you;
Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
Through behoving and unbehoving;
Unless you can die when the dream is past—
Oh, never call it loving!

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS

I

Love me, sweet, with all thou art,
Feeling, thinking, seeing,—
Love me in the lightest part,
Love me in full being.

II

Love me with thine open youth
In its frank surrender;
With the vowed of thy mouth,
With its silence tender.

III

Love me with thine azure eyes,
Made for earnest granting!
Taking colour from the skies,
Can Heaven's truth be wanting?

IV

Love me with their lids, that fall
Snow-like at first meeting;
Love me with thine heart, that all
The neighbours then see beating.

V

Love me with thine hand stretched out
Freely—open-minded;
Love me with thy loitering foot,—
Hearing one behind it.

VI

Love me with thy voice, that turns
Sudden faint above me;
Love me with thy blush that burns
When I murmur, *Love me!*

VII

Love me with thy thinking soul—
Break it to love-sighing;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
On through living—dying.

VIII

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
When the world has crowned thee!
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
With the angels round thee.

IX

Love me pure, as musers do,
Up the woodlands shady;
Love me gaily, fast, and true,
As a winsome lady.

X

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
Further off or nigher,
Love me for the house and grave,—
And for something higher.

XI

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee*—half-a-year—
As a man is able.

A YEAR'S SPINNING

I

He listened at the porch that day,
To hear the wheel go on, and on;
And then it stopped—ran back away—
While through the door he brought
the sun.
But now my spinning is all done.

II

He sate beside me, with an oath
That love ne'er ended, once begun.
I smiled—believing for us both,
What was the truth for only one.
And now my spinning is all done.

III

My mother cursed me that I heard
A young man's wooing as I spun.
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,—
For I have, since, a harder known!
And now my spinning is all done.

IV

I thought—O God!—my first-born's cry
Both voices to mine ear would drown.
I listened in mine agony—
It was the silence made me groan!
And now my spinning is all done.

V

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave
(Who cursed me on her death-bed lone);
And my dead baby's (God it save!),
Who, not to bless me, would not moan.
And now my spinning is all done.

VI

A stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone!
Sweet neighbours, whisper low instead,
'This sinner was a loving one—
And now her spinning is all done.'

VII

And let the door ajar remain,
In case he should pass by anon;
And leave the wheel out very plain,—
That he, when passing in the sun,
May see the spinning is all done.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE

I

Five months ago the stream did flow,
The lilies bloomed within the sedge,
And we were lingering to and fro,
Where none will track thee in this snow,
Along the stream, beside the hedge.
Ah, sweet, be free to love and go!

For if I do not hear thy foot,
The frozen river is as mute,
The flowers have dried down to the
root.
And why, since these be changed
since May,
Shouldst thou change less than they?

II

And slow, slow, as the winter snow,
The tears have drifted to mine eyes;
And my poor cheeks, five months ago,
Set blushing at thy praises so,
Put paleness on for a disguise.
Ah, sweet, be free to praise and go!
For if my face is turned too pale,
It was thine oath that first did fail,—
It was thy love proved false and frail!
And why, since these be changed enow,
Should I change less than thou?

THAT DAY

I

I STAND by the river where both of us
stood,
And there is but one shadow to darken
the flood;
And the path leading to it, where both
used to pass,
Has the step but of one, to take dew
from the grass,—
One forlorn since that day.

II

The flowers of the margin are many to
see;
None stoops at my bidding to pluck
them for me.
The bird in the alder sings loudly and
long,—
My low sound of weeping disturbs not
his song,
As thy vow did that day.

III

I stand by the river—I think of the vow—
Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker,
be thou!
I leave the flower growing, the bird,
unreproved;—
Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*,
my beloved,
And my lover that day!

IV

Go, be sure of my love—by that treason
forgiven ;
Of my prayers—by the blessings they
win thee from Heaven ;
Of my grief—(guess the length of the
sword by the sheath's)
By the silence of life, more pathetic
than death's !
 Go,—be clear of that day !

A REED

I

I AM no trumpet, but a reed :
No flattering breath shall from me lead
A silver sound, a hollow sound ;
I will not ring, for priest or king,
One blast that in re-echoing
Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

II

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
A broken reed, the wind indeed
Left flat upon a dismal shore ;
Yet if a little maid, or child,
Should sigh within it, earnest-mild,
This reed will answer evermore.

III

I am no trumpet, but a reed.
Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
Their nets along the river's edge,
I will not tear their nets at all,
Nor pierce their hands, if they should fall ;
Then let them leave me in the sedge.

THE DEAD PAN

Excited by Schiller's *Götter Griechenlands*,
and partly founded on a well-known tradition
mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch (*De Oraculorum Defectu*), according to which, at the hour
of the Saviour's agony, a cry of 'Great Pan is
dead !' swept across the waves in the hearing
of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.
It is in all veneration to the memory of the
deathless Schiller that I oppose a doctrine still
more dishonouring to poetry than to Christi-
anity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious

paraphrase of the German poem was the first
occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this
direction, I take advantage of the pretence to
indulge my feelings (which overflow on other
grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear
friend and relative, with the earnestness of ap-
preciating esteem as well as of affectionate
gratitude. [1844.]

I

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence ?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide ! In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore ?
 Pan, Pan is dead.

II

In what revels are ye sunken,
In old Aethiopia ?
Have the Pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips, that shiver
Like the lotus in the river ?
 Pan, Pan is dead.

III

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows ?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,
And so kept alive and fine ?
 Pan, Pan is dead.

IV

Or lie crushed your stagnant corses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun !—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters ?
 Great Pan is dead.

V

' Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,'
Said the old Hellenic tongue !
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poets' songs the sweetest sung !
Have ye grown deaf in a day ?
Can ye speak not yea or nay—
 Since Pan is dead ?

VI

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All alone, O Naiades,
While your drenched locks dry slow in
This cold feeble sun and breeze ?—
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for ay.

For Pan is dead.

VII

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee ?
At the rushing thunderstroke, would
No sob tremble through the tree ?—
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for ay.

For Pan is dead.

VIII

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst ?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist ?
Not a sound the silence thrills
Of the everlasting hills.

Pan, Pan is dead.

IX

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings.—
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings !
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities,—

Now Pan is dead !

X

Jove, that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail,
While in idiocy of godhead
Thou art staring the stars pale !
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XI

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread ?
Will they lay, for evermore, thee,
On thy dim, straight, golden bed ?
Will thy quendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid ?

Pan, Pan is dead.

XII

Ha, Apollo ! floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands,
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands :
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou !

Pan, Pan is dead.

XIII

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,
And no hero take inspiring
From the god-Greek of her lips ?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it !

Pan, Pan is dead.

XIV

Bacchus, Bacchus ! on the panther
He swoons,—bound with his own vines ;
And his Maenads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,
'Evohe—ah—evohe—!'

Ah, Pan is dead !

XV

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone ;
And old Pluto deaf and silent
Is cast out into the sun :
Ceres smileth stern thereat,
'We all now are desolate—'

Now Pan is dead.'

XVI

Aphrodite ! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art ;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart !
Al Adonis ! at that shriek,
Not a tear runs down her cheek—

Pan, Pan is dead.

XVII

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another, huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly,—
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XVIII

What, and Hermes? Time enthralleth
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?
Nay, Pan is dead.

XIX

Crowned Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head;
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, unfed.
Scornful children are not mute,—
'Mother, mother, walk afoot—'
Since Pan is dead.'

XX

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!
For Pan is dead.

XXI

Gods, we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign!
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine!
Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXII

Even that Greece who took your wages
Calls the obolus outworn;
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn;
And the poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you—
And Pan is dead.

XXIII

Gods bereavèd, gods belated,
With your purples rent asunder!
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder!
Now, the goats may climb and crop
The soft grass on Ida's top—
Now, Pan is dead.

XXIV

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
When a cry more loud than wind
Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
From the piled Dark behind;
And the sun shrank and grew pale,
Bathed against by the great wail—
'Pan, Pan is dead.'

XXV

And the rowers from the benches
Fell,—each shuddering on his face—
While departing Influences
Struck a cold back through the place;
And the shadow of the ship
Reeled along the passive deep—
'Pan, Pan is dead.'

XXVI

And that dismal cry rose slowly
And sank slowly through the air,
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair!
And they heard the words it said—
'PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
PAN, PAN IS DEAD.'

XXVII

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
Hung for love's sake on a cross;
When His brow was chill with dying,
And His soul was faint with loss;
When His priestly blood dropped downward,
And His kingly eyes looked throneward—
Then, Pan was dead.

XXVIII

By the love He stood alone in
His sole Godhead rose complete,
And the false gods fell down moaning,
Each from off his golden seat;
All the false gods with a cry
Rendered up their deity—
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXIX

Wailing wide across the islands,
They rent, vest-like, their Divine!
And a darkness and a silence
Quenched the light of every shrine;
And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only,
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXX

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her,
Her lost god's forsaking look ;
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror,
And her crispy fillets shook,
And her lips gasped through their foam
For a word that did not come.

Pan, Pan was dead.

XXXI

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore !
And I dash down this old chalice,
Whence libations ran of yore.
See, the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike—as your glories must.

Since Pan is dead.

XXXII

Get to dust, as common mortals,
By a common doom and track !
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades call you back,
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXIII

By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
By our grand heroic guesses,
Through your falsehood, at the True,—
We will weep not . . . earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—

And Pan is dead.

XXXIV

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth ;
And those debonair romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phoebus' chariot-course is run :
Look up, poets, to the sun !

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXV

Christ hath sent us down the angels ;
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumined by altar-candles
Lit for blessed mysteries ;
And a Priest's hand, through creation,
Waveth calm and consecration—

And Pan is dead.

XXXVI

Truth is fair : should we forgo it ?
Can we sigh right for a wrong ?
God Himself is the best Poet,
And the Real is His song.
Sing His truth out fair and full,
And secure His beautiful.

Let Pan be dead.

XXXVII

Truth is large. Our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be :
Shame, to stand in His creation,
And doubt truth's sufficiency !—
To think God's song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling—

When Pan is dead.

XXXVIII

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure—
All of praise that hath admonisht,
All of virtue, shall endure,—
These are themes for poets' uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses,

Ere Pan was dead.

XXXIX

O brave poets, keep back nothing,
Nor mix falsehood with the whole :
Look up Godward ; speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul !
Hold, in high poetic duty,
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty.

Pan, Pan is dead.

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE

A. A. E. C. BORN JULY 1848. DIED
NOVEMBER 1849

I
Of English blood, of Tuscan birth, . . .
What country should we give her?
Instead of any on the earth,
The civic Heavens receive her.

II
And here, among the English tombs,
In Tuscan ground we lay her,
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
Our English words of prayer.

III

A little child!—how long she lived,
By months, not years, is reckoned:
Born in one July, she survived
Alone to see a second.

IV

Bright-featured, as the July sun
Her little face still played in,
And splendours, with her birth begun,
Had had no time for fading.

V

So, LILY, from those July hours,
No wonder we should call her;
She looked such kinship to the flowers,
Was but a little taller.

VI

A Tuscan Lily,—only white,
As Dante, in abhorrence
Of red corruption, wished aright
The lilies of his Florence.

VII

We could not wish her whiter,—her
Who perfumed with pure blossom
The house!—a lovely thing to wear
Upon a mother's bosom!

VIII

This July creature thought perhaps
Our speech not worth assuming;
She sate upon her parents' laps,
And mimicked the gnat's humming;

IX

Said 'father,' 'mother'—then, left off,
For tongues celestial, fitter;
Her hair had grown just long enough
To catch heaven's jasper-glitter.

X

Babes! Love could always hear and see
Behind the cloud that hid them.
'Let little children come to Me,
And do not thou forbid them.'

XI

So, unforbidding, have we met,
And gently here have laid her,
Though winter is no time to get
The flowers that should o'erspread
her.

XII

We should bring pansies quick with
spring,
Rose, violet, daffodilly,
And also, above everything,
White lilies for our Lily.

XIII

Nay, more than flowers, this grave
exacts,—
Glad, grateful attestations
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,
With calm renunciations.

XIV

Her very mother with light feet
Should leave the place too earthy,
Saying, 'The angels have thee, Sweet,
Because we are not worthy.'

XV

But winter kills the orange buds,
The gardens in the frost are,
And all the heart dissolves in floods,
Remembering we have lost her!

XVI

Poor earth, poor heart,—too weak, too
weak,
To miss the July shining!
Poor heart!—what bitter words we speak
When God speaks of resigning!

XVII

Sustain this heart in us that faints,
Thou God, the self-existent!
We catch up wild at parting saints,
And feel Thy Heaven too distant.

XVIII

The wind that swept them out of sin
Has ruffled all our vesture:
On the shut door that let them in,
We beat with frantic gesture,—

XIX

To us, us also—open straight!
The outer life is chilly—
Are we too, like the earth, to wait
Till next year for our Lily?

XX

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
My leaping, dimpled treasure,
At every word I write like these,
Clasped close, with stronger pressure!

XXI

Too well my own heart understands,—
At every word beats fuller—
My little feet, my little hands,
And hair of Lily's colour!

XXII

—But God gives patience, Love learns
strength,
And Faith remembers promise,
And Hope itself can smile at length
On other hopes gone from us.

XXIII

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer
Death,
Through struggle, made more glorious.
This mother stills her sobbing breath,
Renouncing, yet victorious.

XXIV

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts,
With spirit unbereav'd,—
'God will not all take back His gifts;
My Lily's mine in heaven!'

XXV

Still mine! maternal rights serene
Not given to another!
The crystal bars shine faint between
The souls of child and mother.

XXVI

Meanwhile, 'the mother cries, 'content!
Our love was well divided.
Its sweetness following where she went,
Its anguish stayed where I did.'

XXVII

Well done of God, to halve the lot,
And give her all the sweetness;
To us, the empty room and cot,—
To her, the Heaven's completeness.

XXVIII

To us, this grave—to her, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in;
To us, the silence in the house,—
To her, the choral singing.

XXIX

For her, to gladden in God's view,—
For us, to hope and bear on!—
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new
Beside the rose of Sharon.

XXX

'Grow fast in heaven, sweet Lily clipped,
In love more calm than this is,—
And may the angels dewy-lipped
Remind thee of our kisses!

XXXI

While none shall tell thee of our tears,
These human tears now falling,
Till, after a few patient years,
One home shall take us all in.

XXXII

'Child, father, mother—who, left out?
Not mother, and not father!—
And when, our dying couch about,
The natural mists shall gather,

XXXIII

'Some smiling angel close shall stand
In old Correggio's fashion,
And bear a LILY in his hand,
For death's ANNUNCIATION.'

CATARINA TO CAMOENS

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND
REFERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH
HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF
HER EYES

I

On the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long—adieu!
Hope withdraws her peradventure—
Death is near me,—and not you.
Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

II

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but hearkened that of yours—
Only saying
In heart-playing,
'Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
If the sweetest, his have seen!'

III

But all changes. At this vesper,
 Cold the sun shines down the door.
 If you stood there, would you whisper
 'Love, I love you,' as before,—
 Death pervading
 Now, and shading
 Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
 As the sweetest ever seen?

IV

Yes, I think, were you beside them,
 Near the bed I die upon,—
 Though their beauty you denied them,
 As you stood there, looking down,
 You would truly
 Call them duly,
 For the love's sake found therein,—
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

V

And if *you* looked down upon them,
 And if *they* looked up to *you*,
 All the light which has foregone them
 Would be gathered back anew.
 They would truly
 Be as duly
 Love-transformed to beauty's sheen,—
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

VI

But, ah me! you only see me,
 In your thoughts of loving man,
 Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
 Through the wavings of my fan,—
 And unweeting
 Go repeating,
 In your reverie serene,
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

VII

While my spirit leans and reaches
 From my body still and pale.
 Fain to hear what tender speech is
 In your love to help my bale—
 O my poet,
 Come and show it!
 Come, of latest love, to glean
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

VIII

O my poet, O my prophet,
 When you praised their sweetness so,
 Did you think, in singing of it,
 That it might be near to go?
 Had you fancies
 From their glances,
 That the grave would quickly screen
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen'?

IX

No reply! the fountain's warble
 In the court-yard sounds alone.
 As the water to the marble
 So my heart falls with a moan
 From love-sighing
 To this dying.
 Death forerunneth Love to win
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

X

Will you come? When I'm departed
 Where all sweetesses are hid;
 Where thy voice, my tender-hearted,
 Will not lift up either lid.
 Cry, O lover,
 Love is over!
 Cry beneath the cypress green—
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

XI

When the angelus is ringing,
 Near the convent will you walk,
 And recall the choral singing
 Which brought angels down our talk?
 Spirit-shriven
 I viewed Heaven,
 Till you smiled—'Is earth unclean,
 Sweetest eyes, were ever seen'?

XII

When beneath the palace-lattice,
 You ride slow as you have done,
 And you see a face there—that is
 Not the old familiar one,—
 Will you oftly
 Murmur softly,
 'Here, ye watched me morn and e'en,
 Sweetest eyes, were ever seen'?

xiii

When the palace-ladies, sitting
 Round your gittern, shall have said,
 'Poet, sing those verses written
 For the lady who is dead,'
 Will you tremble,
 Yet dissemble,—
 Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen'?

xiv

'Sweetest eyes!' how sweet in flowings
 The repeated cadence is!
 Though you sang a hundred poems,
 Still the best one would be this.
 I can hear it
 'Twixt my spirit
 And the earth-noise intervene—
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

xv

But the priest waits for the praying,
 And the choir are on their knees,
 And the soul must pass away in
 Strains more solemn high than these.
 Misere
 For the weary!
 Oh, no longer for Catrine,
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

xvi

Keep my ribbon, take and keep it
 (I have loosed it from my hair)¹,
 Feeling, while you overweep it,
 Not alone in your despair,
 Since with saintly
 Watch unfaintly
 Out of heaven shall o'er you lean
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

xvii

But—but now—yet unremovèd
 Up to Heaven, they glisten fast.
 You may cast away, Belovèd,
 In your future all my past.
 Such old phrases
 May be praises
 For some fairer bosom-queen—
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

¹ She left him the ribbon from her hair.

xviii

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing!
 Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss
 If a tear be of your showing,
 Dropped for any hope of His!
 Death has boldness
 Besides coldness,
 If unworthy tears demean
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

xix

I will look out to his future;
 I will bless it till it shine.
 Should he ever be a suitor
 Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
 Sunshine gild them,
 Angels shield them,
 Whatsoever eyes terrene
 Be the sweetest His have seen!

LIFE AND LOVE

I

Fast this Life of mine was dying,
 Blind already and calm as death,
 Snowflakes on her bosom lying
 Scarcely heaving with her breath.

II

Love came by, and having known her
 In a dream of fabled lands,
 Gently stooped, and laid upon her
 Mystic chrism of holy hands;

III

Drew his smile across her folded
 Eyelids, as the swallow dips;
 Breathed as finely as the cold did,
 Through the locking of her lips.

IV

So, when Life looked upward, being
 Warmed and breathed on from above,
 What sight could she have for seeing,
 Evermore . . . but only Love?

A DENIAL

I

We have met late—it is too late to meet,
O friend, not more than friend!
Death's forecome shroud is tangled
round my feet,
And if I step or stir, I touch the end.

In this last jeopardy
Can I approach thee, I, who cannot move?
How shall I answer thy request for love?
Look in my face and see.

II

I love thee not, I dare not love thee! go
In silence; drop my hand.
If thou seek roses, seek them where
they blow
In garden-alleys, not in desert-sand.
Can life and death agree,
That thou shouldst stoop thy song to
my complaint?
I cannot love thee. If the word is faint,
Look in my face and see.

III

I might have loved thee in some former
days.
Oh, then, my spirits had leapt
As now they sink, at hearing thy love-
praise.
Before these faded cheeks were over-
wept,
*Had this been asked of me,
To love thee with my whole strong
heart and head,—
I should have said still . . . yes, but
smiled and said,
'Look in my face and see!'

IV

But now . . . God sees me, God, who
took my heart
And drowned it in life's surge.
In all your wide warm earth I have no
part—
A light song overcomes me like a dirge.
Could Love's great harmony
The saints' keep step to when their
bonds are loose,
Not weigh me down? am I a wife to
choose?
Look in my face and see.

V

While I behold, as plain as one who
dreams,
Some woman of full worth,
Whose voice, as cadenced as a silver
stream's,
Shall prove the fountain-soul which
sends it forth;
One younger, more thought-free
And fairand gay, than I, thou must forget,
With brighter eyes than these... which
are not wet . . .
Look in my face and see!

VI

So farewell thou, whom I have known
too late
To let thee come so near.
Be counted happy while men call thee
great,
And one beloved woman feels thee
dear!—
Not I!—that cannot be.
I am lost, I am changed,—I must go
farther, where
The change shall take me worse, and
no one dare
Look in my face to see.

VII

Meantime I bless thee. By these
thoughts of mine
I bless thee from all such!
I bless thy lamp to oil, thy cup to wine,
Thy hearth to joy, thy hand to an equal
touch
Of loyal troth. For me,
I love thee not, I love thee not!—away!
Here's no more courage in my soul to say
'Look in my face and see.'

PROOF AND DISPROOF

I

Dost thou love me, my beloved?
Who shall answer yes or no?
What is provèd or disprovèd
When my soul inquireth so,
Dost thou love me, my beloved?

II

I have seen thy heart to-day,
Never open to the crowd,
While to love me ay and ay
Was the vow as it was vowed
By thine eyes of steadfast grey.

III

Now I sit alone, alone—
And the hot tears break and burn.
Now, Beloved, thou art gone,
Doubt and terror have their turn.
Is it love that I have known?

IV

I have known some bitter things,—
Anguish, anger, solitude.
Year by year an evil brings,
Year by year denies a good;
March winds violate my springs.

V

I have known how sickness bends,
I have known how sorrow breaks,—
How quick hopes have sudden ends,
How the heart thinks till it aches
Of the smile of buried friends.

VI

Last, I have known *thee*, my brave
Noble thinker, lover, doer!
The best knowledge last I have.
But thou comest as the thrower
Of fresh flowers upon a grave.

VII

Count what feelings used to move me!
Can this love assort with those?
Thou, who art so far above me,
Wilt thou stoop so, for repose?
Is it true that thou canst love me?

VIII

Do not blame me if I doubt thee.
I can call love by its name
When thine arm is wrapt about me;
But even love seems not the same,
When I sit alone, without thee.

IX

In thy clear eyes I desired
Many a proof of love, to-day;
But to-night, those unbelied
Speechful eyes being gone away,
There's the proof to seek, beside.

X

Dost thou love me, my beloved?
Only *thou* canst answer yes!
And, thou gone, the proof's disproved,
And the cry rings answerless—
Dost thou love me, my beloved?

QUESTION AND ANSWER

I

Love you seek for, presupposes
Summer heat and sunny glow.
Tell me, do you find moss-roses
Budding, blooming in the snow?
Snow might kill the rose-tree's root—
Shake it quickly from your foot,
Lest it harm you as you go.

II

From the ivy where it dapples
A grey ruin, stone by stone,—
Do you look for grapes or apples,
Or for sad green leaves alone?
Pluck the leaves off, two or three—
Keep them for morality
When you shall be safe and gone.

INCLUSIONS

I

Oh, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to
lie along in thine?
As a little stone in a running stream, it
seems to lie and pine.
Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, . . .
unfit to plight with thine.

II

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear,
drawn closer to thine own?
My cheek is white, my cheek is worn,
by many a tear run down.
Now leave a little space, Dear, . . . lest it
should wet thine own.

III

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, com-
mingled with thy soul?—
Red grows the cheek, and warm the
hand, . . . the part is in the whole!
Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate,
when soul is joined to soul.

INSUFFICIENCY

I
THERE is no one beside thee and no one above thee,
Thou standest alone as the nightingale sings!
And my words that would praise thee are impotent things,
For none can express thee though all should approve thee.
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can love thee.

II
Say, what can I do for thee? weary thee, grieve thee?
Lean on thy shoulder, new burdens to add?
Weep my tears over thee, making thee sad?
Oh, hold me not—love me not! let me retrieve thee.
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can leave thee.

THE LITTLE FRIEND¹

WRITTEN IN THE BOOK WHICH SHE MADE AND SENT TO ME

τὸ δὲ ἡδη ἐφ ὅφθαλμῶν ἀπελήλυθεν.
MARCUS ANTONINUS.

THE book thou givest, dear as such,
Shall bear thy dearer name;
And many a word the leaves shall touch,
For thee who form'dst the same!
And on them many a thought shall grow
'Neath memory's rain and sun,
Of thee, glad child, who dost not know
That thought and pain are one!

Yes! thoughts of thee, who satest oft,
A while since, at my side—
So wild to tame,—to move so soft,
So very hard to chide:
The childish vision at thine heart,
The lesson on the knee;
The wandering looks which *would* depart,
Like gulls, across the sea!

¹ This and the following eight Poems first appeared in 1838, but were omitted in the Collected Editions of 1850 and 1856.

The laughter, which no half-belief
In wrath could all suppress:
The falling tears, which looked like grief,
And were but gentleness:
The fancies sent, for bliss, abroad,
As Eden's were not done—
Mistaking still the cherub's sword
For shining of the sun!

The sportive speech with wisdom in 't—
The question strange and bold—
The childish fingers in the print
Of God's creative hold:
The praying words in whispers said,
The sin with sobs confess'd;
The leaning of the young meek head
Upon the Saviour's breast!

The gentle consciousness of praise,
With hues that went and came;
The brighter blush, a word could raise,
Were *that*—a father's name!
The shadow on thy smile for each
That on his face could fall!
So quick hath love been, *thee* to teach,
What soon it teacheth all.

Sit still as erst beside his feet!
The future days are dim,—
But those will seem to thee most sweet
Which keep thee nearest *him*!
Sit at his feet in quiet mirth,
And let him see arise
A clearer sun and greener earth
Within thy loving eyes!—

Ah, loving eyes! that used to lift
Your childhood to my face—
That leave a memory on the gift
I look on in your place—
May bright-eyed hosts your guardians be
From all but thankful tears,—
While, brightly as ye turned on *me*,
. Ye meet th' advancing years!

THE STUDENT

Τί σύν τοῦτο πρὸς σέ; καὶ οὐδὲν λέγω ὅτι πρὸς τὸν τεθηκότα, ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὸν γάρτα, τὸ δὲ ἔπαιρος;

MARCUS ANTONINUS.

'My midnight lamp is weary as my soul,
And, being unimmortal, has gone out.
And now alone yon moony lamp of heaven,
Which God lit and not man, illuminates

These volumes, others wrote in weariness
 As I have read them ; and this cheek and brow,
 Whose paleness, burnèd in with heats of thought,
 Would make an angel smile to see how ill
 Clay thrust from Paradise consorts with mind—
 If angels could, like men, smile bitterly.
 ' Yet must my brow be paler ! I have vowed
 To clip it with the crown which cannot fade.
 When it is faded. Not in vain ye cry,
 O glorious voices that survive the tongues
 From whence was drawn your separate sovereignty—
 For I would reign beside you ! I would melt
 The golden treasures of my health and life
 Into that name ! My lips are vowed apart
 From cheerful words ; mine ears, from pleasant sounds ;
 Mine eyes, from sights God made so beautiful,—
 My feet, from wanderings under shady trees ;
 Mine hands, from clasping of dear-loving friends,—
 My very heart, from feelings which move soft !
 Vowed am I from the day's delightsomeness,
 And dreams of night ! and when the house is dumb
 In sleep, which is the pause 'twixt life and life,
 I live and waken thus ; and pluck away Slumber's sleek poppies from my pained lids—
 Goading my mind with thongs wrought by herself,
 To toil and struggle along this mountain-path
 Which hath no mountain-airs ; until she sweat
 Like Adam's brow, and gasp, and rend away
 In agony, her garment of the flesh !'

And so his midnight lamp was lit anew,
 And burned till morning. But his lamp of life
 Till morning burned not ! He was found embraced,
 Close, cold, and stiff, by Death's compelling sleep ;
 His breast and brow supported on a page Characterized over with a praise of *faire*, Of its divineness and beatitude— Words which had often caused that heart to throb,
 That cheek to burn ; though silent lay they now,
 Without a single beating in the pulse, And all the fever gone !

I saw a bay Spring verdant from a newly-fashioned grave.

The grass upon the grave was verdanter, *That* being watered by the eyes of One Who bore not to look up toward the tree ! Others looked on it—some, with passing glance, Because the light wind stirred in its leaves ; And some, with sudden lighting of the soul In admiration's ecstasy !—Aye ! some Did wag their heads like oracles, and say, "Tis very well !"—but none remembered The heart which housed the root, except that One Whose sight was lost in weeping !

Is it thus, Ambition, idol of the intellect ? Shall we drink aconite, alone to use Thy golden bowl ? and sleep ourselves to death—

To dream thy visions about life ? O Power That art a very feebleness !—before Thy clayey feet we bend our knees of clay, And round thy senseless brow bind diadems

With paralytic hands, and shout 'a god,' With voices mortal hoarse ! Who can discern

Th' infirmities they share in ? Being blind, We cannot see thy blindness : being weak, We cannot feel thy weakness : being low, We cannot mete thy baseness : being unwise, We cannot understand thy idiocy !

STANZAS

I may sing ; but minstrel's singing
Ever ceaseth with his playing.
I may smile ; but time is bringing
Thoughts for smiles to wear away in.
I may view thee, mutely loving ;
But shall view thee so in dying !
I may sigh ; but life's removing,
And with breathing endeth sighing !
Be it so !

When no song of mine comes near thee,
Will its memory fail to soften ?
When no smile of mine can cheer thee,
Will thy smile be used as often ?
When my looks the darkness bounteth,
Will thine own be lighted after ?
When my sigh no longer soundeth,
Wilt thou list another's laughter ?
Be it so !

THE YOUNG QUEEN

This awful responsibility is imposed upon me
so suddenly and at so early a period of my life,
that I should feel myself utterly oppressed by
the burden, were I not sustained by the hope that
Divine Providence, which has called me to this
work, will give me strength for the performance
of it.—*The Queen's Declaration in Council.*

THE shroud is yet unspread
To wrap our crowned dead ;
His soul hath scarcely hearkened for the
thrilling word of doom ;
And Death, that makes serene
Even brows where crowns have been,
Hath scarcely time to meeten his for
silence of the tomb.

Saint Paul's king-dirging note
The city's heart hath smote—
The city's heart is struck with thought
more solemn than the tone !
A shadow sweeps apace
Before the nation's face,
Confusing in a shapeless blot the sepul-
chre and throne.

The palace sounds with wail—
The courtly dames are pale—
A widow o'er the purple bows, and
weeps its splendour dim :
And we who hold the boon,
A king for freedom won,
Do feel eternity rise up between our
thanks and him.

And while all things express
All glory's nothingness,
A royal maiden treadeth firm where that
departed trod !
The deathly scented crown
Weighs her shining ringlets down ;
But calm she lifts her trusting face, and
calleth upon God.

Her thoughts are deep within her :
No outward pageants win her
From memories that in her soul are
rolling wave on wave—
Her palace walls enring
The dust that was a king—
And very cold beneath her feet, she feels
her father's grave.

And One, as fair as she,
Can scarce forgotten be,—
Who clasped a little infant dead, for all
a kingdom's worth !
The mournèd, blessed One,
Who views Jehovah's throne,
Ay smiling to the angels, that she lost
a throne on earth.

Perhaps our youthful Queen
Remembers what has been—
Her childhood's rest by loving heart, and
sport on grassy sod—
Alas ! can others wear
A mother's heart for her ?
But calm she lifts her trusting face, and
calleth upon God.

Yea ! call on God, thou maiden
Of spirit nobly laden,
And leave such happy days behind, for
happy-making years !
A nation looks to thee
For steadfast sympathy :
Make room within thy bright clear eyes
for all its gathered tears.

And so the grateful isles
Shall give thee back their smiles,
And as thy mother joys in thee, in them
shalt thou rejoice ;
Rejoice to meekly bow
A somewhat paler brow,
While the King of kings shall bless thee
by the British people's voice !

VICTORIA'S TEARS

Hark! the reiterated clangour sounds!
Now murmur, like the sea or like the storm,
Or like the flames on forests, move and mount
From rank to rank, and loud and louder roll,
Till all the people is one vast applause.

LANDOR's *Gebir.*

'O MAIDEN! heir of kings!
A king has left his place!
The majesty of Death has swept
All other from his face!
And thou upon thy mother's breast
No longer lean adown,
But take the glory for the rest,
And rule the land that loves thee best!'—
She heard, and wept—
She wept, to wear a crown!

They decked her courtly halls;
They reined her hundred steeds;
They shouted at her palace gate,
'A noble Queen succeeds!'—
Her name has stirred the mountain's
sleep,
Her praise has filled the town!
And mourners God had stricken deep,
Looked hearkening up, and did not weep.
Alone she wept,
Who wept, to wear a crown!

She saw no purples shine,
For tears had dimmed her eyes;
She only knew her childhood's flowers
Were happier pageantries!
And while her heralds played the part,
For million shouts to drown—
'God save the Queen' from hill to mart,—
She heard through all her beating heart,
And turned and wept—
She wept, to wear a crown!

God save thee, weeping Queen!
Thou shalt be well beloved!
The tyrant's sceptre cannot move,
As those pure tears have moved!
The nature in thine eyes we see,
That tyrants cannot own—
The love that guardeth liberties!
Strange blessing on the nation lies,
Whose Sovereign wept—
Yea! wept, to wear its crown!

God bless thee, weeping Queen,
With blessing more divine!
And fill with happier love than earth's
That tender heart of thine!
That when the thrones of earth shall be
As low as graves brought down,
A pierced Hand may give to thee
The crown which angels shout to see!
Thou wilt not *weep*
To wear that heavenly crown!

VANITIES

From fading things, fond men, lift your desire.

DRUMMOND.

Could ye be very blest in hearkening
Youth's often danced-to melodies—
Hearing it piped, the midnight darkening
Doth come to show the starry skies,—
To freshen garden-flowers, the rain?—
It is in vain, it is in vain!

Could ye be very blest in urging
A captive nation's strength to thunder
Out into foam, and with its surging
The Xerxean fetters break asunder?
The storm is cruel as the chain!—
It is in vain, it is in vain!

Could ye be very blest in paling
Your brows with studious nights and
days,
When like your lamps your life is fading,
And sighs, not breath, are wrought from
praise?

Your tombs, not ye, that praise retain—
It is in vain, it is in vain!

Yea! but ye could be very blest,
If some ye nearest love were nearest!
Must they not love when lovèd best?
Must ye not happiest love when dearest?
Alas! how hard to feel again,—
It is in vain, it is in vain!

For those ye love are not unsighing,—
They are unchanging least of all:
And ye the loved—ah! no denying,
Will leave your lips beneath the pall,
When passioned ones have o'er it sain—
'It is in vain, it is in vain!'

A SUPPLICATION FOR LOVE

HYMN I

The Lord Jesus, although gone to the Father, and we see Him no more, is still present with His Church; and in His heavenly glory expends upon her as intense a love, as in the agony of the garden, and the crucifixion of the tree. Those eyes that wept, still gaze upon her.—*Recalled words of an extempore Discourse, preached at Sidmouth, 1833.*

God, named Love, whose fount Thou art,
Thy crownless Church before Thee stands,
With too much hating in her heart,
And too much striving in her hands!

O loving Lord! O slain for love!
Thy blood upon Thy garments came—
Inwrap their folds our brows above,
Before we tell Thee all our shame!

'Love as I loved you,' was the sound
That on Thy lips expiring sate!
Sweet words, in bitter strivings drowned!
We hated as the worldly hate.

The spear that pierced for love Thy side,
We dared for wrathful use to crave;
And with our cruel noise denied
Its silence to Thy blood-red grave!

An, blood! that speaketh more of love
Than Abel's—could we speak like Cain,
And grieve and scare that holy Dove,
The parting love-gift of the Slain?

Yet, Lord, Thy wronged love fulfil!
Thy Church, though fallen, before
Thee stands—
Behold, the voice is Jacob's still,
Albeit the hands are Esau's hands!

Hast Thou no tears, like those besprent
Upon Thy Zion's ancient part?
No moving looks, like those which sent
Their softness through a traitor's heart?

No touching tale of anguish dear;
Whereby like children we may creep,
All trembling, to each other near,
And view each other's face, and weep?

Oh, move us—Thou hast power to move—
One in the one Beloved to be!
Teach us the heights and depths of love—
Give THINE—that we may love like THEE!

THE MEDIATOR

HYMN II

As the greatest of all sacrifices was required, we may be assured that no other would have sufficed.—*BOYD'S ESSAY ON THE ATONEMENT.*

How high Thou art! our songs can own
No music Thou couldst stoop to hear!
But still the Son's expiring groan
Is vocal in the Father's ear.

How pure Thou art! our hands are dyed
With curses, red with murder's hue—
But He hath stretched His hands to hide
The sins that pierced them from Thy view.

How strong Thou art! we tremble lest
The thunders of Thine arm be moved—
But He is lying on Thy breast,
And Thou must clasp Thy best Beloved!

How kind Thou art! Thou didst not choose
To joy in Him for ever so;
But that embrace Thou wilt not loose
For vengeance, didst for love forgo!

High God, and pure, and strong, and kind!
The low, the foul, the feeble, spare!
Thy brightness in His face we find—
Behold our darkness only there!

THE WEEPING SAVIOUR

HYMN III

— tell
Whether His countenance can thee affright,
Tears in His eyes quench the amazing light
DONNE.

WHEN Jesus' friend had ceased to be,
Still Jesus' heart its friendship kept—
'Where have ye laid him?'—'Come and see!'
But ere His eyes could see, they wept.

Lord ! not in sepulchres alone,
Corruption's worm is rank and free;
The shroud of death our bosoms own—
The shades of sorrow ! Come and see !

Come, Lord ! God's image cannot shine
Where sin's funeral darkness
lowers—
Come ! turn those weeping eyes of Thine
Upon these sinning souls of ours !

And let those eyes, with shepherd care,
Their moving watch above us keep ;
Till love the strength of sorrow wear,
And as thou weepedst, we may weep !

For surely we may weep to know,
So dark and deep our spirit's stain ;
That had Thy blood refused to flow,
Thy very tears had flowed in vain.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

I
I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young :
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy
years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had
flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I
was ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did
move
Behind me, and drew me backward by
the hair,
And a voice said in mastery while I
strode, . . .
'Guess now who holds thee ?'—'Death,'
I said. But, there,
The silver answer rang, . . . 'Not Death,
but Love.'

II

But only three in all God's universe
Have heard this word thou hast said,—
Himself, beside
Thee speaking, and me listening ! and
replied
One of us . . . that was God, . . . and laid
the curse
So darkly on my eyelids, as to amerce
My sight from seeing thee,—that if
I had died,

The deathweights, placed there, would
have signified
Less absolute exclusion. 'Nay' is worse
From God than from all others, O my
friend !
Men could not part us with their worldly
jars,
Nor the seas change us, nor the tem-
pests bend ;
Our hands would touch for all the
mountain-bars,—
And, heaven being rolled between us at
the end,
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely
Heart !
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, be think
thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to ply
thy part
Of chief musician. What hast thou to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, . . . sing-
ing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree !
The chrism is on thine head,—on mine,
the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where
these agree.

IV

THOU hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems: where
The dancers will break footing, from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fullness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in;
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . . alone, aloof.

V

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen greyness. If thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
O my Belovéd, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand farther off then! go.

VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand

Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forbore, . . .
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

VII

THE face of all the world is changed,
I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwix me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought
to sink,
Was caught up into love, and taught
the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this . . . this lute and song . . .
loved yesterday
(The singing angels know) are only dear,
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who hast brought
the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained,
untold,
And laid them on the outside of the wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.

Ask God who knows. For frequent tears
have run
The colours from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

IX

CAN it be right to give what I can give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing
years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles which
fail to live
For all thy adjurations! O my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We are
not peers,
So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve,
That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out,
alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-
glass,
Nor give thee any love... which were
unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X

YET, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
And worthy of acceptance. Fire is bright,
Let temple burn, or flax. An equal light
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or
weed.
And love is fire; and when I say at need
I love thee... mark! ... *I love thee!* ... in
thy sight
I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
With conscience of the new rays that
proceed
Out of my face toward thine. There's
nothing low
In love, when love the lowest: meanest
creatures
Who love God, God accepts while
loving so.
And what I *feel*, across the inferior
features
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
How that great work of Love enhances
Nature's.

XI

AND therefore if to love can be desert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
As these you see, and trembling knees
that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—
This weary minstrel-life that once was
girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
A melancholy music,—why advert
To these things? O Belovéd, it is plain
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!
And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
From that same love this vindicating
grace,
To live on still in love, and yet in vain...
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy
face.

XII

INDEED this very love which is my boast,
And which, when rising up from breast
to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
To draw men's eyes and prove the
inner cost...
This love even, all my worth, to the
uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shewn me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine
were crossed,
And love called love. And thus, I
cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own.
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all
faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden
throne,—
And that I love (O soul, we must be
meek!)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words
enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds
are rough,
Between our faces, to cast light on
each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach

My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself . . . me . . . that I should
 bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however
 wooded,
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its
 grief.

xiv

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
‘I love her for her smile . . . her look . . .
 her way
Of speaking gently, . . . for a trick of
thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes
 brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day’—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd,
 may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and
love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love
me for
Thine own dear pity’s wiping my cheeks
dry,—
A creature might forget to weep, who
bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love
thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's
eternity.

xv

ACCUSE me not, beseech thee, that I wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
For we two look two ways, and cannot
 shine
With the same sunlight on our brow
and hair.
On me thou lookest, with no doubting
care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline,—
Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's
 divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the
outer air
Were most impossible failure, if I strove

To failso. But I look on thee . . . on thee . . .
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
Hearing oblivion beyond memory!
As one who sits and gazes from above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

xvi

AND yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like
 a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and
fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart
shall grow
Too close against thine heart, henceforth
 to know
How it shook when alone. Why,
conquering
May prove as lordly and complete
 a thing
In lifting upward, as in crushing low!
And as a vanquished soldier yields his
sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody
earth,—
Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If thou invite me
forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

xvii

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
God set between His After and Before,
And strike up and strike off the general
 roar
Of the rushing worlds, a melody that floats
in a serene air purely. Antidotes
Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst
pour
From thence into their ears. God's
will devotes
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait
on thine.
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for
most use?
A hope, to sing by gladly? . . . or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
A shade, in which to sing . . . of palm
or pine?
A grave, on which to rest from singing? . . .
Choose.

xviii

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
To a man, dearest, except this to thee,
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
I ring out to the full brown length and say
'Take it.' My day of youth went
yesterday;
My hair no longer boundst to my foot's glee,
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more. It only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks, the
mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that
hangs aside
Through sorrow's trick. I thought the
funeral-shears
Would take this first, but Love is
justified,—
Take it, thou, . . . finding pure, from all
those years,
The kiss my mother left here when she
died.

xix

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
I barter curl for curl upon that mart.
And from my poet's forehead to my heart,
Receive this lock which outweighs
argosies,—
As purply black, as erst, to Pindar's eyes,
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed
athwart
The nine white Muse-brows. For this
counterpart, . . .
Thy bay-crown's shade, Belovèd, I
surmise,
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing
breath,
I tie the shadow safe from gliding back,
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth,
Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to lack
No natural heat till mine grows cold in
death.

xx

BELOVÈD, my Belovèd, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sate alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence
sink
No moment at thy voice, . . . but, link by link,
Went counting all my chains, as if that so
They never could fall off at any blow

Struck by thy possible hand . . . why,
thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech,—nor ever
call
Some prescience of thee with the
blossoms white
Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as
dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out
of sight.

xxi

SAY over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the
word repeated
Should seem 'a cuckoo-song,' as thou
dost treat it,
Remember, never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-
strain,
Comes the fresh Spring in all her green
completed.
Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's
pain
Cry . . . 'Speak once more . . . thou
lovest!' Who can fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven
shall roll—
Too many flowers, though each shall
crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love
me—tell
The silver iteration!—only minding, dear,
To love me also in silence, with thy soul.

xxii

WHEN our two souls stand up erect and
strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and
nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into
fire
At either curvèd point,—what bitter
wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should
not long
Be here contented! Think. In mounting
higher,
The angels would press on us, and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay.

Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the
unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour
rounding it.

xxiii

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?
And would the sun for thee more coldly
shine,
Because of grave-damps falling round
my head?
I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
But... so much to thee! Can I pour
thy wine
While my hands tremble? Then my
soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower
range.
Then, love me, Love! look on me...
breathe on me!
As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and ex-
change
My near sweet view of Heaven, for
earth with thee!

xxiv

LET the world's sharpness like a clasping
knife
Shut upon itself and do no harm
In this close hand of Love, now soft and
warm,
And let us hear no sound of human strife
After the click of the shutting. Life to
life—
I lean upon thee, dear, without alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm
Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots, acces-
sible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not
fewer:
Growing straight, out of man's reach, on
the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can make
us poor.

xxv

A HEAVY heart, Belovèd, have I borne
From year to year until I saw thy face,
And sorrow after sorrow took the place
Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
As the stringed pearls... each lifted in
its turn
By a beating heart at dance-time.
Hopes apace
Were changed to long despairs, till God's
own grace
Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
My heavy heart. Then thou didst bid
me bring

And let it drop adown thy calmly great
Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
Which its own nature doth precipitate,
While thine doth close above it, mediating
Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished
fate.

xxvi

I LIVED with visions for my company,
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor
thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not
free
Of this world's dust,—their lutes did
silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then thou didst
come... to be,
Belovèd, what they seemed. Their
shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendours (better,
yet the same,
As river-water hallowed into founts),
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—
Because God's gifts put man's best
dreams to shame.

xxvii

My own Belovèd, who hast lifted me
From this drear flat of earth where I was
thrown,
And, in betwixt the languid ringlets,
blown
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels see,

Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
Who camest to me when the world was
gone,
And I who looked for only God, found
thee!
I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.
As one who stands in dewless asphodel,
Looks backward on the tedious time he
had
In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,
Make witness, here, between the good
and bad,
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves
as well.

XXVIII

My letters! all dead paper, . . . mute and
white:—
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose
the string
And let them drop down on my knee
to-night.
This said, . . . he wished to have me in
his sight
Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple
thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this, . . . the paper's
light . . .
Said, *Dear, I love thee;* and I sank and
quailed
As if God's future thundered on my past.
This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has
paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast.
And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill
availed,
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do twine
and bud
About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's
nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides
the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better! rather instantly
Renew thy presence. As a strong tree
should,

Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all
bare,
And let these bands of greenery which
insphere thee,
Drop heavily down, . . . burst, shattered,
everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear
thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX

I SEE thine image through my tears to-
night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
Refer the cause?—Belovèd, is it thou
Or I, who makes me sad? The acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite,
May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and
vow
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out
of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's
amen.
Belovèd, dost thou love? or did I see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal,
For my soul's eyes? Will that light
come again,
As now these tears come . . . falling hot
and real?

XXXI

THOU comest! all is said without a word.
I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble
through
Their happy eyelids from an unaverr'd
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I err'd
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
The sin most, but the occasion . . . that
we two
Should for a moment stand unministered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near
and close,
Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears
would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely interpose.
Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
These thoughts which tremble when
bereft of those,
Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII

The first time that the sun rose on thine oath
 To love me, I looked forward to the moon
 To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
 And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
 Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe;
 And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
 For such man's love!—more like an out-of-tune
 Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
 To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,
 Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
 I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
 A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains
 may float
 'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
 And great souls, at one stroke, may do and dote.

XXXIII

Yes, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
 The name I used to run at, when a child,
 From innocent play, and leave the cow-slips piled,
 To glance up in some face that proved me dear
 With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
 Fond voices, which, being drawn and reconciled
 Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
 Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
 While I call God . . . call God!—So let thy mouth
 Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
 Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
 And catch the early love up in the late.
 Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
 With the same heart, will answer, and not wait.

XXXIV

With the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee
 As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
 Lo, the vain promise! is the same, the same,

Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?
 When called before, I told how hastily
 I dropped my flowers or brake off from a game,
 To run and answer with the smile that came
 At play last moment, and went on with me
 Through my obedience. When I answer now,
 I drop a grave thought—break from solitude;
 Yet still my heart goes to thee . . . ponder how . . .
 Not as to a single good, but all my good:
 Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
 That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
 And be all to me? Shall I never miss
 Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
 That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
 When I look up, to drop on a new range
 Of walls and floors . . . another home than this?
 Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
 Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
 That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,
 To conquer grief, tries more . . . as all things prove;
 For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
 Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.
 Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
 And fold within, the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI

When we met first and loved, I did not build
 Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
 To last, a love set pendulous between
 Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
 Distrusting every light that seemed to gild

The onward path, and feared to overlean
A finger even. And, though I have
grown serene
And strong since then, I think that God
has willed
A still renewable fear . . . O love,
O troth . . .
Lest these enclasped hands should never
hold,
This mutual kiss drop down between us
both
As an unowned thing, once the lips being
cold.
And Love, befalse! if he, to keep one oath,
Must lose one joy, by his life's star
foretold.

xxxvii

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul should
make
Of all that strong divineness which I
know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and
break.
It is that distant years which did not take
Thy sovranity, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to
undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to
forsake
The purity of likeness, and distort
Thy worthiest love to a worthless
counterfeit.
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate.
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills
a-snort
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

xxxviii

FIRST time he kissed me, he but only
kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I
write;
And, ever since, it grew more clean and
white, . . .
Slow to world-greetings . . . quick with
its 'Oh, list.'
When the angels speak. A ring of
amethyst
I could not wear here, plainer to my sight,
Than that first kiss. The second passed
in height

The first, and sought the forehead, and
half missed,
Half falling on the hair. Oh, beyond
meed!
That was the chrism of love, which love's
own crown,
With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
The third upon my lips was folded down
In perfect, purple state; since when,
indeed,
I have been proud and said, 'My love,
my own.'

xxxix

BECAUSE thou hast the power and own'st
the grace
To look through and behind this mask
of me
(Against which years have beat thus
blanchingly
With their rains) and behold my soul's
true face,
The dim and weary witness of life's
race!—
Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
Through that same soul's distracting
lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for a place
In the new heavens! because nor sin
nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neigh-
bourhood,
Nor all which others viewing, turn to
go, . . .
Nor all which makes me tired of all,
self-viewed, . . .
Nothing repels thee, . . . dearest, teach
me so
To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good.

xl

OH, yes! they love through all this world
of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love for-
sooth.
I have heard love talked in my early youth,
And since, not so long back but that the
flowers
Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans
and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no
ruth
For any weeping. Polypheme's white
tooth

Slip on the nut, if, after frequent showers,
The shell is over-smooth,—and not so
much

Will turn the thing called love, aside to
hate,

Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
A lover, my Belovéd! thou canst wait
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring
souls to touch,
And think it soon when others cry ‘Too
late.’

XLII

I THANK all who have loved me in their
hearts,
With thanks and love from mine. Deep
thanks to all

Who paused a little near the prison-wall,
To hear my music in its louder parts,
Ere they went onward, each one to the
mart's

Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall,
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
Own instrument didst drop down at thy
foot,
To hearken what I said between my
tears, . . .

Instruct me how to thank thee!—Oh, to
shoot

My soul's full meaning into future years,
That they should lend it utterance, and
salute

Love that endures, from Life that dis-
appears!

XLIII

'My future will not copy fair my past'—
I wrote that once; and thinking at my side
My ministering life-angel justified
The word by his appealing look upcast
To the white throne of God, I turned at
last,

And there, instead, saw thee, not un-
allied

To angels in thy soul! Then I, long tried
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's
staff

Gave out green leaves with morning
dews impearled.

I seek no copy now of life's first half:
Leave here the pages with long musing
curled,

And write me new my future's epigraph,
New angel mine, unhoped for in the
world!

XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the
ways.

I love thee to the depth and breadth and
height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of
sight

For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from
Praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's
faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with
the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God
choose,

I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV

BELOVÉD, thou hast brought me many
flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer
through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun
and showers.

So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts which here-
unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I
withdrew

From my heart's ground. Indeed, those
beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding; yet here's
eglantine,

Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they
shall not pine.

Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours
true,
And tell thy soul, their roots are left in
mine.

SONNETS

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION

With stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground !
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime
and whole,
And utter all myself into the air.
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET

THE seraph sings before the manifest God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,
And with the full life of consummate Heaven
Heaving beneath him, like a mother's breast
Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest.
The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,
Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven
For wronging him,—and in the darkness prest
From his own soul by worldly weights.
Even so,
Sing, seraph with the glory ! heaven is high.
Sing, poet with the sorrow ! earth is low.
The universe's inward voices cry
'Amen' to either song of joy and woe.
Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally !

BEREAVEMENT

WHEN some Belovèds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonished fell and could not pray,—
A thought within me to myself did say,
'Is God less God, that thou art left undone ?'
Rise, worship, bless Him, in this sack-cloth spun,
As in that purple !—But I answered,
Nay !
What child his filial heart in words can loose.
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely ? can he choose
But sob in silence with an upward gaze ?—
And my great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears both prayer and praise.

CONSOLATION

ALL are not taken ; there are left behind Living Belovèds, tender looks to bring, And make the daylight still a happy thing, And tender voices, to make soft the wind. But if it were not so—if I could find No love in all the world for comforting, Nor any path but hollowly did ring, Where 'dust to dust' the love from life disjoined,
And if, before those sepulchres unmoving, I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb Goes bleating up the moors in weary dearth), Crying 'Where are ye, O my loved and loving ?' ...
I know a Voice would sound, 'Daughter, I AM.
Can I suffice for HEAVEN, and not for earth ?'

TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD
IN HER GARDEN

WHAT time I lay these times anear thy feet,
Benignant friend, I will not proudly say
As better poets use, 'These flowers I lay,'
Because I would not wrong thy roses sweet,
Blaspheming so their name. And yet, repeat,
Thou, overleaning them this springtime day,
With heart as open to love as theirs to May,
—'Low-rooted verse may reach some heavenly heat,
Even like my blossoms, if as nature-true,
Though not as precious.' Thou art unperplexed,
Dear friend, in whose dear writings drops the dew
And blow the natural airs,—thou, who art next
To nature's self in cheering the world's view,—
To preach a sermon on so known a text!

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDS-WORTH BY B. R. HAYDON

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. He with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind
And very meek with inspirations proud,
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free
Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist!
No portrait this, with Academic air!
This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast
Upon the fullness of the heart, at last
Says no grace after meat. My wine has run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled,—yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food.
Dear Christ! when Thy new vintage fills
my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day
And gathered there the nosegay that you see,
Singing within myself as a bird or bee
When such do field-work on a morn of May.
But now I look upon my flowers, decay
Has met them in my hands more fatally
Because more warmly clasped,—and sobs are free
To come instead of songs. What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields, and gather more?
Another, sooth, may do it,—but not I!
My heart is very tired, my strength is low,
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

TEARS

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
 More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
 That is light grieving! lighter, none beset
 Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
 Tears! what are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,
 The mother singing,—at her marriage-bell
 The bride weeps.—and before the oracle
 Of high-famed hills, the poet has forgot
 Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace.
 Ye who weep only! If, as some have done,
 Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
 And touch but tombs,—look up! those tears will run
 Soon in long rivers down the lifted face.
 And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

GRIEF

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless;
 That only men incredulous of despair,
 Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
 Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
 Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
 In souls, as countries, lieth silent-bare
 Under the blanching, vertical eye-glares
 Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
 Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death:—
 Most like a monumental statue set
 In everlasting watch and moveless woe,
 Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
 Touch it: the marble eyelids are not wet;
 If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION

WHEN some beloved voice that was to you Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
 And silence, against which you dare not cry,
 Aches round you like a strong disease and new.—
 What hope! what help! what music will undo
 That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh.
 Not reason's subtle count. Not melody Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew.
 Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales, Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress trees
 To the clear moon! nor yet the spheric laws
 Self-chanted,—nor the angels' sweet All hails,
 Met in the smile of God. Nay, none of these.
 Speak THOU, availng Christ!—and fill this pause.

COMFORT

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
 From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
 Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
 Who art not missed by any that entreat.
 Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet!
 And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
 Let my tears drop like amber, while I go
 In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
 In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,
 To lose the sense of losing. As a child, Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
 Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth,
 Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
 He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
 A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
 Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
 Of God's will in His worlds, the strain
 unfolds
 In sad, perplexed minors. Deathly colds
 Fall on us while we hear and counter-
 mand
 Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-
 land
 With nightingales in visionary wolds.
 We murmur,—' Where is any certain
 tune
 Or measured music, in such notes as
 these?'—
 But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
 Are not so minded; their fine ear hath
 won
 The issue of completed cadences,
 And, smiling down the stars, they
 whisper—SWEET.

WORK

WHAT are we set on earth for? Say, to
 toil;
 Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
 For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
 And Death's mild curfew shall from
 work assoil.
 Goddid anoint thee with His odorous oil,
 To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns
 All thy tears over, like pure crystallines
 For younger fellow workers of the soil
 To wear for amulets. So others shall
 Take patience, labour, to their heart
 and hand,
 From thy hand, and thy heart, and thy
 brave cheer,
 And God's grace fructify through thee
 to all.
 The least flower, with a brimming cup,
 may stand,
 And share its dewdrop with another
 near.

FUTURITY

AND, O beloved voices, upon which
 Ours passionately call, because ere long
 Ye brake off in the middle of that song
 We sang together softly, to enrich
 The poor world with the sense of love,
 and witch
 The heart out of things evil,—I am
 strong,
 Knowing ye are not lost for ay among
 The hills, with last year's thrush. God
 keeps a niche
 In Heaven, to hold our idols: and albeit
 He brake them to our faces, and denied
 That our close kisses should impair their
 white,—
 I know we shall behold them raised,
 complete,
 The dust swept from their beauty,—
 glorified
 New Memnons singing in the great
 God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
 Like pulses in the Church's brow and
 breast!
 And by them we find rest in our unrest,
 And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet
 entreat
 God's fellowship, as if on heavenly seat.
 The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is
 prest
 Full many a sobbing face that drops its
 best
 And sweetest waters on the record
 sweet.
 And one is, where the Christ, denied
 and scorned,
 LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render
 plain,
 By help of having loved a little and
 mourned,
 That look of sovereign love and sovereign
 pain
 Which He, who could not sin yet
 suffered, turned
 On him who could reject but not sustain!

THE LOOK

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Aye, no word,
No gesture of reproach! the Heavens serene,
Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
Their thunders that way! the forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
What that look was, none guess; for those who have seen
Wrongs lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
Have missed Jehovah at the judgement-call.
And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
'I never knew this man'—did quail and fall,
As knowing straight THAT God,—and turned free
And went out speechless from the face of all,
And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—
'Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break My heart upon,
For all God's charge to His high angels may
Guard My foot better? Did I yesterday wash thy feet, My beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny Me 'neath the morning sun?
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?
The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
For when thy final need is dreariest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here—
My voice, to God and angels, shall attest,
Because I know this man, let him be clear.'

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

If God compel thee to this destiny,
To die alone,—with none beside thy bed
To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said,
And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
Pray then alone—'O Christ, come tenderly!
By Thy forsaken Sonship in the red Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness outspread,—
And the lone garden where Thine agony Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those
Permitted desolations, comfort mine!
No earthly friend being near me, interpose
No deathly angel 'twixt my face and Thine,
But stoop Thyself to gather my life's rose,
And smile away my mortal to Divine.'

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
A pleasant chant, ballad, or baircarole:
She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
Far more than of her flax; and yet the reel
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident control,
The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
To the dear Christian Church—that we may do
Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
Thusswifstandsteadfast,—thus,intent and strong;
While, thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
The better for the sweetness of our song.

PAIN IN PLEASURE

A Thought lay like a flower upon mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts like bees
For multitude and thirst of sweet-
nesses,—
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf
and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
That I might hive with me such thoughts,
and please
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I spoke,
The thought I called a flower, grew nettle-rough—
The thoughts, called bees, stung me to festering.
Oh, entertain (cried Reason, as she woke)
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to sting.

FLUSH OR FAUNUS

You see this dog. It was but yesterday I mused forgetful of his presence here Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear,
When from the pillow, where wet-cheeked I lay,
A head as hairy as Faunus, thrust its way Right sudden against my face,—two golden-clear
Great eyes astonished mine,—a drooping ear
Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray!
I started first, as some Arcadian, Amazed by goaty god in twilight grove;
But, as the bearded vision closer ran My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true PAN,
Who, by low creatures, leads to heights of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE

THE wind sounds only in opposing straits,
The sea, beside the shore; man's spirit rends
Its quiet only up against the ends
Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,
Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,
And losing by the loss it apprehends.
The flesh rocks round, and every breath it sends
Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah Lord,
Make room for rest, around me! out of sight
Now float me, of the vexing land abhorred,
Till in deep calms of space my soul may right
Her nature,—shoot large sail on lengthening cord,
And rush exultant on the Infinite.

AN APPREHENSION

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
That still grew gentler, till its pulse was less
For life than pity,—I should yet be slow To bring my own heart nakedly below The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances, My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge; I should fear
Some plait between the brows—some rougher chime
In the free voice . . . O angels, let your flood
Of bitter scorn dash on me! do ye hear What I say, who bear calmly all the time This everlasting face to face with God?

DISCONTENT

LIGHT human nature is too lightly lost
And ruffled without cause,—complaining
on,
Restless with rest—until, being over-
thrown,
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the inner-
most
Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun
Shine westward of our window,—straight
we run
A furlong's sigh, as if the world were lost.
But what time through the heart and
through the brain
God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved
before,
Attain to a calm. Aye, shouldering
weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from
shore,
And hear, submissive, o'er the stormy
main,
God's chartered judgements walk for
evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE

'O dreary life,' we cry. 'O dreary life!'
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks
and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping strife
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as
a knife
Against which we may struggle! ocean
girds
Unslackened the dry land, savannah-
swards
Unweary sweep,—hills watch, unworn;
and rise
Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-
trees,
To show above the unwasted stars that
pass
In their old glory. O thou God of old,
Grant me some smaller grace than comes
to these!—
But so much patience as a blade of grass
Grows by, contented through the heat
and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY
REASON

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we no
hope
Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
Of yon grey blank of sky, we might
grow faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls; but since
the scope
Must widen early is it well to droop,
For a few days consumed in loss and
taint!
O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted,—
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the
road,
Singing beside the hedge. What if the
bread
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
To meet the flints!—At least it may be
said,
'Because the way is short, I thank Thee,
God!'

EXAGGERATION

We overstate the ills of life, and take
Imagination (given us to bring down
The choirs of singing angels overshone
By God's clear glory) down our earth
to rake
The dismal snows instead,—flake follow-
ing flake,
To cover all the corn. We walk upon
The shadow of hills across a level
thrown,
And pant like climbers. Near the alder-
brake
We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
O brothers! let us leave the shame and
sin
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
The holy name of GRIEF! —holy herein,
That by the grief of ONE came all our
good.

ADEQUACY

Now by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
Belov'd England,—doth the earth appear
Quite good enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious
wills!
We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course, nor that the clear
Strong stars without significance in
sphere
Our habitation. We, meantime, our ills
Heap up against this good, and lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-
spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and
High Priest,
I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only to make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND

A DESIRE

THOU large-brained woman and large-
hearted man,
Self-called George Sand! whose soul,
amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance,
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can!
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus, in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength
and science,
Drawing two pinions, white as wings
of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the
place
With holier light! that thou to woman's
claim,
And man's, mightst join beside the
angel's grace
Of a pure geniussanctified from blame,—
Till child and maiden pressed to thine
embrace,
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND

A RECOGNITION

TRUE genius, but true woman! dost deny
Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets
worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice for-
lorn!—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name! and while
before
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer,
heart, and higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly
shore,
Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire.

THE PRISONER

I COUNT the dismal time by months and
years,
Since last I felt the green sward under
foot,
And the great breath of all things
summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth
appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant
spheres,
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at
Nature's lute
Sounds on behind this door so closely shut,
A strange, wild music to the prisoner's
ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels
too fine,
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and
shine
Streams, forests, glades,—and many a
golden train
Of sunlit hills, transfigured to Divine.

INSUFFICIENCY

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs
audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher,
rehearse.
To the individual, true, and the universe,
In consummation of right harmony.
But, like a wind-exposed, distorted tree.
We are blown against forever by the curse
Which breathes through nature. Oh, the
world is weak—
The effluence of each is false to all.
And what we best conceive, we fail to
speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments
fall,
And then resume thy broken strains, and
seek
Fit peroration without let or thrall.

TWO SKETCHES

I. H. B.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall
May take your memory to the perfect
Greek.
But when you front her, you would call
the cheek
Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
That bloom it wears could leave you
critical,
And that smile reaching toward the rosy
streak;
For one who smiles so, has no need to
speak
To lead your thoughts along, as steed to
stall.
A smile that turns the sunny side o' the
heart
On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open mart!
Let no man call the liberal sweetness,
sin.—
For friends may whisper, as they stand
apart,
'Methinks there's still some warmer
place within.'

II. A. B.

HER azure eyes, dark lashes hold in tee;
Her fair superfluous ringlets, without
check,
Drop after one another down her neck,
As many to each cheek as you might see
Green leaves to a wild rose! this sign
outwardly,
And a like woman-covering seems to
deck
Her inner nature. For she will not fleck
World's sunshine with a finger. Sympathy
Must call her in Love's name! and then,
I know,
She rises up, and brightens as she
should,
And lights her smile for comfort, and is
slow
In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
To smell this flower, come near it! such
can grow
In that sole garden where Christ's brow
dropped blood.

MOUNTAINEER AND POET

THE simple goatherd, between Alp and
sky,
Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,
Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
Esteems not his own stature larger by
The apparent image, but more patiently
Strikes his staff down beneath his clenching
fist,
While the snow-mountains lift their
amethyst
And sapphire crowns of splendour, far
and nigh,
Into the air around him. Learn from
hence
Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue
Your way still onward up to eminence!
Ye are not great because creation drew
Large revelations round your earliest
sense,
Nor bright because God's glory shines
for you.

THE POET

THE poet hath the child's sight in his breast,
And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed,
He views with the first glory. Fair and good
Fall never on him, at the fairest, best,
But stand before him holy and undressed
In week-day false conventions, such as would
Drag other men down from the altitude
Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
Why, God would tire of all His heavens,
as soon
As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst,
Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon!
And therefore hath He set thee in the midst,
Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune.
And praise His world for ever, as thou bidst.

HIRAM POWERS' GREEK SLAVE

THEY say Ideal beauty cannot enter
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
An alien Image with enshackled hands,
Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her
(That passionless perfection which he lent her,
Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)
To, so, confront man's crimes in different lands
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
Art's fiery finger!—and break up e're long
The serfdom of this world! appeal, fair stone,
From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!
Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
East grieves but west,—and strike and shame the strong,
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

LIFE

EACH creature holds an insular point in space;
Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a sound,
But all the multitudinous beings round
In all the countless worlds, with time and place
For their conditions, down to the central base,
Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
Life answering life across the vast profound,
In full antiphony, by a common grace?
I think, this sudden joyance which illumes
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run
From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs.
I think, this passionate sigh, which half-begun
I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes
Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

LOVE

WE cannot live, except thus mutually
We alternate, aware or unaware,
The reflex act of life; and when we bear
Our virtue outward most impulsively,
Most full of invocation, and to be
Most instantly compellant, certes, there
We live most life, whoever breathes
most air,
And counts his dying years by sun and sea.
But when a soul, by choice and conscience, doth
Throw out her full force on another soul,
The conscience and the concentration both
Make mere life, Love. For Life in perfect whole
And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,
As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.

HEAVEN AND EARTH

And there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.—*Revelation viii. 1.*
 God, who, with thunders and great voices kept
 Beneath Thy throne, and stars most silver-paced
 Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced
 Melodious angels round,—canst intercept
 Music with music,—yet, at will, hast swept
 All back, all back (said he in Patmos placed),
 To fill the heavens with silence of the waste
 Which lasted half an hour!—lo, I who have wept
 All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,
 And by that dread response of curse and groan
 Men alternate across these hemispheres,
 Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,
 In compensation for our stormy years!
 As heaven has paused from song, let earth, from moan.

THE PROSPECT

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,
 Leaning their faces on the window-pane
 To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,
 And shut the sky and landscape from their view.
 And thus, alas! since God the maker drew
 A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,
 The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,
 We miss the prospect which we are called unto
 By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,
 O man, my brother! hold thy sobbing breath,
 And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong,—
 That so, as life's appointment issueth,
 Thy vision may be clear to watch along
 Thesunsetconsummation-lights of death.

HUGH STUART BOYD¹

HIS BLINDNESS

God would not let the spheric Lights accost
 This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off
 With all her beckoning hills, whose golden stuff
 Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.
 Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—
 Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,
 To catch fair visions, rendered full enough
 By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—
 Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,
 Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's spring,
 And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eyes!
 Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seemed one thing,
 Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves
 Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on the wing!

HUGH STUART BOYD

HIS DEATH, 1848

BELOVED friend, who living many years
 With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,
 Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune
 To visible nature's elemental cheers:
 God has not caught thee to new hemispheres
 Because thou wast aweary of this one;—
 I think thine angel's patience first was done,

¹ To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of 'Cyprus Wine.' There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848. Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier, in this than the absent), fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sat by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

And that he spake out with celestial tears,
 'Is it enough, dear God? then lighten so
 This soul that smiles in darkness!'

Steadfast friend,
 Who never didst my heart or life mis-
 know,
 Nor either's faults too keenly appre-
 hend,—
 How can I wonder when I see thee go
 To join the Dead found faithful to the end?

HUGH STUART BOYD

LEGACIES

THREE gifts the Dying left me,—
 Aeschylus,
 And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock,
 Chiming the gradual hours outlike a flock,

Of stars whose motion is melodious.
 The books were those I used to read from,
 thus

Assisting my dear teacher's soul to un-
 lock

The darkness of his eyes. Now, mine
 they mock,
 Blinded in turn, by tears! now, mur-
 inorous

Sad echoes of my young voice, years
 agone

Intoning from these leaves the Grecian
 phrase,

Return and choke my utterance. Books,
 lie down

In silence on the shelf there, within gaze;
 And thou, clock, striking the hour's
 pulses on,

Chime in the day which ends these
 parting days!

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS

A POEM, IN TWO PARTS

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION

THIS poem contains the impressions of the writer upon events in Tuscany of which she was a witness. 'From a window,' the critic may demur. She bows to the objection in the very title of her work. No continuous narrative nor exposition of political philosophy is attempted by her. It is a simple story of personal impressions, whose only value is in the intensity with which they were received, as proving her warm affection for a beautiful and unfortunate country, and the sincerity with which they are related, as indicating her own good faith and freedom from partisanship.

Of the two parts of this poem, the first was written nearly three years ago, while the second resumes the actual situation of 1851. The discrepancy between the two parts is a sufficient guarantee to the public of the truthfulness of the writer, who,

though she certainly escaped the epidemic 'falling sickness' of enthusiasm for Pio Nono, takes shame upon herself that she believed, like a woman, some royal oaths, and lost sight of the probable consequences of some obvious popular defects. If the discrepancy should be painful to the reader, let him understand that to the writer it has been more so. But such discrepancies we are called upon to accept at every hour by the conditions of our nature, implying the interval between aspiration and performance, between faith and dis-illusion, between hope and fact.

O trusted broken prophecy,
O richest fortune sourly crost,
Born for the future, to the future lost!

Nay, not lost to the future in this case.
The future of Italy shall not be disinherited.

FLORENCE, 1851.

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS

PART I

I HEARD last night a little child go singing
'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the
church,
O bella libertà, O bella! stringing
The same words still on notes he went
in search
So high for, you concluded the upspring-
ing
Of such an nimble bird to sky from perch
Must leave the whole bush in a tremble
green,
And that the heart of Italy must beat,
While such a voice had leave to rise
serene

'Twixt church and palace of a Florence
street!
A little child, too, who not long had been
By mother's finger steadied on his
feet,
And still *O bella libertà* he sang.

Then I thought, musing, of the innume-
rous
Sweet songs which still for Italy out-
rang
From older singers' lips, who sang not
thus
Exultingly and purely, yet, with pang
Fast sheathed in music, touched the heart
of us

So finely, that the pity scarcely pained.
 I thought how Filicaja led on others,
 Bewailers for their Italy enchain'd,
 And how they called her childless among
 mothers,
 Widow of empires, aye, and scarce
 restrain'd
 Cursing her beauty to her face, as
 brothers
 Might a shamed sister's,—‘Had she
 been less fair
 She were less wretched,’—how, evoking
 so
 From congregated wrong and heaped
 despair
 Of men and women writhing under
 blow,
 Harrowed and hideous in a filthy lair,
 Some personating Image, wherein woe
 Was wrapt in beauty from offending
 much,
 They called it Cybele, or Niobe,
 Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for such,
 Where all the world might drop for
 Italy
 Those cadenced tears which burn not
 where they touch,—
 ‘Juliet of nations, canst thou die as we ?
 And was the violet crown that crowned
 thy head
 So over-large, though new buds made it
 rough,
 It slipped down and across thine eye-
 lids dead,
 O sweet, fair Juliet!’ Of such songs
 enough,
 Too many of such complaints! behold,
 instead,
 Void at Verona, Juliet's marble trough¹.
 As void as that is, are all images
 Men set between themselves and actual
 wrong,
 To catch the weight of pity, meet the
 stress
 Of conscience,—since 'tis easier to gaze
 long
 On mournful masks, and sad effigies,
 Than on real, live, weak creatures
 crushed by strong.

For me who stand in Italy to-day

¹ They show at Verona, as the tomb of Juliet,
 an empty trough of stone.

Where worthier poets stood and sang
 before,
 I kiss their footsteps, yet their words
 gainsay.
 I can but muse in hope upon this shore
 Of golden Arno as it shoots away
 Through Florence' heart beneath her
 bridges four!
 Bent bridges, seeming to strain off like
 bows,
 And tremble while the arrowy undertide
 Shoots on and cleaves the marble as it
 goes,
 And strikes up palace-walls on either
 side,
 And froths the cornice out in glittering
 rows,
 With doors and windows quaintly multi-
 plied,
 And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon
 all,
 By whom if flower or kerchief were
 thrown out
 From any lattice there, the same would
 fall
 Into the river underneath no doubt,
 It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall
 and wall.
 How beautiful! the mountains from with-
 out
 In silence listen for the word said next.
 What word will men say,—here where
 Giotto planted
 His campanile, like an unperplexed
 Fine question Heaven-ward, touching
 the things granted
 A noble people who, being greatly
 vexed
 In act, in aspiration keep undaunted?
 What word will God say? Michel's
 Night and Day
 And Dawn and Twilight wait in marble
 scorn²,
 Like dogs upon a dunghill, couched on
 clay
 From whence the Medicean stamp 's out-
 worn,
 The final putting off of all such sway

² These famous statues recline in the Sagrestia Nuova, on the tombs of Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Lorenzo of Urbino, his grandson. Strozzi's epigram on the Night, with Michel Angelo's rejoinder, is well known.

By all such hands, and freeing of the unborn
 In Florence and the great world outside Florence.
 Three hundred years his patient statues wait
 In that small chapel of the dim St. Lawrence.
 Day's eyes are breaking bold and passionate
 Over his shoulder, and will flash abhorrence
 On darkness and with level looks meet fate,
 When once loose from that marble film of theirs;
 The Night has wild dreams in her sleep, the Dawn
 Is haggard as the sleepless, Twilight wears
 A sort of horror; as the veil withdrawn
 'Twixt the artist's soul and works had left them heirs
 Of speechless thoughts which would not quail nor fawn,
 Of angers and contempts, of hope and love;
 For not without a meaning did he place
 The princely Urbino on the seat above
 With everlasting shadow on his face,
 While the slow dawns and twilights disapprove
 The ashes of his long-extinguished race,
 Which never more shall clog the feet of men.
 I do believe, divinest Angelo,
 That winter-hour, in Via Larga, when
 They bade thee build a statue up in snow¹,
 And straight that marvel of thine art again
 Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian glow,
 Thine eyes, dilated with the plastic passion,
 Thawing too, in drops of wounded manhood, since,
 To mock alike thine art and indignation,
 Laughed at the palace-window the new prince,—
 ('Aha! this genius needs for exaltation,

¹ This mocking task was set by Pietro, the unworthy successor of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

When all's said, and howe'er the proud may wince,
 A little marble from our princely mines!')
 I do believe that hour thou laughdest too,
 For the whole sad world and for thy Florentines,
 After those few tears—which were only few!
 That as, beneath the sun, the grand white lines
 Of thy snow-statue trembled and withdrew,—
 The head, erect as Jove's, being palsied first,
 The eyelids flattened, the full brow turned blank,—
 The right hand, raised but now as if it cursed,
 Dropped, a mere snowball (till the people sank
 Their voices, though a louder laughter burst
 From the royal window), thou couldst proudly thank
 God and the prince for promise and presage,
 And laugh the laugh back, I think verily,
 Thine eyes being purged by tears of righteous rage
 To read a wrong into a prophecy,
 And measure a true great man's heritage
 Against a mere great duke's posterity.
 I think thy soul said then, 'I do not need
 A princedom and its quarries, after all;
 For if I write, paint, carve a word, indeed,
 On book or board or dust, on floor or wall,
 The same is kept of God, who taketh heed
 That not a letter of the meaning fall
 Or ere it touch and teach His world's deep heart,
 Outlasting, therefore, all your lordships, sir!
 So keep your stone, beseech you, for your part,
 To cover up your grave-place and refer
 The proper titles; / live by my art.
 The thought I threw into this snow shall stir

This gazing people when their gaze
is done;
And the tradition of your act and mine,
When all the snow is melted in the sun,
Shall gather up, for unborn men, a sign
Of what is the true princedom,—aye,
and none
Shall laugh that day, except the drunk
with wine.'

Amen, great Angelo! the day's at hand,
If many laugh not on it, shall we weep?
Much more we must not, let us
understand.
Through rimer's sonneteering in their
sleep,
And archaists mumbling dry bones up
the land,
And sketchers lauding ruined towns
a-heap,—
Through all that drowsy hum of voices
smooth,
The hopeful bird mounts caroling from
brake,
The hopeful child, with leaps to catch
his growth,
Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweet sake!
And I, a singer also, from my youth,
Prefer to sing with these who are awake,
With birds, with babes, with men
who will not fear
The baptism of the holy morning dew
(And many of such wakers now are
here,
Complete in their anointed manhood, who
Will greatly dare and greatlier perse-
vere),
Than join those old thin voices with my
new,
And sigh for Italy with some safe sigh
Cooped up in music's twixt an o'hand ah,—
Nay, hand in hand with that young
child, will I
Go singing rather, '*Bella libertà*',
Than, with those poets, croon the
dead or cry
'Se tu men bella fossi, Italia!'

'Less wretched if less fair.' Perhaps
a truth
Is so far plain in this—that Italy,
Long trammelled with the purple of
her youth

Against her age's ripe activity,
Sits still upon her tombs, without
death's ruth,
But also without life's brave energy.
'Now tell us what is Italy?' men
ask:
And others answer, 'Virgil, Cicero,
Catullus, Caesar.' What beside? to
task
The memory closer—'Why, Boccaccio,
Dante, Petrarca,'—and if still the
flask
Appears to yield its wine by drops too
slow,—
'Angelo, Raffael, Pergolese,'—all
Whose strong hearts beat through stone,
or charged again
The paints with fire of souls electrical,
Or broke up heaven for music. What
more then?
Why, then, no more. The chaplet's
last beads fall
In naming the last saintship within ken,
And, after that, none prayeth in the
land.
Alas, this Italy has too long swept
Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand;
Of her own past, impassioned nympho-
lept!
Consenting to be nailed here by the
hand
To the very bay-tree under which she
stepped
A queen of old, and plucked a leafy
branch.
And, licensing the world too long indeed
To use her broad phylacteries to
staunch
And stop her bloody lips, she takes no
heed
How one clear word would draw an
avalanche
Of living sons around her, to succeed
The vanished generations. Can she
count
These oil-eaters, with large, live, mobile
mouths
Agape for macaroni, in the amount
Of consecrated heroes of her south's
Bright rosary? The pitcher at the
fount,
The gift of gods, being broken, she
much loathes

To let the ground-leaves of the place
confer
A natural bowl. So henceforth she
would seem
No nation, but the poet's pensioner,
With alms from every land of song and
dream,
While ay her pipers sadly pipe of
her,
Until their proper breaths, in that
extreme
Of sighing, split the reed on which
they played!
Of which, no more. But never say 'no
more'
To Italy's life! Her memories undis-
mayed
Still argue 'evermore,'—her graves
implore
Her future to be strong and not
afraid;
Her very statues send their looks before.

We do not serve the dead—the past
is past!
God lives, and lifts His glorious mornings
up
Before the eyes of men, awake at last,
Who put away the meats they used to
sup,
And down upon the dust of earth
outcast
The dregs remaining of the ancient cup.
Then turn to wakeful prayer and
worthy act.
The dead, upon their awful 'vantage
ground,
The sun not in their faces,—shall
abstract
No more our strength: we will not be
discrowned
As guardians of their crowns; nor
deign transact
A barter of the present, for a sound
Of good, so counted in the foregone
days.
O Dead, ye shall no longer cling to us
With rigid hands of desiccating praise,
And drag us backward by the garment
thus,
To stand and laud you in long-drawn
virelays!
We will not henceforth be oblivious

Of our own lives, because ye lived
before,
Nor of our acts, because ye acted well.
We thank you that ye first unlatched
the door,
But will not make it inaccessible
By thankings on the threshold any
more.
We hurry onward to extinguish hell
With our fresh souls, our younger
hope, and God's
Maturity of purpose. Soon shall we
Die also! and, that then our periods
Of life may round themselves to memory,
As smoothly as on our graves the
burial-sods,
We now must look to it to excel as ye,
And bear our age as far, unlimited
By the last mind-mark! so, to be in-
voked
By future generations, as their Dead

'Tis true that when the dust of death
has choked
A great man's voice, the common
words he said
Turn oracles,—the common thoughts
he yoked
Like horses, draw like griffins!—this
is true
And acceptable. I, too, should desire,
When men make record, with the
flowers they strew,
'Savonarola's soul went out in fire
Upon our Grand-duke's piazza¹, and
burned through
A moment first, or ere he did expire,
The veil betwixt the right and wrong,
and showed
How near God sate and judged the
judges there,—'
Upon the self-same pavement over-
strewed,
To cast my violets with as reverent
care,
And prove that all the winters which
have snowed

¹ Savonarola was burnt for his testimony against papal corruptions as early as March, 1493: and, as late as our own day, it has been a custom in Florence to strew with violets the pavement where he suffered, in grateful recognitio[n] of the anniversary.

Cannot snow out the scent from stones
and air,
Of a sincere man's virtues. This
was he,
Savonarola, who, while Peter sank
With his whole boat-load, called
courageously
'Wake Christ, wake Christ!'—Who,
having tried the tank
Of old church-waters used for baptistry
Ere Luther came to spill them, swore
they stank!
Who also by a princely deathbed cried,
'Loose Florence, or God will not loose
thy soul!'
Then fell back the Magnificent and
died
Beneath the star-look, shooting from
the cowl,
Which turned to wormwood bitterness
the wide
Deep sea of his ambitions. It were foul
To grudge Savonarola and the rest
Their violets! rather pay them quick
and fresh!
The emphasis of death makes manifest
The eloquence of action in our flesh;
And men who, living, were but dimly
guessed,
When once free from their life's en-
tangled mesh,
Show their full length in graves, or
oft indeed
Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,
To noble admirations which exceed
Most nobly, yet will calculate in that
But accurately. We, who are the
seed
Of buried creatures, if we turned and
spat
Upon our antecedents, we were vile.
Bring violets rather! If these had not
walked
Their furlong, could we hope to walk
our mile?
Therefore bring violets. Yet if we,
self-baulked,
Stand still, a-strewing violets all the
while,
These moved in vain, of whom we have
vainly talked.
So rise up henceforth with a cheerful
smile,

And having strown the violets, reap the
corn,
And having reaped and garnered,
bring the plough
And draw new furrows 'neath the
healthy morn,
And plant the great Hereafter in this
Now.
Of old 'twas so. How step by step
was worn,
As each man gained on each, se-
curely!—how
Each by his own strength sought his
own ideal,—
The ultimate Perfection leaning bright
From out the sun and stars, to bless the
leal
And earnest search of all for Fair and
Right,
Through doubtful forms, by earth ac-
counted real!
Because old Jubal blew into delight
The souls of men, with clear-piped
melodies,
If youthful Asaph were content at
most
To draw from Jubal's grave, with
listening eyes,
Traditional music's floating ghost
Into the grass-grown silence, were it
wise?
And was't not wiser, Jubal's breath
being lost,
That Miriam clashed her cymbals to
surprise
The sun between her white arms
flung apart,
With new, glad, golden sounds? that
David's strings
O'overflowed his hand with music from
his heart?
So harmony grows full from many
springs,
And happy accident turns holy art.
You enter, in your Florence wanderings,
The church of St. Maria Novella. Pass
The left stair, where at plague-time
Macchiavel¹
Saw One with set fair face as in a glass,

¹ See his description of the plague in Florence.

Dressed out against the fear of death
and hell,
Rustling her silks in pauses of the
mass,
To keep the thought off how her hus-
band fell,
When she left home, stark dead across
her feet,—
The stair leads up to what the Orgagna
save
Of Dante's demons: you, in pass-
ing it,
Ascend the right stair from the farther
nave,
To muse in a small chapel scarcely lit
By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and brave,
That picture was accounted, mark, of
old.
A king stood bare before its sovran
grace¹,
A reverent people shouted to behold
The picture, not the king, and even the
place
Containing such a miracle, grew bold,
Named the Glad Borgo from that beau-
teous face,—
Which thrilled the artist, after work,
to think
His own ideal Mary-smile should stand
So very near him,—he, within the
brink
Of all that glory, let in by his hand
With too divine a rashness! Yet none
shrink
Who come to gaze here now—albeit
'twas planned
Sublimely in the thought's simplicity.
The Lady, throned in empyreal state,
Minds only the young babe upon her
knee,
While sidelong angels bear the royal
weight,
Prostrated meekly, smiling tenderly
Oblivion of their wings; the Child
thereat

¹ Charles of Anjou, in his passage through Florence, was permitted to see this picture while yet in Cimabue's 'bottega.' The populace followed the royal visitor, and, from the universal delight and admiration, the quarter of the city in which the artist lived was called 'Borgo Allegri.' The picture was carried in triumph to the church, and deposited there.

Stretching its hand like God. If any
should,
Because of some stiff draperies and
loose joints,
Gaze scorn down from the heights of
Raffaelhood,
On Cimabue's picture,—Heaven anoints
The head of no such critic, and his
blood
The poet's curse strikes full on and
appoints
Toague and cold spasms for ever-
more.
A noble picture! worthy of the shout
Wherewith along the streets the
people bore
Its cherub faces, which the sun threw
out
Until they stooped and entered the
church door!—
Yet rightly was young Giotto talked
about,
Whom Cimabue found among the
sheep²,
And knew, as gods know gods, and
carried home
To paint the things he had painted,
with a deep
And fuller insight, and so overcome
His chapel-lady with a heavenlier
sweep
Of light. For thus we mount into the
sum
Of great things known or acted. I
hold, too,
That Cimabue smiled upon the lad,
At the first stroke which passed what
he could do,—
Or else his Virgin's smile had never had
Such sweetness in't. All great men
who foreknew
Their heirs in art, for art's sake have
been glad,
And bent their old white heads as if
uncrowned,
Fanatics of their pure ideals still
Far more than of their triumphs, which
were found

² How Cimabue found Giotto, the shepherd-boy, sketching a ram of his flock upon a stone, is prettily told by Vasari,—who also relates that the elder artist Margheritone died 'infastidito' of the successes of the new school.

With some less vehement struggle of the will.
 If old Margheritone trembled, swooned,
 And died despairing at the open sill
 Of other men's achievements (who achieved,
 By loving art beyond the master!), he
 Was old Margheritone, and conceived
 Never, at first youth and most ecstasy,
 A Virgin like that dream of one, which heaved
 The death-sigh from his heart. If twistfully
 Margheritone sickened at the smell
 Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go!—
 For Cimabue stood up very well
 In spite of Giotto's—and Angelico,
 The artist-saint, kept smiling in his cell
 The smile with which he welcomed the sweet slow
 Inbreak of angels (whitening through the dim)
 That he might paint them!), while the sudden sense
 Of Raffael's future was revealed to him
 By force of his own fair works' competence.
 The same blue waters where the dolphins swim
 Suggest the tritons. Through the blue Immense,
 Strike out, all swimmers! cling not in the way
 Of one another, so to sink; but learn
 The strong man's impulse, catch the fresh'ning spray
 He throws up in his motions, and discern
 By his clear, westering eye, the time of day.
 Thou, God, hast set us worthy gifts to earn,
 Besides Thy heaven and Thee! and when I say
 There's room here for the weakest man alive
 To live and die,—there's room too,
 I repeat,
 For all the strongest to live well, and strive
 Their own way, by their individual heat,—
 Like some new bee-swarm leaving the old hive,
 Despite the wax which tempts so violet-sweet.

Then let the living live, the dead retain
 Their grave-cold flowers!—though honour's best supplied
 By bringing actions, to prove theirs not vain.
 Cold graves, we say? it shall be testified
 That living men who burn in heart and brain,
 Without the dead, were colder. If we tried
 To sink the past beneath our feet, be sure
 The future would not stand. Precipitate
 This old roof from the shrine—and, insecure,
 The nesting swallows fly off, mate from mate.
 How scant the gardens, if the graves were fewer!
 The tall green poplars grew no longer straight,
 Whose tops not looked to Troy. Would any fight
 For Athens, and not swear by Marathon?
 Who dared build temples, without tombs in sight?
 Or live, without some dead man's benison?
 Or seek truth, hope for good, and strive for right,
 If, looking up, he saw not in the sun
 Some angel of the martyrs all day long
 Standing and waiting? Your last rhythm will need
 Your earliest key-note. Could I sing this song,
 If my dead masters had not taken heed
 To help the heavens and earth to make me strong,
 As the wind ever will find out some reed,
 And touch it to such issues as belong
 To such a frail thing? None may grudge the dead
 Libations from full cups. Unless we choose
 To look back to the hills behind us spread,
 The plains before usadden and confuse;
 If orphaned, we are disinherited.

I would but turn these lachrymals to use,
And pour fresh oil in from the olive
grove,
To furnish them as new lamps. Shall I
say
What made my heart beat with exulting
love,
A few weeks back!—
.... The day was such a day
As Florence owes the sun. The sky
above,
Its weight upon the mountains seemed to
lay,
And paipitate in glory, like a dove
Who has flown too fast, full-hearted!—
take away
The image! for the heart of man beat
higher
That day in Florence, flooding all her
streets
And piazzas with a tumult and desire.
The people, with accumulated heats,
And faces turned one way, as if one
fire
Both drew and flushed them, left their
ancient beats,
And went up toward the palace-Pitti
wall,
To thank their Grand-duke, who, not
quite of course,
Had graciously permitted, at their call,
The citizens to use their civic force
To guard their civic homes. So, one
and all,
The Tuscan cities streamed up to the
source
Of this new good, at Florence, taking it
As good so far, presageful of more good,—
The first torch of Italian freedom, lit
To toss in the next tiger's face who
should
Approach too near them in a greedy
fit,—
The first pulse of an even flow of blood,
To prove the level of Italian veins
Toward rights perceived and granted.
How we gazed
From Casa Guidi windows, while, in
trains
Of orderly procession—banners raised,
And intermittent bursts of martial
strains
Which died upon the shout, as if amazed

By gladness beyond music—they
passed on!
The Magistracy, with insignia, passed,—
And all the people shouted in the
sun,
And all the thousand windows which
had cast
A ripple of silks, in blue and scarlet,
down
(As if the houses overflowed at last),
Seemed growing larger with fair heads
and eyes.
The Lawyers passed,—and still arose
the shout,
And hands broke from the windows
to surprise
Those grave calm brows with bay-tree
leaves thrown out.
The Priesthood passed,—the friars
with worldly-wise
Keen sidelong glances from their beards
about
The street to see who shouted! many
a monk
Who takes a long rope in the waist,
was there!
Whereat the popular exultation drunk
With indrawn 'vivas' the whole sunny
air,
While, through the murmuring win-
dows, rose and sunk
A cloud of kerchiefed hands.—'The
Church makes fair
Her welcome in the new Pope's name.'
Ensued
The black sign of the 'Martyrs!' (name
no name,
But count the graves in silence). Next,
were viewed
The Artists; next, the Trades; and after
came
The People,—flag and sign, and rights
as good,—
And very loud the shout was for that
same
Motto, 'Il popolo.' *Il Popolo*,—
The word means dukedom, empire,
majesty,
And kings in such an hour might read
it so.
And next, with banners, each in his
degree,
Deputed representatives a-row

Of every separate state of Tuscany.
 Siena's she-wolf, bristling on the fold
 Of the first flag, preceded Pisa's hare,
 And Massa's lion floated calm in gold,
 Pienza's following with his silver stare.
 Arezzo's steed pranced clear from
 bridle-hold,—
 And well might shout our Florence,
 greeting there
 These, and more brethren. Last, the
 world had sent
 The various children of her teeming
 flanks—
 Greeks, English, French—as if to a
 parliament
 Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,
 Each bearing its land's symbol reverent.
 At which the stones seemed breaking
 into thanks
 And rattling up the sky, such sounds
 in proof
 Arose; the very house-walls seemed to
 bend;
 The very windows, up from door to
 roof,
 Flashed out a rapture of bright heads, to
 mend
 With passionate looks, the gesture's
 whirling off
 A hurricane of leaves. Three hours did
 end
 While all these passed; and ever in
 the crowd,
 Rude men, unconscious of the tears that
 kept
 Their beards moist, shouted; some few
 laughed aloud,
 And none asked any why they laughed
 and wept.
 Friends kissed each other's cheeks,
 and foes long vowed
 More warmly did it,—two-months' babies
 leapt
 Right upward in their mothers' arms,
 whose black,
 Wide, glittering eyes looked elsewhere;
 lovers pressed
 Each before either, neither glancing
 back;
 And peasant maidens, smoothly 'tired
 and tressed,
 Forgot to finger on their throats the
 slack

Great pearl-strings; while old blind men
 would not rest,
 But pattered with their staves and slid
 their shoes
 Along the stones, and smiled as if they
 saw.
 O heaven, I think that day had noble use
 Among God's days. So near stood Right
 and Law,
 Both mutually forborne! Law would
 not bruise,
 Nor Right deny, and each in reverent awe
 Honoured the other. And if, ne'er-
 theless,
 That good day's sun delivered to the vines
 No charta, and the liberal Duke's
 excess
 Did scarce exceed a Guelf's or Ghibel-
 line's
 In any special actual righteousness
 Of what that day he granted, still the signs
 Are good and full of promise, we must
 say,
 When multitudes approach their kings
 with prayers
 And kings concede their people's right
 to pray,
 Both in one sunshine. Griefs are not
 despairs,
 So uttered, nor can royal claims dismay
 When men from humble homes and ducal
 chairs
 Hate wrong together. It was well to
 view
 Those banners ruffled in a ruler's face
 Inscribed, 'Live freedom, union, and
 all true
 Brave patriots who are aided by God's
 grace!'
 Nor was it ill, when Leopoldo drew
 His little children to the window-place
 He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest
 They too should govern as the people
 willed.
 What a cry rose then! some, who saw
 the best,
 Declared his eyes filled up and overfilled
 With good warm human tears which
 unrepressed
 Ran down. I like his face; the fore-
 head's build
 Has no capacious genius, yet perhaps
 Sufficient comprehension,—mild and sad,

And careful nobly,—not with care that wraps
Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make mad,
But careful with the care that shuns a lapse
Of faith and duty, studious not to add
A burden in the gathering of a gain.
And so, God save the Duke, I say with those
Who that day shouted it, and while dukes reign,
May all wear in the visible overflows
Of spirit, such a look of careful pain!
For God must love it better than repose.
And all the people who went up to let
Their hearts out to that Duke, as has been told—
Where guess ye that the living people met,
Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose leaders, first unrolled
Their banners?
In the Loggia? where is set
Cellini's godlike Perseus, bronze—or gold—
(How name the metal, when the statue flings
Its soul so in your eyes?) with brow and sword
Superbly calm, as all opposing things,
Slain with the Gorgon, were no more abhorred
Since ended?
No, the people sought no wings
From Perseus in the Loggia, nor implored
An inspiration in the place beside,
From that dim bust of Brutus, jagged and grand,
Where Buonarroti passionately tried
From out the close-clenched marble to demand
The head of Rome's sublimest homicide,—
Then dropt the quivering mallet from his hand,
Despairing he could find no model-stuff
Of Brutus, in all Florence, where he found
The gods and gladiators thick enough.
Nor there! the people chose still holier ground!

The people, who are simple, blind, and rough,
Know their own angels, after looking round.
Whom chose they then? where met they?
On the stone
Called Dante's,—a plain flat stone, scarce discerned
From others in the pavement,—whereupon
He used to bring his quiet chair out, turned
To Brunelleschi's church, and pour alone
The lava of his spirit when it burned.
It is not cold to-day. O passionate
Poor Dante, who, a banished Florentine,
Didst sit austere at banquets of the great,
And muse upon this far-off stone of thine,
And think how oft some passer used to wait
A moment, in the golden day's decline,
With 'Good night, dearest Dante!'—well, good night!
I muse now, Dante, and think, verily,
Though chapelled in the by-way, out of sight,
Ravenna's bones would thrill with ecstasy,
Couldst know thy favourite stone's elected right
As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to foresee
Their earliest chartas from. Good night, good morn,
Henceforward, Dante! now my soul is sure
That thine is better comforted of scorn,
And looks down earthward in completer cure,
Than when, in Santa Croce church forlorn
Of any corpse, the architect and hewer
Did pile the empty marbles as thy tomb'.
¹ The Florentines, to whom the Ravennese refused the body of Dante (demanded of them 'in a late remorse of love'), have given a cenotaph in this church to their divine poet. Something less than a grave!

For now thou art no longer exiled,
now
Best honoured!—we salute thee who art
come
Back to the old stone with a softer
brow
Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for some
Good lovers of our age to track and
plough¹
Their way to, through time's ordures
stratified,
And startle bread awake into the dull
Bargello chamber! now, thou 'rt milder
eyed,—
Now Beatrice may leap up glad to cull
Thy first smile, even in heaven and at
her side,
Like that which, nine years old, looked
beautiful
At May-game. What do I say? I only
meant
That tender Dante loved his Florence
well,
While Florence, now, to love him is
content;
And, mark ye, that the piercingest
sweet smell
Of love's dear incense by the living sent
To find the dead, is not accessible
To lazy livers! no narcotic,—not
Swung in a censer to a sleepy tune,—
But trod out in the morning air, by hot
Quick spirits, who tread firm to ends
foreshown,
And use the name of greatness unforget,
To meditate what greatness may be
done.

For Dante sits in heaven, and ye stand
here,
And more remains for doing, all must
feel,
Than trysting on his stone from year to
year
To shift processions, civic toe to heel,
The town's thanks to the Pitti. Are ye
freer
For what was felt that day! a chariot-
wheel
May spin fast, yet the chariot never roll.

¹ In allusion to Mr. Kirkup's discovery of Giotto's fresco-portrait of Dante.

But if that day suggested something
good,
And bettered, with one purpose, soul by
soul,—
Better means freer. A land's brother-
hood
Is most puissant: men, upon the whole,
Are what they can be,—nations, what
they would.

Will, therefore, to be strong, thou Italy!
Will to be noble! Austrian Metternich
Can fix no yoke unless the neck agree;
And thine is like the lion's when the
thick
Dews shudder from it, and no man
would be
The stroker of his mane, much less
would prick
His nostril with a reed. When nations
roar
Like lions, who shall tame them, and
defraud
Of the due pasture by the river-shore?
Roar, therefore! shake your dew-laps
dry abroad.
The amphitheatre with open door
Leads back upon the benchers, who
applaud
The last spear-thruster.

Yet the Heavens forbid
That we should call on passion to con-
front
The brutal with the brutal, and, amid
This ripening world, suggest a lion's-
hunt
And lion's-vengeance for the wrongs
men did
And do now, though the spears are
getting blunt.
We only call, because the sight and
proof
Of lion-strength hurts nothing; and to
show
A lion-heart, and measure paw with
hoof,
Helps something, even, and will in-
struct a foe
As well as the onslaught, how to stand
aloof!
Or else the world gets past the mere
brute blow

Or given or taken. Children use the fist
 Until they are of age to use the brain;
 And so we needed Caesars to assist
 Man's justice, and Napoleons to ex-
 plain
 God's counsel, when a point was nearly
 missed,
 Until our generations should attain
 Christ's stature nearer. Not that we,
 alas,
 Attain already; but a single inch
 Will raise to look down on the swords-
 man's pass,
 As knightly Roland on the coward's
 flinch:
 And, after chloroform and ether-gas,
 We find out slowly what the bee and
 finch
 Have ready found, through Nature's lamp
 in each,
 How to our races we may justify
 Our individual claims, and, as we reach
 Our own grapes, bend the top vines
 to supply
 The children's uses,—how to fill a breach
 With olive branches,—how to quench
 a lie
 With truth, and smite a foe upon the
 cheek
 With Christ's most conquering kiss.
 Why, these are things
 Worth a great nation's finding, to prove
 weak
 The 'glorious arms' of military kings.
 And so with wide embrace, my England,
 seek
 To stifle the bad heat and flickerings
 Of this world's false and nearly expended
 fire!
 Draw palpitating arrows to the wood,
 And twang abroad thy high hopes, and
 thy higher
 Resolves, from that most virtuous
 altitude!
 Till nations shall unconsciously aspire
 By looking up to thee, and learn that
 good
 And glory are not different. Announce
 law
 By freedom; exalt chivalry by peace;
 Instruct how clear calm eyes can overawe,
 And how pure hands, stretched simply
 to release

A bond-slave, will not need a sword to
 draw
 To be held dreadful. O my England,
 crease
 Thy purple with no alien agonies!
 No struggles toward encroachment, no
 vile war!
 Disband thy captains, change thy vic-
 tories,
 Be henceforth prosperous as the angels
 are,
 Helping, not humbling.
 Drums and battle cries
 Go out in music of the morning star—
 And soon we shall have thinkers in the
 place
 Of fighters, each found able as a man
 To strike electric influence through a
 race,
 Unstayed by city-wall and barbican.
 The poet shall look grander in the face
 Than even of old (when he of Greece
 began
 To sing 'that Achillean wrath which slew
 So many heroes'),—seeing he shall
 treat
 The deeds of souls heroic toward the
 true—
 The oracles of life—previsions sweet
 And awful, like divine swans gliding
 through
 White arms of Ledas, which will leave
 the heat
 Of their escaping godship to endue
 The human medium with a heavenly
 flush.
 Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want
 Not popular passion, to arise and
 crush,
 But popular conscience, which may
 covenant
 For what it knows. Concede without
 a blush,
 To grant the 'civic guard' is not to grant
 The civic spirit, living and awake.
 Those lappets on your shoulders, citizens,
 Your eyes strain after sideways till
 they ache,
 While still, in admirations and amens,
 The crowd comes up on festa-days, to
 take

The great sight in)—are not intelligence,
Not courage even—alas, if not the sign
Of something very noble, they are
nought;
Forevery day ye dress yoursallow kine
With fringes down their cheeks, though
unbesought
They loll their heavy heads and drag
the wine,
And bear the wooden yoke as they were
taught
The first day. What ye want is
light—indeed
Not sunlight—ye may well look up
surprised
To those unfathomable heavens that
feed
Your purple hills!)—but God's light
organized
In some high soul, crowned capable
to lead
The conscious people, conscious and
advised,—
For if we lift a people like mere clay,
It falls the same. We want thee, O
unfound
And sovran teacher!—if thy beard be
grey
Or black, we bid thee rise up from the
ground
And speak the word God giveth thee
to say,
Inspiring into all this people round,
Instead of passion, thought, which
pioneers
All generous passion, purifies from sin,
And strikes the hour for. Rise up
teacher! here's
A crowd to make a nation!—best begin
By making each a man, till all be peers
Of earth's true patriots and pure martyrs
in
Knowing and daring. Best unbar the
doors
Which Peter's heirs keep locked so
overclose
They only let the mice across the
floors,
While every churchman dangles, as he
goes,
The great key at his girdle, and abhors
In Christ's name, meekly. Open wide
the house,

Concede the entrance with Christ's
liberal mind,
And set the tables with His wine and
bread.
What! 'commune in both kinds?'
In every kind—
Wine, wafer, love, hope, truth, un-
limited,
Nothing kept back. For when a man
is blind
To starlight, will he see the rose is
red?
A bondsman shivering at a Jesuit's
foot—
'Vae! meā culpā!' is not like to stand
A freedman at a despot's, and dispute
His titles by the balance in his hand,
Weighing them 'suo jure.' Tend the
root
If careful of the branches, and expand
The inner souls of men before you
strive
For civic heroes.

But the teacher, where?
From all these crowded faces, all alive,
Eyes, of their own lids flashing them-
selves bare,
And brows that with a mobile life
contrive
A deeper shadow,—may we in no wise
dare
To put a finger out, and touch a man,
And cry 'this is the leader!' What,
all these!—
Broad heads, black eyes,—yet not
a soul that ran
From God down with a message? all,
to please
The donna waving measures with her
fan,
And not the judgement-angel on his knees
(The trumpet just an inch off from his
lips),
Who when he breathes next, will put
out the sun?

Yet mankind's self were foundered in
eclipse,
If lacking doers, with great works to be
done;
And lo, the startled earth already dips
Back into light—a better day's begun—

And soon this leader, teacher, will stand plain,
And build the golden pipes and synthesize This people-organ for a holy strain.
We hold this hope, and still in all these eyes,
Go sounding for the deep look which shall drain
Suffused thought into channelled enterprise.
Where is the teacher? What now may he do,
Who shall do greatly? Doth he gird his waist
With a monk's rope, like Luther? or pursue
The goat, like Tell? or dry his nets in haste,
Like Masaniello when the sky was blue?
Keep house, like other peasants, with inlaced,
Bare, brawny arms about a favourite child,
And meditative looks beyond the door, (But not to mark the kidling's teeth have filed
The green shoots of his vine which last year bore
Full twenty bunches,) or, on triple-piled Throne-velvets sit at ease, to bless the poor,
Like other pontiffs, in the Poorest's name?
The old tiara keeps itself aslope
Upon his steady brows, which, all the same,
Bend mildly to permit the people's hope!
Whatever hand shall grasp this ori-flamme,
Whatever man (last peasant or first pope
Seeking to free his country!) shall appear,
Teach, lead, strike fire into the masses, fill These empty bladders with fine air, insphere
These wills into a unity of will,
And make of Italy a nation—dear And blessed be that man! the Heavens shall kill

No leaf the earth lets grow for him, and Death
Shall cast him back upon the lap of Life To live more surely, in a clarion-breath
Of hero-music. Brutus, with the knife, Rienzi, with the fasces, throb beneath Rome's stones,—and more,—who threw away joy's fife
Like Pallas, that the beauty of their souls
Might ever shine untroubled and entire.
But if it can be true that he who rolls
The Church's thunders, will reserve her fire
For only light,—from eucharistic bowls
Will pour new life for nations that expire,
And rend the scarlet of his papal vest
To gird the weak loins of his country-men—
I hold that he surpasses all the rest
Of Romans, heroes, patriots,—and that when
He sate down on the throne, he dispossessed
The first graves of some glory. See again,
This country-saving is a glorious thing,
And if a common man achieved it? well.
Say, a rich man did? excellent. A king?
That grows sublime. A priest? improbable.
A pope? Ah, there we stop, and cannot bring
Our faith up to the leap, with history's bell
So heavy round the neck of it—albeit
We fain would grant the possibility,
For thy sake, Pio Nono!

Stretch thy feet

In that case—I will kiss them reverently
As any pilgrim to the papal seat!
And, such proved possible, thy throne to me
Shall seem as holy a place as Pellico's Venetian dungeon, or as Spielberg's grate,

At which the Lombard woman hung
the rose
Of her sweet soul, by its own dewy
weight,
To feel the dungeon round her sun-
shine close,
And pining so, died early, yet too late
For what she suffered. Yea, I will
not choose
Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and the
spot
Marked red for ever, spite of rains
and dews.
Where two fell riddled by the Aus-
trian's shot,
The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,
With one same mother-voice and face
(that what
They speak may be invincible) the sins
Of earth's tormentors before God the
just,
Until the unconscious thunder-bolt
begins
To loosen in His grasp.

And yet we must
Beware, and mark the natural kiths
and kins
Of circumstance and office, and distrust
The rich man reasoning in a poor
man's hut,
The poet who neglects pure truth to
prove
Statistic fact, the child who leaves a rut
For a smoother road, the priest who
vows his glove
Exhales no grace, the prince who
walks a-foot,
The woman who has sworn she will
not love.
And this Ninth Pius in Seventh
Gregory's chair,
With Andrea Doria's forehead!

Count what goes
To making up a pope, before he
wear
That triple crown. We pass the world-
wide throes
Which went to make the popedom,—
the despair
Of free men, good men, wise men; the
dread shows

—Of women's faces, by the faggot's flash,
Tossed out, to the minutest stir and throb
O' the white lips, the least tremble
of a lash,
To glut the red stare of a licensed mob;
The short mad cries down oubllettes,
andplash
So horribly far off; priests, trained to rob,
And kings that, like encouraged
nightmares, satc
On nations' hearts most heavily distressed
With monstrous sights and apoph-
thegms of fate!—
We pass these things,—because 'the
times' are prest
With necessary charges of the weight
Of all this sin, and 'Calvin for the rest,
Made bold to burn Servetus—Ah, men
err!—
And, so do churches! which is all we mean
To bring to proof in any register
Of theological fat kine and lean—
So drive them back into the pens! refer
Old sins (with pourpoint, 'quotha' and
'I ween')
Entirely to the old times, the old times;
Nor ever ask why this preponderant,
Infallible, pure Church could set her
chimes
Most loudly then, just then,—most ju-
bilant,
Precisely then—when mankind stood
in crimes
Full heart-deep, and Heaven's judge-
ments were not scant.
Inquire still less, what signifies a
church
Of perfect inspiration and pure laws,
Who burns the first man with a
brimstone-torch,
And grinds the second, bone by bone,
because
The times, forsooth, are used to rack
and scorch!
What is a holy Church, unless she awes
The times down from their sins?
Did Christ select
Such amiable times, to come and teach
Love to, and mercy? The whole
world were wrecked,
If every mere great man, who lives to
reach
A little leaf of popular respect,

Attained not simply by some special
breach
In the age's customs, by some pre-
cedence
In thought and act, which, having proved
him higher
Than those he lived with, proved his
competence
In helping them to wonder and aspire.

My words are guiltless of the bigot's
sense.
My soul has fire to mingle with the fire
Of all these souls, within or out of
doors
Of Rome's church or another. I believe
In one Priest, and one temple, with
its floors
Of shining jasper gloom'd at morn and
eve
By countless knees of earnest audi-
tors,
And crystal walls, too lucid to perceive,
That none may take the measure of
the place
And say, 'So far the porphyry, then,
the flint—
To this mark, mercy goes, and there,
ends grace,'
Though still the permeable crystals hint
At some white starry distance, bathed
in space.
I feel how nature's ice-crusts keep the
dint
Of undersprings of silent Deity.
I hold the articulated gospels, which
Show Christ among us, crucified on
tree.
I love all who love truth, if poor or rich
In what they have won of truth
possessively.
No altars and no hands defiled with
pitch
Shall scare me off, but I will pray and
eat
With all these—taking leave to choose
my ewers
And say at last, 'Your visible churches
cheat
Their inward types,—and, if a church
assures
Of standing without failure and defeat,
The same both fails and lies.'

To leave which lures
Of wider subject through past years,
—behold,
We come back from the popedom to the
pope,
To ponder what he *must* be, ere we
are bold
For what he *may* be, with our heavy hope
To trust upon his soul. So, fold by
fold,
Explore this mummy in the priestly cope,
Transmitted through the darks of time,
to catch
The man within the wrappage, and dis-
cern
How he, an honest man, upon the
watch
Full fifty years, for what a man may
learn,
Contrived to get just there; with what
a snatch
Of old-world oboli he had to earn
The passage through; with what a
drowsy sop,
To drench the busy barkings of his brain;
What ghosts of pale tradition,
wreathed with hop
'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to enter-
tain
For heavenly visions; and consent to
stop
The clock at noon, and let the hour re-
main
(Without vain windings up) inviolate,
Against all chimings from the belfry.
Lo,
From every given pope you must abate,
Albeit you love him, some things—good,
you know—
Which every given heretic you hate,
Assumes for his, as being plainly so.
A pope must hold by popes a little,—
yes,
By councils,—from Nicaea up to Trent,—
By hierocratic empire, more or less
Irresponsible to men,—he must resent
Each man's particular conscience, and
repress
Inquiry, meditation, argument,
As tyrants faction. Also, he must not
Love truth too dangerously, but prefer
'The interests of the Church' (because
a blot

Is better than a rent, in miniver),
 Submit to see the people swallow hot
 Husk-porridge, which his chartered
 churchmen stir
 Quoting the only true God's epigraph,
 'Feed my lambs, Peter!'—must consent
 to sit
 Attesting with his pastoral ring and
 staff,
 To such a picture of our Lady, hit
 Off well by artist angels (though not
 half
 As fair as Giotto would have painted it)—
 To such a vial, where a dead man's
 blood
 Runs yearly warm beneath a church-
 man's finger;
 To such a holy house of stone and
 wood,
 Whereof a cloud of angels was the
 bringer
 From Bethlehem to Loreto.—Were
 it good
 For any pope on earth to be a flinger
 Of stones against these high-niched
 counterfeits?
 Apostates only are iconoclasts.
 He dares not say, while this false
 thing abets
 That true thing, 'this is false.' He
 keeps his fasts
 And prayers, as prayer and fast were
 silver frets
 To change a note upon a string that
 lasts,
 And make a lie a virtue. Now, if he
 Did more than this, higher hoped, and
 braver dared,
 I think he were a pope in jeopardy,
 Or no pope rather, for his truth had
 barred
 The vaulting of his life,—and certainly,
 If he do only this, mankind's regard
 Moves on from him at once, to seek
 some new
 Teacher and leader. He is good and
 great
 According to the deeds a pope can do;
 Most liberal, save those bonds; affection-
 ate,
 As princes may be, and, as priests
 are, true;
 But only the ninth Pius after eight,

When all's praised most. At best and
 hopefulllest,
 He's pope—we want a man! his heart
 beats warm,
 But, like the prince enchanted to the
 waist,
 He sits in stone, and hardens by a charm
 Into the marble of his throne high-
 placed.
 Mild benediction, waves his saintly arm—
 So, good! but what we want's a per-
 fect man,
 Complete and all alive: half travertine
 Half suits our need, and ill subserves
 our plan.
 Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies
 divine
 Were never yet too much for men
 who ran
 In such hard ways as must be this of thine,
 Deliverer whom we seek, whoe'er thou
 art,
 Pope, prince, or peasant! If, indeed,
 the first,
 The noblest, therefore! since the
 heroic heart
 Within thee must be great enough to burst
 Those trammels buckling to the baser
 part
 Thy saintly peers in Rome, who crossed
 and cursed
 With the same finger.
 Come, appear, be found,
 If pope or peasant, come! we hear the
 cock,
 The courtier of the mountains when
 first crown'd
 With golden dawn; and orient glories
 flock
 To meet the sun upon the highest
 ground.
 Take voice and work! we wait to hear
 thee knock
 At some one of our Florentine nine
 gates,
 On each of which was imaged a sublime
 Face of a Tuscan genius, which, for
 hate's
 And love's sake, both, our Florence in
 her prime
 Turned boldly on all comers to her
 states,

As heroes turned their shields in antique time,
Emblazoned with honourable acts.
And though
The gates are blank now of such images,
And Petrarch looks no more from Nicolo
Toward dear Arezzo, 'twixt the acacia trees,
Nor Dante, from gate Gallo—still we know,
Despite the razing of the blazonries,
Remains the consecration of the shield!
The dead heroic faces will start out
On all these gates, if foes should take
the field,
And blend sublimely, at the earliest shout,
With living heroes who will scorn to yield
A hair's-breadth even, when, gazing round about,
They find in what a glorious company
They fight the foes of Florence. Who will grudge
His one poor life, when that great man we see
Has given five hundred years, the world being judge,
To help the glory of his Italy?
Who, born the fair side of the Alps, will budge,
When Dante stays, when Ariosto stays,
When Petrarch stays for ever? Ye bring swords,
My Tuscan! Aye, if wanted in this haze,
Bring swords. But first bring souls!—bring thoughts and words,
Untrusted by a tear of yesterday's,
Yet awful by its wrong,—and cut these cords,
And mow this green lush falseness to the roots,
And shut the mouth of hell below the swathe!
And, if ye can bring songs too, let the lute's
Recoverable music softly bathe
Some poet's hand, that, through all bursts and bruits
Of popular passion, all unripe and rathe
Convictions of the popular intellect,
Ye may not lack a finger up the air,

Annunciative, reproving, pure, erect,
To show which way your first Ideal bare
The whiteness of its wings, when
(sorely pecked)
By falcons on your wrists) it unaware
Arose up overhead, and out of sight.

Meanwhile, let all the far ends of the world
Breathe back the deep breath of their old delight.
To swell the Italian banner just unfurled.
Help, lands of Europe! for, if Austria
fights,
The drums will bar your slumber. Had ye curled
The laurel for your thousand artists' brows,
If these Italian hands had planted none?
Can any sit down idle in the house,
Nor hear appeals from Buonarroti's stone
And Raffael's canvas, rousing and to rouse?
Where's Poussin's master? Gallic Avignon
Bred Laura, and Vaucluse's fount has stirred
The heart of France too strongly, as it lets
Its little stream out (like a wizard's bird
Which bounds upon its emerald wing and wets
The rocks on each side), that she should not gird
Her loins with Charlemagne's sword
when foes beset
The country of her Petrarch. Spain may well
Be minded how from Italy she caught,
To mingle with her tinkling Moorish bell,
A fuller cadence and a subtler thought.
And even the New World, the receptacle
Of freemen, may send glad men, as it ought,
To greet Vespucci Amerigo's door.
While England claims, by trump of poetry,
Verona, Venice, the Ravenna-shore,
And dearer holds John Milton's Fiesole
Than Langland's Malvern with the stars in flower.

And Vallombrosa, we two went to see
 Last June, beloved companion,—
 where sublime
 The mountains live in holy families,
 And the slow pinewoods ever climb
 and climb
 Halfup their breasts, just stagger as they
 seize
 Some grey crag, drop back with it
 many a time,
 And straggle blindly down the precipice!
 The Vallombrosan brooks were strewn
 as thick
 That June-day, knee-deep, with dead
 beechen leaves,
 As Milton saw them, ere his heart
 grew sick
 And his eyes blind. I think the monks
 and beees
 Are all the same too. Scarce they have
 changed the wick
 On good St. Gualbert's altar, which re-
 ceives
 The convent's pilgrims,—and the pool
 in front
 (Wherein the hill-stream trout are cast,
 to wait
 The beatific vision and the grunt
 Used at refectory) keeps its weedy state,
 To baffle saintly abbots who would
 count
 The fish across their breviary nor 'bate
 The measure of their steps. O water-
 falls
 And forests! sound and silence! moun-
 tains bare,
 That leap up peak by peak, and catch
 the palls
 Of purple and silver mist to rend and
 share
 With one another, at electric calls
 Of life in the sunbeams,—till we cannot
 dare
 Fix your shapes, count your number!
 we must think
 Your beauty and your glory helped to fill
 The cup of Milton's soul so to the brink,
 He never more was thirsty, when God's
 will
 Had shattered to his sense the last
 chain-link
 By which he had drawn from Nature's
 visible

The fresh well-water. Satisfied by this,
 He sang of Adam's paradise and smiled,
 Remembering Vallombrosa. There-
 fore is
 The place divine to English man and
 chiid,
 And pilgrims leave their souls here in
 a kiss.
 For Italy's the whole earth's treasury,
 piled
 With reveries of gentle ladies, flung
 Aside, like ravelled silk, from life's worn
 stuff;
 With coins of scholars' fancy, which,
 being rung
 On work-day counter, still sound silver-
 proof;
 In short, with all the dreams of
 dreamers young,
 Before their heads have time for slipping
 off
 Hope's pillow to the ground. How
 oft, indeed,
 We've sent our souls out from the rigid
 north,
 On bare white feet which would not
 print nor bleed,
 To climb the Alpine passes and look forth,
 Where booming low the Lombard
 rivers lead
 To gardens, vineyards, all a dream is
 worth,—
 Sights, thou and I, Love, have seen
 afterward
 From Tuscan Bellosuardo, wideawake¹,
 When, standing on the actual blessed
 sward
 Where Galileo stood at nights to take
 The vision of the stars, we have found it
 hard,
 Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to make
 A choice of beauty.

Therefore let us all
 Refreshed in England or in other land,
 By visions, with their fountain-rise and
 fall,
 Of this earth's darling,—we, who under-
 stand
 A little how the Tuscan musical

¹ Galileo's villa, close to Florence, is built on an eminence called Bellosuardo.

Vowels do round themselves as if they planned
 Eternities of separate sweetness,—we,
 Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-book,
 Or ere in wine-cup we pledged faith or glee.—
 Who loved Rome's wolf, with demi-gods at suck,
 Or ere we loved truth's own divinity,—
 Who loved, in brief, the classic hill and brook,
 And Ovid's dreaming tales, and Petrarch's song,
 Or ere we loved Love's self even!—let us give
 The blessing of our souls, (and wish them strong)
 To bear it to the height where prayers arrive,
 When faithful spirits pray against a wrong.)
 To this great cause of southern men, who strive
 In God's name for man's rights, and shall not fail!
 Behold, they shall not fail. The shouts ascend
 Above the shrieks, in Naples, and prevail.
 Rows of shot corpses, waiting for the end
 Of burial, seem to smile up straight and pale
 Into the azure air and apprehend
 That final gun-flash from Palermo's coast
 Which lightens their apocalypse of death.
 So let them die! The world shows nothing lost;
 Therefore, not blood. Above or underneath,
 What matter, brothers, if ye keep your post
 On duty's side! As sword returns to sheath,
 So dust to grave, but souls find place in Heaven.
 Heroic daring is the true success,

The eucharistic bread requires no leaven;
 And though your ends were hopeless, we should bless
 Your cause as holy. Strive—and, having striven,
 Take, for God's recompense, that righteousness!

PART II

I WROTE a meditation and a dream,
 Hearing a little child sing in the street.
 I leant upon his music as a theme,
 Till it gave way beneath my heart's full beat,
 Which tried at an exultant prophecy
 But dropped before the measure was complete—
 Alas, for songs and hearts! O Tuscany, O Dante's Florence, is the type too plain?
 Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty,
 As little children take up a high strain
 With unintended voices, and break off
 To sleep upon their mothers' knees again?
 Couldst thou not watch one hour? then, sleep enough—
 That sleep may hasten manhood, and sustain
 The faint pale spirit with some muscular stuff.
 But we, who cannot slumber as thou dost,
 We thinkers, who have thought for thee and failed,
 We hopers, who have hoped for thee and lost,
 We poets, wandered round by dreams¹, who hailed
 From this Atrides' roof (with lintel-post
 Which still drips blood,—the worse part hath prevailed)
 The fire-voice of the beacons, to declare
 Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened through

¹ See the opening passage of the Agamemnon of Aeschylus.

A crimson sunset in a misty air,—
What now remains for such as we, to do?
God's judgements, peradventure, will
 He bare
To the roots of thunder, if we kneel and
sue?

From Casa Guidi windows I looked
forth,
And saw ten thousand eyes of Florentines
Flash back the triumph of the Lombard
 north,—
Saw fifty banners, freighted with the
signs
 And exultations of the awakened earth,
Float on above the multitude in lines,
 Straight to the Pitti. So, the vision
went.
And so, between those populous rough
hands
 Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold out-
leant,
And took the patriot's oath, which
henceforth stands
 Among the oaths of perjurers, eminent
To catch the lightnings ripened for these
lands.

Why swear at all, thou false Duke
Leopold?
What need to swear? What need to
boast thy blood
 Unspoilt of Austria, and thy heart
unsold
Away from Florence? It was understood
God made thee not too vigorous or too
bold;
And men had patience with thy quiet
mood,
 And women, pity, as they saw thee pace
Their festive streets with premature grey
hairs.
We turned the mild dejection of thy face
To princely meanings, took thy wrinkling
cares
 For ruffing hopes, and called thee
weak, not base.
Nay, better light the torches for more
prayers
 And smoke the pale Madonnas at the
shrine,
Being still 'our poor Grand-duke, our
good Grand-duke,

Who cannot help the Austrian in his
line,'—
Than write an oath upon a nation's
book
 For men to spit at with scorn's blurring
brine!
Who dares forgive what none can over-
look?

For me, I do repent me in this dust
Of towns and temples, which makes
Italy.—
I sigh amid the sighs which breathe
a gust
Of dying century to century
 Around us on the uneven crater-crust
Of these old worlds,—I bow my soul
and knee!
Absolve me, patriots, of my woman's
fault

That ever I believed the man was true!—
These sceptred strangers shun the
common salt,
And, therefore, when the general board's
in view,
 And they stand up to carve for blind
and halt,

The wise suspect the viands which ensue.
I much repent that, in this time and
place,

Where many corpse-lights of experience
burn
 From Caesar's and Lorenzo's festering
race,

To enlighten groping reasoners, I could
learn
 No better counsel for a simple case.
Than to put faith in princes, in my
turn.

Had all the death-piles of the ancient
years
Flared up in vain before me? knew I not

What stench arises from some purple
gears?

And how the sceptres witness whence
they got

Their briar-wood, crackling through
the atmosphere's
Foul smoke, by princely perjuries, kept
hot?

Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—
Brutus, thou,
Who trailest downhill into life again

Thy blood-weighted cloak, to indict
me with thy slow
Reproachful eyes!—for being taught in
vain
That, while the illegitimate Caesars
show
Of meaner stature than the first full strain
(Confessed incompetent to conquer
Gaul),
They swoon as feebly and cross Rubicons
As rashly as any Julius of them all!
Forgive, that I forgot the mind which runs
Through absolute races, too unsceptical!
I saw the man among his little sons,
His lips were warm with kisses while
he swore,—
And I, because I am a woman, I,
Who felt my own child's coming life
before
The prescience of my soul, and held
faith high,—
I could not bear to think, whoever bore,
That lips, so warmed, could shape so cold
a lie.

From Casa Guidi windows I looked out,
Again looked, and beheld a different sight.
The Duke had fled before the people's
shout
'Long live the Duke!' A people, to
speak right,
Must speak as soft as courtiers, lest a
doubt
Should curdle brows of gracious sove-
reigns, white.
Moreover that same dangerous shout-
ing meant
Some gratitude for future favours, which
Were only promised, the Constituent
Implied, the whole being subject to the
hitch
In 'motu proprios,' very incident
To all these Czars, from Paul to Paulo-
vitch.

Whereat the people rose up in the dust
Of the ruler's flying feet, and shouted still
And loudly, only, this time, as was just,
Not 'Live the Duke,' who had fled, for
good or ill.
But 'Live the People,' who remained
and must,
The unrenounced and unrenounceable.

Long live the people! How they
lived! and boiled
And bubbled in the cauldron of the street.
How the young blustered, nor the old
recoiled,—
And what a thunderous stir of tongues
and feet
Trod flat the palpitating bells, and foiled
The joy-guns of their echo, shattering it!
How down they pulled the Duke's
arms everywhere!
How up they set new café-signs, to show
Where patriots might sip ices in pure
air—
(The fresh paint smelling somewhat).
To and fro
How marched the civic guard, and
stopped to stare
When boys broke windows in a civic
glove.
How rebel songs were sung to loyal
tunes,
And bishops cursed in ecclesiastic metres.
How all the Circoli grew large as
moons,
And all the speakers, moonstruck,—
thankful greeters
Of prospects which struck poor the
ducal boons,..
A mere free press, and chambers!—
frank repeaters
Of great Guerazzi's praises. . . .
'There's a man,
The father of the land!—who, truly
great,
Takes off that national disgrace and ban,
The farthing tax upon our Florence-gate,
And saves Italia as he only can.'
How all the nobles fled, and would not
wait,
Because they were most noble,—
which being so,
How liberals vowed to burn their palaces,
Because free Tuscans were not free
to go.
How grown men raged at Austria's
wickedness,
And smoked,—while fifty striplings in
a row
Marched straight to Piedmont for the
wrong's redress!
You say we failed in duty, we who
wore

Black velvet like Italian democrats,
Who slashed our sleeves like patriots,
nor forswore
The true republic in the form of hats?
We chased the archbishop from the
Duomo door—
We chalked the walls with bloody caveats
Against all tyrants. If we did not
 fight
Exactly, we fired muskets up the air,
To show that victory was ours of
right.
We met, had free discussion every-
 where
(Except perhaps i' the Chambers) day
and night.
We proved the poor should be em-
ployed, . . . that's fair,—
And yet the rich not worked for any-
 wise,—
Pay certified, yet payers abrogated,—
Full work secured, yet liabilities
To over-work excluded,—not one bated
 Of all our holidays, that still, at twice
Or thrice a-week, are moderately rated.
We proved that Austria was dislodged,
 or would
Or should be, and that Tuscany in arms
Should, would, dislodge her, ending
the old feud;
And yet, to leave our piazzas, shops, and
farms,
For the simple sake of fighting, was
not good—
We proved that also. ‘Did we carry
charms
Against being killed ourselves, that
we should rush
On killing others? what! desert here-
with
Our wives and mothers?—was that
duty? tush!’
At which we shook the sword within
the sheath,
Like heroes—only louder; and the
flush
Ran up the cheek to meet the future
wreath.
Nay, what we proved, we shouted—
how we shouted
(Especially the boys did), boldly planting
That tree of liberty, whose fruit is
doubted,

Because the roots are not of nature's
 granting.
A tree of good and evil!—none, with-
out it,
Grow gods!—alas, and, with it, men are
wanting!
O holy knowledge, holy liberty,
O holy rights of nations! If I speak
These bitter things against the jugglery
Of days that in your names proved blind
 and weak,
It is that tears are bitter. When we see
The brown skulls grin at death in church-
yards bleak,
We do not cry, ‘This Yorick is too
light,’
For death grows deathlier with that
mouth he makes.
So with my mocking. Bitter things
I write,
Because my soul is bitter for your sakes,
O freedom! O my Florence!
Men who might
Do greatly in a universe that breaks
 And burns, must ever know before
they do.
Courage and patience are but sacrifice;
And sacrifice is offered for and to
Something conceived of. Each man pays
a price
For what himself counts precious,
whether true
Or false the appreciation it implies.
But here,—no knowledge, no con-
ception, nought!
Desire was absent, that provides great
deeds
From out the greatness of preventient
thought.
And action, action, like a flame that needs
A steady breath and fuel, being caught
Up, like a burning reed from other reeds,
Flashed in the empty and uncertain air,
Then wavered, then went out. Behold,
 who blames
A crooked course, when not a goal is
there,
To round the fervid striving of the games?
An ignorance of means may minister
To greatness, but an ignorance of aims
Makes it impossible to be great at all.

So, with our Tuscans! Let none dare to say,
 'Here virtue never can be national.
 Here fortitude can never cut a way
 Between the Austrian muskets, out of thrall.'
 I tell you rather, that, whoever may discern true ends here, shall grow pure enough
 To love them, brave enough to strive for them,
 And strong to reach them, though the roads be rough!
 That having learnt—by no mere apophthegm—
 Not just the draping of a graceful stuff About a statue, broidered at the hem,—
 Not just the trilling on an opera stage, Of 'libertà' to bravos—a fair word,
 Yet too allied to inarticulate rage And breathless sobs, for singing, though the chord
 Were deeper than they struck it!) but the gauge
 Of civil wants sustained, and wrongs abhorred,—
 The serious, sacred meaning and full use
 Of freedom for a nation,—then, indeed, Our Tuscans, underneath the bloody dews
 Of some new morning, rising up agreed And bold, will want no Saxon souls or thews,
 To sweep their piazzas clear of Austria's breed.

Alas, alas! it was not so this time. Conviction was not, courage failed, and truth
 Was something to be doubted of. The mime
 Changed masks, because a mime. The tide as smooth
 In running in as out, no sense of crime
 Because no sense of virtue, sudden ruth Seized on the people.—They would have again
 Their good Grand-duke, and leave Guerazzi, though
 He took that tax from Florence. 'Much in vain

He takes it from the market-carts, we trow,
 While urgent that no market-men remain,
 But all march off and leave the spade and plough,
 To die among the Lombards. Was it thus
 The dear paternal Duke did? Live the Duke!
 At which the joy-bells multitudinous, Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly shook.
 Call back the mild archbishop to his house,
 To bless the people with his frightened look,—
 He shall not yet be hanged, you comprehend,
 Seize on Guerazzi; guard him in fullview, Or else we stab him in the back, to end.
 Rub out those chalked devices! set up new!
 The Duke's arms! doff your Phrygian caps; and mend
 The pavement of the piazzas broke into By barren poles of freedom! smooth the way
 For the ducal carriage, lest his highness sigh
 'Here trees of liberty grew yesterday.'
 'Long live the Duke!'—How roared the cannonry,
 How rocked the bell-towers, and through thickening spray
 Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs tossed on high,
 How marched the civic guard, the people still
 Being good at shouts,—especially the boys.
 Alas, poor people, of an unfledged will Most fitly expressed by such a callow voice!
 Alas, still poorer Duke, incapable Of being worthy even of so much noise!

You think he came back instantly, with thanks
 And tears in his faint eyes, and hands extended
 To stretch the franchise through their utmost ranks?

That having, like a father, apprehended,
He came to pardon fatherly those
pranks
Played out, and now in filial service
ended!—
That some love-token, like a prince,
he threw,
To meet the people's love-call, in return?
Well, how he came I will relate to you;
And if your hearts should burn, why,
hearts *must* burn,
To make the ashes which things old
and new
Shall be washed clean in—as this Duke
will learn.

From Casa Guidi windows, gazing,
then,
I saw and witness how the Duke came
back.
The regular tramp of horse and tread
of men
Did smite the silence like an anvil black
And sparkless. With her wide eyes
at full strain,
Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed, ‘Alack,
alack,
Signora! these shall be the Austrians.’
‘Nay,
Be still,’ I answered, ‘do not wake the
child!’
—For so, my two-months’ baby sleeping
lay
In milky dreams upon the bed and smiled,
And I thought, ‘he shall sleep on,
while he may,
Through the world’s baseness. Not
being yet defiled,
Why should he be disturbed by what
is done?’
Then, gazing, I beheld the long-drawn
street
Live out, from end to end, full in the sun,
With Austria’s thousands. Sword and
bayonet,
Horse, foot, artillery,—cannons roll-
ing on,
Like blind slow storm-clouds gestant
with the heat
Of undeveloped lightnings, each be-
strose
By a single man, dust-white from head
to heel,

Indifferent as the dreadful thing he
rode,
Like a sculptured Fate serene and
terrible.
As some smooth river which has
overflowed,
Will slow and silent down its current
wheel
A loosened forest, all the pines erect,—
So, swept, in mute significance of storm,
The marshalled thousands,—not an
eye deflect
To left or right, to catch a novel form
Of Florence city adorned by architect
And carver, or of Beauties live and
warm
Scared at the casements!—all, straight-
forward eyes
And faces, held as steadfast as their
swords,
And cognizant of acts, not imagineries.
The key, O Tuscans, too well fits the
wards!
Ye asked for mimes,—these bring
you tragedies;
For purple,—these shall wear it as your
lords.
Ye played like children,—die like
innocents.
Ye mimicked lightnings with a torch,—
the crack
Of the actual bolt, your pastime,
circumvents.
Ye called up ghosts, believing they were
slack
To follow any voice from Gilboa’s
tents, . . .
Here’s Samuel!—and, so, Grand-dukes
come back!
And yet, they are no prophets though
they come.
That awful mantle, they are drawing
close,
Shall be searched, one day, by the
shafts of Doom
Through double folds now hoodwinking
the brows.
Resuscitated monarchs disentomb
Grave-reptiles with them, in their new
life-throes.
Let such beware. Behold, the people
waits,

Like God. As He, in His serene of might,
So they, in their endurance of long straits.
Ye stamp no nation out, though day and night
Ye tread them with that absolute heel which grates
And grinds them flat from all attempted height.
You kill worms sooner with a garden-spade
Than you kill peoples : peoples will not die ;
The tail curls stronger when you lop the head ;
They writhe at every wound and multiply,
And shudder into a heap of life that's made
Thus vital from God's own vitality.
'Tis hard to shrivel back a day of God's
Once fixed for judgement : 'tis as hard to change
The people's, when they rise beneath their loads
And heave them from their backs with violent wrench,
To crush the oppressor !—for that judgement-rod's
The measure of this popular revenge.

Meantime, from Casa Guidi windows, we
Beheld the armament of Austria flow
Into the drowning heart of Tuscany.
And yet none wept, none cursed, or, if 'twas so,
They wept and cursed in silence.
Silently
Our noisy Tuscans watched the invading foe ;
They had learnt silence. Pressed against the wall,
And grouped upon the church-steps opposite,
A few pale men and women stared at all!
God knows what they were feeling, with their white
Constrained faces, they, so prodigal
Of cry and gesture when the world goes right,

Or wrong indeed. But here, was depth of wrong,
And here, still water ; they were silent here ;
And through that sentient silence, struck along
That measured tramp from which it stood out clear,
Distinct the sound and silence, like a gong
Atmidnight, each by the other awfuller,—
While every soldier in his cap displayed
A leaf of olive. Dusty, bitter thing !
Wassuch plucked at Novara, is it said ?
A cry is up in England, which doth ring
The hollow world through, that for ends of trade
And virtue, and God's better worshipping,
We henceforth should exalt the name of Peace,
And leave those rusty wars that eat the soul,—
Besides their clippings, at our golden fleece.
I, too, have loved peace, and from bole to bole
Of immemorial, undeciduous trees,
Would write, as lovers use, upon a scroll,
The holy name of Peace, and set it high
Where none could pluck it down. On trees, I say,—
Not upon gibbets !—With the greenery
Of dewy branches and the flowery May,
Sweet mediation betwixt earth and sky
Providing, for the shepherd's holiday,
Not upon gibbets !—though the vulture leaves
The bones to quiet, which he first picked bare.
Not upon dungeons ! though the wretch who grieves
And groans within, less stirs the outer air
Than any little field-mouse stirs the sheaves.
Not upon chain-bolts ! though the slave's despair
Has dulled his helpless, miserable brain,
And left him blank beneath the freeman's whip,
To sing and laugh out idiocies of pain.

Nor yet on starving homes! where
many a lip
Has sobbed itself asleep through
curses vain.
I love no peace which is not fellowship,
And which includes not mercy. I
would have
Rather, the raking of the guns across
The world, and shrieks against
Heaven's architrave;
Rather, the struggle in the slippery
fosse
Of dying men and horses, and the
wave
Blood-bubbling. . . . Enough said!—
by Christ's own cross,
And by this faint heart of my woman-
hood,
Such things are better than a Peace
that sits
Beside a hearth in self-commended
mood,
And takes no thought how wind and
rain by fits
Are howling out of doors against the
good
Of the poor wanderer. What! your
peace admits
Of outside anguish while it keeps at
home?
I loathe to take its name upon my
tongue.
'Tis nowise peace. 'Tis treason, stiff
with doom,—
'Tis gagged despair, and inarticulate
wrong,
Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,
Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath
the thong,
And Austria wearing a smooth olive-
leaf
On her brute forehead, while her hoofs
outpress
The life from these Italian souls, in
brief.
O Lord of Peace, who art Lord of
Righteousness,
Constrain the anguished worlds from
sin and grief,
Pierce them with conscience, purge them
with redress,
And give us peace which is no counter-
feit!

But wherefore should we look out any
more
From Casa Guidi windows? Shut them
straight,
And let us sit down by the folded door,
And veil our saddened faces, and, so,
wait
What next the judgement-heavens make
ready for.
I have grown too weary of these
windows. Sights
Come thick enough and clear enough in
thought,
Without the sunshine; souls have
inner lights.
And since the Grand-duke has come back
and brought
This army of the North which thus
requires
His filial South, we leave him to be
taught.
His South, too, has learnt something
certainly,
Whereof the practice will bring profit
soon;
And peradventure other eyes may see,
From Casa Guidi windows, what is done
Or undone. Whatsoever deeds they
be,
Pope Pius will be glorified in none.
Record that gain, Mazzini!—it shall
top
Some heights of sorrow. Peter's rock,
so named,
Shall lure no vessel any more to drop
Among the breakers. Peter's chair is
shamed.
Like any vulgar throne, the nations
lop
To pieces for their firewood unre-
claimed,—
And, when it burns too, we shall see
as well
In Italy as elsewhere. Let it burn.
The cross, accounted still adorable,
Is Christ's cross only!—if the thief's
would earn
Some stealthy genuflexions, we rebel;
And here the impenitent thief's has had
its turn,
As God knows; and the people on
their knees

Scoff and toss back the croziers, stretched
like yokes
To press their heads down lower by
degrees.
So Italy, by means of these last strokes,
Escapes the danger which preceded
these,
Of leaving captured hands in cloven
oaks.—
Of leaving very souls within the buckle
Whence bodies struggled outward,—of
supposing
That freemen may, like bondsmen,
kneel and truckle;
And then stand up as usual, without losing
An inch of stature.

Those whom she-wolves suckle
Will bite as wolves do in the grapple—
closing
Of adverse interests. This, at last, is
known
(Thank Pius for the lesson), that albeit
Among the popedom's hundred heads
of stone
Which blink down on you from the roof's
retreat
In Siena's tiger-striped cathedral, Joan
And Borgia 'mid their fellows you may
greet,
A harlot and a devil,—you will see
Not a man, still less angel, grandly set
With open soul to render man more
free.
The fishers are still thinking of the net,
And, if not thinking of the hook too, we
Are counted somewhat deeply in their
debt;
But that's a rare case—so, by hook
and crook
They take the advantage, agonizing
Christ
By rustier nails than those of Cedron's
brook,
I' the people's body very cheaply
priced,—
And quite high priesthood out of Holy
book,
While buying death-fields with the
sacrificed.
Priests, priests,—there's no such
name!—God's own, except

Ye take most vainly. Through heaven's
lifted gate
The priestly ephod in sole glory swept,
When Christ ascended, entered in, and
sate
(With victor face sublimely overwept)
At Deity's right hand, to mediate
He alone, He for ever. On his breast
The Urim and the Thummim, fed with
fire
From the full Godhead, flicker with
the unrest
Of human, pitiful heartbeats. Come up
higher,
All Christians! Levi's tribe is dispos-
sess'd.
That solitary alb ye shall admire,
But not cast lots for. The last chrism,
poured right,
Was on that Head, and poured for burial,
And not for domination in men's sight.
What are these churches? The old
temple wall
Doth overlook them juggling with the
sleight
Of surplice, candlestick, and altar-pall;
East church and west church, aye,
north church and south,
Rome's church and England's,—let them
all repent,
And make concordats 'twixt their soul
and mouth.
Succeed St. Paul by working at the tent,
Become infallible guides by speaking
truth,
And excommunicate their pride that bent
And cramped the souls of men.

Why, even here,
Priestcraft burns out, the twinèd linen
blazes;
Not, like asbestos, to grow white and
clear,
But all to perish!—while the fire-smell
raises
To life some swooning spirits, who,
last year,
Lost breath and heart in these church-
stifled places.
Why, almost, through this Pius, we
believed
The priesthood could be an honest thing,
he smiled

So saintly while our corn was being sheaved
For his own granaries. Showing now defiled
His hireling hands, a better help's achieved
Than if they blessed us shepherd-like and mild.
False doctrine, strangled by its own amen,
Dies in the throat of all this nation. Who Will speak a pope's name, as they rise again?
What woman or what child will count him true?
What dreamer, praise him with the voice or pen?
What man, fight for him?—Pius takes his due.

Record that gain, Mazzini!—Yes, but first
Set down thy people's faults;—set down the want
Of soul-conviction; set down aims dispersed,
And incoherent means, and valour scant
Because of scanty faith, and schisms accursed,
That wrench these brother-hearts from covenant
With freedom and each other. Set down this,
And this, and see to overcome it when
The seasons bring the fruits thou wilt not miss
If wary. Let no cry of patriot men
Distract thee from the stern analysis
Of masses who cry only! keep thy ken
Clear as thy soul is virtuous. Heroes' blood
Splashed up against thy noble brow in Rome,—
Let such not blind thee to an interlude
Which was not also holy, yet did come
'Twixt sacramental actions,—brother-hood,
Despised even there, and something of the doom
Of Remus, in the trenches. Listen now—
Rossi died silent near where Caesar died.
He did not say, ' My Brutus, is it thou ?'

But Italy unquestioned testified,
' I killed him!—I am Brutus.—I avow.
At which the whole world's laugh of scorn replied,
' A poor maimed copy of Brutus!' Too much like,
Indeed. to be so unlike! too un-skilled
At Philippi and the honest battle-pike.
To be so skilful where a man is killed
Near Pompey's statue, and the daggers strike
At unawares i' the throat. Was thus fulfilled
An omen once of Michel Angelo:—
When Marcus Brutus he conceived complete,
And strove to hurl him out by blow on blow
Upon the marble, at Art's thunderheat,
Till haply (some pre-shadow rising slow,
Of what his Italy would fancy meet
To be called Brutus) straight his plastic hand
Fell back before his prophet-soul, and left
A fragment, a maimed Brutus,—but more grand
Than this, so named at Rome, was!
Let thy weft Present one woof and warp, Mazzini!— stand
With no man hankering for a dagger's heft,—
No, not for Italy!—nor stand apart,
No, not for the republic!—from those pure
Brave men who hold the level of thy heart
In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,
Albeit they will not follow where thou art
As extreme theorist. Trust and distrust fewer;
And so bind strong and keep unstained the cause
Which (God's sign granted) war-trumps newly blown
Shall yet annunciate to the world's applause.

But now, the world is busy; it has grown
A Fair-going world. Imperial England
draws
The flowing ends of the earth, from Fez,
Canton,
Delhi and Stockholm, Athens and
Madrid,
The Russias and the vast Americas,
As if a queen drew in her robes amid
Her golden cincture,—isles, peninsulas,
Capes, continents, far inland countries
hid
By jasper-sands and hills of chrysopras,
All trailing in their splendours through
the door
Of the gorgeous Crystal Palace. Every
nation,
To every other nation strange of yore,
Gives face to face the civic salutation,
And holds up in a proud right hand
before
That congress, the best work which she
can fashion
By her best means. ‘These corals,
will you please
To match against your oaks? They grow
as fast
Within my wilderness of purple seas.’—
‘This diamond stared upon me as I passed
(As a live god’s eye from a marble
frieze)
Along a dark of diamonds. Is it classed?’—
‘I wove these stuffs so subtly that the
gold
Swims to the surface of the silk like cream,
And curdles to fair patterns. Ye be-
hold!’—
‘These delicatest muslins rather seem
Than be, you think? Nay, touch them
and be bold,
Though such veiled Chakhi’s face in
Hafiz’ dream.’—
‘These carpets—you walk slow on
them like kings,
Inaudible like spirits, while your foot
Dips deep in velvet roses and such
things.’—
‘Even Apollonius might commend this
flute.’

¹ Philostratus relates of Apollonius how he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, that it could not enrich or beautify. The history of music in our day would satisfy the philosopher on one point at least.

The music, winding through the stops,
upsprings
To make the player very rich! com-
pute.’—
‘Here’s goblet-glass, to take in with
your wine
The very sun its grapes were ripened
under!
Drink light and juice together, and
each fine.’—
‘This model of a steam-ship moves your
wonder?
You should behold it crushing down
the brine,
Like a blind Jove, who feels his way
with thunder.’—
‘Here’s sculpture! Ah, we live too!
why not throw
Our life into our marbles! Art has place
For other artists after Angelo.’—
‘I tried to paint out here a natural face;
For nature includes Raffael, as we
know,
Not Raffael nature. Will it help my
case?’—
‘Methinks you will not match this
steel of ours!’—
‘Nor you this porcelain! One might
dream the clay
Retained in it the larvae of the flowers,
They bud so, round the cup, the old
spring way.’—
‘Nor you these carven woods, where
birds in bowers
With twisting snakes and climbing
cupids, play.’

O Magi of the east and of the west,
Your incense, gold, and myrrh are ex-
cellent!—
What gifts for Christ, then, bring ye
with the rest?
Your hands have worked well. Is your
courage spent
In handwork only? Have you nothing
best,
Which generous souls may perfect and
present,
And He shall thank the givers for
no light
Of teaching, liberal nations, for the poor,
Who sit in darkness when it is not
night?

No cure for wicked children? Christ,—
no cure!

No help for women, sobbing out of sight
Because men made the laws? no brothel-
lure

Burnt out by popular lightnings?—
Hast thou found

No remedy, my England, for such woes?
No outlet, Austria, for the scourged
and bound,

No entrance for the exiled? no repose,
Russia, for knouted Poles worked
underground,
And gentle ladies bleached among the
snows?—

No mercy for the slave, America?—
No hope for Rome, free France, chivalric
France?—

Alas, great nations have great shames,
I say.

No pity, O world, no tender utterance
Of benediction, and prayers stretched
this way

For poor Italia, baffled by mischance?—
O gracious nations, give some ear to me!
You all go to your Fair, and I am one
Who at the roadside of humanity
Beseech your alms,—God's justice to be
done.

So, prosper!

In the name of Italy,
Meantime, her patriot dead have benison.
They only have done well,—and,
what they did

Being perfect, it shall triumph. Let
them slumber.

No king of Egypt in a pyramid
Is safer from oblivion, though he number
Full seventy ceremonys for a coverlid.
These Dead be seeds of life, and shall
encumber

The sad heart of the land, until it loose
The clammy clods and let out the spring-
growth

In beatific green through every bruise.
The tyrant should take heed to what he
doth,

Since every victim-carrion turns to use,
And drives a chariot, like a god made
wroth,

Against each piled injustice. Aye,
the least,

Dead for Italia, not in vain has died,
Though many vainly, ere life's struggle
ceased,
To mad dissimilar ends have swerved
aside;

Each grave her nationality has pieced
By its own majestic breadth, and fortified
And pinned it deeper to the soil. For-
lorn

Of thanks, be, therefore, no one of these
graves!

Not Hers,—who, at her husband's
side, in scorn,
Outfaced the whistling shot and hissing
waves,

Until she felt her little babe unborn
Recoil, within her, from the violent staves
And bloodhounds of the world,—at
which, her life

Dropt inwards from her eyes and
followed it

Beyond the hunters. Garibaldi's wife
And child died so. And now, the
sea-weeds fit

Her body, like a proper shroud and
coif,
And murmurously the ebbing waters grit
The little pebbles while she lies in-
terred

In the sea-sand. Perhaps, ere dying
thus,

She looked up in his face (which
never stirred
From its clenched anguish) as to make
excuse

For leaving him for his, if so she
erred.

He well remembers that she could not
choose.

A memorable grave! Another is
At Genoa. There, a king may fitly lie,
Who, bursting that heroic heart of his
At lost Novara, that he could not die
(Though thrice into the cannon's eyes
for this

He plunged his shuddering steed, and
feit the sky

Reel back between the fire-shocks),
stripped away

The ancestral ermine ere the smoke had
cleared,

And, naked to the soul, that none
might say

His kingship covered what was base
and bleared
With treason, went out straight an
exile, yea,
An exiled patriot. Let him be revered.

Yea, verily, Charles Albert has died
well;
And if he lived not all so, as one spoke,
The sin pass softly with the passing
bell.
For he was shiven, I think, in cannon-
smoke,
And, taking off his crown, made visible
A hero's forehead. Shaking Austria's
yoke
He shattered his own hand and heart.
'So best.'

His last words were upon his lonely bed,
'I do not end like popes and dukes at
least—'

Thank God for it.' And now that he
is dead,

Admitting it is proved and manifest
That he was worthy, with a discrowned
head,

To measure heights with patriots, let
them stand

Beside the man in his Oporto shroud,
And each vouchsafe to take him by
the hand,
And kiss him on the cheek, and say
aloud,—

'Thou, too, hast suffered for our
native land!

My brother, thou art one of us! be
proud.'

Still, graves, when Italy is talked upon.
Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the
stranger's hate.

Still Niobe! still fainting in the sun,
By whose most dazzling arrows violate
Her beauteous offspring perished!
has she won

Nothing but garlands for the graves,
from Fate?

Nothing but death-songs?—Yes, be it
understood

Life throbs in noble Piedmont! while
the feet

Of Rome's clay image, dabbled soft
in blood,

Grow flat with dissolution, and, as meet,
Will soon be shovelled off like other
mud,

To leave the passage free in church and
street.
And I, who first took hope up in this
song,

Because a child was singing one . . .
behold,

The hope and omen were not, haply,
wrong!

Poets are soothsayers still, like those
of old

Who studied flights of doves,—and
creatures young

And tender, mighty meanings may un-
fold.

The sun strikes, through the windows,
up the floor;

Standout in it, my own young Florentine,
Not two years old, and let me see
thee more!

It grows along thy amber curls, to
shine

Brighter than elsewhere. Now, look
straight before,

And fix thy brave blue English eyes on
mine,

And from my soul, which fronts the
future so,

With unabashed and unabated gaze,
Teach me to hope for, what the angels
know

When they smile clear as thou dost.
Down God's ways

With just alighted feet, between the
snow

And snowdrops, where a little lamb may
graze,

Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about the
road,

Albeit in our vain-glory we assume
That, less than we have, thou hast
learnt of God.

Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet!—thou,
to whom

The earliest world-day light that ever
flowed,

Through Casa Guidi windows, chanced
to come!

Now shake the glittering nimbus of
thy hair,

And be God's witness that the elemental
New springs of life are gushing every-
where

To cleanse the water-courses, and pre-
vent all

Concrete obstructions which infest the
air!

That earth's alive, and gentle or ungentle
Motions within her, signify but
growth!—

The ground swells greenest o'er the
labouring moles.

Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed
and wroth,

Young children, lifted high on parent
souls,

Look round them with a smile upon
the mouth,

And take for music every bell that tolls;

(WHO said we should be better if like
these?)

But *we* sit murmuring for the future though
Posterity is smiling on our knees,
Convicting us of folly. Let us go—
We will trust God. The blank inter-
stices

Men take for ruins, He will build into
With pillared marbles rare, or knit
across

With generous arches, till the fane's
complete.

This world has no perdition, if some
loss.

Such cheer I gather from thy smiling,
Sweet!

The self-same cherub-faces which em-
boss

The Vail, lean inward to the Mercy-seat.

AURORA LEIGH

A POEM, IN NINE BOOKS.

DEDICATION TO JOHN KENYON, ESQ.

THE words 'cousin' and 'friend' are constantly recurring in this poem, the last pages of which have been finished under the hospitality of your roof, my own dearest cousin and friend;—cousin and friend, in a sense of less equality and greater disinterestedness than 'Romney's'.

Ending, therefore, and preparing once more to quit England, I venture to leave in your hands this book, the most mature of my works, and the one into which my highest convictions upon Life and Art have

entered; that as, through my various efforts in literature and steps in life, you have believed in me, borne with me, and been generous to me, far beyond the common uses of mere relationship or sympathy of mind, so you may kindly accept, in sight of the public, this poor sign of esteem, gratitude, and affection from

Your unforgetting

E. B. B.

39 DEVONSHIRE PLACE,
October 17, 1856.

AURORA LEIGH

FIRST BOOK

Or writing many books there is no end;
And I who have written much in prose
and verse
For others' uses, will write now for
mine,—
Will write my story for my better self
As when you paint your portrait for a
friend,
Who keeps it in a drawer and looks at it
Long after he has ceased to love you, just
To hold together what he was and is.

I, writing thus, am still what men call
young,
I have not so far left the coasts of life
To travel inland, that I cannot hear
That murmur of the outer Infinite
Which unweaned babies smile at in their
sleep
When wondered at for smiling; not so
far,
But still I catch my mother at her post
Beside the nursery-door, with finger up,
'Hush, hush—here's too much noise!'
while her sweet eyes

Leap forward, taking part against her
word
In the child's riot. Still I sit and feel
My father's slow hand, when she had
left us both,
Stroke out my childish curls across his
knee,
And hear Assunta's daily jest (she knew
He liked it better than a better jest)
Inquire how many golden scudi went
To make such ringlets. O my father's
hand,
Stroke heavily, heavily the poor hair
down,
Draw, press the child's head closer to
thy knee!
I'm still too young, too young, to sit
alone.

I write. My mother was a Florentine,
Whose rare blue eyes were shut from
seeing me
When scarcely I was four years old, my
life
A poor spark snatched up from a failing
lamp

Which went out therefore. She was weak and frail;
 She could not bear the joy of giving life,
 The mother's rapture slew her. If her kiss
 Had left a longer weight upon my lips
 It might have steadied the uneasy breath,
 And reconciled and fraternized my soul
 With the new order. As it was, indeed,
 I felt a mother-want about the world,
 And still went seeking, like a bleating lamb
 Left out at night in shutting up the fold,—
 As restless as a nest-deserted bird
 Grown chill through something being away, though what
 It knows not. I, Aurora Leigh, was born
 To make my father sadder, and myself
 Not overjoyous, truly. Women know
 The way to rear up children (to be just);
 They know a simple, merry, tender knack
 Of tying sashgs, fitting baby-shoes,
 And stringing pretty words that make no sense,
 And kissing full sense into empty words,
 Which things are corals to cut life upon,
 Although such trifles: children learn by such,
 Love's holy earnest in a pretty play
 And get not over-early solemnized,
 But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's Divine
 Which burns and hurts not,—not a single bloom,—
 Become aware and unafraid of Love.
 Such good do mothers. Fathers love as well
 —Mine did, I know,—but still with heavier brains,
 And wills more consciously responsible,
 And not as wisely, since less foolishly;
 So mothers have God's licence to be missed.

My father was an austere Englishman, Who, after a dry lifetime spent at home In college-learning, law, and parish talk, Was flooded with a passion unaware, His whole provisioned and complacent past Drowned out from him that moment. As he stood

In Florence, where he had come to spend a month
 And note the secret of Da Vinci's drains, He musing somewhat absently perhaps Some English question : whether men should pay
 The unpopular but necessary tax With left or right hand—in the alien sun In that great square of the Santissima There drifted past him (scarcely marked enough
 To move his comfortable island scorn) A train of priestly banners, cross and psalm,
 The white-veiled rose-crowned maidens holding up
 Tall tapers, weighty for such wrists, aslant
 To the blue luminous tremor of the air, And letting drop the white wax as they went
 To eat the bishop's wafer at the church ; From which long trail of chanting priests and girls,
 A face flashed like a cymbal on his face And shook with silent clangour brain and heart,
 Transfiguring him to music. Thus, even thus,
 He too received his sacramental gift With eucharistic meanings ; for he loved.
 And thus beloved, she died. I've heard it said
 That but to see him in the first surprise Of widower and father, nursing me, Unmothered little child of four years old, His large man's hands afraid to touch my curlis,
 As if the gold would tarnish,—his grave lips
 Contriving such a miserable smile As if he knew needs must, or I should die, And yet 'twas hard,—would almost make the stones
 Cry out for pity. There's a verse he set In Santa Croce to her memory,— ‘Weep for an infant too young to weep much
 When death removed this mother’—stops the mirth
 To-day on women's faces when they walk

With rosy children hanging on their gowns,
Under the cloister to escape the sun
That scorches in the piazza. After which
He left our Florence and made haste to hide
Himself, his Prattling child, and silent grief,
Among the mountains above Pelago;
Because unmothered babes, he thought,
had need
Of mother nature more than others use,
And Pan's white goats, with udders warm and full
Of mystic contemplations, come to feed
Poor milkless lips of orphans like his own—
Such scholar scraps he talked, I've heard from friends,
For even prosaic men who wear grief long
Will get to wear it as a hat aside
With a flower stuck in't. Father, then, and child,
We lived among the mountains many years,
God's silence on the outside of the house,
And we who did not speak too loud within,
And old Assunta to make up the fire,
Crossing herself whene'er a sudden flame
Which lightened from the firewood, made alive
That picture of my mother on the wall.
The painter drew it after she was dead,
And when the face was finished, throat and hands,
Her cameriera carried him, in hate
Of the English-fashioned shroud, the last brocade
She dressed in at the Pitti; 'he should paint
No sadder thing than that,' she swore,
'to wrong
Her poor signora. Therefore very strange
The effect was. I, a little child, would crouch
For hours upon the floor with knees drawn up,
And gaze across them, half in terror, half

In adoration, at the picture there,—
That swan-like supernatural white life
Just sailing upward from the red stiff silk
Which seemed to have no part in it nor power
To keep it from quite breaking out of bounds.
For hours I sat and stared. Assunta's awe
And my poor father's melancholy eyes
Still pointed that way. That way went
my thoughts
When wandering beyond sight. And as I grew
In years, I mixed, confused, unconsciously,
Whatever I last read or heard or dreamed,
Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,
Pathetical, or ghastly, or grotesque,
With still that face . . . which did not therefore change,
But kept the mystic level of all forms,
Hates, fears, and admirations, was by turns
Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch,
and sprite,
A dauntless Muse who eyes a dreadful Fate,
A loving Psyche who loses sight of Love,
A still Medusa with mild milky brows
All curdled and all clothed upon with snakes
Whose slime falls fast as sweat will; or anon
Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed with swords
Where the Babe sucked; or Lamia in her first
Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk and blinked
And shuddering wriggled down to the unclean;
Or my own mother, leaving her last smile
In her last kiss upon the baby-mouth.
My father pushed down on the bed for that,—
Or my dead mother, without smile or kiss,
Buried at Florence. All which images,
Concentred on the picture, glassed themselves
Before my meditative childhood, as
The incoherencies of change and death

Are represented fully, mixed and merged,
In the smooth fair mystery of perpetual
Life.

And while I stared away my childish
wits
Upon my mother's picture (ah, poor
child!)
My father, who through love had suddenly
Thrown off the old conventions, broken
loose
From chin-bands of the soul, like Lazarus,
Yet had no time to learn to talk and walk
Or grow anew familiar with the sun,—
Who had reached to freedom, not to
action, lived,
But lived as one entranced, with thoughts,
not aims,—
Whom love had unmade from a common
man
But not completed to an uncommon
man,—
My father taught me what he had learnt
the best
Before he died and left me,—grief and
love.
And, seeing we had books among the
hills,
Strong words of counselling souls con-
federate
With vocal pines and waters,—out of
books
He taught me all the ignorance of men,
And how God laughs in heaven when any
man
Says 'Here I'm learned ; this, I under-
stand ;
In that, I am never caught at fault or
doubt.'
He sent the schools to school, demon-
strating
A fool will pass for such through one
mistake,
While a philosopher will pass for such,
Through said mistakes being ventured
in the gross
And heaped up to a system.

I am like,
They tell me, my dear father. Broader
brows
Howbeit, upon a slenderer undergrowth
Of delicate features,—paler, near as
grave ;

But then my mother's smile breaks up the
whole,
And makes it better sometimes than itself.

So, nine full years, our days were hid
with God
Among His mountains : I was just thir-
teen,
Still growing like the plants from unseen
roots
In tongue-tied Springs,—and suddenly
awoke
To full life and life's needs and agonies
With an intense, strong, struggling
heart beside
A stone-dead father. Life, struck sharp
on death,
Makes awful lightning. His last word
was, 'Love'—
'Love, my child, love, love !'—(then he
had done with grief)
'Love, my child.' Ere I answered he
was gone,
And none was left to love in all the world.

There, ended childhood. What suc-
ceeded next
I recollect as, after fevers, men
Thread back the passage of delirium,
Missing the turn still, baffled by the door;
Smooth endless days, notched here and
there with knives ;
A weary, worny darkness, spurred i'
the flank
With flame, that it should eat and end
itself
Like some tormented scorpion. Then
at last
I do remember clearly, how there came
A stranger with authority, not right
(I thought not), who commanded, caught
me up
From old Assunta's neck ; how, with a
shriek,
She let me go,—while I, with ears too full
Of my father's silence to shriek back
a word,
In all a child's astonishment at grief
Stared at the wharf-edge where she
stood and moaned,
My poor Assunta, where she stood and
moaned !
The white walls, the blue hills, my Italy,

Drawn backward from the shuddering
steamer-deck,
Like one in anger drawing back her
skirts
Which suppliants catch at. Then the
bitter sea
Inexorably pushed between us both,
And sweeping up the ship with my
despair
Threw us out as a pasture to the stars.

Ten nights and days we voyaged on the
deep;
Ten nights and days without the common
face
Of any day or night; the moon and sun
Cut off from the green reconciling earth,
To starve into a blind ferocity
And glare unnatural; the very sky
(Dropping its bell-net down upon the sea
As if no human heart should 'scape alive,)
Bedraggled with the desolating salt,
Until it seemed no more than holy heaven
To which my father went. All new
and strange;
The universe turned stranger, for a child.

Then, land!—then, England! oh, the
frosty cliffs
Looked cold upon me. Could I find a
home
Among those mean red houses through
the fog?
And when I heard my father's language
first

From alien lips which had no kiss for mine
I wept aloud, then laughed, then wept,
then wept,
And some one near me said the child
was mad
Through much sea-sickness. The train
swept us on.
Was this my father's England? the great
isle?
The ground seemed cut up from the
fellowship
Of verdure, field from field, as man from
man;
The skies themselves looked low and
positive,
As almost you could touch them with
a hand,
And dared to do it they were so far off

From God's celestial crystals; all things
blurred
And dull and vague. Did Shakespeare
and his mates
Absorb the light here?—not a hill or stone
With heart to strike a radiant colour up
Or active outline on the indifferent air.

I think I see my father's sister stand
Upon the hall-step of her country-house
To give me welcome. She stood straight
and calm,
Her somewhat narrow forehead braided
tight

As if for taming accidental thoughts
From possible pulses; brown hair
pricked with grey
By frigid use of life (she was not old
Although my father's elder by a year),
A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate
lines;

A close mild mouth, a little soured about
The ends, through speaking unrequited
loves

Or peradventure niggardly half-truths;
Eyes of no colour,—once they might
have smiled,

But never, never have forgot themselves
In smiling; cheeks, in which was yet
a rose

Of perished summers, like a rose in a
book,
Kept more for ruth than pleasure,—if
past bloom,
Past fading also.

She had lived, we'll say,
A harmless life, she called a virtuous life,
A quiet life, which was not life at all
(But that, she had not lived enough to
know),

Between the vicar and the county squires,
The lord-lieutenant looking down some-
times

From the empyrean to assure their souls
Against chance-vulgarisms, and, in the
abyss

The apothecary, looked on once a year
To prove their soundness of humility.
The poor-club exercised her Christian
gifts

Of knitting stockings, stitching petticoats,
Because we are of one flesh after all
And need one flannel (with a proper sense

Of difference in the quality)—and still
The book-club, guarded from your
modern trick

Of shaking dangerous questions from the
crease,
Preserved her intellectual. She had lived
A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,
Accounting that to leap from perch to
perch

Was act and joy enough for any bird.
Dear heaven, how silly are the things
that live

In thickets, and eat berries!

I, alas,

A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought
to her cage,
And she was there to meet me. Very kind.
Bring the clean water, give out the fresh
seed.

She stood upon the steps to welcome me,
Calm, in black garb. I clung about her
neck,—

Young babes, who catch at every shred
of wool
To draw the new light closer, catch and
cling

Less blindly. In my ears, my father's
word

Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in shells,
'Love, love, my child.' She, black there
with my grief,

Might feel my love—she was his sister
once,

I clung to her. A moment she seemed
moved,

Kissed me with cold lips, suffered me
to cling,

And drew me feebly through the hall into
The room she sate in.

There, with some strange spasm
Of pain and passion, she wrung loose
my hands

Impenitently, and held me at arm's length,
And with two grey-steel naked-bladed
eyes

Searched through my face,—aye, stabbed
it through and through,
Through brows and cheeks and chin, as
if to find

A wicked murderer in my innocent face,
If not here, there perhaps. Then,
drawing breath,

She struggled for her ordinary calm
And missed it rather,—told me not to
shrink,

As if she had told me not to lie or swear,—
'She loved my father and would love
me too'

As long as I deserved it.' Very kind.

I understood her meaning afterward;
She thought to find my mother in my face,
And questioned it for that. For she,
my aunt,

Had loved my father truly, as she could,
And hated, with the gall of gentle souls,
My Tuscan mother who had fooled away
A wise man from wise courses, a good man
From obvious duties, and, depriving her,
His sister, of the household precedence,
Had wronged his tenants, robbed his
native land,

And made him mad, alike by life and death,
In love and sorrow. She had pored for
years

What sort of woman could be suitable
To her sort of hate, to entertain it with,
And so, her very curiosity

Became hate too, and all the idealism
She ever used in life, was used for hate,
Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at last
The love from which it grew, in strength
and heat,

And wrinkled her smooth conscience
with a sense

Of disputable virtue (say not, sin)
When Christian doctrine was enforced
at church.

And thus my father's sister was to me
My mother's hater. From that day, she did
Her duty to me (I appreciate it
In her own word as spoken to herself),
Her duty, in large measure, well-pressed
out,

But measured always. She was generous,
bland,
More courteous than was tender, gave
me still

The first place,—as if fearful that God's
saints

Would look down suddenly and say,
'Herein

You missed a point, I think, through
lack of love.'

Alas, a mother never is afraid
Of speaking angrily to any child,
Since love, she knows, is justified of love.

And I, I was a good child on the whole,
A meek and manageable child. Why not?
I did not live, to have the faults of life :
There seemed more true life in my
father's grave
Than in all England. Since *that* threw
me off

Who fain would cleave (his latest will,
they say,
Consigned me to his land), I only thought
Of lying quiet there where I was thrown
Like sea-weed on the rocks, and suffer-
ing her

To prick me to a pattern with her pin
Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from leaf,
And dry out from my drowned anatomy
The last sea-salt left in me.

So it was.

I broke the copious curls upon my head
In braids, because she liked smooth-
ordered hair.

I left off saying my sweet Tuscan words
Which still at any stirring of the heart
Came up to float across the English phrase
As lilies (*Bene* or *Che c'z*), because
She liked my father's child to speak his
tongue.

I learnt the collects and the catechism,
The creeds, from Athanasius back to Nice,
The Articles, the Tracts *against* the times
(By no means Buonaventure's 'Prick of
Love'),

And various popular synopses of
Inhuman doctrines never taught by John,
Because she liked instructed piety.

I learnt my complement of classic French
(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism)
And German also, since she liked a range
Of liberal education,—tongues, not books.

I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics,—brushed with
extreme flounce

The circle of the sciences, because
She disliked women who are frivolous.

I learnt the royal genealogies
Of Oviedo, the internal laws
Of the Burmese empire,—by how many
feet

Mount Chimborazo outsoars Teneriffe,

What navigable river joins itself
To Lara, and what census of the year
five

Was taken at Klagenfurt,—because she
liked

A general insight into useful facts.
I learnt much music,—such as would
have been

As quite impossible in Johnson's day
As still it might be wished—fine sleights
of hand

And unimagined fingering, shuffling off
The hearer's soul through hurricanes of
notes

To a noisy Tophet; and I drew . . .
costumes

From French engravings, nereids neatly
draped,
(With smirks of simmering godship)—

I washed in
Landscapes from nature (rather say,
washed out).

I danced the polka and Cellarius,
Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modelled
flowers in wax,

Because she liked accomplishments in
girls.

I read a score of books on womanhood
To prove, if women do not think at all,
They may teach thinking (to a maid-
aunt

Or else the author),—books that boldly
assert

Their right of comprehending husband's
talk

When not too deep, and even of answering
With pretty 'may it please you,' or 'so
it is,'—

Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
Particular worth and general missionari-
ness,

As long as they keep quiet by the fire
And never say 'no' when the world
says 'aye,'

For that is fatal,—their angelic reach
Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,
And fatten household sinners,—their, in
brief,

Potential faculty in everything
Of abdicating power in it: she owned
She liked a woman to be womanly,
And English women, she thanked God
and sighed

(Some people always sigh in thanking
God),

Were models to the universe. And last
I learnt cross-stitch, because she did not
like

To see me wear the night with empty
hands

A-doing nothing. So, my shepherdess
Was something after all (the pastoral
saints

Be praised for't), leaning lovelorn with
pink eyes

To match her shoes, when I mistook the
silks;

Her head uncrushed by that round
weight of hat

So strangely similar to the tortoise-shell
Which slew the tragic poet.

By the way,
The works of women are symbolical.
We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull
our sight,

Producing what? A pair of slippers, sir,
(To put on when you're weary—or a stool
To stumble over and vex you . . . curse
that stool!')

Or else at best, a cushion, where you lean
And sleep, and dream of something we
are not

But would be for your sake. Alas, alas!
This hurts most, this—that, after all, we
are paid

The worth of our work, perhaps.

In looking down
Those years of education (to return)
I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered more
In the water-torture, . . . flood succeeding
flood

To drench the incapable throat and split
the veins.

Than I did. Certain of your feebler souls
Go out in such a process; many pine
To a sick, inodorous light; my own
endured:

I had relations in the Unseen, and drew
The elemental nutriment and heat
From nature, as earth feels the sun at
nights,

Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark.
I kept the life thrust on me, on the outside
Of the inner life with all its ample room
For heart and lungs, for will and intellect,
Inviolable by conventions. God,

I thank thee for that grace of thine!

At first

I felt no life which was not patience,—did
The thing she bade me, without heed
to a thing

Beyond it, sate in just the chair she placed,
With back against the window, to exclude
The sight of the great lime-tree on the
lawn,

Which seemed to have come on purpose
from the woods

To bring the house a message,—aye, and
walked

Demurely in her carpeted low rooms,
As if I should not, hearkening my own
steps,

Misdoubt I was alive. I read her books,
Was civil to her cousin, Romney Leigh,
Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her visitors,
And heard them whisper, when I
changed a cup—

(I blushed for joy at that),—‘The Italian
child,

For all her blue eyes and her quiet ways,
Thrives ill in England: she is paler yet
Than when we came the last time; she
will die.’

‘Will die.’ My cousin, Romney Leigh,
blushed too,

With sudden anger, and approaching me
Said low between his teeth, ‘You’re
wicked now!

You wish to die and leave the world
a-dusk

For others, with your naughty light
blown out?’

I looked into his face defyingly;
He might have known that, being what
I was,

‘Twas natural to like to get away
As far as dead folk can: and then indeed
Some people make no trouble when
they die.

He turned and went abruptly, slammed
the door

And shut his dog out.

Romney, Romney Leigh.
I have not named my cousin hitherto,
And yet I used him as a sort of friend;
My elder by few years, but cold and shy
And absent . . . tender, when he thought
of it,

Which scarcely was imperative, grave
betimes,

As well as early master of Leigh Hall,
Whereof the nightmare sate upon his
youth

Repressing all its seasonable delights
And agonizing with a ghastly sense
Of universal hideous want and wrong

To incriminate possession. When he
came

From college to the country, very oft
He crossed the hill on visits to my aunt,
With gifts of blue grapes from the hot-
houses,

A book in one hand,—mere statistics (if I chanced to lift the cover), count of all The goats whose beards grow sprouting down toward hell

Against God's separative judgement-hour.
And she, she almost loved him,—even
allowed .

That sometimes he should seem to sigh
my way;

It made him easier to be pitiful,
And sighing was his gift. So, undisturbed
At whiles she let him shut my music up
And push my needies down, and lead
me out

To see in that south angle of the house
The figs grow black as if by a Tuscan rock,
On some light pretext. She would
turn her head

At other moments, go to fetch a thing,
And leave me breath enough to speak
with him.

With him,
For his sake; it was simple.

Sometimes too
He would have saved me utterly, it
 seemed,
He stood and looked so.

Once, he stood so near
He dropped a sudden hand upon my head,
Bent down on woman's work, as soft
as rain —

But then I rose and shook it off as fire,
The stranger's touch that took my
father's place

Yet dared seem soft.
I used him for a friend.

I used him for a friend
Before I ever knew him for a friend.
'Twas better, 'twas worse so, afterward
We came so close, we saw our differences
Too intimately. Always Romney Leigh

Was looking for the worms, I for the
gods.

A godlike nature his ; the gods look down,
Incurious of themselves ; and certainly
'Tis well I should remember, how, those
days.

I was a worm too and he looked on me.

A little by his act perhaps, yet more
By something in me, surely not my will,
I did not die. But slowly, as one in
swoon,
To whom life creeps back in the form of
death.

With a sense of separation. a blind pain
Of blank obstruction, and a roar i' the ears
Of visionary chariots which retreat
As earth grows clearer . . . slowly, by
degrees,
I woke, rose up . . . where was I? in the
world;
For uses therefore I must count worth
while.

I had a little chamber in the house,
As green as any privet-hedge a bird
Might choose to build in, though the
nest itself

Could show but dead-brown sticks and straws; the walls

Were green, the carpet was pure green,
the straight
Small bed was curtained greenly, and
the folds

Hung green about the window which
let in

The outdoor world with all its greenery.
You could not push your head out and
escape

A dash of dawn-dew from the honeysuckle,
But so you were baptized into the grace
And privilege of seeing. . .

First, the lime
(I had enough there, of the lime, be sure, —
My morning-dream was often hummed
away.

away
By the bees in it), past the lime, the
lawn,
Which, after sweeping broadly round
the house,
Went trickling through the shrubberies
in a stream

Of tender turf, and wore and lost itself
 Among the acacias, over which you saw
 The irregular line of elms by the deep lane
 Which stopped the grounds and dammed
 the overflow
 Of arbutus and laurel. Out of sight
 The lane was ; sunk so deep, no foreign
 tramp
 Nor drover of wild ponies out of Wales
 Could guess if lady's hall or tenant's
 lodge
 Dispensed such odours,—though his
 stick well-crooked
 Might reach the lowest trail of blossoming brier
 Which dipped upon the wall. Behind
 the elms,
 And through their tops, you saw the
 folded hills
 Striped up and down with hedges
 (burly oaks)
 Projecting from the line to show them-
 selves),
 Through which my cousin Romney's
 chimneys smoked
 As still as when a silent mouth in frost
 Breathes, showing where the woodlands
 hid Leigh Hall ;
 While, far above, a jut of table-land,
 A premonitory without water, stretch-
 ed,—
 You could not catch it if the days were
 thick,
 Or took it for a cloud ; but, otherwise,
 The vigorous sun would catch it up at eve
 And use it for an anvil till he had filled
 The shelves of heaven with burning
 thunderbolts,
 Protesting against night and darkness :—
 then,
 When all his setting trouble was resolved
 To a trance of passive glory, you might see
 In apparition on the golden sky
 (Alas, my Giotto's background !) the
 sheep run
 Along the fine clear outline, small as mice
 That run along a witch's scarlet thread.
 Not a grand nature. Not my chestnut-
 woods
 Of Vallombrosa, cleaving by the spurs
 To the precipices. Not my headlong leaps
 Of waters, that cry out for joy or fear

In leaping through the palpitating pines,
 Like a white soul tossed out to eternity
 With thrills of time upon it. Not indeed
 My multitudinous mountains, sitting in
 The magic circle, with the mutual touch
 Electric, panting from their full deep
 hearts
 Beneath the influent heavens, and
 waiting for
 Communion and commission. Italy
 Is one thing, England one.
 On English ground
 You understand the letter,—ere the fall
 How Adam lived in a garden. All the
 fields
 Are tied up fast with hedges, nosegay-
 like ;
 The hills are crumpled plains, the plains
 parterres,
 The trees, round, woolly, ready to be
 clipped,
 And if you seek for any wilderness
 You find, at best, a park. A nature tamed
 And grown domestic like a barn-door
 fowl,
 Which does not awe you with its claws
 and beak
 Nor tempt you to an eyrie too high up,
 But which, in cackling, sets you
 thinking of
 Your eggs to-morrow at breakfast, in
 the pause
 Of finer meditation.
 Rather say,
 A sweet familiar nature, stealing in
 As a dog might, or child, to touch your
 hand
 Or pluck your gown, and humbly mind
 you so
 Of presence and affection, excellent
 For inner uses, from the things without.
 I could not be unthankful, I who was
 Entreated thus and holpen. In the room
 I speak of, ere the house was well awake,
 And also after it was well asleep,
 I sat alone, and drew the blessing in
 Of all that nature. With a gradual step,
 A stir among the leaves, a breath, a ray,
 It came in softly, while the angels made
 A place for it beside me. The moon came,
 And swept my chamber clean of foolish
 thoughts.

The sun came, saying, 'Shall I lift this light
Against the lime-tree, and you will not look?
I make the birds sing—listen! but, for you,
God never hears your voice, excepting when
You lie upon the bed at nights and weep.'

Then, something moved me. Then,
I wakened up
More slowly than I verily write now,
But wholly, at last, I wakened, opened wide
The window and my soul, and let the airs
And outdoor sights sweep gradual gospels in,
Regenerating what I was. O Life,
How oft we throw it off and think,—
‘Enough,
Enough of life in so much!—here’s a cause
For rupture;—herein we must break with Life,
Or be ourselves unworthy; here we are wronged,
Maimed, spoiled for aspiration: farewell Life!’
And so, as forward babes, we hide our eyes
And think all ended.—Then, Life calls to us
In some transformed, apocalyptic voice,
Above us, or below us, or around:
Perhaps we name it Nature’s voice, or Love’s,
Tricking ourselves, because we are more ashamed
To own our compensations than our griefs:
Still, Life’s voice!—still, we make our peace with Life.

And I, so young then, was not sullen.
Soon
I used to get up early, just to sit
And watch the morning quicken in the grey,
And hear the silence open like a flower
Leaf after leaf,—and stroke with listless hand
The woodbine through the window, till at last

I came to do it with a sort of love,
At foolish unaware: whereat I smiled,—
A melancholy smile, to catch myself Smiling for joy.

Capacity for joy
Admits temptation. It seemed, next, worth while
To dodge the sharp sword set against my life;
To slip downstairs through all the sleepy house,
As mute as any dream there, and escape As a soul from the body, out of doors, Glide through the shrubberies, drop into the lane,
And wander on the hills an hour or two, Then back again before the house should stir.

Or else I sate on in my chamber green, And lived my life, and thought my thoughts, and prayed My prayers without the vicar; read my books, Without considering whether they were fit To do me good. Mark, there. We get no good By being ungenerous, even to a book, And calculating profits,—so much help By so much reading. It is rather when We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge Soul-forward, headlong, into a book’s profound, Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth— ‘Tis then we get the right good from a book.

I read much. What my father taught before From many a volume, Love re-emphasized Upon the self-same pages: Theophrast Grew tender with the memory of his eyes, And Aelian made mine wet. The trick of Greek And Latin, he had taught me, as he would Have taught me wrestling or the game of fives If such he had known,—most like a shipwrecked man

Who heaps his single platter with goats' cheese
 And scarlet berries ; or like any man
 Who loves but one, and so gives all at once,
 Because he has it, rather than because
 He counts it worthy. Thus, my father
 gave ;
 And thus, as did the women formerly
 By young Achilles, when they pinned
 a veil
 Across the boy's audacious front, and
 swept
 With tuneful laughs the silver-fretted
 rocks,
 He wrapt his little daughter in his large
 Man's doublet, careless did it fit or no.
 But, after I had read for memory,
 I read for hope. The path my father's foot
 Had trod me out (which suddenly broke
 off
 What time he dropped the wallet of the
 flesh
 And passed) alone I carried on, and set
 My child-heart 'gainst the thorny under-
 wood,
 To reach the grassy shelter of the trees.
 Ah babe i' the wood, without a brother-
 babe !
 My own self-pity, like the red-breast bird,
 Flies back to cover all that past with
 leaves.
 Sublimest danger, over which none
 weeps,
 When any young wayfaring soul goes
 forth
 Alone, unconscious of the perilous road,
 The day-sun dazzling in his limpid eyes,
 To thrust his own way, he an alien,
 through
 The world of books ! Ah, you !—you
 think it fine,
 You clap hands—‘A fair day !’—you
 cheer him on,
 As if the worst could happen, were to rest
 Too long beside a fountain. Yet, behold,
 Behold !—the world of books is still the
 world,
 “And worldlings in it are less merciful
 And more puissant. For the wicked there
 Are winged like angels ; every knife
 that strikes

Is edged from elemental fire to assail
 A spiritual life ; the beautiful seems right
 By force of beauty, and the feeble wrong
 Because of weakness ; power is justified
 Though armed against Saint Michael ;
 many a crown
 Covers bald foreheads. In the book-
 world, true,
 There's no lack, neither, of God's saints
 and kings,
 That shake the ashes of the grave aside
 From their calm locks and undiscomfited
 Look steadfast truths against Time's
 changing mask.
 True, many a prophet teaches in the
 roads ;
 True, many a seer pulls down the
 flaming heavens
 Upon his own head in strong martyrdom
 In order to light men a moment's space.
 But stay !—who judges ?—who dis-
 tinguishes
 ‘Twixt Saul and Nahash justly, at first
 sight,
 And leaves king Saul precisely at the sin,
 To serve king David ? who discerns at
 once
 The sound of the trumpets, when the
 trumpets blow
 For Alaric as well as Charlemagne ?
 Who judges wizards, and can tell true
 seers
 From conjurors ? the child, there ?
 Would you leave
 That child to wander in a battle-field
 And push his innocent smile against the
 guns ;
 Or even in a catacomb,—his torch
 Grown ragged in the fluttering air, and
 all
 The darka-mutter round him ? not a child.
 I read books bad and good—some bad
 and good
 At once (good aims not always make
 good books :
 Well-tempered spades turn up ill-
 smelling soils
 In digging vineyards even) ; books that
 prove
 God's being so definitely, that man's
 doubt
 Grows self-defined the other side the line,

Made atheist by suggestion; moral books,
Exasperating to licence; genial books,
Discounting from the human dignity;
And merry books, which set you weep-
ing when

The sun shines,—aye, and melancholy
books,
Which make you laugh that any one
should weep
In this disjointed life for one wrong more.

The world of books is still the world,
I write,
And both worlds have God's providence,
thank God,
To keep and hearten: with some struggle,
indeed,
Among the breakers, some hard swim-
ming through
The deeps—I lost breath in my soul
sometimes
And cried, 'God save me if there's any
God,'
But, even so, God saved me; and, being
dashed
From error on to error, every turn
Still brought me nearer to the central
truth.

I thought so. All this anguish in the
thick
Of men's opinions . . . press and counter-
press,
Now up, now down, now underfoot, and
now
Emergent . . . all the best of it, perhaps,
But throws you back upon a noble trust
And use of your own instinct,—merely
proves
Pure reason stronger than bare inference
At strongest. Try it,—fix against heaven's
wall
The scaling-ladders of school logic—
mount
Step by step!—sight goes faster; that
still ray
Which strikes out from you, how, you
cannot tell,
And why, you know not (did you elim-
inate,
That such as you indeed should analyse?),
Goes straight and fast as light, and high
as God.

The cygnet finds the water, but the man
is born in ignorance of his element
And feels out blind at first, disorganized
By sin i' the blood,—his spirit-insight
dulled

And crossed by his sensations. Presently
He feels it quicken in the dark sometimes,
When, mark, be reverent, be obedient,
For such dumb motions of imperfect life
Are oracles of vital Deity
Attesting the Hereafter. Let who says
'The soul's a clean white paper,' rather
say,

A palimpsest, a prophet's holograph
Defiled, erased and covered by a monk's,—
The apocalypse, by a Longus! poring on
Which obscene text, we may discern
perhaps
Some fair, fine trace of what was written
once,
Some upstroke of an alpha and omega
Expressing the old scripture.

Books, books, books!
I had found the secret of a garret-room
Piled high with cases in my father's name,
Piled high, packed large,—where, creep-
ing in and out
Among the giant fossils of my past,
Like some small nimble mouse between
the ribs
Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and there
At this or that box, pulling through the
gap,
In heats of terror, haste, victorious joy,
The first book first. And how I felt it beat
Under my pillow, in the morning's dark,
An hour before the sun would let me read!
My books! At last because the time was
ripe,
I chanced upon the poets.

As the earth
Plunges in fury, when the internal fires
Have reached and pricked her heart, and,
throwing flat
The marts and temples, the triumphal
gates
And towers of observation, clears herself
To elemental freedom—thus, my soul,
At poetry's divine first finger-touch,
Let go conventions and sprang up sur-
prised,
Convicted of the great eternities
Before two worlds.

What's this, Aurora Leigh,
You write so of the poets, and not laugh?
Those virtuous liars, dreamers after dark,
Exaggerators of the sun and moon,
And soothsayers in a tea-cup?

I write so
Of the only truth-tellers now left to God,
The only speakers of essential truth,
Opposed to relative, comparative,
And temporal truths; the only holders by
His sun-skirts, through conventional
grey glooms;
The only teachers who instruct mankind
From just a shadow on a charnel-wall
To find man's veritable stature out
Erect, sublime,—the measure of a man,
And that's the measure of an angel, says
The apostle. Aye, and while your com-
mon men
Lay telegraphs, gauge railroads, reign,
reap, dine,
And dust the flaunting carpets of the world
For kings to walk on, or our president,
The poet suddenly will catch them up
With his voice like a thunder,—'This is
soul,
This is life, this word is being said in
heaven,
Here's God down on us! what are you
about?'
How all those workers start amid their
work,
Look round, look up, and feel, a mo-
ment's space,
That carpet-dusting, though a pretty
trade,
Is not the imperative labour after all.

My own best poets, am I one with you,
That thus I love you,—or but one
through love?
Does all this smell of thyme about my feet
Conclude my visit to your holy hill
In personal presence, or but testify
The rustling of your vesture through my
dreams
With influent odours? When my joy
and pain,
My thought and aspiration, like the stops
Of pipe or flute, are absolutely dumb
Unless melodious, do you play on me
My pipers,—and if, sooth, you did not
blow,

Would no sound come? or is the music
mine,
As a man's voice or breath is called his
own,
Inbreathed by the Life-breather? There's
a doubt
For cloudy seasons!

But the sun was high.
When first I felt my pulses set themselves
For concord; when the rhythmic turbu-
lence

Of blood and brain swept outward upon
words,
As wind upon the alders, blanching them
By turning up their under-natures till
They trembled in dilation. O delight
And triumph of the poet, who would say
A man's mere 'yes,' a woman's common
'no,'

A little human hope of that or this,
And says the word so that it burns you
through
With a special revelation, shakes the
heart
Of all the men and women in the world,
As if one came back from the dead and
spoke,
With eyes too happy, a familiar thing
Become divine i' the utterance! while
for him

The poet, speaker, he expands with joy;
The palpitating angel in his flesh
Thrills inly with consenting fellowship
To those innumerable spirits who sun
themselves
Outside of time.

O life, O poetry,
—Which means life in life! cognizant of
life
Beyond this blood-beat, passionate for
truth
Beyond these senses!—poetry, my life,
My eagle, with both grappling feet still
hot
From Zeus's thunder, who hast ravished
me
Away from all the shepherds, sheep, and
dogs,
And set me in the Olympian roar and
round
Of luminous faces for a cup-bearer,
To keep the mouths of all the godheads
moist

For everlasting laughter,—I myself
Half drunk across the beaker with their
eyes!

How those gods look!

Enough so, Ganymede,
We shall not bear above a round or two.
We drop the golden cup at Heré's foot
And swoon back to the earth,—and find
ourselves

Face-down among the pine-cones, cold
with dew.

While the dogs bark, and many a sheep-
herd scoffs,
'What's come now to the youth?' Such
ups and downs
Have poets.

Am I such indeed? The name
Is royal, and to sign it like a queen,
Is what I dare not,—though some royal
blood

Would seem to tingle in me now and then,
With sense of power and ache,—with
imposthumes

And manias usual to the race. Howbeit
I dare not: 'tis too easy to go mad
And ape a Bourbon in a crown of straws;
The thing's too common.

Many fervent souls
Strike rime on rime, who would strike
steel on steel!

If steel had offered, in a restless heat
Of doing something. Many tender souls
Have strung their losses on a riming
thread,

As children, cowslips:—the more pains
they take,

The work more withers. Young men,
aye, and maids,
Too often sow their wild oats in tame
verse,

Before they sit down under their own vine
And live for use. Alas, near all the birds
Will sing at dawn,—and yet we do not
take

The chattering swallow for the holy lark.

In those days, though, I never analysed,
Not even myself. Analysis comes late.
You catch a sight of Nature, earliest,
In full front sun-face, and your eyelids
wink

And drop before the wonder of 't; you
miss

The form, through seeing the light. I lived,
those days,
And wrote because I lived—unlicensed
else;

My heart beat in my brain. Life's violent
flood

Abolished bounds,—and, which my
neighbour's field,

Which mine, what mattered? it is thus
in youth!

We play at leap-frog over the god Term;
The love within us and the love without
Are mixed, confounded; if we are loved
or love,

We scarce distinguish: thus, with other
power;

Being acted on and acting seem the same:
In that first onrush of life's chariot-
wheels,

We know not if the forests move or we.

And so, like most young poets, in a flush
Of individual life I poured myself
Along the veins of others, and achieved
Mere lifeless imitations of live verse,
And made the living answer for the dead,
Profaning nature. 'Touch not, do not
taste,'

Nor handle,—we're too legal, who write
young:

We beat the phorminx till we hurt our
thumbs,

As if still ignorant of counterpoint;
We call the Muse,—'O Muse, benignant
Muse,'

As if we had seen her purple-braided
head,

With the eyes in it, start between the
boughs

As often as a stag's. What make-believe,
With so much earnest! what effete results
From virile efforts! what cold wire-
drawn odes,

From such white heats!—bucolics, where
the cows

Would scare the writer if they splashed
the mud

In lashing off the flies,—didactics, driven
Against the heels of what the master said;
And counterfeiting epics, shrill with
trumps

A babe might blow between two straining
cheeks

Of bubbled rose, to make his mother
laugh ;
And elegiac griefs, and songs of love,
Like cast-off nosegays picked up on the
road,
The worse for being warm : all these
things, writ
On happy mornings, with a morning
heart,
That leaps for love, is active for resolve,
Weak for art only. Oft, the ancient
forms
Will thrill, indeed, in carrying the young
blood.
The wine-skins, now and then, a little
warped,
Will crack even, as the new wine gurgles
in.
Spare the old bottles !—spill not the new
wine.

By Keats's soul, the man who never
stepped
In gradual progress like another man,
But, turning grandly on his central self,
Ensphered himself in twenty perfect
years
And died, not young (the life of a long
life)
Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a tear
Upon the world's cold cheek to make it
burn
For ever) ; by that strong excepted soul,
I count it strange and hard to understand
That nearly all young poets should write
old,
That Pope was sexagenary at sixteen,
And beardless Byron academical,
And so with others. It may be perhaps
Such have not settled long and deep
enough
In trance, to attain to clairvoyance,—
and still
The memory mixes with the vision, spoils,
And works it turbid.

Or perhaps, again,
In order to discover the Muse-Sphinx,
The melancholy desert must sweep round,
Behind you as before.—
For me, I wrote
False poems, like the rest, and thought
them true
Because myself was true in writing them.

I peradventure have writ true ones since
With less complacence.

But I could not hide
My quickening inner life from those at
watch.

They saw a light at a window now and
then,
They had not set there: who had set it
there?

My father's sister started when she caught
My soul agaze in my eyes. She could
not say

I had no business with a sort of soul,
But plainly she objected,— and demurred
That souls were dangerous things to carry
straight
Through all the spilt saltpetre of the
world.

She said sometimes, ‘ Aurora, have you
done

Your task this morning ? have you read
that book ?

And are you ready for the crochet
here ?—

As if she said, ‘ I know there's some-
thing wrong ;

I know I have not ground you down
enough
To flatten and bake you to a wholesome
crust

For household uses and proprieties,
Before the rain has got into my barn
And set the grains a-sprouting. What,
you're green
With outdoor impudence ? you almost
grow ?—

To which I answered, ‘ Would she hear
my task,

And verify my abstract of the book ?
Or should I sit down to the crochet work ?
Was such her pleasure ?’ Then I sate
and teased

The patient needle till it spilt the thread,
Which oozed off from it in meandering
lace

From hour to hour. I was not, there-
fore, sad ;

My soul was singing at a work apart
Behind the wall of sense, as safe from
harm

As sings the lark when sucked up out of
sight

In vortices of glory and blue air.

And so, through forced work and spontaneous work,
 The inner life informed the outer life,
 Reduced the irregular blood to a settled rhythm,
 Made cool the forehead with fresh-sprinkling dreams,
 And, rounding to the spheric soul the thin,
 Pined body, struck a colour up the cheeks,
 Though somewhat faint. I clenched my brows across
 My blue eyes greatnessing in the looking-glass,
 And said, 'We'll live, Aurora! we'll be strong.
 The dogs are on us—but we will not die.'

Whoever lives true life, will love true love.

I learnt to love that England. Very oft, Before the day was born, or otherwise Through secret windings of the afternoons,
 I threw my hunters off and plunged myself
 Among the deep hills, as a hunted stag Will take the waters, shivering with the fear
 And passion of the course. And when at last Escaped, so many a green slope built on slope
 Betwixt me and the enemy's house behind,
 I dared to rest, or wander, in a rest Made sweeter for the step upon the grass, And view the ground's most gentle dimplement
 (As if God's finger touched but did not press In making England), such an up and down Of verdure,—nothing too much up or down,
 A ripple of land; such little hills, the sky Can stoop to tenderly and the wheat-fields climb;
 Such nooks of valleys lined with orchises, Fed full of noises by invisible streams; And open pastures where you scarcely tell
 White daisies from white dew,—at intervals

The mythic oaks and elm-trees standing out
 Self-poised upon their prodigy of shade,— I thought my father's land was worthy too
 Of being my Shakespeare's. Very oft alone, Unlicensed; not unfrequently with leave To walk the third with Romney and his friend
 The rising painter, Vincent Carrington, Whom men judge hardly as bee-bonneted, Because he holds that, paint a body well, You paint a soul by implication, like The grand first Master. Pleasant walks! for if He said, 'When I was last in Italy,' It sounded as an instrument that's played Too far off for the tune—and yet it's fine To listen.

Ofter we walked only two, If cousin Romney pleased to walk with me.

We read, or talked, or quarrelled, as it chanced.

We were not lovers, nor even friends well-matched: Say rather, scholars upon different tracks, And thinkers disagreed; he, overfull Of what is, and I, haply, overbold For what might be.

But then the thrushes sang, And shook my pulses and the elms' new leaves; At which I turned, and held my finger up, And bade him mark that, howsoe'er the world Went ill, as he related, certainly The thrushes still sang in it. At the word His brow would soften,—and he bore with me In melancholy patience, not unkind, While breaking into voluble ecstasy I flattered all the beauteous country round, As poets use, the skies, the clouds, the fields,

The happy violets hiding from the roads The primroses run down to, carrying gold;

The tangled hedgerows, where the cows
push out
Impatient horns and tolerant churning
mouths
'Twixt dripping ash-boughs, — hedge-
rows all alive
With birds and gnats and large white
butterflies
Which look as if the May-flower had
caught life
And palpitated forth upon the wind ;
Hills, vales, woods, netted in a silver
mist,
Farms, granges, doubled up among the
hills ;
And cattle grazing in the watered vales,
And cottage-chimneys smoking from the
woods,
And cottage-gardens smelling every-
where,
Confused with smell of orchards. 'See,'
I said,
'And see ! is God not with us on the
earth ?'
And shall we put Him down by aught
we do ?
Who says there's nothing for the poor
and vile
Save poverty and wickedness ? behold !
And ankle-deep in English grass I leaped
And clapped my hands, and called all
very fair.

In the beginning when God called all
good,
Even then was evil near us, it is writ;
But we indeed who call things good and
fair,
The evil is upon us while we speak ;
Deliver us from evil, let us pray.

SECOND BOOK

TIMES followed one another. Came a
morn
I stood upon the brink of twenty years,
And looked before and after, as I stood
Woman and artist,—either incomplete,
Both credulous of completion. There I
held
The whole creation in my little cup,

And smiled with thirsty lips before I
drank
'Good health to you and me, sweet
neighbour mine,
And all these peoples.'

I was glad, that day ;
The June was in me, with its multitudes
Of nightingales all singing in the dark,
And rosebuds reddening where the calyx
split.
I felt so young, so strong, so sure of God !
So glad, I could not choose be very wise !
And, old at twenty, was inclined to pull
My childhood backward in a childish jest
To see the face of 't once more, and
farewell !
In which fantastic mood I bounded forth
At early morning,—would not wait so
long
As even to snatch my bonnet by the
strings,
But, brushing a green trail across the
lawn
With my gown in the dew, took will
and way
Among the acacias of the shrubberies,
To fly my fancies in the open air
And keep my birthday, till my aunt awoke
To stop good dreams. Meanwhile I
murmured on
As honeyed bees keep humming to
themselves,
'The worthiest poets have remained un-
crowned
Till death has bleached their foreheads
to the bone ;
And so with me it must be unless I prove
Unworthy of the grand adversity,
And certainly I would not fail so much.
What, therefore, if I crown myself to-day
In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of it,
Before my brows be numbed as Dante's
own
To all the tender pricking of such leaves ?
Such leaves ! what leaves ?'
I pulled the branches down
To choose from,
'Not the bay ! I choose no bay
(The fates deny us if we are overbold),
Nor myrtle—which means chiefly love ;
and love
Is something awful which one dares not
touch

So early o' mornings. This verbena strains
The point of passionate fragrance; and hard by,
This guelder-rose, at far too slight a beck Of the wind, will toss about her flower-apples.
Ah—there's my choice,—that ivy on the wall,
That headlong ivy! not a leaf will grow But thinking of a wreath. Large leaves, smooth leaves,
Serrated like my vines, and half as green. I like such ivy, bold to leap a height 'Twas strong to climb; as good to grow on graves As twist about a thyrsus; pretty too (And that's not ill) when twisted round a comb.'

Thus speaking to myself, half singing it, Because some thoughts are fashioned like a bell To ring with once being touched, I drew a wreath Drenched, blinding me with dew, across my brow, And fastening it behind so, turning faced . . . My public!—cousin Romney—with a mouth Twice graver than his eyes.

I stood there fixed,— My arms up, like the caryatid, sole Of some abolished temple, helplessly Persistent in a gesture which derides A former purpose. Yet my blush was flame,

As if from flax, not stone.

'Aurora Leigh,

The earliest of Auroras!'

Hand stretched out

I clasped, as shipwrecked men will clasp a hand, Indifferent to the sort of palm. The tide Had caught me at my pastime, writing down

My foolish name too near upon the sea Which drowned me with a blush as foolish. 'You,

My cousin!'

The smile died out in his eyes And dropped upon his lips, a cold dead weight,

For just a moment, 'Here's a book I found!
No name writ on it—poems, by the form;
Some Greek upon the margin,—lady's Greek
Without the accents. Read it? Not a word.
I saw at once the thing had witchcraft in 't,
Whereof the reading calls up dangerous spirits:
I rather bring it to the witch.'

'My book. You found it...'

'In the hollow by the stream That beech leans down into—of which you said
The Oread in it has a Naiad's heart
And pines for waters.'

'Thank you.'
'Thanks to you, My cousin! that I have seen you not too much Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and the rest,
To be a woman also.'

With a glance The smile rose in his eyes again and touched

The ivy on my forehead, light as air. I answered gravely, 'Poets needs must be Or men or women—more's the pity.'

'Ah, But men, and still less women, happily, Scarce need be poets. Keep to the green wreath,

Since even dreaming of the stone and bronze

Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and defiles

The clean white morning dresses.'

'So you judge! Because I love the beautiful I must Love pleasure chiefly, and be overcharged

For ease and whiteness! well, you know the world,

And only miss your cousin, 'tis not much. But learn this; I would rather take my part With God's Dead, who afford to walk in white

Yet spread His glory, than keep quiet here
 And gather up my feet from even a step
 For fear to soil my gown in so much dust.
 I choose to walk at all risks.—Here, if heads
 That hold a rhythmic thought must ache perforce,
 For my part I choose headaches,—and to-day's
 My birthday.'
 'Dear Aurora, choose instead
 To cure them. You have balsams.'
 'I perceive.
 The headache is too noble for my sex.
 You think the heartache would sound
 decenter,
 Since that's the woman's special, proper
 ache,
 And altogether tolerable, except
 To a woman.'

Saying which, I loosed my wreath,
 And swinging it beside me as I walked,
 Half petulant, half playful, as we walked,
 I sent a sidelong look to find his thought,—

As falcon set on falconer's finger may,
 With sidelong head, and startled, brav-
 ing eye,
 Which means, 'You'll see—you'll see!
 I'll soon take flight,
 You shall not hinder.' He, as shaking
 out

His hand and answering 'Fly then,' did
 not speak,

Except by such a gesture. Silently
 We paced, until just coming into sight
 Of the house-windows, he abruptly
 caught

At one end of the swinging wreath, and said
 'Aurora!' There I stopped short,
 breath and all.

'Aurora, let's be serious, and throw by
 This game of head and heart. Life
 means, be sure,
 Both heart and head,—both active, both
 complete,
 And both in earnest. Men and women
 make
 The world, as head and heart make
 human life.

Work man, work woman, since there's
 work to do
 In this beleaguered earth, for head and
 heart,
 And thought can never do the work of
 love:
 But work for ends, I mean for uses, not
 For such sleek fringes (do you call them
 ends,
 Still less God's glory?) as we sew
 ourselves
 Upon the velvet of those baldaquins
 Held twixt us and the sun. That book
 of yours,
 I have not read a page of; but I toss
 A rose up—it falls calyx down, you see!
 The chances are that, being a woman,
 young
 And pure, with such a pair of large,
 calm eyes,
 You write as well... and ill... upon the
 whole,
 As other women. If as well, what then?
 If even a little better, . . . still, what
 then?
 We want the Best in art now, or no art.
 The time is done for facile settings up
 Of minnow gods, nymphs here and
 tritons there;
 The polytheists have gone out in God,
 That unity of Bests. No best, no God!
 And so with art, we say. Give art's
 divine,
 Direct, indubitable, real as grief,
 Or leave us to the grief we grow ourselves
 Divine by overcoming with mere hope
 And most prosaic patience. You, you
 are young
 As Eve with nature's daybreak on her
 face,
 But this same world you are come to,
 dearest coz,
 Has done with keeping birthdays, saves
 her wreaths
 To hang upon her ruins,—and forgets
 To rime the cry with which she still
 beats back
 Those savage, hungry dogs that hunt
 her down
 To the empty grave of Christ. The
 world's hard pressed;
 The sweat of labour in the early curse
 Has (turning acrid in six thousand years)

Become the sweat of torture. Who has time.
 An hour's time . . . think!—to sit upon a bank
 And hear the cymbal tinkle in white hands?
 When Egypt's slain, I say, let Miriam sing!—
 Before—where's Moses?
 ‘Ah, exactly that.
 Where's Moses?—is a Moses to be found?
 You'll seek him vainly in the bulrushes,
 While I in vain touch cymbals. Yet concede,
 Such sounding brass has done some actual good
 (The application in a woman's hand,
 If that were credible, being scarcely spoilt)
 In colonizing beehives.’
 ‘There it is!—
 You play beside a death-bed like a child,
 Yet measure to yourself a prophet's place
 To teach the living. None of all these things
 Can women understand. You generalize—
 —Oh, nothing,—not even grief! Your quick-breathed hearts,
 So sympathetic to the personal pang,
 Close on each separate knife-stroke, yielding up
 A whole life at each wound, incapable
 Of deepening, widening a large lap of life
 To hold the world-full woe. The human race
 To you means, such a child, or such a man,
 You saw one morning waiting in the cold,
 Beside that gate, perhaps. You gather up
 A few such cases, and when strong sometimes
 Will write of factories and of slaves, as if
 Your father were a negro, and your son
 A spinner in the mills. All's yours and you,
 All, coloured with your blood, or otherwise
 Just nothing to you. Why, I call you hard
 To general suffering. Here's the world half blind
 With intellectual light, half brutalized
 With civilization, having caught the plague

In silks from Tarsus, shrieking east and west
 Along a thousand railroads, mad with pain
 And sin too! . . . does one woman of you all
 (You who weep easily) grow pale to see
 This tiger shake his cage?—does one of you
 Stand still from dancing, stop from stringing pearls,
 And pine and die because of the great sum
 Of universal anguish?—Show me a tear
 Wet as Cordelia's, in eyes bright as yours,
 Because the world is mad. You cannot count,
 That you should weep for this account, not you!
 You weep for what you know. A red-haired child
 Sick in a fever, if you touch him once,
 Though but so little as with a finger-tip,
 Will set you weeping; but a million sick...
 You could as soon weep for the rule of three
 Or compound fractions. Therefore this same world,
 Uncomprehended by you, must remain Uninfluenced by you.—Women as you are,
 Mere women, personal and passionate,
 You give us doting mothers, and perfect wives,
 Sublime Madonnas, and enduring saints!
 We get no Christ from you,—and verily
 We shall not get a poet, in my mind.’
 ‘With which conclusion you conclude’...
 ‘But this:
 That you, Aurora, with the large live brow
 And steady eyelids, cannot condescend
 To play at art, as children play at swords,
 To show a pretty spirit, chiefly admired
 Because true action is impossible.
 You never can be satisfied with praise
 Which men give women when they judge a book
 Not as mere work but as mere woman's work,
 Expressing the comparative respect
 Which means the absolute scorn. “Oh, excellent!
 What grace, what facile turns, what fluent sweeps,

What delicate discernment . . almost thought!

The book does honour to the sex, we hold.

Among our female authors we make room
For this fair writer, and congratulate
The country that produces in these times
Such women, competent to . . spell.”

‘Stop there.’

I answered, burning through his thread
of talk

With a quick flame of emotion,—‘ You
have read

My soul, if not my book, and argue well.
I would not condescend . . we will not
say

To such a kind of praise (a worthless end
Is praise of all kinds), but to such a use
Of holy art and golden life. I am young,
And peradventure weak—you tell me
so—

Through being a woman. And, for all
the rest,

Take thanks for justice. I would rather
dance

At fairs on tight-rope, till the babies
dropped

Their gingerbread for joy,—than shift
the types

For tolerable verse, intolerable
To men who act and suffer. Better far
Pursue a frivolous trade by serious means,
Than a sublime art frivolously.’

‘ You,
Choose nobler work than either, O moist
eyes

And hurrying lips and heaving heart!

We are young,
Aurora, you and I. The world,—look
round,—

The world, we’re come to late, is
swollen hard

With perished generations and their sins:
The civilizer’s spade grinds horribly

On dead men’s bones, and cannot turn
up soil

That’s otherwise than fetid. All success
Proves partial failure; all advance im-
plies

What’s left behind; all triumph, some-
thing crushed

At the chariot-wheels; all government,
some wrong :

And rich men make the poor, who curse
the rich,

Who agonize together, rich and poor,
Under and over, in the social spasm
And crisis of the ages. Here’s an age
That makes its own vocation! here we
have stepped

Across the bounds of time! here’s nought
to see,

But just the rich man and just Lazarus,
And both in torments, with a mediate
gulf,

Though not a hint of Abraham’s bosom.
Who

Being man, Aurora, can stand calmly by
And view these things, and never tease
his soul

For some great cure! No physic for
this grief,

In all the earth and heavens too?’

‘ You believe
In God, for your part?—aye? that He

who makes,
Can make good things from ill things,
best from worst,

As men plant tulips upon dunghills when
They wish them finest?’

‘ True. A death-heat is
The same as life-heat, to be accurate,
And in all nature is no death at all,
As men account of death, so long as God
Stands witnessing for life perpetually,
By being just God. That’s abstract
truth, I know,

Philosophy, or sympathy with God:
But I, I sympathize with man, not God
(I think I was a man for chiefly this),
And when I stand beside a dying bed,
‘Tis death to me. Observe,—it had
not much

Consoled the race of mastodons to know,
Before they went to fossil, that anon
Their place would quicken with the
elephant:

They were not elephants but mastodons;
And I, a man, as men are now, and not
As men may be hereafter, feel with men
In the agonizing present.’

‘ Is it so,’
I said, ‘ my cousin! is the world so bad,
While I hear nothing of it through the
trees?

The world was always evil,—but so bad?’

'So bad, Aurora. Dear, my soul is grey
With poring over the long sum of ill ;
So much for vice, so much for discontent,
So much for the necessities of power,
So much for the connivances of fear,
Coherent in statistical despairs
With such a total of distracted life, . . .
To see it down in figures on a page,
Plain, silent, clear, as God sees through
the earth
The sense of all the graves,—that's
terrible
For one who is not God, and cannot right
The wrong he looks on. May I choose
indeed
But vow away my years, my means,
my aims,
Among the helpers, if there's any help
In such a social strait ! The common
blood
That swings along my veins is strong
enough
To draw me to this duty.'

Then I spoke.
'I have not stood long on the strand of
life,
And these salt waters have had scarcely
time
To creep so high up as to wet my feet :
I cannot judge these tides—I shall,
perhaps.
A woman's always younger than a man
At equal years, because she is disallowed
Maturing by the outdoor sun and air,
And kept in long-clothes past the age
to walk.
Ah well, I know you men judge other-
wise !
You think a woman ripens as a peach,
In the cheeks, chiefly. Pass it to me
now ;
I'm young in age, and younger still,
I think,
As a woman. But a child may say amen
To a bishop's prayer and feel the way it
goes,
And I, incapable to loose the knot
Of social questions, can approve, applaud
August compassion, Christian thoughts
that shoot
Beyond the vulgar white of personal aims.
Accept my reverence.'

There he glowed on me

With all his face and eyes. 'No other
help ?'
Said he—'no more than so ?'
'What help ?' I asked.
'You'd scorn my help,—as Nature's
self, you say,
Has scorned to put her music in my mouth
Because a woman's. Do you now turn
round
And ask for what a woman cannot give ?'

'For what she only can, I turn and ask,'
He answered, catching up my hands in
his,
And dropping on me from his high-eaved
brow
The full weight of his soul,—'I ask for
love,
And that, she can ; for life in fellowship
Through bitter duties—that, I know she
can ;
For wifehood—will she ?'

'Now,' I said, 'may God
Be witness twixt us two !' and with
the word,
Meseemed I floated into a sudden light
Above his stature,—'am I proved too
weak
To stand alone, yet strong enough to bear
Such leaners on my shoulder ? poor
to think,
Yet rich enough to sympathize with
thought ?
Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds can,
Yet competent to love, like HIM ?'

I paused ;
Perhaps I darkened, as the lighthouse
will
That turns upon the sea. 'It's always so.
Anything does for a wife.'

'Aurora, dear,
And dearly honoured,'—he pressed in
at once

With eager utterance,—'you translate
me ill.

I do not contradict my thought of you
Which is most reverent, with another
thought

Found less so. If your sex is weak for art
(And I who said so, did but honour you
By using truth in courtship), it is strong
For life and duty. Place your fecund
heart

In mine, and let us blossom for the world
That wants love's colour in the grey of
time.

My talk, meanwhile, is arid to you, aye,
Since all my talk can only set you where
You look down coldly on the arena-heaps
Of headless bodies, shapeless, indistinct!
The Judgement-Angel scarce would find
his way

Through such a heap of generalized dis-
tress

To the individual man with lips and eyes,
Much less Aurora. Ah, my sweet, come
down,
And hand in hand we'll go where yours
shall touch

These victims, one by one! till, one by
one,

The formless, nameless trunk of every
man

Shall seem to wear a head with hair
you know,

And every woman catch your mother's
face

To melt you into passion.'

'I am a girl,'
I answered slowly; 'you do well to name
My mother's face. Though far too early,
alas,

God's hand did interpose 'twixt it and
me,

I know so much of love as used to shine
In that face and another. Just so much;
No more indeed at all. I have not seen
So much love since, I pray you pardon me,
As answers even to make a marriage with
In this cold land of England. What
you love,

Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause:
You want a helpmate, not a mistress, sir.
A wife to help your ends,—in her no end!
Your cause is noble, your ends excellent,
But I, being most unworthy of these
and that,

Dooth otherwise conceive of love. Farewell.'

'Farewell, Aurora! you reject me thus?'
He said.

'Sir, you were married long ago.
You have a wife already whom you love,
Your social theory. Bless you both, I say.
For my part, I am scarcely meek enough
To be the handmaid of a lawful spouse.

Do I look a Hagar, think you?
'So you jest.'

'Nay, so, I speak in earnest,' I replied.
'You treat of marriage too much like,
at least,
A chief apostle: you would bear with you
A wife... a sister... shall we speak it out?
A sister of charity.'

'Then, must it be
Indeed farewell? And was I so far wrong
In hope and in illusion, when I took
The woman to be nobler than the man,
Yourself the noblest woman, in the use
And comprehension of what love is,—
love,

That generates the likeness of itself
Through all heroic duties? so far wrong,
In saying bluntly, venturing truth on
love,
"Come, human creature, love and work
with me,"—

Instead of, "Lady, thou art wondrous fair,
And, where the Graces walk before,
the Muse

Will follow at the lightning of their eyes,
And where the Muse walks, lovers need
to creep:
Turn round and love me, or I die of love."

With quiet indignation I broke in.
'You misconceive the question like a man,
Who sees a woman as the complement
Of his sex merely. You forget too much
That every creature, female as the male,
Stands single in responsible act and
thought

As also in birth and death. Whoever says
To a loyal woman, "Love and work
with me,"

Will get fair answers if the work and love,
Being good themselves, are good for
her—the best

She was born for. Women of a softer
mood,

Surprised by men when scarcely awake
to life,
Will sometimes only hear the first word,
love,

And catch up with it any kind of work,
Indifferent, so that dear love go with it.
I do not blame such women, though,
for love,

They pick much oakum ; earth's fanatics
make
Too frequently heaven's saints. But
me your work
Is not the best for,—nor your love the
best,
Nor able to commend the kind of work
For love's sake merely. Ah, you force
me, sir,
To be over-bold in speaking of myself :
I too have my vocation,—work to do,
The heavens and earth have set me
since I changed
My father's face for theirs, and, though
your world
Were twice as wretched as you repre-
sent,
Most serious work, most necessary work
As any of the economists'. Reform,
Make trade a Christian possibility,
And individual right no general wrong :
Wipe out earth's furrows of the Thine
and Mine,
And leave one green for men to play at
bowls,
With innings for them all! . . what then,
indeed,
If mortals are not greater by the head
Than any of their prosperities? what
then,
Unless the artist keep up open roads
Betwixt the seen and unseen,—bursting
through
The best of your conventions with his
best,
The speakable, imaginable best
God bids him speak, to prove what lies
beyond
Both speech and imagination? A starved
man
Exceeds a fat beast : we'll not barter, sir,
The beautiful for barley.—And, even so,
I hold you will not compass your poor
ends
Of barley-feeding and material ease,
Without a poet's individualism
To work your universal. It takes a soul
To move a body : it takes a high-souled
man
To move the masses, even to a cleaner
sty :
It takes the ideal to blow a hair's-
breadth off

The dust of the actual.—Ah, your
Fouriers failed,
Because not poets enough to understand
That life develops from within.—For
me,
Perhaps I am not worthy, as you say,
Of work like this : perhaps a woman's soul
Aspires, and not creates : yet we aspire,
And yet I'll try out your perhapses, sir ;
And if I fail . . why, burn me up my
straw
Like other false works—I'll not ask for
grace ;
Your score is better, cousin Romney. I,
Who love my art, would never wish it
lower.
To suit my stature. I may love my art.
You'll grant that even a woman may
love art,
Seeing that to waste true love on anything
Is womanly, past question.' I retain
The very last word which I said that day,
As you the creaking of the door, years
past,
Which let upon you such disabling news
You ever after have been graver. He,
His eyes, the motions in his silent mouth,
Were fiery points on which my words
were caught,
Transfixed for ever in my memory
For his sake, not their own. And yet
I know
I did not love him . . nor he me . . that's
sure . .
And what I said is unrepented of,
As truth is always. Yet . . a princely
man !—
If hard to me, heroic for himself!
He bears down on me through the
slanting years,
The stronger for the distance. If he
had loved,
Aye, loved me, with that retributive
face . .
I might have been a common woman now
And happier, less known and less left
alone,
Perhaps a better woman after all,
With chubby children hanging on my
neck
To keep me low and wise. Ah me, the
vines

That bear such fruit are proud to stoop
with it.
The palm stands upright in a realm of
sand.

And I, who spoke the truth then, stand
upright,
Still worthy of having spoken out the
truth;

By being content I spoke it, though it set
Him there, me here.—O woman's vile

remorse,

To hanker after a mere name, a show,

A supposition, a potential love!

Does every man who names love in our

lives,

Become a power for that? Is love's true

thing

So much best to us, that what personates

love

Is next best? A potential love, forsooth!

I'm not so vile. No, no—he cleaves,

I think,

This man, this image,—chiefly for the
wrong

And shock he gave my life, in finding me

Precisely where the devil of my youth

Had set me, on those mountain-peaks of
hope

All glittering with the dawn-dew, all
erect

And famished for the noon,—exclaiming,
while

I looked for empire and much tribute,
‘Come,

I have some worthy work for thee below.

Come, sweep my barns and keep my
hospitals,

And I will pay thee with a current coin
Which men give women.’

As we spoke, the grass
Was trod in haste beside us, and my
aunt,
With smile distorted by the sun,—face,
voice

As much at issue with the summer-day
As if you brought a candle out of doors,—
Broke in with, ‘Romney, here!—My
child, entreat

Your cousin to the house, and have
your talk,

If girls must talk upon their birthdays.
Come.’

He answered for me calmly, with pale lips
That seemed to motion for a smile in vain,
‘The talk is ended, madam, where we
stand.

Your brother's daughter has dismissed
me here;

And all my answer can be better said
Beneath the trees, than wrong by such
a word

Your house's hospitalities. Farewell.’

With that he vanished. I could hear
his heel

Ring bluntly in the lane, as down he leapt
The short way from us.—Then a mea-
sured speech

Withdrew me. ‘What means this,
Aurora Leigh?

My brother's daughter has dismissed
my guests?’

The lion in me felt the keeper's voice
Through all its quivering dewlaps;
I was quelled

Before her,—meekened to the child she
knew:

I prayed her pardon, said, ‘I had little
thought

To give dismissal to a guest of hers,
In letting go a friend of mine who came
To take me into service as a wife,—
No more than that, indeed.’

‘No more, no more?
Pray Heaven,’ she answered, ‘that
I was not mad.

I could not mean to tell her to her face
That Romney Leigh had asked me for
a wife,

And I refused him?’

‘Did he ask?’ I said;
‘I think he rather stooped to take me up
For certain uses which he found to do
For something called a wife. He never
asked.’

‘What stuff!’ she answered; ‘are they
queens, these girls?

They must have mantles, stitched with
twenty silks,

Spread out upon the ground, before
they'll step

One footstep for the noblest lover born.’

'But I am born,' I said with firmness, 'I,
To walk another way than his, dear aunt.'

'You walk, you walk! A babe at
thirteen months
Will walk as well as you,' she cried in
'haste,
'Without a steadyng finger. Why,
you child,
God help you, you are groping in the dark,
For all this sunlight. You suppose,
perhaps,
That you, sole offspring of an opulent man,
Are rich and free to choose a way to walk?
You think, and it's a reasonable thought,
That I, beside, being well to do in life,
Will leave my handful in my niece's hand
When death shall paralyse these fingers!

Pray,

Pray, child, albeit I know you love me not,
As if you loved me, that I may not die!
For when I die and leave you, out you go
(Unless I make room for you in my grave),
Unhoused, unfed, my dear, poor brother's
lamb
(Ah heaven,—that pains!)—without
a right to crop
A single blade of grass beneath these trees,
Or cast a lamb's small shadow on the lawn,
Unfed, unfolded! Ah, my brother, here's
The fruit you planted in your foreign
loves!—

Aye, there's the fruit he planted! never
look

Astonished at me with your mother's
eyes,

For it was they who set you where you are,
An undowered orphan. Child, your

father's choice

Of that said mother, disinherited
His daughter, his and hers. Men do
not think

Of sons and daughters, when they fall
in love,

So much more than of sisters; otherwise
He would have paused to ponder what

he did,

And shrank before that clause in the entail
Excluding offspring by a foreign wife

(The clause set up a hundred years ago
By a Leigh who wedded a French

dancing-girl

And had his heart danced over in return);

But this man shrank at nothing, never
thought

Of you, Aurora, any more than me—
Your mother must have been a pretty
thing,

For all the coarse Italian blacks and
browns,
To make a good man, which my brother
was,

Uncharly of the duties to his house;
But so it fell indeed. Our cousin Vane,
Vane Leigh, the father of this Romney,
wrote

Directly on your birth, to Italy,
"I ask your baby daughter for my son
In whom the entail now merges by the
law.

Betroth her to us out of love, instead
Of colder reasons, and she shall not lose
By love or law from henceforth"—so he
wrote;

A generous cousin, was my cousin Vane.
Remember how he drew you to his knee
The year you came here, just before he
died,

And hollowed out his hands to hold
your cheeks,

And wished them redder,—you re-
member Vane?

And now his son who represents our
house

And holds the fiefs and manors in his
place,

To whom reverts my pittance when
I die

(Except a few books and a pair of shawls),
The boy is generous like him, and pre-
pared

To carry out his kindest word and thought
To you, Aurora. Yes, a fine young man
Is Romney Leigh; although the sun of
youth

Has shone too straight upon his brain,
I know,

And fevered him with dreams of doing
good

To good-for-nothing people. But a wife
Will put all right, and stroke his temples
cool

With healthy touches'..

I broke in at that.
I could not lift my heavy heart to breathe
Till then, but then I raised it, and it fell

In broken words like these—‘No need
to wait ;
The dream of doing good to . . . me, at
least,
Is ended, without waiting for a wife
To cool the fever for him. We've es-
caped
That danger,—thank Heaven for it.’
‘You,’ she cried,
‘Have got a fever. What, I talk and
talk
An hour long to you,—I instruct you how
You cannot eat or drink or stand or sit
Or even die, like any decent wretch
In all this unroofed and unfurnished
world,
Without your cousin,—and you still
maintain
There's room 'twixt him and you, for
flirting fans
And running knots in eyebrows! You
must have
A pattern lover sighing on his knee!
You do not count enough, a noble heart
(Above book-patterns) which this very
morn
Unclosed itself in two dear fathers' names
To embrace your orphaned life ? fie, fie !
But stay,
I write a word, and counteract this sin.
She would have turned to leave me, but
I clung.
‘O sweet my father's sister, hear my
word
Before you write yours. Cousin Vane
did well,
And cousin Romney well,—and I well
too,
In casting back with all my strength
and will
The good they meant me. O my God,
my God !
God meant me good, too, when he
hindered me
From saying “yes” this morning. If
you write
A word, it shall be “no.” I say no, no!
I tie up “no” upon His altar-horns,
Quite out of reach of perjury ! At least
My soul is not a pauper; I can live
At least my soul's life, without alms
from men ;

And if it must be in heaven instead of
earth,
Let heaven look to it,—I am not afraid.’
She seized my hands with both hers.
strained them fast,
And drew her probing and unscrupulous
eyes
Right through me, body and heart.
‘Yet, foolish Sweet,
You love this man. I've watched you
when he came,
And when he went, and when we've
talked of him :
I am not old for nothing ; I can tell
The weather-signs of love : you love
this man.’
Girls blush sometimes because they are
alive,
Half wishing they were dead to save
the shame.
The sudden blush devours them, neck
and brow ;
They have drawn too near the fire of ^R
life, like gnats,
And flare up bodily, wings and all.
What then ?
Who's sorry for a gnat . . . or girl ?
I blushed.
I feel the brand upon my forehead now
Strike hot, sear deep, as guiltless men
may feel
The felon's iron, say, and scorn the mark
Of what they are not. Most illogical
Irrational nature of our womanhood,
That blushes one way, feels another
way,
And prays, perhaps, another ! After all,
We cannot be the equal of the male
Who rules his blood a little.
For although
I blushed indeed, as if I loved the man,
And her incisive smile, accrediting
That treason of false witness in my blush,
Did bow me downward like a swathe
of grass
Below its level that struck me,—I attest
The conscious skies and all their daily
suns,
I think I loved him not,—nor then, nor
since,
Nor ever. Do we love the schoolmaster,

Being busy in the woods? much less,
being poor,
The overseer of the parish? Do we keep
Our love to pay our debts with?

White and cold
I grew next moment. As my blood
recoiled
From that imputed ignominy, I made
My heart great with it. Then, at last,
I spoke,
Spoke veritable words but passionate,
Too passionate perhaps . . . ground up
with sobs
To shapeless endings. She let fall my
hands
And took her smile off, in sedate disgust,
As peradventure she had touched a
snake.—
A dead snake, mind!—and turning
round, replied,
'We'll leave Italian manners, if you
please.
I think you had an English father, child,
And ought to find it possible to speak
A quiet "yes" or "no," like English girls,
Without convulsions. In another month
We'll take another answer—no, or yes.'
With that, she left me in the garden-
walk.

I had a father! yes, but long ago—
How long it seemed that moment. Oh,
how far,
How far and safe, God, dost Thou keep
Thy saints
When once gone from us! We may
call against
The lighted windows of Thy fair June-
heaven
Where all the souls are happy,—and
not one,
Not even my father, look from work
or play
To ask, 'Who is it that cries after us,
Below there, in the dusk?' Yet formerly
He turned his face upon me quick enough,
If I said 'father.' Now I might cry loud;
The little lark reached higher with his
song
Than I with crying. Oh, alone, alone,—
Not troubling any in heaven, nor any
on earth,
I stood there in the garden, and looked up

The deaf blue sky that brings the roses
out
On such June mornings.
You who keep account
Of crisis and transition in this life,
Set down the first time Nature says
plain 'no'
To some 'yes' in you, and walks over you
In gorgeous sweeps of scorn. We all
begin
By singing with the birds, and running
fast
With June-days, hand in hand: but
once, for all,
The birds must sing against us, and the sun
Strike down upon us like a friend's
sword caught
By an enemy to slay us, while we read
The dear name on the blade which bites
at us!—
That's bitter and convincing: after that,
We seldom doubt that something in the
large
Smooth order of creation, though no
more
Than haply a man's footprint, has gone
wrong.
Some tears fell down my cheeks, and
then I smiled,
As those smile who have no face in the
world
To smile back to them. I had lost a friend
In Romney Leigh; the thing was sure—
a friend,
Who had looked at me most gently now
and then,
And spoken of my favourite books, 'our
books,'
With such a voice! Well, voice and
look were now
More utterly shut out from me, I felt,
Than even my father's. Romney now
was turned
To a benefactor, to a generous man,
Who had tied himself to marry . . . me,
instead
Of such a woman, with low timorous lids
He lifted with a sudden word one day,
And left, perhaps, for my sake.—Ah,
self-tied
By a contract, male Iphigenia bound
At a fatal Aulis for the winds to change

(But loose him, they'll not change), he
well might seem
A little cold and dominant in love!
He had a right to be dogmatical,
This poor, good Romney. Love, to him,
was made
A simple law-clause. If I married him,
I should not dare to call my soul my own
Which so he had bought and paid for:
every thought
And every heart-beat down there in the
bill;
Not one found honestly deductible
From any use that pleased him! He
might cut
My body into coins to give away
Among his other paupers; change my
sons,
While I stood dumb as Griseld, for black
babes
Or piteous foundlings; might unques-
tioned set
My right hand teaching in the Ragged
Schools,
My left hand washing in the Public Baths;
What time my angel of the Ideal stretched
Both his to me in vain. I could not claim
The poor right of a mouse in a trap, to
squeal,
And take so much as pity from myself.

Farewell, good Romney! if I loved you
even,
I could but ill afford to let you be
So generous to me. Farewell, friend,
since friend
Betwixt us two, forsooth, must be a
word
So heavily overladen. And, since help
Must come to me from those who love
me not,
Farewell, all helpers—I must help my-
self,
And am alone from henceforth.—Then
I stooped
And lifted the soiled garland from the
earth,
And set it on my head as bitterly
As when the Spanish monarch crowned
the bones
Of his dead love. So be it. I preserve
That crown still,—in the drawer there!
'twas the first.

The rest are like it;—those Olympian
crowns,
We run for, till we lose sight of the sun
In the dust of the racing chariots!
After that,
Before the evening fell, I had a note,
Which ran,—‘Aurora, sweet Chaldean,
you read
My meaning backward like your eastern
books.
While I am from the west, dear. Read
me now
A little plainer. Did you hate me quite
But yesterday? I loved you for my part;
I love you. If I spoke untenderly
This morning, my beloved, pardon it;
And comprehend me that I loved you so
I set you on the level of my soul,
And overwashed you with the bitter
brine
Of some habitual thoughts. Henceforth,
my flower,
Be planted out of reach of any such,
And lean the side you please, with all
your leaves!
Write woman's verses and dream wo-
man's dreams;
But let me feel your perfume in my home
To make my sabbath after working-days.
Bloom out your youth beside me,—be
my wife.’

I wrote in answer—‘We Chaldeans
discern
Still farther than we read. I know your
heart,
And shut it like the holy book it is,
Reserved for mild-eyed saints to pore
upon
Betwixt their prayers at vespers. Well,
you're right,
I did not surely hate you yesterday;
And yet I do not love you enough to-day
To wed you, cousin Romney. Take this
word,
And let it stop you as a generous man
From speaking farther. You may tease,
indeed,
And blow about my feelings, or my leaves,
And here's my aunt will help you with
east winds
And break a stalk, perhaps, tormenting
me;

But certain flowers grow near as deep
as trees,
And, cousin, you'll not move my root,
not you,
With all your confluent storms. Then
let me grow
Within my wayside hedge, and pass
your way!
This flower has never as much to say to you
As the antique tomb which said to travel-
lers, "Pause,"
"Siste, viator." Ending thus, I signed.

The next week passed in silence, so the
next,
And several after: Romney did not come
Nor my aunt chide me. I lived on and on,
As if my heart were kept beneath a glass,
And everybody stood, all eyes and ears,
To see and hear it tick. I could not sit,
Nor walk, nor take a book, nor lay it
down,
Nor sew on steadily, nor drop a stitch,
And a sigh with it, but I felt her looks
Still cleaving to me, like the sucking asp
To Cleopatra's breast, persistently
Through the intermittent pantings. Be-
ing observed,
When observation is not sympathy,
Is just being tortured. If she said a word,
A 'thank you,' or an 'if it please you, dear,'
She meant a commination, or, at best,
An exorcism against the devildom
Which plainly held me. So with all the
house.
Susannah could not stand and twist my
hair,
Without such glancing at the looking-
glass
To see my face there, that she missed
the plait.
And John,—I never sent my plate for
soup,
Or did not send it, but the foolish John
Resolved the problem, 'twixt his nap-
kined thumbs,
Of what was signified by taking soup
Or choosing mackerel. Neighbours who
dropped in
On morning visits, feeling a joint wrong,
Smiled admonition, sate uneasily,
And talked with measured, emphasized
reserve,

Of parish news, like doctors to the sick,
When not called in,—as if, with leave
to speak,
They might say something. Nay, the
very dog
Would watch me from his sun-patch on
the floor,
In alternation with the large black fly
Not yet in reach of snapping. So I lived.
A Roman died so ; smeared with honey,
teased
By insects, stared to torture by the noon:
And many patient souls 'neath English
roofs
Have died like Romans. I, in looking
back,
Wish only, now, I had borne the plague
of all
With meeker spirits than were rife at
Rome.

For, on the sixth week, the dead sea
broke up,
Dashed suddenly through beneath the
heel of Him
Who stands upon the sea and earth and
swears
Time shall be nevermore. The clock
struck nine
That morning too,—no lark was out of
tune,
The hidden farms among the hills
breathed straight
Their smoke toward heaven, the lime-
tree scarcely stirred
Beneath the blue weight of the cloudless
sky,
Though still the July air came floating
through
The woodbine at my window, in and out,
With touches of the outdoor country-
news
For a bending forehead. There I sate,
and wished
That morning-truce of God would last
till eve,
Or longer. 'Sleep,' I thought, 'late
sleepers,—sleep,
And spare me yet the burden of your eyes.'

Then, suddenly, a single ghastly shriek
Tore upward from the bottom of the house.

Like one who wakens in a grave and
shrieks,
The still house seemed to shriek itself
alive,

And shudder through its passages and
stairs

With slam of doors and clash of bells.—
I sprang,

I stood up in the middle of the room,
And there confronted at my chamber-
door,

A white face,—shivering, ineffectual lips.

'Come, come,' they tried to utter, and
I went:

As if a ghost had drawn me at the point
Of a fiery finger through the uneven
dark,

I went with reeling footsteps down the
stair,

Nor asked a question.

There she sate, my aunt,—
Bolt upright in the chair beside her bed,
Whose pillow had no dint! she had used
no bed

For that night's sleeping, yet slept well.
My God,

The dumb derision of that grey, peaked
face

Concluded something grave against the
sun,

Which filled the chamber with its July
burst

When Susan drew the curtains ignorant
Of whose ate open-eyed behind her. There
She sate . . . it sate . . . we said 'she'
yesterday . . .

And held a letter with unbroken seal
As Susan gave it to her hand last night:
All night she had held it. If its news
referred

To duchies or to dunghills, not an inch
She'd budge, 'twas obvious, for such
worthless odds:

Nor, though the stars were suns and
overburned

| Their spheric limitations, swallowing up
| Like wax the azure spaces, could they
force

Those open eyes to wink once. What
last sight

Had left them blank and flat so,—draw-
ing out

The faculty of vision from the roots,
As nothing more, worthseeing, remained
behind!

Were those the eyes that watched me,
worried me?

That dogged me up and down the hours
and days.

A beaten, breathless, miserable soul?
And did I pray, a half-hour back, but so,
To escape the burden of those eyes . . .
those eyes?

'Sleep late,' I said:—
Why now, indeed, they sleep.

God answers sharp and sudden on some
prayers,

And thrusts the thing we have prayed
for in our face,

A gauntlet with a gift in 't. Every wish

Is like a prayer, with God.

I had my wish,
To read and meditate the thing I would,
To fashion all my life upon my thought,
And marry or not marry. Henceforth
none

Could disapprove me, vex me, hamper me.
Full ground-room, in this desert newly
made,

For Babylon or Balbec,—when the
breath,

Now choked with sand, returns for build-
ing towns.

The heir came over on the funeral day,
And we two cousins met before the dead,
With two pale faces. Was it death or life
That moved us? When the will was read
and done,

The official guests and witnesses with-
drawn,

We rose up in a silence almost hard,
And looked at one another. Then I said,
'Farewell, my cousin.'

But he touched, just touched
My hatstrings tied for going (at the door
The carriage stood to take me), and said
low,

His voice a little unsteady through his
smile,

'Siste, viator.'

'Is there time,' I asked,
'In these last days of railroads, to stop
short'

Like Caesar's chariot (weighing half a ton)
On the Appian road for morais?

'There is time,'
He answered grave, 'for necessary
words,
Inclusive, trust me, of no epitaph
On man or act, my cousin. We have read
A will, which gives you all the personal
goods
And funded moneys of your aunt.'

'I thank
Her memory for it. With three hundred
pounds

We buy in England even, clear standing-
room
To stand and work in. Only two hours
since,
I fancied I was poor.'

'And, cousin, still
You're richer than you fancy. The will
says,

*Three hundred pounds, and any other sum
Of which the said testatrix dies possessed.*
I say she died possessed of other sums.'

'Dear Romney, need we chronicle the
pence?

I'm richer than I thought—that's evident.
Enough so.'

'Listen rather. You've to do
With business and a cousin,' he resumed,
'And both, I fear, need patience. Here's
the fact.

The other sum (there is another sum,
Unspecified in any will which dates
After possession, yet bequeathed as
much

And clearly as those said three hundred
pounds)

Is thirty thousand. You will have it paid
When? . . . where? My duty troubles
you with words.'

He struck the iron when the bar was hot;
No wonder if my eyes sent out some
sparks.

'Pause there! I thank you. You are
delicate

In glosing gifts;—but I, who share your
blood,
Am rather made for giving, like yourself,
Than taking, like your pensioners. Fare-
well.'

He stopped me with a gesture of calm
pride.

'A Leigh,' he said, 'gives largesse and
gives love,

But gloses never: if a Leigh could close,
He would not do it, moreover, to a Leigh,
With blood trained up along nine cen-
turies

To hound and hate a lie from eyes like
yours.

And now we'll make the rest as clear;
your aunt

Possessed these moneys.'

'You will make it clear,
My cousin, as the honour of us both,
Or one of us speaks vainly! that's not I.
My aunt possessed this sum,—inherited
From whom, and when? bring docu-
ments, prove dates.'

'Why now indeed you throw your
bonnet off

As if you had time left for a logarithm!
The faith's the want. Dear cousin, give
me faith,
And you shall walk this road with silken
shoes,

As clean as any lady of our house
Supposed the proudest. Oh, I com-
prehend

The whole position from your point of
sight.

I oust you from your father's halls and
lands

And make you poor by getting rich—
that's law;

Considering which, in common circum-
stance,

You would not scruple to accept from me
Some compensation, some sufficiency
Of income—that were justice; but, alas,
I love you,—that's mere nature; you
reject

My love,—that's nature also; and at once
You cannot, from a suitor disallowed,
A hand thrown back as mine is, into yours
Receive a doit, a farthing,—not for the
world!

That's woman's etiquette, and obviously
Exceeds the claim of nature, law, and right,
Unanswerable to all. I grant, you see,
The case as you conceive it,—leave you
room

To sweep your ample skirts of womanhood,
While, standing humbly squeezed against
the wall,
I own myself excluded from being just,
Restrained from paying indubitable
debts,
Because denied from giving you my
soul.

That's my misfortune!—I submit to it
As if, in some more reasonable age,
'Twould not be less inevitable. Enough.
You'll trust me, cousin, as a gentleman,
To keep your honour, as you count it,
pure,
Your scruples (just as if I thought them
wise)
Safe and inviolate from gifts of mine.'

I answered mild but earnest. 'I believe
In no one's honour which another keeps,
Nor man's nor woman's. As I keep,
myself,
My truth and my religion, I depute
No father, though I had one this side
death,
Nor brother, though I had twenty, much
less you,
Though twice my cousin, and once
Romney Leigh,
To keep my honour pure. You face,
to-day,
A man who wants instruction, mark me,
not
A woman who wants protection. As to
a man,
Show manhood, speak out plainly, be
precise
With facts and dates. My aunt inherited
This sum, you say—'
 'I said she died possessed
Of this, dear cousin.'

 'Not by heritage.
Thank you: we're getting to the facts
at last.
Perhaps she played at commerce with
a ship
Which came in heavy with Australian
gold?
Or touched a lottery with her finger-end,
Which tumbled on a sudden into her lap
Some old Rhine tower or principality?
Perhaps she had to do with a marine

Sub-transatlantic railroad, which pre-
pays

As well as pre-supposes? or perhaps
Some stale ancestral debt was after-paid
By a hundred years, and took her by
surprise!—
You shake your head, my cousin; I guess
ill.'

'You need not guess, Aurora, nor de-
ride;
The truth is not afraid of hurting you.
You'll find no cause, in all your scruples,
why
Your aunt should cavil at a deed of gift
'Twixt her and me.'
 'I thought so—ah! a gift.'

'You naturally thought so,' he resumed.
'A very natural gift.'

 'A gift, a gift!
Her individual life being stranded high
Above all want, approaching opulence,
Too haughty was she to accept a gift
Without some ultimate aim: ah, ah,
I see,—

A gift intended plainly for her heirs,
And so accepted . . . if accepted . . . ah,
Indeed that might be; I am snared
perhaps
Just so. But, cousin, shall I pardon you,
If thus you have caught me with a cruel
springe?'

He answered gently, 'Need you tremble
and pant
Like a netted lioness? is't my fault, mine,
That you're a grand wild creature of the
woods
And hate the stall built for you? Anyway,
Though triply netted, need you glare at
me?

I do not hold the cords of such a net;
You're free from me, Aurora!'
 'Now may God
Deliver me from this strait! This gift
of yours
Was tendered . . . when? accepted . . .
when?' I asked.

 'A month . . . a fortnight since! Six
weeks ago
It was not tendered; by a word she
dropped

I know it was not tendered nor received.
When was it? bring your dates.'

'What matters when?
A half-hour ere she died, or a half-year,
Secured the gift, maintains the heritage
Inviolable with law. As easy pluck
The golden stars from heaven's em-
broidered stole

To pin them on the grey side of this earth,
As make you poor again, thank God.'

'Not poor
Nor clean again from henceforth, you
thank God?
Well, sir—I ask you—I insist at need,—
Vouchsafe the special date, the special
date.'

'The day before her death-day,' he
replied,
'The gift was in her hands. We'll
find that deed,
And certify that date to you.'

As one
Who has climbed a mountain-height and
carried up
His own heart climbing, panting in his
throat
With the toil of the ascent, takes breath
at last,
Looks back in triumph—so I stood and
looked.
'Dear cousin Romney, we have reached
the top
Of this steep question, and may rest,
I think.
But first,—I pray you pardon, that the
shock
And surge of natural feeling and event
Has made me oblivious of acquainting you
That this, this letter (unread, mark, still
sealed),
Was found enfolded in the poor dead
hand:
That spirit of hers had gone beyond the
address,
Which could not find her though you
wrote it clear,—
I know your writing, Romney,—recog-
nize
The open-hearted *A*, the liberal sweep
Of the *G*. Now listen,—let us under-
stand:
You will not find that famous deed of gift,

Unless you find it in the letter here,
Which, not being mine, I give you
back.—Refuse
To take the letter? well then—you and I,
As writer and as heiress, open it
Together, by your leave.—Exactly so:
The words in which the noble offering's
made

Are nobler still, my cousin; and, I own,
The proudest and most delicate heart
alive,

Distracted from the measure of the gift
By such a grace in giving, might accept
Your largesse without thinking any more
Of the burthen of it, than King Solomon
Considered, when he wore his holy ring
Charactered over with the ineffable spell,
How many carats of fine gold made up
Its money-value: so, Leigh gives to
Leigh!

Or rather, might have given, observe,—
for that's

The point we come to. Here's a proof
of gift,
But here's no proof, sir, of acceptancy,
But rather, disproof. Death's black dust,
being blown,
Infiltrated through every secret fold
Of this sealed letter by a puff of fate,
Dried up for ever the fresh-written ink,
Annulled the gift, disutilized the grace,
And left these fragments.'

As I spoke, I tore
The paper up and down, and down and up
And crosswise, till it fluttered from my
hands,
As forest-leaves, stripped suddenly and
rapt
By a whirlwind on Valdarno, drop again,
Drop slow, and strew the melancholy
ground
Before the amazed hills . . . why, so,
indeed,

I'm writing like a poet, somewhat large
In the type of the image, and exaggerate
A small thing with a great thing,
topping it:—

But then I'm thinking how his eyes
looked, his,
With what despondent and surprised
reproach!
I think the tears were in them as he
looked;

I think the manly mouth just trembled.
Then

He broke the silence.

'I may ask, perhaps,
Although no stranger . . . only Romney
Leigh,
Which means still less . . . than Vincent
Carrington,
Your plans in going hence, and where
you go.
This cannot be a secret.'

'All my life
Is open to you, cousin. I go hence
To London, to the gathering-place of
souls,
To live mine straight out, vocally, in
books;
Harmoniously for others, if indeed
A woman's soul, like man's, be wide
enough
To carry the whole octave (that's to
prove)
Or, if I fail, still purely for myself.
Pray God be with me, Romney.'

'Ah, poor child,
Who fight against the mother's tiring
hand,
And choose the headsman's! May God
change His world
For your sake, sweet, and make it mild
as heaven,
And juster than I have found you.'

But I paused.

'And you, my cousin?'—
'I,' he said,—'you ask?
You care to ask? Well, girls have
curious minds
And fain would know the end of every-
thing,
Of cousins therefore with the rest. For
me,
Aurora, I've my work; you know my
work;
And, having missed this year some
personal hope,
I must beware the rather that I miss
No reasonable duty. While you sing
Your happy pastorals of the meads and
trees,
Bethink you that I go to impress and
prove

On stifled brains and deafened ears,
stunned deaf,

Crushed dull with grief, that nature
sings itself,

And needs no mediate poet, lute or voice,
To make it vocal. While you ask of men
Your audience, I may get their leave
perhaps

For hungry orphans to say audibly
"We're hungry, see,"—for beaten and
bullied wives

To hold their unweaned babies up in sight,
Whom orphanage would better, and for
all

To speak and claim their portion . . . by
no means

Of the soil, . . . but of the sweat in tilling it;
Since this is nowadays turned privilege,
To have only God's curse on us, and
not man's.

Such work I have for doing, elbow-deep
In social problems,—as you tie your
rimes,

To draw my uses to cohere with needs
And bring the uneven world back to its
round,

Or, failing so much, fill up, bridge at
least

To smoother issues some abysmal cracks
And feuds of earth, intestine heats have
made

To keep men separate,—using sorry shifts
Of hospitals, almshouses, infant schools,
And other practical stuff of partial good
You lovers of the beautiful and whole
Despise by system.'

'I despise? The scorn
Is yours, my cousin. Poets become such
Through scorning nothing. You decry
them for

The good of beauty sung and taught by
them,
While they respect your practical partial
good

As being a part of beauty's self. Adieu!
When God helps all the workers for His
world,

The singers shall have help of Him,
not last.'

He smiled as men smile when they will
not speak

Because of something bitter in the
thought;

And still I feel his melancholy eyes

Look judgement on me. It is seven years since :
 I know not if 'twas pity or 'twas scorn
 Has made them so far-reaching : judge it ye
 Who have had to do with pity more than love
 And scorn than hatred. I am used, since then,
 To other ways, from equal men. But so,
 Even so, we let go hands, my cousin and I,
 And, in between us, rushed the torrent-world
 To blanch our faces like divided rocks,
 And bar for ever mutual sight and touch
 Except through swirl of spray and all that roar.

THIRD BOOK

'To-DAY thou girdest up thy loins thyself
 And goest where thou wouldest : presently
 Others shall gird thee,' said the Lord,
 'to go
 Where thou wouldest not.' He spoke to Peter thus,
 To signify the death which he should die
 When crucified head downward.
 If He spoke to Peter then, He speaks to us the same;
 The word suits many different martyrdoms,
 And signifies a multiform of death,
 Although we scarcely die apostles, we,
 And have mislaid the keys of heaven and earth.
 For 'tis not in mere death that men die most,
 And, after our first girding of the loins
 In youth's fine linen and fair broidery
 To run up hill and meet the rising sun,
 We are apt to sit tired, patient as a fool,
 While others gird us with the violent bands
 Of social figments, feints, and formalisms,
 Reversing our straight nature, lifting up our base needs, keeping down our lofty thoughts,
 Head downward on the cross-sticks of the world.

Yet He can pluck us from that shameful cross.
 God, set our feet low and our forehead high,
 And show us how a man was made to walk !
 Leave the lamp, Susan, and go up to bed.
 The room does very well ; I have to write
 Beyond the stroke of midnight. Get away ;
 Your steps, for ever buzzing in the room,
 Tease me like gnats. Ah, letters ! throw them down
 At once, as I must have them, to be sure,
 Whether I bid you never bring me such
 At such an hour, or bid you. No excuse ;
 You choose to bring them, as I choose perhaps
 To throw them in the fire. Now get to bed,
 And dream, if possible, I am not cross.
 Why what a pettish, petty thing I grow,—
 A mere, mere woman, a mere flaccid nerve,
 A kerchief left out all night in the rain,
 Turned soft so,—overtasked and overstrained
 And overlived in this close London life !
 And yet I should be stronger.
 Never burn Your letters, poor Aurora ! for they stare With red seals from the table, saying each,
 'Here's something that you know not.'
 Out alas,
 'Tis scarcely that the world's more good and wise
 Or even straighter and more consequent Since yesterday at this time—yet, again, If but one angel spoke from Ararat I should be very sorry not to hear : So open all the letters ! let me read. Blanche Ord, the writer in the 'Lady's Fan,' Requests my judgement on . . . that, afterwards.
 Kate Ward desiresthe modelofmy cloak, And signs, 'Elisha to you.' Pringle Sharpe

Presents his work on 'Social Conduct,'
 craves
A little money for his pressing debts . . .
From me, who scarce have money for
 my needs;
Art's fiery chariot which we journey in
Being apt to singe our singing-robes to
 holes
Although you ask me for my cloak,
 Kate Ward!
Here's Rudgely knows it,—editor and
 scribe;
He's 'forced to marry where his heart
 is not,
Because the purse lacks where he lost
 his heart.'
Ah,—lost it because no one picked
 it up;
That's really loss,—(and passable impu-
 dence.)
My critic Hammond flatters prettily,
And wants another volume like the last.
My critic Belfair wants another book
Entirely different, which will sell (and
 live!),
A striking book, yet not a startling book,
The public blames originalities
(You must not pump spring-water
 unawares
Upon a gracious public full of nerves),
Good things, not subtle, new yet
 orthodox,
As easy reading as the dog-eared page
That's fingered by said public fifty years,
Since first taught spelling by its grand-
 mother,
And yet a revelation in some sort:
That's hard, my critic Belfair. So—
 what next?
My critic Stokes objects to abstract
 thoughts;
'Call a man, John, a woman, Joan,' says
 he,
'And do not prate so of *humanities*:'
Whereat I call my critic simply, Stokes.
My critic Jobson recommends more mirth
Because a cheerful genius suits the times,
And all true poets laugh unquenchably
Like Shakespeare and the gods. That's
 very hard.
The gods may laugh, and Shakespeare;
 Dante smiled
With such a needy heart on two pale lips,

We cry, 'Weep rather, Dante.' Poems
 are
Men, if true poems: and who dares
 exclaim
At any man's door, 'Here, 'tis understood
The thunder fell last week and killed
 a wife
And scared a sickly husband—what of
 that?
Get up, be merry, shout and clap your
 hands,
Because a cheerful genius suits the
 times—?'
None says so to the man, and why indeed
Should any to the poem? A ninth seal;
The apocalypse is drawing to a close.
Ha,—this from Vincent Carrington,—
 'Dear friend,
I want good counsel. Will you lend
 me wings
To raise me to the subject, in a sketch
I'll bring to-morrow—may I? at eleven?
A poet's only born to turn to use:
So save you! for the world . . . and Car-
 rington,'
(Writ after.) Have you heard of
 Romney Leigh,
Beyond what's said of him in newspapers,
His phalansteries there, his speeches
 here,
His pamphlets, pleas, and statements,
 everywhere?
He dropped me long ago, but no one
 drops
A golden apple—though indeed one day
You hinted that, but jested. Well, atleast
You know Lord Howe who sees him . .
 whom he sees
And you see and I hate to see,—for Howe
Stands high upon the brink of theories,
Observes the swimmers and cries "Very
 fine,"
But keeps dry linen equally,—unlike
That gallant breaster, Romney. Strange
 it is,
Such sudden madness seizing a young man
To make earth over again,—while I'm
 content
To make the pictures. Let me bring the
 sketch.
A tiptoe Danae, overbold and hot,
Both arms a-flame to meet her wishing
 Jove

Half-way, and burn him faster down;
the face
And breasts upturned and straining, the
loose locks
All glowing with the anticipated gold.
Or here's another on the self-same theme.
She lies here—flat upon her prison-floor,
The long hair swathed about her to the
heel
Like wet sea-weed. You dimly see her
through
The glittering haze of that prodigious rain,
Half blotted out of nature by a love
As heavy as fate. I'll bring you either
sketch.
I think, myself, the second indicates
More passion.'

Surely. Self is put away,
And calm with abdication. She is Jove,
And no more Danae—greater thus.
Perhaps

The painter symbolizes unaware
Two states of the recipient artist-soul,
One, forward, personal, wanting rever-
ence,
Because aspiring only. We'll be calm,
And know that, when indeed our Joves
come down,
We all turn stiller than we have ever
been.

Kind Vincent Carrington. I'll let him
come.
He talks of Florence,—and may say a
word
Of something as it chanced seven years
ago,
A hedgehog in the path, or a lame bird,
In those green country walks, in that
good time
When certainly I was so miserable...
I seem to have missed a blessing ever
since.

The music soars within the little lark,
And the lark soars. It is not thus with
men.
We do not make our places with our
strains,—
Content, while they rise, to remain be-
hind
Alone on earth instead of so in heaven.
No matter; I bear on my broken tale.

When Romney Leigh and I had parted
thus,
I took a chamber up three flights of stairs
Not far from being as steep as some larks
climb,
And there, in a certain house in Kensing-
ton,
Three years I lived and worked. Get
leave to work
In this world—'tis the best you get at all;
For God, in cursing, gives us better gifts
Than men in benediction. God says,
Sweat
For foreheads,' men say 'crowns,' and
so we are crowned,
Aye, gashed by some tormenting circle
of steel
Which snaps with a secret spring. Get
work, get work;
Be sure 'tis better than what you work
to get.

Serene and unafraid of solitude
I worked the short days out,—and
watched the sun
On lurid morns or monstrous afternoons
(Like some Druidic idol's fiery brass
With fixed unflickering outline of dead
heat,
From which the blood of wretches pent
inside
Seems oozing forth to incarnadine the air)
Push out through fog with his dilated disk,
And startle the slant roofs and chimney-
pots
With splashes of fierce colour. Or I saw
Fog only, the great tawny weltering fog,
Invoke the passive city, strangle it
Alive, and draw it off into the void,
Spires, bridges, streets, and squares, as
if a sponge
Had wiped out London,—or as noon and
night
Had clapped together and utterly struck
out
The intermediate time, undoing them-
selves
In the act. Your city poets see such things
Not despicable. Mountains of the south,
When drunk and mad with elemental
wines
They rend the seamless mist and stand
up bare,

Makefewersingers, haply. No onesings,
Descending Sinai : on Parnassus-mount
You take a mule to climb and not a muse
Except in fable and figure : forests chant
Their anthems to themselves, and leave
 you dumb.

But sit in London at the day's decline,
And view the city perish in the mist
Like Pharaoh's armaments in the deep
 Red Sea,
The chariots, horsemen, footmen, all the
host,
Sucked down and choked to silence—
then, surprised
By a sudden sense of vision and of tune,
You feel as conquerors though you did
 not fight,
And you and Israel's other singing girls,
Aye, Miriam with them, sing the song
 you chose.

I worked with patience, which means
 almost power :
I did some excellent things indifferently,
Some bad things excellently. Both
 were praised,
The latter loudest. And by such a time
That I myself had set them down as
 sins
Scarce worth the price of sackcloth,
 week by week
Arrived some letter through the sedulous
 post,
Like these I've read, and yet dissimilar,
With pretty maiden seals,—initials
 twined
Of lilies, or a heart marked *Emily*
(Convicting Emily of being all heart);
Or rarer tokens from young bachelors,
Who wrote from college with the same
 goosequill,
Suppose, they had just been plucked of,
 and a snatch
From Horace, 'Collegisse juvat,' set
Upon the first page. Many a letter, signed
Or unsigned, showing the writers at
 eighteen
Had lived too long, although a muse
 should help
Their dawn by holding candles,—com-
pliments
To smile or sigh at. Such could pass
 with me

No more than coins from Moscow cir-
culate
At Paris: would ten roubles buy a tag
Of ribbon on the boulevard, worth a sou ?
I smiled that all this youth should love
 me,—sighed
That such a love could scarcely raise
 them up
To love what was more worthy than
 myself;
Then sighed again, again, less generously,
To think the very love they lavished so
Proved me inferior. The strong loved
 me not,
And he . . . my cousin Romney . . . did
 not write.
I felt the silent finger of his scorn
Prick every bubble of my frivolous fame
As my breath blew it, and resolve it back
To the air it came from. Oh, I justified
The measure he had taken of my height:
The thing was plain—he was not wrong
 a line ;
I played at art, made thrusts with a toy-
 sword,
Amused the lads and maidens.
 Came a sigh
Deep, hoarse with resolution,—I would
 work
To better ends, or play in earnest.
 'Heavens,
I think I should be almost popular
If this went on !—I ripped my verses up,
And found no blood upon the rapier's
 point ;
The heart in them was just an embryo's
 heart
Which never yet had beat, that it should
 die ;
Just gasps of make-believe galvanic life;
Mere tones, inorganized to any tune.
And yet I felt it in me where it burnt,
Like those hot fire-seeds of creation held
In Jove's clenched palm before the worlds
 were sown,—
But I—I was not Juno even ! my hand
Was shut in weak convulsion, woman's
 ill,
And when I yearned to loose a finger—lo,
The nerve revolted. 'Tis the same even
 now :
This hand may never, haply, open large,

Before the spark is quenched, or the
palm charred,
To prove the power not else than by the
pain.

It burns, it burnt—my whole life burnt
with it,
And light, not sunlight and not torch-light, flashed
My steps out through the slow and
difficult road.
I had grown distrustful of too forward
Springs,
The season's books in drear significance
Of morals, dropping round me. Lively
books!

The ash has livelier verdure than the yew;
And yet the yew's green longer, and alone
Found worthy of the holy Christmastime:
We'll plant more yews if possible, albeit
We plant the graveyards with them.

Day and night
I worked my rhythmic thought, and
furrowed up
Both watch and slumber with long lines
of life
Which did not suit their season. The
rose fell
From either cheek, my eyes globed
luminous
Through orbits of blue shadow, and my
pulse
Would shudder along the purple-veined
wrist
Like a shot bird. Youth's stern, set
face to face
With youth's ideal: and when people
came

And said, 'You work too much, you are
looking ill.'

I smiled for pity of them who pitied me,
And thought I should be better soon
perhaps
For those ill looks. Observe—'I,'
means in youth

Just *I*, the conscious and eternal soul
With all its ends, and not the outside life,
The parcel-man, the doublet of the flesh,
The so much liver, lung, integument,
Which make the sum of 'I' hereafter
when

World-talkers talk of doing well or ill.
I prosper if I gain a step, although

A nail then pierced my foot: although
my brain

Embracing any truth froze paralysed,
I prosper: I but change my instrument;
I break the spade off, digging deep for
gold,

And catch the mattock up.

I worked on, on.
Through all the bristling fence of nights
and days
Which hedges time in from the eternities,
I struggled,—never stopped to note the
stakes

Which hurt me in my course. The mid-
night oil
Would stink sometimes; there came
some vulgar needs:

I had to live that therefore I might work,
And, being but poor, I was constrained,
for life,

To work with one hand for the booksellers
While working with the other for myself
And art: you swim with feet as well as
hands,
Or make small way. I apprehended
this,—

In England no one lives by verse that lives;
And, apprehending, I resolved by prose
To make a space to sphere my living verse.
I wrote for cyclopaedias, magazines,
And weekly papers, holding up my name
To keep it from the mud. I learnt the use
Of the editorial 'we' in a review
As courtly ladies the fine trick of trains,
And swept it grandly through the open
doors

As if one could not pass through doors at all
Save so encumbered. I wrote tales beside,
Carved many an article on cherry-stones
To suit light readers,—something in the
lines

Revealing, it was said, the mallet-hand,
But that, I'll never vouch for: what you
do

For bread, will taste of common grain,
not grapes,
Although you have a vineyard in Cham-
pagne;

Much less in Nephelococcygia
As mine was, peradventure.

Having bread
For just so many days, just breathing-
room

For body and verse, I stood up straight
and worked
My veritable work. And as the soul
Which grows within a child makes the
child grow,—
Or as the fiery sap, the touch from God,
Careering through a tree, dilates the bark
And roughs with scale and knob, before
it strikes
The summer foliage out in a green
flame—
So life, in deepening with me, deepened
all
The course I took, the work I did. Indeed
The academic law convinced of sin ;
The critics cried out on the falling off,
Regretting the first manner. But I felt
My heart's life throbbing in my verse to
show
It lived, it also—certes incomplete,
Disordered with all Adam in the blood,
But even its very tumours, warts and wens
Still organized by and implying life.

A lady called upon me on such a day.
She had the low voice of your English
dames,
Unused, it seems, to need rise half a note
To catch attention,—and their quiet
mood,
As if they lived too high above the earth
For that to put them out in anything :
So gentle, because verily so proud ;
So wary and afraid of hurting you,
By no means that you are not really vile,
But that they would not touch you with
their foot
To push you to your place ; so self-
possessed
Yet gracious and conciliating, it takes
An effort in their presence to speak
truth :
You know the sort of woman,—brilliant
stuff,
And out of nature. ‘Lady Waldemar.’
She said her name quite simply, as if it
meant
Not much indeed, but something,—took
my hands,
And smiled as if her smile could help my
case,
And dropped her eyes on me and let
them melt.

‘Is this,’ she said, ‘the Muse ?’
‘No sibyl even,’
I answered, ‘since she fails to guess the
cause
Which taxed you with this visit, madam.’
‘Good,’
She said, ‘I value what’s sincere at once.
Perhaps if I had found a literal Muse,
The visit might have taxed me. As it is,
You wear your blue so chiefly in your
eyes,
My fair Aurora, in a frank good way,
It comforts me entirely for your fame,
As well as for the trouble of ascent
To this Olympus.’
There, a silver laugh
Ran rippling through her quickened
little breaths
The steep stair somewhat justified.
‘But still
Your ladyship has left me curious why
You dared the risk of finding the said
Muse ?’

‘Ah,—keep me, notwithstanding, to the
point,
Like any pedant ? Is the blue in eyes
As awful as in stockings after all,
I wonder, that you’d have my business
out
Before I breathe—exact the epic plunge
In spite of gasps ? Well, naturally you
think
I’ve come here, as the lion-hunters go
To deserts, to secure you with a trap
For exhibition in my drawing-rooms
On zoologic soirées ? not in the least.
Roar softly at me ; I am frivolous,
I dare say ; I have played at wild-beast
shows
Like other women of my class,—but
now
I meet my lion simply as Androcles
Met his . . . when at his mercy.’
So, she bent
Her head, as queens may mock,—then
lifting up
Her eyelids with a real grave queenly
look,
Which ruled and would not spare, not
even herself,—
‘I think you have a cousin :—Romney
Tieck,

'You bring a word from *him*?—my eyes leapt up
To the very height of hers,—'a word from *him*?'

'I bring a word about him, actually.
But first' (she pressed me with her urgent eyes),
• You do not love him,—you ?'

'You're frank at least
In putting questions, madam,' I replied;
'I love my cousin cousinly—no more.'

'I guessed as much. I'm ready to be frank
In answering also, if you'll question me,
Or even for something less. You stand outside,
You artist women, of the common sex ;
You share not with us, and exceed us so
Perhaps by what you're mulcted in,
your hearts
Being starved to make your heads : so run the old

Traditions of you. I can therefore speak
Without the natural shame which creatures feel

When speaking on their level, to their like.

There's many a papist she, would rather die
Than own to her maid she put a ribbon on
To catch the indifferent eye of such a man,

Who yet would count adulteries on her beads

At holy Mary's shrine and never blush ;
Because the saints are so far off, we lose All modesty before them. Thus, to-day,
'Tis I, love Romney Leigh.'

'Forbear,' I cried.
'If here's no muse, still less is any saint;
Nor even a friend, that Lady Waldemar
Should make confessions' . . .

'That's unkindly said.
If no friend, what forbids to make a friend
To join to our confession ere we have done ?

I love your cousin. If it seems unwise
To say so, it's still foolisher (we're frank)
To feel so. My first husband left me young,

And pretty enough, so please you, and rich enough,
To keep my booth in May-fair with the rest

To happy issues. There are marquises Would serve seven years to call me wife, I know,
And, after seven, I might consider it, For there's some comfort in a marquise When all's said,—yes, but after the seven years ;

I, now, love Romney. You put up your lip,

So like a Leigh ! so like him !—Pardon me,

I'm well aware I do not derogate In loving Romney Leigh. The name is good,

The means are excellent, but the man, the man—

Heaven help us both,—I am near as mad as he,
In loving such an one.'

She slowly swung Her heavy ringlets till they touched her smile,

As reasonably sorry for herself, And thus continued.

'Of a truth, Miss Leigh, I have not, without struggle, come to this. I took a master in the German tongue, I gained a little, went to Paris twice; But, after all, this love ! . . . you eat of love,

And do as vile a thing as if you ate Of garlic—which, whatever else you eat, Tastes uniformly acrid, till your peach Reminds you of your onion. Am I coarse ?

Well, love's coarse, nature's coarse— ah, there's the rub !

We fair fine ladies, who park out our lives From common sheep-paths, cannot help the crows

From flying over,—we're as natural still As Blowsalinda. Drape us perfectly In Lyons' velvet,—we are not, for that, Lay-figures, look you : we have hearts within,

Warm, live, improvident, indecent hearts,

As ready for outrageous ends and acts As any distressed sempstress of them all

That Romney groans and toils for. We
catch love
And other fevers, in the vulgar way :
Love will not be outwitted by our wit,
Nor outrun by our equipages :—mine
Persisted, spite of efforts. All my cards
Turned up but Romney Leigh; my
German stopped
At germane Wertherism ; my Paris
rounds
Returned me from the Champs Elysées
just
A ghost, and sighing like Dido's. I
came home
Uncured,—convicted rather to myself
Of being in love . . . in love ! That's
coarse, you'll say.
I'm talking garlic.'

Coldly I replied.
'Apologize for atheism, not love !
For me, I do believe in love, and God.
I know my cousin : Lady Waldemar
I know not : yet I say as much as this ;
Whoever loves him, let her not excuse
But cleanse herself, that, loving such
a man,
She may not do it with such unworthy
love
He cannot stoop and take it.'

'That is said
Austerely, like a youthful prophetess,
Who knits her brows across her pretty
eyes
To keep them back from following the
grey flight
Of doves between the temple-columns.
Dear,
Be kinder with me ; let us two be friends.
I'm a mere woman,—the more weak
perhaps
Through being so proud ; you're better;
as for him,
He's best. Indeed he builds his good-
ness up
So high, it topples down to the other side
And makes a sort of badness ; there's
the worst

I have to say against your cousin's best !
And so be mild, Aurora, with my worst
For his sake, if not mine.' 'I own myself
Incredulous of confidence like this
Availing him or you.'

'And I, myself,
Of being worthy of him with any love :
In your sense I am not so—let it pass.
And yet I save him if I marry him ;
Let that pass too.'

'Pass, pass ! we play police
Upon my cousin's life, to indicate
What may or may not pass ?' I cried.
'He knows
What's worthy of him ; the choice re-
mains with him ;
And what he chooses, act or wife, I think
I shall not call unworthy, I, for one.'

'Tis somewhat rashly said,' she an-
swered slow ;
'Now let's talk reason, though we talk
of love.
Your cousin Romney Leigh's a monster ;
there,
The word's out fairly, let me prove the
fact.
We'll take, say, that most perfect of
antiques
They call the Genius of the Vatican,
(Which seems too beauteous to endure
itself
In this mixed world,) and fasten it for
once

Upon the torso of the Dancing Fawn,
(Who might limp surely, if he did not
dance.)

Instead of Buonarroti's mask : what then ?
We show the sort of monster Romney is,
With god-like virtues and heroic aims
Subjoined to limping possibilities
Of mismade human nature. Grant the
man
Twice godlike, twice heroic,—still he
limps,
And here's the point we come to.'

'Pardon me,
But, Lady Waldemar, the point's the
thing
We never come to.'

'Caustic, insolent
At need ! I like you'—(there, she took
my hands)
'And now my lioness, help Androcles,
For all your roaring. Help me ! for
myself
I would not say so—but for him. He
limps

So certainly, he'll fall into the pit
 A week hence,—so I lose him—so he is
 lost!
 For when he's fairly married, he a Leigh,
 To a girl of doubtful life, undoubtful birth,
 Starved out in London till her coarse-
 grained hands
 Are whiter than her morals,—even you
 May call his choice unworthy.'
 'Married! lost!
 He, . . . Romney!'
 'Ah, you're moved at last,' she said.
 'These monsters, set out in the open sun,
 Of course throw monstrous shadows:
 those who think
 Awry, will scarce act straightly. Who
 but he?
 And who but you can wonder? He
 has been mad,
 The whole world knows, since first,
 a nominal man,
 He soured the proctors, tried the gowns—
 men's wits,
 With equal scorn of triangles and wine,
 And took no honours, yet was honourable.
 They'll tell you he lost count of Homer's
 ships
 In Melbourne's poor-bills, Ashley's fac-
 tory bills,—
 Ignored the Aspasia we all dare to praise,
 For other women, dear, we could not
 name
 Because we're decent. Well, he had
 some right
 On his side probably; men always have,
 Who go absurdly wrong. The living boor
 Who brews your ale, exceeds in vital
 worth
 Dead Caesar who "stops bunholes" in
 the cask;
 And also, to do good is excellent,
 For persons of his income, even to boors:
 I sympathize with all such things. But he
 Went mad upon them . . . madder and
 more mad
 From college times to these,—as, going
 down hill,
 The faster still, the farther. You must
 know
 Your Leigh by heart. he has sown his
 black young curls
 With bleaching cares of half a million men
 Already. If you do not starve, or sin,

You're nothing to him: pay the income-
 tax
 And break your heart upon 't, he'll
 scarce be touched;
 But come upon the parish, qualified
 For the parish stocks, and Romney will
 be there
 To call you brother, sister, or perhaps
 A tenderer name still. Had I any chance
 With Mister Leigh, who am Lady
 Waldemar
 And never committed felony?'
 'You speak
 Too bitterly,' I said, 'for the literal truth.'
 'The truth is bitter. Here's a man who
 looks
 For ever on the ground! you must below,
 Or else a pictured ceiling overhead,
 Good painting thrown away. For me,
 I've done
 What women may, we're somewhat
 limited,
 We modest women, but I've done my
 best.
 —How men are perjured when they
 swear our eyes
 Have meaning in them! they're just
 blue or brown,
 They just can drop their lids a little.
 And yet
 Mine did more, for I read half Fourier
 through,
 Proudhon, *Considérant*, and Louis Blanc,
 With various others of his socialists,
 And, if I had been a fathom less in love,
 Had cured myself with gaping. As it was,
 I quoted from them prettily enough
 Perhaps, to make them sound half
 rational
 To a saner man than he whence'er we
 talked
 (For which I dodged occasion)—learnt
 by heart
 His speeches in the Commons and else-
 where
 Upon the social question; heaped reports
 Of wicked women and penitentiaries
 On all my tables (with a place for Sue),
 And gave my name to swell subscription-
 lists
 Toward keeping up the sun at nights in
 heaven,

And other possible ends. All things
I did,
Except the impossible . . such as
wearing gowns
Provided by the Ten Hours' movement:
there,
I stopped—we must stop somewhere.
He, meanwhile,
Unmoved as the Indian tortoise 'neath
the world,
Let all that noise go on upon his back :
He would not disconcert or throw me
out,
'Twas well to see a woman of my class
With such a dawn of conscience. For
the heart,
Made firewood for his sake, and flaming
up
To his face,—he merely warmed his
feet at it :
Just deigned to let my carriage stop him
short
In park or street,—he leaning on the door
With news of the committee which sate
last
On pickpockets at suck.'

'You jest—you jest.'

'As martyrs jest, dear (if you read
their lives),
Upon the axe which kills them. When
all's done
By me, . . for him—you'll ask him
presently
The colour of my hair—he cannot tell,
Or answers "dark" at random; while,
be sure,
He's absolute on the figure, five or ten,
Of my last subscription. Is it bearable,
And I a woman?'

'Is it reparable,
Though I were a man ?'
'I know not. That's to prove.
But first, this shameful marriage !'

'Aye?' I cried,
'Then really there's a marriage ?'

'Yesterday
I held him fast upon it, "Mister Leigh,"
Said I, "shut up a thing, it makes more
noise.
The boiling town keeps secrets ill;
I've known

Yours since last week. Forgive my
knowledge so :
You feel I'm not the woman of the world
The world thinks ; you have borne
with me before,
And used me in your noble work, our
work,
And now you shall not cast me off because
You're at the difficult point, the *join*.
'Tis true
Even I can scarce admit the cogency
Of such a marriage . . where you do
not love
(Except the class), yet marry and throw
your name
Down to the gutter, for a fire-escape
To future generations ! 'tis sublime,
A great example, a true Genesis
Of the opening social era. But take heed,
This virtuous act must have a patent
weight,
Or loses half its virtue. Make it tell,
Interpret it, and set it in the light,
And do not muffle it in a winter-cloak
As a vulgar bit of shame,—as if, at best,
A Leigh had made a misalliance and
blushed
A Howard should know it." Then,
I pressed him more :
"He would not choose," I said, "that
even his kin, . .
Aurora Leigh, even . . should conceive
his act
Less sacrifice, more fantasy." At which
He grew so pale, dear, . . to the lips,
I knew
I had touched him. "Do you know her,"
he inquired,
"My cousin Aurora?" "Yes," I said,
and lied,
(But truly we all know you by your books)
And so I offered to come straight to you,
Explain the subject, justify the cause,
And take you with me to St. Margaret's
Court
To see this miracle, this Marian Erie,
This drover's daughter (she's not pretty,
he swears)
Upon whose finger, exquisitely pricked
By a hundred needles, we're to hang
the tie
"Twixt class and class in England,—thus
indeed

By such a presence, yours and mine, to lift
 The match up from the doubtful place.
 At once
 He thanked me sighing, murmured to himself
 "She'll do it perhaps, she's noble,"—thanked me twice,
 And promised, as my guerdon, to put off His marriage for a month.
 I answered then.
 'I understand your drift imperfectly.
 You wish to lead me to my cousin's betrothed,
 To touch her hand if worthy, and hold her hand
 If feeble, thus to justify his match.
 So be it then. But how this serves your ends,
 And how the strange confession of your love
 Servesthis, I have to learn—I cannot see.'
 She knit her restless forehead. 'Then, despite,
 Aurora, that most radiant morning name,
 You're dull as any London afternoon.
 I wanted time, and gained it,—wanted you,
 And gain you! you will come and see the girl
 In whose most prodigal eyes the lineal pearl
 And pride of all your lofty race of Leiggs
 Is destined to solution. Authorized By sight and knowledge, then, you'll speak your mind,
 And prove to Romney, in your brilliant way,
 He'll wrong the people and posterity,
 (Say such a thing is bad for me and you,
 And you fail utterly,) by concluding thus
 An execrable marriage. Break it up,
 Disroot it—peradventure presently We'll plant a better fortune in its place.
 Be good to me, Aurora, scorn me less For saying the thing I should not.
 Well I know
 I should not. I have kept, as others have,

The iron rule of womanly reserve In lip and life, till now : I wept a week Before I came here.'—Ending, she was pale ;
 The last words, haughtily said, were tremulous.
 This palfrey pranced in harness, arched her neck,
 And, only by the foam upon the bit, You saw she champed against it.
 Then I rose.
 'I love love : truth's no cleaner thing than love.
 I comprehend a love so fiery hot It burns its natural veil of august shame, And stands sublimely in the nude, as chaste
 As Medicean Venus. But I know, A love that burns through veils will burn through masks
 And shrivel up treachery. What, love and lie!
 Nay—go to the opera ! your love's curable.'
 'I love and lie !' she said—'I lie, forsooth ?'
 And beat her taper foot upon the floor, And smiled against the shoe,—' You're hard, Miss Leigh,
 Unversed in current phrases.—Bowling-greens
 Of poets are fresher than the world's highways : Forgive me that I rashly blew the dust, Which dims our hedges even, in your eyes,
 And vexed you so much. You find, probably,
 No evil in this marriage,—rather good Of innocence, to pastoralize in song : You'll give the bond your signature, perhaps,
 Beneath the lady's mark,—indifferent That Romney chose a wife could write her name,
 In witnessing he loved her.'
 'Loved !' I cried ; Who tells you that he wants a wife to love ?
 He gets a horse to use, not love, I think : There's work for wives as well,—and after, straw,

When men are liberal. For myself, you
err
Supposing power in me to break this
match.
I could not do it, to save Romney's life,
And would not, to save mine.'
'You take it so,'
She said, 'farewell, then. Write your
books in peace,
As far as may be for some secret stir
Now obvious to me,—for, most obviously,
In coming hither I mistook the way.'
Whereat she touched my hand and bent
her head,
And floated from me like a silent cloud
That leaves the sense of thunder.

I drew breath,
Oppressed in my deliverance. After all
This woman breaks her social system up
For love, so counted—the love possible
To such,—and lilies are still lilies, pulled
By smutty hands, though spotted from
their white;
And thus she is better haply, of her kind,
Than Romney Leigh, who lives by dia-
grams,
And crosses out the spontaneities
Of all his individual, personal life
With formal universals. As if man
Were set upon a high stool at a desk
To keep God's books for Him in red
and black,
And feel by millions! What, if even God
Were chiefly God by living out Himself
To an individualism of the Infinite,
Eterne, intense, profuse,—still throwing
up
The golden spray of multitudinous worlds
In measure to the proclive weight and
rush
Of His inner nature,—the spontaneous
love
Still proof and outflow of spontaneous
life?
Then live, Aurora.

Two hours afterward,
Within St. Margaret's Court I stood
alone,
Close-veiled. A sick child, from an ague-
fit,
Whose wasted right hand gambled
'gainst his left
With an old brass button in a blot of sun,

Jeered weakly at me as I passed across
The uneven pavement; while a woman,
rouged
Upon the angular cheek-bones, kerchief
torn,
Thin dangling locks, and flat lascivious
mouth,
Cursed at a window both ways, in and out,
By turns some bed-rid creature and my-
self,—
'Lie still there, mother! I like the dead
dog
You'll be to-morrow. What, we pick
our way,
Fine madam, with those damnable small
feet!
We cover up our face from doing good,
As if it were our purse! What brings
you here,
My lady! Is 't to find my gentleman
Who visits his tame pigeon in the eaves?
Our cholera catch you with its cramps
and spasms,
And tumble up your good clothes, veil
and all,
And turn your whiteness dead-blue.'
I looked up;
I think I could have walked through hell
that day,
And never flinched. 'The dear Christ
comfort you,'
I said, 'you must have been most miser-
able,
To be so cruel,'—and I emptied out
My purse upon the stones: when, as I
had cast
The last charm in the cauldron, the
whole court
Went boiling, bubbling up, from all its
doors
And windows, with a hideous wail of
laughs
And roar of oaths, and blows perhaps..
I passed
Too quickly for distinguishing . . . and
pushed
A little side-door hanging on a hinge,
And plunged into the dark, and groped
and climbed
The long, steep, narrow stair 'twixt
broken rail
And mildewed wall that let the plaster
drop

To startle me in the blackness. Still,
up, up!

So high lived Romney's bride. I paused
at last

Before a low door in the roof, and
knocked;

There came an answer like a hurried
dove—

'So soon? can that be Mister Leigh?
so soon?'

And, as I entered, an ineffable face
Met mine upon the threshold. 'Oh,
not you,

Not you!'—the dropping of the voice
implied,

'Then, if not you, for me not any one.'

I looked her in the eyes, and held her
hands,

And said, 'I am his cousin,—Romney
Leigh's;

And here I come to see my cousin too.'

She touched me with her face and with
her voice,

This daughter of the people. Such soft
flowers,

From such rough roots! the people,
under there,

Can sin so, curse so, look so, smell so...
laugh!

Yet have such daughters!

Nowise beautiful
Was Marian Erle. She was not white
nor brown,

But could look either, like a mist that
changed

According to being shone on more or less:

The hair, too, ran its opulence of curls
In doubt 'twixt dark and bright, nor left
you clear

To name the colour. Too much hair
perhaps

(I'll name a fault here) for so small a head,
Which seemed to droop on that side and
on this,

As a full-blown rose uneasy with its
weight

Though not a wind should trouble it.
Again,

The dimple in the cheek had better gone
With redder, fuller rounds; and some-
what large

The mouth was, though the milky little
teeth

Dissolved it to so infantine a smile.
For soon it smiled at me; the eyes
smiled too,

But 'twas as if remembering they had
wept,

And knowing they should, some day,
weep again.

We talked. She told me all her story out;
Which I'll re-tell with fuller utterance,
As coloured and confirmed in aftertimes
By others and herself too. Marian Erle
Was born upon the ledge of Malvern Hill
To eastward, in a hut built up at night
To evade the landlord's eye, of mud and
turf,

Still liable, if once he looked that way,
To being straight levelled, scattered by
his foot,

Like any other anthill. Born, I say;
God sent her to His world, commissioned
right,

Her human testimonials fully signed,
Not scant in soul—complete in linea-
ments;

But others had to swindle her a place
To wail in when she had come. No
place for her,

By man's law! born an outlaw, was
this babe;

Her first cry in our strange and strang-
ling air,

When cast in spasms out by the shud-
dering womb,

Was wrong against the social code,—
forced wrong:—

What business had the baby to cry there?

I tell her story and grow passionate.
She, Marian, did not tell it so, but used
Meek words that made no wonder of
herself

For being so sad a creature. 'Mister
Leigh

Considered truly that such things should
change.

They will, in heaven—but meantime, on
the earth,

There's none can like a nettle as a pink,
Except himself. We're nettles, some
of us,

And give offence by the act of spring-
ing up;

And, if we leave the damp side of the wall,
The hoes, of course, are on us.' So she said.
Her father earned his life by random jobs
Despised by steadier workmen—keeping swine
On commons, picking hops, or hurrying on
The harvest at wet seasons, or, at need,
Assisting the Welsh drovers, when a drove
Of startled horses plunged into the mist
Below the mountain-road, and sowed the wind
With wandering neighings. In between the gaps
Of such irregular work, he drank and slept,
And cursed his wife because, the pence being out,
She could not buy more drink. At which she turned
(The worm), and beat her baby in revenge
For her own broken heart. There's not a crime
But takes its proper change out still in crime
If once rung on the counter of this world :
Let sinners look to it.

Yet the outcast child, For whom the very mother's face forewent
The mother's special patience, lived and grew ;
Learned early to cry low, and walk alone, With that pathetic vacillating roll .
Of the infant body on the uncertain feet
(The earth being felt unstable ground so soon),
At which most women's arms unclose at once
With irrepressive instinct. Thus, at three,
This poor weaned kid would run off from the fold,
This babe would steal off from the mother's chair,
And, creeping through the golden walls of gorse,
Would find some keyhole toward the secrecy

Of Heaven's high blue, and, nestling down, peer out—
Oh, not to catch the angels at their games,
She had never heard of angels,—but to gaze
She knew not why, to see she knew not what,
A-hungering outward from the barren earth
For something like a joy. She liked, she said.
To dazzle black her sight against the sky,
For then, it seemed, some grand blind Love came down,
And groped her out, and clasped her with a kiss ;
She learnt God that way, and was beat for it
Whenever she went home,—yet came again,
Assurely as the trapped hare, getting free, Returns to his form. This grand blind Love, she said,
This skyey father and mother both in one, Instructed her and civilized her more Than even Sunday-school did afterward,
To which a lady sent her to learn books And sit upon a long bench in a row With other children. Well, she laughed sometimes
To see them laugh and laugh and maul their texts ;
But often she was sorrowful with noise And wondered if their mothers beat them hard
That ever they should laugh so. There was one
She loved indeed,—Rose Bell, a seven years' child
So pretty and clever, who read syllables When Marian was at letters ; she would laugh
At nothing—hold your finger up, she laughed,
Then shook her curls down over eyes and mouth
To hide her make-mirth from the school-master :
And Rose's pelting glee, as frank as rain On cherry-blossoms, brightened Marian too,
To see another merry whom she loved.

She whispered once (the children side by side,
With mutual arms entwined about their necks)
'Your mother lets you laugh so!' 'Aye,' said Rose,
'She lets me. She was dug into the ground
Six years since, I being but a yearling wean.
Such mothers let us play and lose our time,
And never scold nor beat us! don't you wish
You had one like that?' There, Marian breaking off
Looked suddenly in my face. 'Poor Rose,' said she,
'I heard her laugh last night in Oxford Street.
I'd pour out half my blood to stop that laugh.
Poor Rose, poor Rose!' said Marian.
She resumed: It tried her, when she had learnt at Sunday-school
What God was, what He wanted from us all,
And how in choosing sin we vexed the Christ,
To go straight home and hear her father pull
The Name down on us from the thunder-shelf,
Then drink away his soul into the dark
From seeing judgement. Father, mother, home,
Were God and heaven reversed to her: the more
She knew of Right, the more she guessed their wrong;
Her price paid down for knowledge, was to know
The vileness of her kindred: through her heart,
Her filial and tormented heart, henceforth,
They struck their blows at virtue. Oh, 'tis hard
To learn you have a father up in heaven
By a gathering certain sense of being, on earth,

Still worse than orphaned: 'tis too heavy a grief,
The having to thank God for such a joy!
And so passed Marian's life from year to year.
Her parents took her with them when they tramped,
Dodged lanes and heaths, frequented towns and fairs,
And once went farther and saw Manchester,
And once the sea, that blue end of the world,
That fair scroll-finis of a wicked book,—
And twice a prison,—back at intervals,
Returning to the hills. Hills draw like heaven,
And stronger sometimes, holding out their hands
To pull you from the vile flats up to them.
And though perhaps these strollers still strolled back,
As sheep do, simply that they knew the way.
They certainly felt bettered unaware
Emerging from the social smut of towns
To wipe their feet clean on the mountain turf.
In which long wanderings, Marian lived and learned,
Endured and learned. The people on the roads
Would stop and ask her why her eyes outgrew
Her cheeks, and if she meant to lodge the birds
In all that hair; and then they lifted her, The miller in his cart, a mile or twain, The butcher's boy on horseback. Often too The pedlar stopped, and tapped her on the head
With absolute forefinger, brown and ringed,
And asked if peradventureshe could read, And when she answered 'aye,' would toss her down
Some stray odd volume from his heavy pack,
A Thomson's Seasons, mulcted of the Spring,
Or half a play of Shakespeare's, torn across,

(She had to guess the bottom of a page
By just the top sometimes,—as difficult,
As, sitting on the moon, to guess the
earth !)
Or else a sheaf of leaves (for that small
Ruth's
Small gleanings) torn out from the heart
of books,
From Churchyard Elegies and Edens
Lost,
From Burns, and Bunyan, Selkirk, and
Tom Jones.—
'Twas somewhat hard to keep the things
distinct,
And oft the jangling influence jarred the
child
Like looking at a sunset full of grace
Through a pothouse window while the
drunken oaths
Went on behind her. But she weeded out
Her book-leaves, threw away the leaves
that hurt
(First tore them small, that none should
find a word),
And made a nosegay of the sweet and
good
To fold within her breast, and pore upon
At broken moments of the noon tide glare,
When leave was given her to untie her
cloak
And rest upon the dusty highway's bank
From the road's dust: or oft, the journey
done,
Some city friend would lead her by the
hand
To hear a lecture at an institute.
And thus she had grown, this Marian
Erle of ours,
To no book-learning,—she was ignorant
Of authors,—not in earshot of the things
Outspoken o'er the heads of common men
By men who are uncommon,—but within
The cadenced hum of such, and capable
Of catching from the fringes of the wind
Some fragmentary phrases, here and
there,
Of that fine music, which, being carried in
To her soul, had reproduced itself afresh
In finer motions of the lips and lids.

She said, in speaking of it, 'If a flower
Were thrown you out of heaven at in-
tervals,

You'd soon attain to a trick of looking
up,—
And so with her.' She counted me her
years,
Till I felt old; and then she counted me,
Her sorrowful pleasures, till I felt
ashamed.
She told me she was fortunate and calm:
On such and such a season, sate and
sewed,
With no one to break up her crystal
thoughts,
While rimes from lovely poems span
around
Their ringing circles of ecstatic tune,
Beneath the moistened finger of the Hour.
Her parents called her a strange, sickly
child,
Not good for much, and given to sulk and
stare,
And smile into the hedges and the clouds,
And tremble if one shook her from her fit
By any blow, or woe even. Outdoor jobs
Went ill with her, and household quiet
work
She was not born to. Had they kept
the north,
They might have had their pennyworth
out of her
Like other parents, in the factories,
(Your children work for you, not you
for them,
Or else they better had been choked
with air
The first breath drawn;) but, in this
tramping life,
Was nothing to be done with such a child
But tramp and tramp. And yet she
knitted hose
Not ill, and was not dull at needlework;
And all the country people gave her pence
For darning stockings past their natural
age,
And patching petticoats from old to new,
And other light work done for thrifty
wives.

One day, said Marian,—the sun shone
that day—
Her mother had been badly beat, and felt
The bruises sore about her wretched soul
(That must have been): she came in
suddenly,

And snatching in a sort of breathless rage
 Her daughter's headgear comb, let down
 the hair
 Upon her like a sudden waterfall.
 Then drew her drenched and passive by
 the arm
 Outside the hut they lived in. When
 the child
 Could clear her blinded face from all that
 stream
 Of tresses . . . there, a man stood, with
 beast's eyes
 That seemed as they would swallow her
 alive
 Complete in body and spirit, hair and
 all.—
 And burning stertorous breath that hurt
 her cheek,
 He breathed so near. The mother held
 her tight,
 Saying hard between her teeth—‘Why
 wench, why wench,
 The squire speaks to you now—the
 squire's too good;
 He means to set you up, and comfort us.
 Be mannerly at least.’ The child turned
 round
 And looked up piteous in the mother's
 face
 (Be sure that mother's death-bed will
 not want
 Another devil to damn, than such a look),
 ‘Oh, mother!’ then, with desperate
 glance to heaven,
 ‘God, free me from my mother,’ she
 shrieked out,
 ‘These mothers are too dreadful.’ And,
 with force
 As passionate as fear, she tore her hands
 Like lilies from the rocks, from hers and
 his,
 And sprang down, bounded headlong
 down the steep,
 Away from both—away, if possible,
 As far as God,—away! They yelled at her,
 As famished hounds at a hare. She
 heard them yell;
 She felt her name hiss after her from the
 hills,
 Like shot from guns. On, on. And now
 she had cast
 The voices off with the uplands. On.
 Mad fear

Was running in her feet and killing the
 ground;
 The white roads curled as if she burnt
 them up,
 The green fields melted, wayside trees
 fell back
 To make room for her. Then her head
 grew vexed;
 Trees, fields, turned on her and ran
 after her;
 She heard the quick pants of the hills
 behind,
 Their keen air pricked her neck: she
 had lost her feet,
 Could run no more, yet somehow went
 as fast,
 The horizon red'twixtsteeples in the east
 So sucked her forward, forward, while
 her heart
 Kept swelling, swelling, till it swelled
 so big
 It seemed to fill her body.—when it burst
 And overflowed the world and swamped
 the light;
 ‘And now I am dead and safe,’ thought
 Marian Erie—
 She had dropped, she had fainted.
 As the sense returned,
 The night had passed—not life's night.
 She was 'ware
 Of heavy tumbling motions, creaking
 wheels,
 The driver shouting to the lazy team
 That swung their rankling bells against
 her brain,
 While, through the wagon's coverture
 and chinks,
 The cruel yellow morning pecked at her
 Alive or dead upon the straw inside,—
 At which her soul ached back into the
 dark
 And prayed, ‘no more of that.’ A
 waggoner
 Had found her in a ditch beneath the
 moon,
 As white as moonshine save for the
 oozing blood.
 At first he thought her dead; but when
 he had wiped
 The mouth and heard it sigh, he raised
 her up,
 And laid her in his wagon in the straw,
 And so conveyed her to the distant town

To which his business called himself,
and left
That heap of misery at the hospital.

She stirred ;—the place seemed new and
strange as death.
The white strait bed, with others strait
and white,
Like graves dug side by side at measured
lengths,
And quiet people walking in and out
With wonderful low voices and soft steps
And apparitional equal care for each,
Astonished her with order, silence, law.
And when a gentle hand held out a cup,
She took it, as you do at sacrament,
Half-sawed, half melted,—not being used,
indeed,

To so much love as makes the form of love
And courtesy of manners. Delicate drinks
And rare white bread, to which some
dying eyes
Were turned in observation. O my God,
How sick we must be, ere we make men
just!

I think it frets the saints in heaven to see
How many desolate creatures on the earth
Have learnt the simple dues of fellowship
And social comfort, in a hospital,
As Marian did. She lay there, stunned,
half tranced,
And wished, at intervals of growing
sense,
She might be sicker yet, if sickness made
The world so marvellous kind, the air
so hushed,
And all her wake-time quiet as a sleep ;
For now she understood (as such things
were)
How sickness ended very oft in heaven
Among the unspoken raptures :—yet
more sick.
And surelier happy. Then she dropped
her lids,
And, folding up her hands as flowers at
night,
Would lose no moment of the blessed
time.

She lay and seethed in fever many weeks,
But youth was strong and overcame the
test;
Revolted soul and flesh were reconciled

And fetched back to the necessary day
And daylight duties. She could creep
about
The long bare rooms, and stare out
drearly
From any narrow window on the street,
Till some one who had nursed her as
a friend
Said coldly to her, as an enemy,
'She had leave to go next week, being
well enough,'
(While only her heart ached). 'Go
next week,' thought she,
'Next week ! how would it be with her
next week,
Let out into that terrible street alone
Among the pushing people, . . . to go . . .
where ?'

One day, the last before the dreaded last,
Among the convalescents, like herself
Prepared to go next morning, she sat
dumb,
And heard half absently the women
talk,—
How one was famished for her baby's
cheeks,
'The little wretch would know her!
a year old
And lively, like his father !'—one was
keen
To get to work, and fill some clamorous
mouths ;
And one wastender for her dear goodman
Who had missed her sorely,—and one,
querulous . . .
'Would pay backbiting neighbours who
had dared
To talk about her as already dead,'—
And one was proud . . . 'and if her
sweetheart Luke
Had left her for a redder face than hers
(The gossip would be seen through at a
glance)
Sweet riddance of such sweethearts—
let him hang !
'Twere good to have been sick for such
an end.'

And while they talked, and Marian felt
the worse
For having missed the worst of all their
wrongs,

A visitor was ushered through the wards
And paused among the talkers. 'When
he looked
It was as if he spoke, and when he spoke
He sang perhaps,' said Marian; 'could
she tell?
She only knew' (so much she had
chronicled,
As seraphs might the making of the sun)
'That he who came and spake, was
Romney Leigh,
And then and there she saw and heard
him first.'

And when it was her turn to have the
face
Upon her, all those buzzing pallid lips
Being satisfied with comfort—when he
changed
To Marian, saying 'And *you*? you're
going, where?'—
She, moveless as a worm beneath a stone
Which some one's stumbling foot has
spurned aside,
Writhed suddenly, astonished with the
light,
And breaking into sobs cried, 'Where
I go?
None asked me till this moment. Can
I say
Where I go,—when it has not seemed
worth while
To God Himself, who thinks of every one,
To think of me and fix where I shall go?'

'So young,' he gently asked her, 'you
have lost
Your father and your mother!'
'Both,' she said,
'Both lost! my father was burnt up
with gin.
Or ever I sucked milk, and so is lost.
My mother sold me to a man last month,
And so my mother's lost, 'tis manifest.
And I, who fled from her for miles and
miles,
As if I had caught sight of the fire of hell
Through some wild gap (she was my
mother, sir),
It seems I shall be lost too, presently,
And so we end, all three of us.'

'Poor child,'
He said,—with such a pity in his voice,

It soothed her more than her own
tears,—'poor child!
'Tis simple that betrayal by mother's love
Should bring despair of God's too.
Yet be taught,
He's better to us than many mothers are,
And children cannot wander beyond
reach
Of the sweep of His white raiment.
Touch and hold!
And if you weep still, weep where John
was laid
While Jesus loved him.'
'She could say the words,'
She told me, 'exactly as he uttered them
A year back, since in any doubt or dark
They came out like the stars, and shone
on her
With just their comfort. Common words,
perhaps;
The ministers in church might say the
same;
But *he*, he made the church with what
he spoke,—
The difference was the miracle,' said she.

Then catching up hersmile to ravishment,
She added quickly, 'I repeat his words,
But not his tones: can any one repeat
The music of an organ, out of church?
And when he said "poor child," I shut
my eyes
To feel how tenderly his voice broke
through,
As the ointment-box broke on the Holy
feet
To let out the rich medicative nard.'

She told me how he had raised and
rescued her
With reverent pity, as, in touching grief,
He touched the wounds of Christ,—and
made her feel
More self-respecting. Hope, he called,
belief
In God,—work, worship,—therefore let
us pray!
And thus, to snatch her soul from atheism,
And keep it stainless from her mother's
face,
He sent her to a famous sempstress-house
Far off in London, there to work and
hope.

With that, they parted. She kept sight
of Heaven,
But not of Romney. He had good to do
To others : through the days and through
the nights
She sewed and sewed and sewed. She
drooped sometimes,
And wondered, while along the tawny
light
She struck the new thread into her
needle's eye,
How people without mothers on the hills
Could choose the town to live in !—then
she drew
The stitch, and mused how Romney's
face would look,
And if 'twere likely he'd remember hers
When they two had their meeting after
death.

FOURTH BOOK

THEY met still sooner. 'Twas a year
from thence
That Lucy Gresham, the sick sempstress
girl,
Who sewed by Marian's chair so still
and quick,
And leant her head upon its back to cough
More freely, when, the mistress turning
round,
The others took occasion to laugh out,
Gave up at last. Among the workers,
spoke
A bold girl with black eyebrows and red
lips ;
'You know the news? Who's dying,
do you think?
Our Lucy Gresham. I expected it
As little as Nell Hart's wedding. Blush
not, Nell,
Thy curls be red enough without thy
cheeks,
And, some day, there'll be found a man
to dote
On red curls.—Lucy Gresham swooned
last night,
Dropped sudden in the street while
going home;
And now the baker says, who took her up
And laid her by her grandmother in bed,

He'll give her a week to die in. Pass
the silk.
Let's hope he gave her a loaf too, within
reach,
For otherwise they'll starve before they
die,
That funny pair of bedfellows! Miss
Bell,
I'll thank you for the scissors. The old
crone
Is paralytic—that's the reason why
Our Lucy's thread went faster than her
breath,
Which went too quick, we all know.
Marian Erle!
Why, Marian Erle, you're not the fool
to cry!
Your tears spoil Lady Waldemar's new
dress,
You piece of pity!'
Marian rose up straight,
And, breaking through the talk and
through the work,
Went outward, in the face of their
surprise,
To Lucy's home, to nurse her back to life
Or down to death. She knew, by such
an act,
All place and grace were forfeit in the
house,
Whose mistress would supply the miss-
ing hand
With necessary, not inhuman haste,
And take no blame. But pity, too, had
dues:
She could not leave a solitary soul
To founder in the dark, while she sate
still
And lavished stitches on a lady's hem
As if no other work were paramount.
'Why, God,' thought Marian, 'has
a missing hand'
This moment; Lucy wants a drink,
perhaps.
Let others miss me! never miss me, God!'
So Marian sate by Lucy's bed, content
With duty, and was strong, for recom-
pense,
To hold the lamp of human love arm-high
To catch the death-strained eyes and
comfort them,
Until the angels, on the luminous side

Of death, had got theirs ready. And she said,
 If Lucy thanked her sometimes, called her kind,
 It touched her strangely. 'Marian Erle, called kind!
 What, Marian, beaten and sold, who could not die!
 'Tis verily good fortune to be kind.
 Ah you,' she said, 'who are born to such a grace,
 Besorry for the unlicensed class, the poor, Reduced to think the best good fortune means
 That others, simply, should be kind to them.'

From sleep to sleep when Lucy had slid away So gently, like the light upon a hill, Of which none names the moment that it goes Though all see when 'tis gone,—a man came in And stood beside the bed. The old idiot wretch Screamed feebly, like a baby overlain, 'Sir, sir, you won't mistake me for the corpse? Don't look at me, sir! never bury me! Although I lie here I'm alive as you. Except my legs and arms,—I eat and drink And understand, — (that you're the gentleman Who fits the funerals up, Heaven speed you, sir,) And certainly I should be livelier still If Lucy here... sir, Lucy is the corpse... Had worked more properly to buy me wine; But Lucy, sir, was always slow at work, I shan't lose much by Lucy. Marian Erle, Speak up and show the gentleman the corpse.'

And then a voice said, 'Marian Erle.' She rose; It was the hour for angels—there, stood hers! She scarcely marvelled to see Romney Leigh. As light November snows to empty nests,

As grass to graves, as moss to mildewed stones, As July suns to ruins, through the rents, As ministering spirits to mourners, through a loss, As Heaven itself to men, through pangs of death, He came uncalled wherever grief had come. 'And so,' said Marian Erle, 'we met anew.' And added softly, 'so, we shall not part.' He was not angry that she had left the house Wherein he placed her. Well—she had feared if might Have vexed him. Also, when he found her set On keeping, though the dead was out of sight, That half-dead, half-live body left behind With cankerous heart and flesh, which took your best And cursed you for the little good it did. (Could any leave the bed-rid wretch alone, So joyless she was thankless even to God, Much more to you?) he did not say 'twas well, Yet Marian thought he did not take it ill,— Since day by day he came, and every day She felt within his utterance and his eyes A closer, tenderer presence of the soul, Until at last he said, 'We shall not part.' On that same day, was Marian's work complete: She had smoothed the empty bed, and swept the floor Of coffin sawdust, set the chairs anew The dead had ended gossip in, and stood In that poor room so cold and orderly, The door-key in her hand, prepared to go As they had, howbeit not their way. He spoke. .

'Dear Marian, of one clay God made us all, And though men push and poke and paddle in't (As children play at fashioning dirt-pies) And call their fancies by the name of facts,

Assuming difference, lordship, privilege,
When all's plain dirt,—they come back
to it at last,

The first grave-digger proves it with
a spade,
And pats all even. Need we wait for this,
You, Marian, and I, Romney?"

She, at that,
Looked blindly in his face, as when one
looks
Through driving autumn-rains to find
the sky.
He went on speaking.

"Marian, I being born
What men call noble, and you, issued
from
The noble people,—though the tyrannous
sword
Which pierced Christ's heart, has cleft
the world in twain
'Twixt class and class, opposing rich to
poor,
Shall we keep parted? Not so. Let us lean
And strain together rather, each to each,
Compress the red lips of this gaping
wound
As far as two souls can,—aye, lean and
league,
I from my superabundance,—from your
want
You,—joining in a protest against the
wrong
On both sides."

All the rest, he held her hand
In speaking, which confused the sense
of much.
Her heart against his words beat out so
thick,
They might as well be written on the dust
Where some poor bird, escaping from
hawk's beak,
Has dropped and beats its shuddering
wings,—the lines
Are rubbed so,—yet 'twas something
like to this,
—'That they two, standing at the two
extremes
Of social classes, had received one seal,
Been dedicate and drawn beyond them-
selves

To mercy and ministration,—he, indeed,
Through what he knew, and she,
through what she felt,

He, by man's conscience, she, by
woman's heart,
Relinquishing their several 'vantage
posts

Of wealthy ease and honourable toil,
To work with God at love. And since
God willed

That putting out his hand to touch this ark
He found a woman's hand there, he'd
accept

The sign too, hold the tender fingers fast,
And say, "My fellow-worker, be my
wife!"

She told the tale with simple, rustic
turns,—

Strong leaps of meaning in her sudden
eyes

That took the gaps of any imperfect
phrase

Of the unschooled speaker; I have
rather writ

The thing I understood so, than the thing
I heard so. And I cannot render right
Her quick gesticulation, wild yet soft.
Self-startled from the habitual mood she
used,

Half sad, half languid,—like dumb
creatures (now

A rustling bird, and now a wandering
deer,

Or squirrel 'gainst the oak-gloom
flashing up

His sidelong burnished head, in just her
way

Of savage spontaneity), that stir
Abruptly the green silence of the woods,
And make it stranger, holier, more
profound;

As Nature's general heart confessed it-
self

Of life, and then fell backward on repose.

I kissed the lips that ended.—"So indeed
He loves you, Marian?"

"Loves me!" She looked up
With a child's wonder when you ask
him first

Who made the sun—a puzzled blush,
that grew,

Then broke off in a rapid radiant smile
Of sure solution. "Loves me! he loves
all,—

And me, of course. He had not asked
me else
To work with him forever and be his wife.'

Her words reproved me. This perhaps
was love--

To have its hands too full of gifts to give,
For putting out a hand to take a gift;
To love so much, the perfect round of love
Includes, in strict conclusion, being
loved;

As Eden-dew went up and fell again,
Enough for watering Eden. Obviously
She had not thought about his love at all :
The cataracts of her soul had poured
themselves,

And risen self-crowned in rainbow :
would she ask

Who crowned her?—it sufficed that she
was crowned.

With women of my class 'tis otherwise:
We haggle for the small change of our
gold,

And so much love accord for so much love,
Rialto-prices. Are we therefore wrong?
If marriage be a contract, look to it then,
Contracting parties should be equal, just,
But if, a simple fealty on one side,
A mere religion,—right to give, is all,
And certain brides of Europe duly ask
To mount the pile as Indian widows do,
The spices of their tender youth heaped
up,

The jewels of their gracious virtues worn,
More gems, more glory,—to consume
entire

For a living husband : as the man's alive,
Not dead, the woman's duty by so much
Advanced in England beyond Hindostan.

I sat there musing, till she touched my
hand

With hers, as softly as a strange whitebird
She feared to startle in touching. ' You
are kind.

But are you, peradventure, vexed at heart
Because your cousin takes me for a wife?
I know I am not worthy—nay, in truth,
I'm glad on 't, since, for that, he
chooses me.

He likes the poor things of the world
the best;

I would not therefore, if I could, be rich.

It pleases him to stoop for buttercups;
I would not be a rose upon the wall
A queen might stop at, near the palace-
door,

To say to a courtier, " Pluck that rose
for me,

It's prettier than the rest." O Romney
Leigh!

I'd rather far be trodden by his foot,
Than lie in a great queen's bosom."

Out of breath

She paused.

' Sweet Marian, do you disavow
The roses with that face ?'

She dropt her head
As if the wind had caught that flower
of her

And bent in the garden,—then looked up
With grave assurance. ' Well, you
think me bold !

But so we all are, when we're praying
God.

And if I'm bold—yet, lady, credit me,
That, since I know myself for what I am,
Much fitter for his handmaid than his wife,
I'll prove the handmaid and the wife at
once,

Serve tenderly, and love obediently,
And be a worthier mate, perhaps, than
some

Who are wooed in silk among their
learned books ;

While I shall set myself to read his eyes,
Till such grow plainer to me than the
French

To wisest ladies. Do you think I'll miss
A letter, in the spelling of his mind ?
No more than they do when they sit
and write

Their flying words with flickering wild-
fowl tails,

Nor ever pause to ask how many *is*,
Should that *bey*, or *is*, they know't so well :
I've seen them writing, when I brought
a dress

And waited,—floating out their soft
white hands

On shining paper. But they're hard
sometimes,

For all those hands!—we've used out
many nights,

And worn the yellow daylight into
shreds

Which flapped and shivered down our
aching eyes
Till night appeared more tolerable, just
That pretty ladies might look beautiful,
Who said at last . . " You're lazy in
that house!
You're slow in sending home the
work,—I count
I've waited near an hour for it."
Pardon me,
I do not blame them, madam, nor
misprize;
They are fair and gracious ; aye, but not
like you,
Since none but you has Mister Leigh's
own blood
Both noble and gentle,—and, without
it . . well,
They are fair, I said ; so fair, it scarce
seems strange
That, flashing out in any looking-glass
The wonder of their glorious brows
and breasts,
They're charmed so, they forget to
look behind
And mark how pale we've grown, we
pitiful
Remainders of the world. And so perhaps
If Mister Leigh had chosen a wife from
these,
She might, although he's better than
her best
And dearly she would know it, steal
a thought
Which should be all his, an eye-glance
from his face,
To plunge into the mirror opposite
In search of her own beauty's pearl;
while I . .
Ah, dearest lady, serge will outweigh
silk
For winter-wear when bodies feel a-cold,
And I'll be a true wife to your cousin
Leigh.'

Before I answered he was there himself.
I think he had been standing in the room
And listened probably to half her talk,
Arrested, turned to stone,—as white
as stone.
Will tender sayings make men look so
white?
He loves her then profoundly.

' You are here,
Aurora ! Here I meet you !'—We
clasped hands.

' Evenso, dear Romney. Lady Waldemar
Has sent me in haste to find a cousin of
mine
Who shall be.'

' Lady Waldemar is good.'

' Here's one, at least, who is good,'
I sighed, and touched
Poor Marian's happy head, as doglike she,
Most passionately patient, waited on,
A-tremble for her turn of greeting words ;
' I've sate a full hour with your Marian
Erle,
And learnt the thing by heart,—and
from my heart
Am therefore competent to give you
thanks
For such a cousin.'

' You accept at last
A gift from me, Aurora, without scorn?
At last I please you ?'—How his voice
was changed.

' You cannot please a woman against
her will,
And once you vexed me. Shall we
speak of that?
We'll say, then, you were noble in it all
And I not ignorant—let it pass. And now
You please me, Romuey, when you
please yourself;
So, please you, be fanatical in love,
And I'm well pleased. Ah, cousin !
at the old hall,
Among the gallery portraits of our Leights,
We shall not find a sweeter signory
Than this pure forehead's.'

Not a word he said.
How arrogant men are !—Even philan-
thropists,
Who try to take a wife up in the way
They put down a subscription-cheque,—
if once
She turns and says, ' I will not tax you so,
Most charitable sir,—feel ill at ease
As though she had wronged them some-
how. I suppose
We women should remember what we
are,

And not throw back an obolus inscribed
With Caesar's image, lightly. I resumed.

'It strikes me, some of those sublime
Vandykes

Were not too proud to make good saints
in heaven;
And if so, then they're not too proud
to-day,

To bow down (now the ruffs are off
their necks)

'And own this good, true, noble Marian,
yours.

And mine, I'll say!—For poets (bear
the word),

Half-poets even, are still whole demo-
crats,—

Oh, not that we're disloyal to the high,
But loyal to the low, and cognizant
Of the less scrutable majesties. For me,
I comprehend your choice, I justify
Your right in choosing.'

'No, no, no,' he sighed,
With a sort of melancholy impatient
scorn,

As some grown man who never had
a child

Puts by some child who plays at being
a man,

'You did not, do not, cannot comprehend
My choice, my ends, my motives, nor
myself:

No matter now; we'll let it pass, you
say.

I thank you for your generous cousinship
Which helps this present; I accept for her
Your favourable thoughts. We're fallen
on days,

We two who are not poets, when to wed
Requires less mutual love than common
love

For two together to bear out at once
Upon the loveless many. Work in pairs,
In galley-couplings or in marriage-rings,
The difference lies in the honour, not
the work,—

And such we're bound to, I and she.
But love

(You poets are benighted in this age,
The hour's too late for catching even
moths,

You've gnats instead), love!—love's
fool-paradise

Is out of date, like Adam's. Set a swan
To swim the Trenton, rather than true
love

To float its fabulous plumage safely down
The cataracts of this loud transition-
time,—

Whose roar for ever henceforth in my
ears

Must keep me deaf to music.'

There, I turned
And kissed poor Marian, out of dis-
content.

The man had baffled, chafed me, till
I flung

Forrefugeto the woman,—as, sometimes,
Impatient of some crowded room's close
smell,

You throw a window open and lean out
To breathe along breath in the dewy night
And cool your angry forehead. She,
at least,

Was not built up as walls are, brick by
brick,

Each fancy squared, each feeling ranged
by line,

The very heat of burning youth applied
To indurate form and system! excellent
bricks,

A well-built wall,—which stops you on
the road,

And, into which, you cannot see an inch
Although you beat your head against
it—pshaw!

'Adieu,' I said, 'for this time, cousins
both,
And, cousin Romney, pardon me the
word,

Be happy!—oh, in some esoteric sense
Of course!—I mean no harm in wishing
well.

Adieu, my Marian:—may she come to me,
Dear Romney, and be married from my
house?

It is not part of your philosophy
To keep your bird upon the blackthorn?

'Aye,'
He answered, 'but it is. I take my wife
Directly from the people,—and she
comes,
As Austria's daughter to imperial France,
Betwixt her eagles, blinking not her race,

From Margaret's Court at garret-height,
to meet
And wed me at St. James's, nor put off
Her gown of serge for that. The things
we do.
We do: we'll wear no mask, as if we
blushed.'

'Dear Romney, you're the poet,'
I replied.
But felt my smile too mournful for my
word.
And turned and went. Aye, masks,
I thought,—beware
Of tragic masks we tie before the glass,
Uplifted on the cothurn half a yard
Above the natural stature! we would play
Heroic parts to ourselves,—and end,
perhaps,
As impotently as Athenian wives
Who shrieked in fits at the Eumenides.

His foot pursued me down the stair.
'At least
You'll suffer me to walk with you beyond
These hideous streets, these graves,
where men alive
Packed close with earthworms, burr
unconsciously
About the plague that slew them; let
me go.
The very women pelt their souls in mud
At any woman who walks here alone.
How came you here alone?—you are
ignorant.'

We had a strange and melancholy walk:
The night came drizzling downward in
dark rain,
And, as we walked, the colour of the
time,
The act, the presence, my hand upon
his arm,
His voice in my ear, and mine to my
own sense,
Appeared unnatural. We talked modern
books
And daily papers, Spanish marriage-
schemes
And English climate—was't so cold
last year?
And will the wind change by to-morrow
morn?

Can Guizot stand? is London full?
is trade
Competitive? has Dickens turned his
hinge
A-pinch upon the fingers of the great?
And are potatoes to grow mythical
Like moly? will the apple die out too?
Which way is the wind to-night? south-
east? due east?
We talked on fast, while every common
word
Seemed tangled with the thunder at one
end,
And ready to pull down upon our heads
A terror out of sight. And yet to pause
Were surlier mortal: we tore greedily
up
All silence, all the innocent breathing-
points,
As if, like pale conspirators in haste,
We tore up papers where our signatures
Imperilled us to an ugly shame or death.

I cannot tell you why it was. 'Tis plain
We had not loved nor hated: wherefore
dread
To spill gunpowder on ground safe from
fire?
Perhaps we had lived too closely, to
diverge
So absolutely: leave two clocks, they
say,
Wound up to different hours, upon one
shelf,
And slowly, through the interior wheels
of each.
The blind mechanic motion sets itself
A-throb to feel out for the mutual time.
It was not so with us, indeed: while he
Struck midnight, I kept striking six at
dawn,
While he marked judgement, I, redemp-
tion-day;
And such exception to a general law
Imperious upon inert matter even,
Might make us, each to either, insecure,
A beckoning mystery or a troubling fear.

I mind me, when we parted at the door,
How strange his good-night sounded,—
like good-night
Beside a deathbed, where the morrow's
sun

Is sure to come too late for more good-days:
And all that night I thought . . . "Good-night," said he.'

And so, a month passed. Let me set it down
At once,—I have been wrong, I have been wrong.
We are wrong always when we think too much
Of what we think or are: albeit our thoughts
Be verily bitter as self-sacrifice,
We're no less selfish. If we sleep on rocks
Or roses, sleeping past the hour of noon
We're lazy. This I write against myself.
I had done a duty in the visit paid
To Marian, and was ready otherwise
To give the witness of my presence and name
Whenever she should marry.—Which, I thought,
Sufficed. I even had cast into the scale
An overweight of justice toward the match;
The Lady Waldemar had missed her tool,
Had broken it in the lock as being too straight
For a crooked purpose, while poor Marian Erle
Missed nothing in my accents or my acts:
I had not been ungenerous on the whole,
Nor yet untearer; so, enough. I felt
Tired, overworked: this marriage somewhat jarred;
Or, if it did not, all the bridal noise,
The pricking of the map of life with pins,
In schemes of . . . 'Here we'll go,' and
'There we'll stay,'
And 'Everywhere we'll prosper in our love,'
Was scarce my business: let them order it;
Who else should care? I threw myself aside,
As one who had done her work and shuts her eyes
To rest the better.
I, who should have known,

Forereckoned mischief! Where we disavow
Being keeper to our brother we're his Cain.

I might have held that poor child to my heart
A little longer! 'twould have hurt me much
To have hastened by its beats the marriage day,
And kept her safe meantime from tampering hands
Or, peradventure, traps. What drew me back
From telling Romney plainly the designs
Of Lady Waldemar, as spoken out
To me . . . me? had I any right, aye, right,
With womanly compassion and reserve
To break the fall of woman's impudence!—
To stand by calmly, knowing what I knew,
And hear him call her *good*?
Distrust that word.
'There is none good save God,' said Jesus Christ.
If He once, in the first creation-week,
Called creatures good,—for ever, afterward,
The Devil only has done it, and his heirs,
The knaves who win so, and the fools who lose;
The word's grown dangerous. In the middle age,
I think they called malignant fays and imps
Good people. A good neighbour, even in this,
Is fatal sometimes,—cuts your morning up
To mince-meat of the very smallest talk,
Then helps to sugar her bohea at night
With your reputation. I have known
good wives,
As chaste, or nearly so, as Potiphar's;
And good, good mothers, who would use a child
To better an intrigue; good friends,
beside
(Very good), who hung succinctly round
your neck
And sucked your breath, as cats are fabled to do

By sleeping infants. And we all have known
 Good critics who have stamped out poet's hopes,
 Good statesmen who pulled ruin on the state,
 Good patriots who for a theory risked a cause,
 Good kings who disembowelled for a tax,
 Good popes who brought all good to jeopardy,
 Good Christians who sate still in easy chairs
 And damned the general world for standing up.—
 Now may the good God pardon all good men !

How bitterly I speak,—how certainly
 The innocent white milk in us is turned,
 By much persistent shining of the sun!—
 Shake up the sweetest in us long enough
 With men, it drops to foolish curd, too sour
 To feed the most untender of Christ's lambs.

I should have thought,—a woman of the world
 Like her I'm meaning, centre to herself,
 Who has wheeled on her own pivot half a life
 In isolated self-love and self-will,
 As a windmill seen at distance radiating
 Its delicate white vans against the sky,
 So soft and soundless, simply beautiful,
 Seen nearer,—what a roar and tear it makes,
 How it grinds and bruises!—if she loves at last,
 Her love's a readjustment of self-love,
 No more,—a need felt of another's use
 To her one advantage, as the mill wants grain,
 The fire wants fuel, the very wolf wants prey,
 And none of these is more unscrupulous
 Than such a charming woman when she loves.
 She'll not be thwarted by an obstacle
 So trifling as . . . her soul is, . . . much less yours!—
 Is God a consideration?—she loves you,

Not God; she will not flinch for Him indeed:
 She did not for the Marchioness of Perth,
 When wanting tickets for the fancy ball.
 She loves you, sir, with passion, to lunacy,
 She loves you like her diamonds . . . almost.

Well,
 A month passed so, and then the notice came,
 On such a day the marriage at the church.
 I was not backward.
 Half Saint Giles in frieze
 Was bidden to meet Saint James in cloth of gold,
 And, after contract at the altar, pass
 To eat a marriage-feast on Hampstead Heath.

Of course the people came in un-compelled,
 Lame, blind, and worse—sick, sorrowful, and worse,
 The humours of the peccant social wound
 All pressed out, poured down upon Pimlico,
 Exasperating the unaccustomed air
 With a hideous interfusion. You'd suppose
 A finished generation, dead of plague,
 Swept outward from their graves into the sun,
 The mail of death upon them. What a sight!
 A holiday of miserable men
 Is sadder than a burial-day of kings.

They clogged the streets, they oozed into the church
 In a dark slow stream, like blood. To see that sight,
 The noble ladies stood up in their pews,
 Some pale for fear, a few as red for hate,
 Some simply curious, some just insolent,
 And some in wondering scorn,—‘What next? what next?’
 These crushed their delicate rose-lips from the smile
 That misbecame them in a holy place,
 With broidered hem of perfumed handkerchiefs;
 Those passed the salts, with confidence of eyes
 And simultaneous shiver of moiré silk:

While all the aisles, alive and black with heads,
Crawled slowly toward the altar from the street,
As bruised snakes crawl and hiss out of a hole
, With shuddering involution, swaying slow
From right to left, and then from left to right,
In pants and pauses. What an ugly crest Of faces rose upon you everywhere From that crammed mass! you did not usually
See faces like them in the open day : They hide in cellars, not to make you mad As Romney Leigh is.—Faces !—O my God,
We call those, faces? men's and women's . . . aye,
And children's ;—babies, hanging like a rag
Forgotten on their mother's neck,—poor mouths,
Wiped clean of mother's milk by mother's blow
Before they are taught her cursing. Faces? . . . phew,
We'll call them vices, festering to despairs,
Or sorrows, petrifying to vices : not A finger-touch of God left whole on them, All ruined, lost—the countenance worn out
As the garment, the will dissolute as the act,
The passions loose and draggling in the dirt
To trip a foot up at the first free step ! Those, faces? 'twas as if you had stirred up hell
To heave its lowest dred-fiends uppermost
In fiery swirls of slime,—such strangled fronts,
Such obdurate jaws were thrown up constantly
To twit you with your race, corrupt your blood,
And grind to devilish colours all your dreams
Henceforth,—though, haply, you should drop asleep

By clink of silver waters, in a muse On Raffael's mild Madonna of the Bird.
I've waked and slept through many nights and days Since then,—but still that day will catch my breath Like a nightmare. There are fatal days, indeed, In which the fibrous years have taken root So deeply, that they quiver to their tops Whene'er you stir the dust of such a day.
My cousin met me with his eyes and hand, And then, with just a word, . . . that ' Marian Erie Was coming with her bridesmaids presently,' Made haste to place me by the altar-stair Where he and other noble gentlemen And high-born ladies, waited for the bride.
We waited. It was early : there was time For greeting and the morning's compliment, And gradually a ripple of women's talk Arose and fell and tossed about a spray Of English ss, soft as a silent hush, And, notwithstanding, quite as audible As louder phrases thrown out by the men.—' Yes, really, if we need to wait in church We need to talk there.'—' She? 'tis Lady Ayr, In blue—not purple! that's the dowager.'—' She looks as young'—' She flirts as young, you mean. Why if you had seen her upon Thursday night, You'd call Miss Norris modest.'—' You again ! I waltzed with you three hours back. Up at six, Up still at ten ; scarce time to change one's shoes : I feel as white and sulky as a ghost, So pray don't speak to me, Lord Belcher.'—' No, I'll look at you instead, and it's enough While you have that face.'—' In church, my lord ! fie, fie !'—' Adair, you stayed for the Division ? —' Lost

By one.' 'The devil it is! I'm sorry for t.
And if I had not promised Mistress
Grove'..

'You might have kept your word to
Liverpool.'

—'Constituents must remember, after all,
We're mortal.' —' We remind them of
it.' —' Hark,

The bride comes! here she comes, in a
stream of milk!'

—' There! Dear, you are asleep still;
don't you know

The five Miss Granvilles! always dressed
in white

To show they're ready to be married.'

—' Lower!

The aunt is at your elbow.' —'Lady Maud,
Did Lady Waldemar tell you she had seen
This girl of Leigh's?' —' No,—wait!

'twas Mistress Brookes,
Who told me Lady Waldemar told her—
No, 'twasn't Mistress Brookes.' —' She's
pretty?' —' Who?

Mistress Brookes? Lady Waldemar?' —' How hot!

Pray is't the law to-day we're not to
breathe?

You're treading on my shawl—I thank
you, sir.'

—' They say the bride's a mere child,
who can't read,
But knows the things she shouldn't,
with wide-aware

Great eyes. I'd go through fire to look
at her.'

—' You do, I think.' —' And Lady
Waldemar

(You see her; sitting close to Romney
Leigh.

How beautiful she looks, a little flushed!)
Has taken up the girl, and methodized
Leigh's folly. Should I have come here,

you suppose,
Except she'd asked me?' —' She'd have
served him more

By marrying him herself.' —' Ah—there she comes,

The bride, at last!' —' Indeed, no. Past eleven.

She puts off her patched petticoat to-day
And puts on May-fair manners, so begins
By setting us to wait.' —' Yes, yes, this

Leigh

Was always odd; it's in the blood, I think;
His father's uncle's cousin's second son
Was, was . . . you understand me; and
for him,

He's stark.—has turned quite lunatic upon
This modern question of the poor—the
poor.

An excellent subject when you're
moderate;

You've seen Prince Albert's model
lodging-house?

Does honour to his Royal Highness.
Good!

But would he stop his carriage in Cheap-
side

To shake a common fellow by the fist
Whose name was . . . Shakespeare? no.

We draw a line,
And if we stand not by our order, we
In England, we fall headlong. Here's
a sight,—

A hideous sight, a most indecent sight!
My wife would come, sir, or I had kept
her back.

By heaven, sir, when poor Damiens'
trunk and limbs

Were torn by horses, women of the court
Stood by and stared, exactly as to-day
On this dismembering of society,
With pretty, troubled faces.'

Now, at last,
She comes now.'

'Where! who sees! you
push me, sir,
Beyond the point of what is mannerly.
You're standing, madam, on my second
bounce.

I do beseech you . . .'

'No—it's not the bride.
Half-past eleven. How late. The bride-
groom, mark,

Gets anxious and goes out.'

'And as I said.
These Leights! our best blood running
in the rut!

It's something awful. We had pardoned
him .

A simple misalliance got up aside
For a pair of sky-blue eyes; the House
of Lords

Has winked at such things, and we've
all been young.

But there's an intermarriage reasoned cut,

A contract (carried boldly to the light
To challenge observation, pioneer
Good acts by a great example) 'twixt
the extremes
Of martyred society,—on the left
The well-born, on the right the merest
mob,
To treat as equals!—'tis anarchical;
It means more than it says; 'tis damnable.
Why, sir, we can't have even our coffee
good,
Unless we strain it.'

'Here, Miss Leigh!'

'Lord Howe,
You're Romney's friend. What's all
this waiting for?'

'I cannottell. The bride has lost her head
(And way, perhaps!) to prove her
sympathy
With the bridegroom.'

'What,—you also, disapprove!'

'Oh, I approve of nothing in the world,'
He answered, 'not of you, still less of
me,
Nor even of Romney, though he's worth
us both.

We're all gone wrong. The tune in us
is lost;
And whistling down back alleys to the
moon
Will never catch it.'

Let me draw Lord Howe.
A born aristocrat, bred radical,
And educated socialist, who still
Goes floating, on traditions of his kind,
Across the theoretic flood from France,
Though, like a drenched Noah on a
rotten deck,

Scarce safer for his place there. He,
at least,
Will never land on Ararat, he knows,
To recommence the world on the new
plan:

Indeed, he thinks, said world had better
end,

He sympathizes rather with the fish
Outside, than with the drowned paired
beasts within

Who cannot couple again or multiply,—
And that's the sort of Noah he is,
Lord Howe.

He never could be anything complete,
Except a loyal, upright gentleman,
A liberal landlord, graceful diner-out,
And entertainer more than hospitable,
Whom authors dine with and forget the
hock.

Whatever he believes, and it is much,
But nowise certain, now here and now
there,

He still has sympathies beyond his creed
Diverting him from action. In the House,
No party counts upon him, while for all
His speeches have a noticeable weight.
Men like his books too (he has written
books),

Which, safe to lie beside a bishop's chair,
At times outreach themselves with jets
of fire

At which the foremost of the progressists
May warm audacious hands in passing-by.
Of stature over-tall, lounging for ease;
Light hair, that seems to carry a wind
in it,

And eyes that, when they look on you,
will lean

Their whole weight, half in indolence
and half

In wishing you unmitigated good,
Until you know not if to flinch from him
Or thank him.—'Tis Lord Howe.

'We're all gone wrong,'
Said he, 'and Romney, that dear friend
of ours,

Is nowise right. There's one true
thing on earth,

That's love! he takes it up, and dresses it,
And acts a play with it, as Hamlet did,
To show what cruel uncles we have been,
And how we should be uneasy in our
minds

While he, Prince Hamlet, weds a pretty
maid

(Who keeps us too long waiting, we'll
confess).

By symbol, to instruct us formally
To fill the ditches up 'twixt class and class,
And live together in phalansteries.
What then?—he's mad, our Hamlet!
clap his play,
And bind him.'

'Ah, Lord Howe, this spectacle
Pulls stronger at us than the Dane's.
See there!

The crammed aisles heave and strain
and steam with life.
Dear Heaven, what life!

'Why, yes,—a poet sees;
Which makes him different from a
common man.
I, too, see somewhat, though I cannot
sing;
I should have been a poet, only that
My mother took fright at the ugly world,
And bore me tongue-tied. If you'll
grant me now

That Romney gives us a fine actor-piece
To make us merry on his marriage-morn,
The fable's worse than Hamlet's I'll
concede.

The terrible people, old and poor and
blind,
Their eyes eat out with plague and
poverty
From seeing beautiful and cheerful
sights,
We'll liken to a brutalized King Lear,
Led out,—by no means to clear scores
with wrongs—

His wrongs are so far back, he has forgot
(All's past like youth); but just to
witness here

A simple contract,—he, upon his side,
And Regan with her sister Goneril
And all the dappled courtiers and
court-fools
On their side. Not that any of these
would say

They're sorry, neither. What is done,
is done,
And violence is now turned privilege,
As cream turns cheese, if buried long
enough.

What could such lovely ladies have to do
With the old man there, in those ill-
odorous rags,
Except to keep the wind-side of him?

Lear

Is flat and quiet, as a decent grave;
He does not curse his daughters in the
least:
Bethese his daughters! Lear is thinking of
His porridge chiefly... is it getting cold
At Hampstead? will the ale be served
in pois?

Poor Lear, poor daughters! Bravo,
Romney's play.'

A murmur and a movement drew around,
A naked whisper touched us. Some-
thing wrong.

What's wrong? The black crowd, as
an overstrained
Cord, quivered in vibration, and I saw...
Was that his face I saw?... his...
Romney Leigh's...

Which tossed a sudden horror like
a sponge
Into all eyes,—while himself stood
white upon
The topmost altar-stair and tried to speak,
And failed, and lifted higher above his
head
A letter,... as a man who drowns and
gasps.

'My brothers, bear with me! I am very
weak.
I meant but only good. Perhaps I meant
Too proudly, and God snatched the
circumstance
And changed it therefore. There's no
marriage—none.
She leaves me,—she departs,—she
disappears,
I lose her. Yet I never forced her "aye,"
To have her "no" so cast into my teeth
In manner of an accusation, thus.
My friends, you are dismissed. Go,
eat and drink
According to the programme,—and
farewell!'

He ended. There was silence in the
church.
We heard a baby sucking in its sleep
At the farthest end of the aisle. Then
spoke a man,
'Now, look to it, coves, that all the
beef and drink
Be not filched from us like the other fun,
For beer's spilt easier than a woman's
lost!

This gentry is not honest with the poor;
They bring us up, to trick us.'—'Go it,
Jim,'
A woman screamed back,—'I'm a tender
soul,
I never banged a child at two years old
And drew blood from him, but I sobbed
for it

Next moment,—and I've had a plague
of seven.

I'm tender; I've no stomach even for beef,
Until I know about the girl that's lost,
That's killed, mayhap. I did misdoubt,
at first,

The fine lord meant no good by her or us.
He, maybe, got the upper hand of her
By holding up a wedding-ring, and then...
A choking finger on her throat last night,
And just a clever tale to keep us still,
As she is, poor lost innocent. "Disap-
pear!"

Who ever disappears except a ghost?
And who believes a story of a ghost?
I ask you,—would a girl go off, instead
Of staying to be married? a fine tale!
A wicked man, I say, a wicked man!
For my part I would rather starve on gin
Than make my dianer on his beef and
beer!—

At which a cry rose up—"We'll have
our rights.

We'll have the girl, the girl! Your
ladies there
Are married safely and smoothly every
day,

And *she* shall not drop through into a trap
Because she's poor and of the people:
shame!

We'll have no tricks played off by
gentlefolks;
We'll see her righted."

Through the rage and roar
I heard the broken words which Romney
flung
Among the turbulent masses, from the
ground
He held still with his masterful pale
face,—

As huntsmen throw the ration to the pack,
Who, falling on it headlong, dog on dog
In heaps of fury, rend it, swallow it up
With yelling hound-jaws,—his indignant
words,

His suppliant words, his most pathetic
words,

Whereof I caught the meaning here and
there

By his gesture . . torn in morsels, yelled
across,

And so devoured. From end to end,
the church

Rocked round us like the sea in storm.
and then

Broke up like the earth in earthquake.
Men cried out

'Police'—and women stood and shrieked
for God,

Or dropt and swooned; or, like a herd
of deer

(For whom the black woods suddenly
grow alive.

Unleashing their wild shadows down
the wind

To hunt the creatures into corners, back
And forward), madly fled, or blindly fell.
Trod screeching underneath the feet of
those

Who fled and screeched.

The last sight left to me
Was Romney's terrible calm face above
The tumult!—the last sound was 'Pull
him down!'

Strike—kill him!' Stretching my un-
reasoning arms,
As men in dreams, who vainly interpose
'Twixt gods and their undoing, with
a cry

I struggled to precipitate myself
Head foremost to the rescue of my soul
In that white face, . . till some one
caught me back,
And so the world went out,—I felt no
more.

What followed was told after by Lord
Howe,

Who bore me senseless from the
strangling crowd
In church and street, and then returned
alone

To see the tumult quelled. The men of
law

Had fallen as thunder on a roaring fire,
And made all silent,—while the people's
smoke

Passed eddying slowly from the emptied
aisles.

Here's Marian's letter, which a ragged
child

Brought running, just as Romney at the
porch

Looked out expectant of the bride. He
sent

The letter to me by his friend Lord Howe
Some two hours after, folded in a sheet
On which his well-known hand had
left a word.

Here's Marian's letter.

'Noble friend, dear saint,
Be patient with me. Never think me vile,
Who might to-morrow morning be your
wife
But that I loved you more than such
a name.

Farewell, my Romney. Let me write
it once,—
My Romney.

'Tis so pretty a coupled word,
I have no heart to pluck it with a blot.
We say "my God" sometimes, upon our
knees,
Who is not therefore vexed: so bear
with it..
And me. I know I'm foolish, weak,
and vain;
Yet most of all I'm angry with myself
For losing your last footprint on the stair
That last time of your coming,—
yesterday!

The very first time I lost step of yours
(its sweetness comes the next to what
you speak),
But yesterday sobs took me by the throat
And cut me off from music.

Mister Leigh,
You'll set me down as wrong in many
things.
You've praised me, sir, for truth,—and
now you'll learn
I had not courage to be rightly true.
I once began to tell you how she came,
The woman . . and you stared upon the
floor
In one of your fixed thoughts . . which
put me out
For that day. After, some one spoke
of me,
So wisely, and of you, so tenderly,
Persuading me to silence for your sake...
Well, well! it seems this moment I was
wrong

In keeping back from telling you the truth!
There might be truth betwixt us two, at
least,
If nothing else. And yet 'twas dangerous.
Suppose a real angel came from heaven

To live with men and women! he'd go
mad,

If no considerate hand should tie a blind
Across his piercing eyes. 'Tis thus
with you:

You see us too much in your heavenly
light;

I always thought so, angel,—and indeed
There's danger that you beat yourself
to death

Against the edges of this alien world,
In some divine and fluttering pity.

'Yes,
It would be dreadful for a friend of yours,
To see all England thrust you out of doors
And mock you from the windows.

You might say,
Or think (that's worse), "There's some
one in the house
I miss and love still." Dreadful!

'Very kind,
I pray you mark, was Lady Waldemar.
She came to see me nine times, rather
ten—

So beautiful, she hurts one like the day
Let suddenly on sick eyes.

'Most kind of all,
Your cousin!—ah, most like you! Ere
you came

She kissed me mouth to mouth: I felt
her soul

Dip through her serious lips in holy fire.
God help me, but it made me arrogant:
I almost told her that you would not lose
By taking me to wife: though ever since
I've pondered much a certain thing she
asked . .

"He loves you, Marian?" . . in a sort of
mild

Derisive sadness . . as a mother asks
Her babe, "You'll touch that star, you
think?"

'Farewell:
I know I never touched it.

'This is worst:
Babes grow and lose the hope of things
above;

A silver threepence sets them leaping
high—

But no more stars! mark that.

'I've writ all night
Yet told you nothing. God, if I could die,
And let this letter break off innocent

Just here! But no—for your sake . . .
 'Here's the last :
 I never could be happy as your wife,
 I never could be harmless as your friend,
 I never will look more into your face
 Till God says, "Look!" I charge you,
 seek me not,
 Nor vex yourself with lamentable
 thoughts
 That peradventure I have come to grief ;
 Be sure I'm well, I'm merry, I'm at ease,
 But such a long way, long way, long
 way off,
 I think you'll find me sooner in my grave,
 And that's my choice, observe. For
 what remains,
 An over-generous friend will care for me
 And keep me happy . . . happier . . .
 'There's a blot!
 This ink runs thick . . . we light girls
 lightly weep . . .
 And keep me happier . . . was the thing
 to say,
 Than as your wife I could be.—O, mystar,
 My saint, my soul ! for surely you're
 my soul,
 Through whom God touched me ! I am
 not so lost
 I cannot thank you for the good you did,
 The tears you stopped, which fell down
 bitterly,
 Like these—the times you made me
 weep for joy
 At hoping I should learn to write your
 notes
 And save the tiring of your eyes, atnight ;
 And most for that sweet thrice you
 kissed my lips
 Saying, "Dear Marian,"
 'Twould be hard to read,
 This letter, for a reader half as learn'd ;
 But you'll be sure to master it in spite
 Of ups and downs. My hand shakes,
 I am blind ;
 I'm poor at writing at the best,—and yet
 I tried to make my gs the way you
 showed.
 Farewell. Christ love you.—Say "poor
 Marian" now.'

Poor Marian!—wanton Marian!—was it
 so,
 O so! For days, her touching, foolish lines.

We mused on with conjectural fantasy,
 As if some riddle of a summer-cloud
 On which one tries unlike similitudes
 Of now a spotted Hydra-skin cast off,
 And now a screen of carven ivory
 That shuts the heavens' conventional
 secrets up
 From mortals over-bold. We sought
 the sense :
 She loved him so perhaps (such words
 mean love),
 That, worked on by some shrewd per-
 fidious tongue
 (And then I thought of Lady Waldemar),
 She left him, not to hurt him ; or perhaps
 She loved one in her class,—or did not
 love,
 But mused upon her wild bad tramping life
 Until the free blood fluttered at her heart,
 And black bread eaten by the roadside
 hedge
 Seemed sweeter than being put to
 Romney's school
 Of philanthropical self-sacrifice
 Irrevocably.—Girls are girls, beside,
 Thought I, and like a wedding by one rule.
 You seldom catch these birds except
 with chaff :
 They feel it almost an immoral thing
 To go out and be married in broad day,
 Unless some winning special flattery
 should
 Excuse them to themselves for 't, . . .
 'No one parts
 Her hair with such a silver line as you,
 One moonbeam from the forehead to the
 crown !'
 Or else.. 'You bite your lip in such a way,
 It spoils me for the smiling of the rest,'
 And soon. Then a worthless gaud or two
 To keep for love,—a ribbon for the neck,
 Or some glass pin,—they have their
 weight with girls.
 And Romney sought her many days
 and weeks :
 He sifted all the refuse of the town,
 Explored the trains, inquired among the
 ships,
 And felt the country through from end
 to end ;
 No Marian!—Though I hinted what I
 knew,—

A friend of his had reasons of her own
For throwing back the match—he would
not hear :

The lady had been ailing ever since,
The shock had harmed her. Something
in his tone

Repressed me ; something in me shamed
my doubt

To a sigh repressed too. He went on
to say

That, putting questions where his Marian
lodged,

He found she had received for visitors,
Besides himself and Lady Waldemar
And, that once, me—a dubious woman
dressed

Beyond us both: the rings upon her
hands

Had dazed the children when she threw
them pence ;

‘She wore her bonnet as the queen
might hers,

To show the crown,’ they said,—‘a
scarlet crown

Of roses that had never been in bud.’

When Romney told me that,—for now
and then

He came to tell me how the search
advanced,

His voice dropped: I bent forward for
the rest:

The woman had been with her, it
appeared,

At first from week to week, then day
by day,

And last, ‘twas sure . . .

I looked upon the ground
To escape the anguish of his eyes, and
asked

As low as when you speak to mourners
new

Of those they cannot bear yet to call dead,
‘If Marian had as much as named to him

A certain Rose, an early friend of hers,
A ruined creature.’

‘Never.’—Starting up
He strode from side to side about the
room,

Most like some imprisoned lion sprung
awake,

Who has felt the desert sting him
through his dreams.

‘What was I to her, that she should tell
me aught?’

A friend! was I a friend? I see all clear.
Such devils would pull angels out of
heaven,

Provided they could reach them; ‘tis
their pride;

And that’s the odds ’twixt soul and
body-plague!

The veriest slave who drops in Cairo’s
street,

Cries, “Stand off from me,” to the
passengers;

While these blotched souls are eager to
infect,

And blow their bad breath in a sister’s
face

As if they got some ease by it.’

I broke through.

‘Some natures catch no plagues. I’ve
read of babes

Found whole and sleeping by the spotted
breast

Of one a full day dead. I hold it true,
As I’m a woman and know womanhood,

That Marian Erle, however lured from
place,

Deceived in way, keeps pure in aim and
heart

As snow that’s drifted from the garden-
bank

To the open road.’

‘Twas hard to hear him laugh.
‘The figure’s happy. Well—a dozen

carts

And trampers will secure you presently:
A fine white snow-drift. Leave it there,

your snow!

‘Twill pass for soot ere sunset. Pure
in aim!

She’s pure in aim, I grant you,—like
myself,

Who thought to take the world upon
my back

To carry it o’er a chasm of social ill,
And end by letting slip through impotence

A single soul, a child’s weight in a soul;
Straight down the pit of hell! yes, I am

she

Have reason to be proud of our pure aims.’

Then softly, as the last repenting drops
Of a thunder-shower, he added, ‘The
poor child,

Poor Marian! 'twas a luckless day for her,
When first she chanced on my philanthropy.'

He drew a chair beside me, and sate down;
And I, instinctively, as women use
Before a sweet friend's grief,—when, in his ear,
They hum the tune of comfort though themselves
Most ignorant of the special words of such,
And quiet so and fortify his brain
And give it time and strength for feeling out
To reach the availing sense beyond that sound,—
Went murmuring to him what, if written here,
Would seem not much, yet fetched him better help
Than peradventure if it had been more.
I've known the pregnant thinkers of our time,
And stood by breathless, hanging on their lips,
When some chromatic sequence of fine thought
In learned modulation phrased itself
To an unconjectured harmony of truth :
And yet I've been more moved, more raised, I say,
By a simple word . . . a broken easy thing
A three-years infant might at need repeat,
A look, a sigh, a touch upon the palm,
Which meant less than 'I love you,' than by all
The full-voiced rhetoric of those master-mouths.

'Ah, dear Aurora,' he began at last,
His pale lips fumbling for a sort of smile,
'Your printer's devils have not spoilt your heart:
That's well. And who knows but, long years ago
When you and I talked, you were somewhat right
In being so peevish with me ! You, at least,

Have ruined no one through your dreams. Instead,
You've helped the facile youth to live youth's day

With innocent distraction, still perhaps suggestive of things better than your rimes.

The little shepherd-maiden, eight years old,
I've seen upon the mountains of Vaucluse,
Asleep i' the sun, her head upon her knees,
The flock scattered,—is more laudable than any sheep-dog trained imperfectly,
Who bites the kid through too much zeal.' 'I look

As if I had slept, then !'

He was touched at once By something in my face. Indeed 'twas sure

That he and I,—despite a year or two Of younger life on my side, and on his The heaping of the years' work on the days,

The three-hour speeches from the member's seat,

The hot committees in and out of doors, The pamphlets, 'Arguments,' 'Collective Views,'

Tossed out as straw before sick houses, just

To show one's sick and so be trod to dirt And no more use,—through this world's underground

The burrowing, groping effort, whence the arm

And heart come torn,—'twas sure that he and I

Were, after all, unequally fatigued ; That he, in his developed manhood, stood A little sunburnt by the glare of life, While I . . . it seemed no sun had shone on me,

So many seasons I had missed my Springs.

My cheeks had pined and perished from their orbs,

And all the youth-blood in them had grown white

As dew on autumn cyclamens : alone My eyes and forehead answered for my face.

He said, 'Aurora, you are changed—
are ill!'

'Not so, my cousin,—only not asleep,'
I answered, smiling gently. 'Let it be.
You scarcely found the poet of *Vaucluse*
As drowsy as the shepherds. What is art
But life upon the larger scale, the higher,
When, graduating up in a spiral line
Of still expanding and ascending gyres,
It pushes toward the intense significance
Of all things, hungry for the Infinite!
Art's life,—and where we live, we
suffer and toil.'

He seemed to sift me with his painful
eyes.

'You take it gravely, cousin; you refuse
Your dreamland's right of common, and
green rest.

You break the mythic turf where danced
the nymphs,
With crooked ploughs of actual life,—
let in

The axes to the legendary woods,
To pay the poll-tax. You are fallen
indeed

On evil days, you poets, if yourselves
Can praise that art of yours no otherwise;
And, if you cannot, . . . better take a trade
And be of use: 'twere cheaper for your
youth.'

'Of use!' I softly echoed, 'there's the
point

We sweep about for ever in argument,
Like swallows which the exasperate,
dying year

Sets spinning in black circles, round
and round,

Preparing for far flights o'er unknown seas.
And we, where tend we?'

'Where?' he said, and sighed.
'The whole creation, from the hour we
are born,

Perplexes us with questions. Not a
stone

But cries behind us, every weary step,
'Where, where?' I leave stones to reply
to stones.

Enough for me and for my fleshly heart
To hearken the invocations of my kind,
When men catch hold upon my
shuddering nerves

And shriek, "What help? what hope?
what bread i' the house.
What fire i' the frost?" There must
be some response,

Though mine fail utterly. This social
Sphinx

Who sits between the sepulchres and
stews,
Makes mock and mow against the crystal
heavens,
And bullies God,—exacts a word at least
From each man standing on the side of
God,

However paying a sphinx-price for it.
We pay it also if we hold our peace,
In pangs and pity. Let me speak and die.
Alas, you'll say I speak and kill instead.'

I pressed in there. 'The best men,
doing their best,
Know peradventure least of what they do:
Men usefulness i' the world are simply
used;

The nail that holds the wood, must
pierce it first,
And He alone who yields the hammer
sees

The work advanced by the earliest blow.
Take heart!

'Ah, if I could have taken yours!' he said,
'But that's past now.' Then rising,—
'I will take

At least your kindness and encourage-
ment.

I thank you. Dear, be happy. Sing
your songs,

If that's your way! but sometimes
slumber too,

Nor tire too much with following, out
of breath,
The rimes upon your mountains of
Delight.

Reflect, if Art be in truth the higher life,
You need the lower life to stand upon
In order to reach up unto that higher;
And none can stand a-tilt in the place
He cannot stand in with two stable feet.
Remember then!—for Art's sake, hold
your life.'

We parted so. I held him in respect.
I comprehended what he was in heart
And sacrificial greatness. Aye, but he

Supposed me a thing too small, to deign
to know :—
He blew me, plainly, from the crucible
As some intruding, interrupting fly,
Not worth the pains of his analysis
Absorbed on nobler subjects. Hurt a fly :
He would not for the world : he's pitiful
To flies even. ‘Sing,’ says he, ‘and
tease me still,
If that’s your way, poor insect.’ That’s
your way !

FIFTH BOOK

AURORA LEIGH. be humble. Shall I hope
To speak my poems in mysterious tune
With man and nature !—with the lava-
lymph
That trickles from successive galaxies
Still drop by drop adown the finger of God
In still new worlds !—with summer-
days in this
That scarce dare breathe they are so
beautiful ?
With spring’s delicious trouble in the
ground,
Tormented by the quickened blood of
roots,
And softly pricked by golden crocus-
sheaves
In token of the harvest-time of flowers ?
With winters and with autumns,—and
beyond
With the human heart’s large seasons,
when it hopes
And fears, joys, grieves, and loves ?—
with all that strain
Of sexual passion, which devours the flesh
In a sacrament of souls ! with mother’s
breasts
Which, round the new-made creatures
hanging there,
Throb luminous and harmonious like
pure spheres ?—
With multitudinous life, and finally
With the great escapings of ecstatic
souls,
Who, in a rush of too long imprisoned flame,
Their radiant faces upward, burn away
This dark of the body, issuing on a world
Beyond our mortal ?—can I speak my
verse

So plainly in tune to these things and
the rest,
That men shall feel it catch them on the
quick,
As having the same warrant over them
To hold and move them if they will or
no,
Alike imperious as the primal rhythm
Of that theurgic nature !—I must fail,
Who fail at the beginning to hold and
move
One man,—and he my cousin, and he
my friend,
And he born tender, made intelligent,
Inclined to ponder the precipitous sides
Of difficult questions ; yet, obtuse to *me*,
Of *me*, incurious ! likes me very well,
And wishes me a paradise of good,
Good looks, good means, and good
digestion,—aye,
But otherwise evades me, puts me off
With kindness, with a tolerant gentle-
ness,—
Too light a book for a grave man’s
reading ! Go,
Aurora Leigh : be humble.

There it is,
We women are too apt to look to one,
Which proves a certain impotence in
art,
We strain our natures at doing some-
thing great,
Far less because it’s something great
to do,
Than haply that we, so, commend
ourselves
As being not small, and more appreci-
able
To some one friend. We must have
mediators
Betwixt our highest conscience and the
judge ;
Some sweet saint’s blood must quicken
in our palms,
Or all the life in heaven seems slow and
cold :
Good only being perceived as the end
of good,
And God alone pleased,—that’s too
poor, we think,
And not enough for us by any means.
Aye—Romney, I remember, told me
once

We miss the abstract when we comprehend.
We miss it most when we aspire,—and fail.

Yet, so, I will not.—This vile woman's way
Of trailing garments, shall not trip me up :
I'll have no traffic with the personal thought
In art's pure temple. Must I work in vain,
Without the approbation of a man ?
It cannot be ; it shall not. Fame itself,
That approbation of the general race,
Presents a poor end (though the arrow speed),
Shot straight with vigorous finger to the white),
And the highest fame was never reached except
By what was aimed above it. Art for art,
And good for God Himself, the essential Good !
We'll keep our aims sublime, our eyes erect,
Although our woman-hands should shake and fail ;
And if we fail . . . But must we ?—

Shall I fail ?
The Greeks said grandly in their tragic phrase,
'Let no one be called happy till his death.' -
To which I add,—Let no one till his death
Be called unhappy. Measure not the work
Until the day 's out and the labour done,
Then bring your gauges. If the day's work's scant,
Why, call it scant; affect no compromise ;
And, in that we have nobly striven at least,
Deal with us nobly, women though we be,
And honour us with truth if not with praise.

My ballads prospered ; but the ballad's race
Is rapid for a poet who bears weights
Of thought and golden image. He can stand
Like Atlas, in the sonnet,—and support

His own heavens pregnant with dynastic stars ;
But then he must stand still, nor take a step.

In that descriptive poem called 'The Hills,'
The prospects were too far and indistinct.
'Tis true my critics said, 'A fine view, that !'
The public scarcely cared to climb my book
For even the finest, and the public's right ;
A tree's mere firewood, unless humanized,—
Which well the Greeks knew when they stirred its bark
With close-pressed bosoms of subsiding nymphs,
And made the forest-rivers garrulous
With babble of gods. For us, we are called to mark
A still more intimate humanity
In this inferior nature, or ourselves
Must fall like dead leaves trodden underfoot
By veritable artists. Earth (shut up
By Adam, like a fakir in a box
Left too long buried) remained stiff and dry,
A mere dumb corpse, till Christ the Lord came down,
Unlocked the doors, forced open the blank eyes,
And used his kingly chrism to straighten out
The leathery tongue turned back into the throat ;
Since when, she lives, remembers, palpitates
In every limb, aspires in every breath,
Embraces infinite relations. Now
We want no half-gods, Panomphaean Joves,
Fauns, Naiads, Tritons, Oreads and the rest,
To take possession of a senseless world
To unnatural vampire-uses. See the earth,
The body of our body, the green earth,
Indubitably human like this flesh

And these articulated veins through
which
Our heart drives blood. There's not a
flower of spring
That dies ere June, but vaunts itself
allied
By issue and symbol, by significance
And correspondence, to that spirit-world
Outside the limits of our space and time,
Whereto we are bound. Let poets give
it voice
With human meanings,—else they miss
the thought,
And henceforth step down lower, stand
confessed
Instructed poorly for interpreters,
Thrown out by an easy cowslip in the
text.

Even so my pastoral failed: it was a book
Of surface-pictures—pretty, cold, and
false
With literal transcript,—the worse done,
I think,
For being not ill-done: let me set my
mark
Against such doings, and do otherwise.
This strikes me.—If the public whom we
know
Could catch me at such admissions, I
should pass
For being right modest. Yet how proud
we are,
In daring to look down upon ourselves!

The critics say that epics have died out
With Agamemnon and the goat-nursed
gods;
I'll not believe it. I could never deem
As Payne Knight did (the mythic
mountaineer
Who travelled higher than he was born
to live,
And showed sometimes the goitre in his
throat
Discoursing of an image seen through
fog),
That Homer's heroes measured twelve
feet high.
They were but men:—his Helen's hair
turned grey
Like any plain Miss Smith's who wears
a front;

And Hector's infant whimpered at a
plume
As yours last Friday at a turkey-cock.
All actual heroes are essential men,
And all men possible heroes: every age,
Heroic in proportions, double-faced,
Looks backward and before, expects a
morn
And claims an epos.

Aye, but every age
Appears to souls who live in 't (ask
Carlyle)
Most unheroic. Ours, for instance, ours:
The thinkers scout it, and the poets
abound
Who scorn to touch it with a finger-tip:
A pewter age,—mixed metal, silver-
washed;
An age of scum, spooned off the richer
past,
An age of patches for old gaberdines,
An age of mere transition, meaning
nought
Except that what succeeds must shame
it quite
If God please. That's wrong thinking,
to my mind,
And wrong thoughts make poor poems.
Every age,
Through being beheld too close, is ill-
discerned
By those who have not lived past it.
We'll suppose
Mount Athos carved, as Alexander
schemed,

To some colossal statue of a man.
The peasants, gathering brushwood in
his ear,
Had guessed as little as the browsing
goats
Of form or feature of humanity
Up there,—in fact, had travelled five
miles off
Or ere the giant image broke on them,
Full human profile, nose and chin distinct,
Mouth, muttering rhythms of silence up
the sky
And fedate evening with the blood of suns;
Grand torso,—hand, that flung perpetu-
ally
The largesse of a silver river down
To all the country pastures. 'Tis even thus
With times we live in,—evermore too great

To be apprehended near.

But poets should
Exert a double vision; should have
eyes
To see near things as comprehensively
As if afar they took their point of sight,
And distant things as intimately deep
As if they touched them. Let us strive
for this.

I do distrust the poet who discerns
No character or glory in his times,
And trundles back his soul five hundred
years,

Past moat and drawbridge, into a castle-
court,

To sing—oh, not of lizard or of toad
Alive i' the ditch there,—'twere excus-
able,

But of some black chief, half knight, half
sheep-lifter,

Some beauteous dame, half chattel and
half queen,

As dead as must be, for the greater part;
The poems made on their chivalric bones;
And that's no wonder: death inherits
death.

Nay, if there's room for poets in this
world

A little overgrown (I think there is),
Their sole work is to represent the age,
Their age, not Charlemagne's,—this live,
throbbing age,

That brawls, cheats, maddens, calculates,
aspires,

And spends more passion, more heroic
heat,

Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-
rooms,

Than Roland with his knights at Ronces-
valles.

To flinch from modern varnish, coat or
flounce,

Cry out for togas and the picturesque,
Is it al,—foolish too. King Arthur's self

Was commonplace to Lady Guenever;
And Camelot to minstrels seemed as flat

As Fleet Street to our poets.

Never flinch,

But still, unscrupulously epic, catch
Upon the burning lava of a song

The full-veined, heaving, double-breasted
Age:

That, when the next shall come, the men
of that
May touch the impress with reverent
hand, and say
'Behold,—behold the paps we all have
sucked!

This bosom seems to beat still, or at least
It sets ours beating: this is living art,
Which thus presents and thus records
true life.'

What form is best for poems? Let me
think

Of forms less, and the external. Trust
the spirit,

As sovran nature does, to make the form;
For otherwise we only imprison spirit
And not embody. Inward evermore
To outward,—so in life, and so in art
Which still is life.

Five acts to make a play.
And why not fifteen? why not ten? or
seven?

What matter for the number of the leaves,
Supposing the tree lives and grows? exact
The literal unities of time and place,
When 'tis the essence of passion to
ignore

Both time and place? Absurd. Keep
up the fire,
And leave the generous flames to shape
themselves.

'Tis true the stage requires obsequious-
ness

To this or that convention; 'exit' here
And 'enter' there; the points for clap-
ping, fixed,

Like Jacob's white-peeled rods before
the rams,

And all the close-curled imagery clipped
In manner of their fleece at shearing-time.
Forget to prick the galleries to the heart
Precisely at the fourth act,—culminate
Our five pyramidal acts with one act
more,—

We're lost so: Shakespeare's ghost
could scarcely plead

Against our just damnation. Stand aside;
We'll muse for comfort that, last century,
On this same tragic stage on which we
have failed,

A wigless Hamlet would have failed the
same.

And whosoever writes good poetry,
Looks just to art. He does not write
for you

Or me,—for London or for Edinburgh ;
He will not suffer the best critic known
To step into his sunshine of free thought
And self-absorbed conception and exact
An inch-long swerving of the holy lines.
If virtue done for popularity
Defiles like vice, can art, for praise or hire,
Still keep its splendour and remain pure
art ?

Eschew such serfdom. What the poet
writes,
He writes : mankind accepts it if it suits,
And that's success : if not, the poem's
passed
From hand to hand, and yet from hand
to hand,
Until the unborn snatch it, crying out
In pity on their fathers' being so dull,
And that's success too.

I will write no plays ;
Because the drama, less sublime in this,
Makes lower appeals, submits more
menially,
Adopts the standard of the public taste
To chalk its height on, wears a dog-
chain round
Its regal neck, and learns to carry and
fetch
The fashions of the day to please the day,
Fawns close on pit and boxes, who clap
hands
Commanding chiefly its docility
And humour in stage-tricks,—or else
indeed .
Gets hissed at, howled at, stamped at
like a dog,
Or worse, we'll say. For dogs, unjustly
kicked,
Yell, bite at need; but if your dramatist
(Being wronged by some five hundred
nobodies
Because their grosser brains most natur-
ally

Misjudge the fineness of his subtle wit)
Shows teeth an almond's breadth, pro-
tests the length
Of a modest phrase,—‘ My gentle
countrymen,
‘ There's something in it haply of your
fault,’—

Why then, besides five hundred nobodies,
He'll have five thousand and five thou-
sand more

Against him,—the whole public,—all
the hoofs
Of King Saul's father's asses, in full
drove,
And obviously deserve it. He appealed
To these,—and why say more if they
condemn,
Than if they praise him !—Weep, my
Aeschylus,

But low and far, upon Sicilian shores !
For since 'twas Athens (so I read the
myth)

Whogave commission to that fatal weight
The tortoise, cold and hard, to drop on
thee
And crush thee,—better cover thy bald
head ;
She'll hear the softest hum of Hyblan bee
Before thy loudest protestation !

Then

The risk's still worse upon the modern
stage :

I could not, for so little, accept success,
Nor would I risk so much, in ease and
calm,
For manifester gains : let those who
prize,
Pursue them : I stand off. And yet,
forbid,
That any irreverent fancy or conceit
Should litter in the Drama's throne-room
where

The rulers of our art, in whose full veins
Dynastic glories mingle, sit in strength
And do their kingly work,—conceive,
command,

And, from the imagination's crucial heat,
Catch up their men and women all aflame
For action, all alive and forced to prove
Their life by living out heart, brain, and
nerve,

Until mankind makes witness, ‘ These
be men
As we are,’ and vouchsafes the greeting
due

To Imogen and Juliet—sweetest kin
On art's side.

‘ Tis that, honouring to its worth
The drama, I would fear to keep it
down

To the level of the footlights. Dies no more
 The sacrificial goat, for Bacchus slain,
 His filmed eyes fluttered by the whirling white
 Of choral vestures,—troubled in his blood,
 While tragic voices that clanged keen as swords,
 Leapt high together with the altar-flame
 And made the blue air wink. The waxen mask,
 Which set the grand still front of Themis' son
 Upon the puckered visage of a player,—
 The buskin, which he rose upon and moved,
 As some tall ship first conscious of the wind
 Sweeps slowly past the piers,—the mouthpiece, where
 The mere man's voice with all its breaths and breaks
 Went sheathed in brass, and clashed on even heights
 Its phraséd thunders,—these things are no more,
 Which once were. And concluding, which is clear,
 The growing drama has outgrown such toys
 Of simulated stature, face, and speech,
 It also peradventure may outgrow
 The simulation of the painted scene,
 Boards, actors, prompters, gaslight, and costume,
 And take for a worthier stage the soul itself,
 Its shifting fancies and celestial lights,
 With all its grand orchestral silences
 To keep the pauses of its rhythmic sounds.

Alas, I still see something to be done,
 And what I do, falls short of what I see,
 Though I waste myself on doing. Long green days,
 Worn bare of grass and sunshine,— long calm nights,
 From which the silken sleeps were fretted out,
 Be witness for me, with no amateur's irreverent haste and busy idleness

I set myself to art! What then? what's done?
 What's done, at last?
 Behold, at last, a book.
 If life-blood's necessary, which it is
 (By that blue vein athrob on Mahomet's brow,
 Each prophet-poet's book must show man's blood !),—
 If life-blood's fertilizing, I wrung mine On every leaf of this,—unless the drops Slid heavily on one side and left it dry. That chances often: many a fervid man Writes books as cold and flat as graveyard stones
 From which the lichen's scraped; and if Saint Preux Had written his own letters, as he might, We had never wept to think of the little mole
 'Neath Julie's drooping eyelid. Passion is But something suffered, after all.
 While Art Sets action on the top of suffering:
 The artist's part is both to be and do, Transfixing with a special, central power The flat experience of the common man, And turning outward, with a sudden wrench,
 Half agony, half ecstasy, the thing . He feels the inmost,—never felt the less Because he sings it. Does a torch less burn
 For burning next reflectors of blue steel, That he should be the colder for his place 'Twixt two incessant fires,—his personal life's
 And that intense refraction which burns back Perpetually against him from the round Of crystal conscience he was born into If artist-born? O sorrowful great gift Conferred on poets, of a twofold life, When one life has been found enough for pain!
 We, staggering 'neath our burden as mere men, Being called to stand up straight as demi-gods, Support the intolerable strain and stress Of the universal, and send clearly up With voices broken by the human sob, Our poems to find rimes among the stars!

But soft,—a ‘poet’ is a word soon said,
A book’s a thing soon written. Nay,
indeed,
The more the poet shall be questionable,
The more unquestionably comes his
book.
And this of mine—well, granting to
myself
Some passion in it,—furrowing up the
flats,
Mere passion will not prove a volume
worth
Its gall and rags even. Bubbles round
a keel
Mean nought, excepting that the vessel
moves.
There’s more than passion goes to make
a man
Or book, which is a man too.

I am sad.
I wonder if Pygmalion had these doubts
And, feeling the hard marble first relent,
Grow supple to the straining of his arms,
And tingle through its cold to his
burning lip,
Supposed his senses mocked, supposed
the toil
Of stretching past the known and seen
to reach
The archetypal Beauty out of sight,
Had made his heart beat fast enough
for two,
And with his own life dazed and blinded
him!
Not so; Pygmalion loved,—and whoso
loves
Believes the impossible.

But I am sad:
I cannot thoroughly love a work of mine,
Since none seems worthy of my thought
and hope
More highly mated. He has shot them
down,
My Phoebus Apollo, soul within my soul,
Who judges, by the attempted, what’s
attained,
And with the silver arrow from his height
Has struck down all my works before
my face
While I said nothing. Is there ought
to say?
I called the artist but a greatened man.
He may be childless also, like a man.

I laboured on alone. The wind and
dust
And sun of the world beat blistering
in my face;
And hope, now for me, now against me,
dragged
My spirits onward, as some fallen balloon,
Which, whether caught by blossoming
tree or bare,
Is torn alike. I sometimes touched my
aim,
Or seemed,—and generous souls cried
out, ‘Be strong,
Take courage; now you’re on our
level,—now!
The next step saves you!’ I was
flushed with praise,
But, pausing just a moment to draw
breath,
I could not choose but murmur to myself
‘Is this all? all that’s done? and all
that’s gained?
If this then be success, ‘tis dismaller
Than any failure.’
O my God, my God,
O supreme Artist, who as sole return
For all the cosmic wonder of Thy work,
Demandest of us just a word... a name,
‘My Father!’ Thou hast knowledge,
only Thou,
How dreary ‘tis for women to sit still
On winter nights by solitary fires
And hear the nations praising them
far off,
Too far! aye, praising our quick sense
of love,
Our very heart of passionate womanhood,
Which could not beat so in the verse
without
Being present also in the unkissed lips
And eyes undried because there’s
none to ask
The reason they grew moist.
To sit alone
And think for comfort how, that very
night,
Affianced lovers, leaning face to face
With sweet half-listenings for each
other’s breath,
Are reading haply from a page of ours,
To pause with a thrill (as if their cheeks
had touched)
When such a stanza, level to their mood,

Seems floating their own thought out—
 ‘So I feel
 For thee;—‘And I, for thee: this poet
 knows
 What everlasting love is! ’—how, that
 night,
 Some father, issuing from the misty roads
 Upon the luminous round of lamp and
 hearth
 And happy children, having caught up
 first
 The youngest there until it shrink and
 shriek
 To feel the cold chin prick its dimples
 through
 With winter from the hills, may throw
 i’ the lap
 Of the eldest (who has learnt to drop
 her lids
 To hide some sweetness newer than
 last year’s),
 Our book and cry, . . . ‘Ah you, you
 care for rimes;
 So here be rimes to pore on under trees,
 When April comes to let you! I’ve
 been told
 They are not idle as so many are,
 But set hearts beating pure as well as fast.
 ‘Tis yours, the book; I’ll write your
 name in it,
 That so you may not lose, however lost
 In poet’s lore and charming reverie,
 The thought of how your father thought
 of you
 In riding from the town.’

To have our books
 Appraised by love, associated with love,
 While we sit loveless! is it hard, you
 think?
 At least ‘tis mournful. Fame, indeed,
 ‘twas said,
 Means simply love. It was a man said
 that:
 And then, there’s love and love: the
 love of all
 (To risk in turn a woman’s paradox),
 Is but a small thing to the love of one.
 You bid a hungry child be satisfied
 With a heritage of many cornfields: nay,
 He says he’s hungry,—he would rather
 have
 That little barley-cake you keep from
 him

While reckoning up his harvests. So
 with us
 (Here, Romney, too, we fail to
 generalize!);
 We’re hungry. Hungry! but it’s pitiful
 To wail like unweaned babes and suck
 our thumbs
 Because we’re hungry. Who, in all
 this world
 (Wherein we are haply set to pray and
 fast,
 And learn what good is by its opposite),
 Has never hungered? Woe to him who
 has found
 The meal enough! if Ugolino’s full,
 His teeth have crunched some foul
 unnatural thing:
 For here satiety proves penury
 More utterly irremediable. And since
 We needs must hunger,—better, for
 man’s love,
 Than God’s truth! better, for companions
 sweet,
 Than great convictions! let us bear our
 weights,
 Preferring dreary hearths to desert souls.
 Well, well! they say we’re envious,
 we who rime;
 But I, because I am a woman perhaps
 And so rime ill, am ill at envying.
 I never envied Graham his breadth of
 style,
 Which gives you, with a random smutch
 or two,
 (Near-sighted critics analyse to smutch)
 Such delicate perspectives of full life:
 Nor Belmore, for the unity of aim
 To which he cuts his cedar poems, fine
 As sketchers do their pencils: nor
 Mark Gage,
 For that caressing colour and trancing
 tone
 Whereby you’re swept away and
 melted in
 The sensual element, which with a back
 wave
 Restores you to the level of pure souls
 And leaves you with Plotinus. None
 of these,
 For native gifts or popular applause,
 I’ve envied; but for this,—that when
 by chance

Says some one,—‘There goes Belmore
a great man !
He leaves clean work behind him, and
requires
No sweeper-up of the chips,’ . . . a girl
I know,
Who answers nothing, save with her
brown eyes,
Smiles unaware as if a guardian saint
Smiled in her :—for this, too,—that
Gage comes home
And lays his last book’s prodigal review
Upon his mother’s knee, where, years
ago,
He laid his childish spelling-book and
learned
To chirp and peck the letters from her
mouth,
As young birds must. ‘Well done,’
she murmured then;
She will not say it now more wonder-
ingly :
And yet the last ‘Well done’ will touch
him more,
As catching up to-day and yesterday
In a perfect chord of love : and so, Mark
Gage,
I envy you your mother!—and you,
Graham,
Because you have a wife who loves you
so,
She half forgets, at moments, to be proud
Of being Graham’s wife, until a friend
observes,
‘The boy here, has his father’s massive
brow,
Done small in wax . . . if we push back
the curls.’

Who loves me? Dearest father,—mother
sweet,—
I speak the names out sometimes by
myself,
And make the silence shiver. They
sound strange,
As Hindostanee to an Ind-born man
Accustomed many years to English
speech ;
Or lovely poet-words grown obsolete,
Which will not leave off singing. Up
in heaven
I have my father,—with my mother’s
face

Beside him in a blotch of heavenly light;
No more for earth’s familiar, household
use,
No more. The best verse written by
this hand,
Can never reach them where they sit,
to seem
Well-done to *them*. Death quite un-
fells us,
Sets dreadful odds betwixt the live and
dead,
And makes us part as those at Babel did
Through sudden ignorance of a common
tongue.
A living Caesar would not dare to play
At bowls with such as my dead father is.
And yet this may be less so than ap-
pears,
This change and separation. Sparrows
five
For just two farthings, and God cares
for each.
If God is not too great for little cares,
Is any creature, because gone to God?
I’ve seen some men, veracious, nowise
mad,
Who have thought or dreamed, declared
and testified,
They heard the Dead a-ticking like
a clock
Which strikes the hours of the eternities,
Beside them, with their natural ears,—
and known
That human spirits feel the human way
And hate the unreasoning awe which
waves them off
From possible communion. It may be.
At least, earth separates as well as
heaven.
For instance, I have not seen Romney
Leigh
Full eighteen months . . . add six, you
get two years.
They say he’s very busy with good
works,—
Has parted Leigh Hall into almshouses.
He made one day an almshouse of his
heart,
Which ever since is loose upon the latch
For those who pull the string.—I never
did.

It always makes me sad to go abroad,
And now I'm sadder that I went to-night
Among the lights and talkers at Lord
Howe's.

His wife is gracious, with her glossy
braids,
And even voice, and gorgeous eyeballs,
calm
As her other jewels. If she's somewhat
cold,

Who wonders, when her blood has
stood so long
In the ducal reservoir she calls her line
By no means arrogantly? she's not
proud;

Not prouder than the swan is of the lake
He has always swum in;—tis her
element;
And so she takes it with a natural
grace,

Ignoring tadpoles. She just knows,
perhaps,
There are who travel without outriders,
Which isn't her fault. Ah, to watch her
face.

When good Lord Howe expounds his
theories

Of social justice and equality!

'Tis curious, what a tender, tolerant bend
Her neck takes: for she loves him,
likes his talk,

'Such clever talk—that dear, odd
Algernon!'

She listens on, exactly as if he talked
Some Scandinavian myth of Lemures,
Too pretty to dispute, and too absurd.

She's gracious to me as her husband's
friend,

And would be gracious, were I not
a Leigh,

Being used to smile just so, without her
eyes,

On Joseph Strangways, the Leeds
mesmerist,

And Delia Dobbs, the lecturer from
'the States'

Upon the 'Woman's question.' Then,
for him,

I like him; he's my friend. And all
the rooms

Were full of crinkling silks that swept
about

The fine dust of most subtle courtesies.
What then?—why then, we come home
to be sad.

How lovely, One I love not looked to-
night!

She's very pretty, Lady Waldemar.
Her maid must use both hands to twist
that coil

Of tresses, then be careful lest the rich
Bronze rounds should slip :—she missed,
though, a grey hair,

A single one,—I saw it; otherwise
The woman looked immortal. How
they told,

Those alabaster shoulders and bare
breasts,

On which the pearls, drowned out of
sight in milk,

Were lost, excepting for the ruby-clasp!
They split the amaranth velvet-bodice
down

To the waist or nearly, with the
audacious press

Of full-breathed beauty. If the heart
within

Were half as white!—but, if it were,
perhaps

The breast were closer covered and the
sight

Less aspectable, by half, too.

I heard
The young man with the German
student's look—

A sharp face, like a knife in a cleft stick,
Which shot up straight against the
parting line

So equally dividing the long hair,—
Say softly to his neighbour (thirty-five
And mediaeval), 'Look that way, Sir
Blaise.'

She's Lady Waldemar—to the left,—
in red—

Whom Romney Leigh, our ablest man
just now,

Is soon about to marry.'

Then replied
Sir Blaise Delorme, with quiet, priest-
like voice,

Too used to syllable damnations round
To make a natural emphasis worth while :

'Is Leigh your ablest man? the same,
I think,

Once jilted by a recreant pretty maid
Adopted from the people? Now, in
change,
He seems to have plucked a flower from
the other side
Of the social hedge.'

'A flower, a flower,' exclaimed
My German student,—his own eyes
full-blown
Bent on her. He was twenty, certainly.

Sir Blaise resumed with gentle arrogance,
As if he had dropped his alms into a hat
And gained the right to counsel,—' My
young friend,
I doubt your ablest man's ability
To get the least good or help meet for
him,
For pagan phalanstery or Christian home,
From such a flowery creature.'

'Beautiful!'
My student murmured rapt,—' Mark
how she stirs!
Just waves her head, as if a flower
indeed,
Touched far off by the vain breath of
our talk.'

At which that bilious Grimwald (he
who writes
For the Renovator), who had seemed
absorbed
Upon the table-book of autographs
(I dare say mentally he crunched the
bones

Of all those writers, wishing them alive
To feel his tooth in earnest), turned
short round
With low carnivorous laugh,—' A flower,
of course!

She neither sews nor spins,—and takes
no thought
Of her garments... falling off.'

The student flinched;
Sir Blaise, the same; then both, draw-
ing back their chairs
As if they spied black-beetles on the floor,
Pursued their talk, without a word
being thrown
To the critic.

Good Sir Blaise's brow is high
And noticeably narrow: a strong wind,
You fancy, might unroof him suddenly,

And blow that great top attic off his
head

So piled with feudal relics. You admire
His nose in profile, though you miss
his chin;
But, though you miss his chin, you
seldom miss
His ebon cross worn innermostly
(carved

For penance by a saintly Styrian monk
Whose flesh was too much with him),
slipping through
Some unaware unbuttoned casualty
Of the under-waistcoat. With an absent
air
Sir Blaise sate fingering it and speaking
low,
While I, upon the sofa, heard it all.

'My dear young friend, if we could
bear our eyes,
Like blessedest Saint Lucy, on a plate,
They would not trick us into choosing
wives,
As doublets, by the colour. Otherwise
Our fathers chose,—and therefore,
when they had hung
Their household keys about a lady's
waist,
The sense of duty gave her dignity;
She kept her bosom holy to her babes,
And, if a moralist reproved her dress,
'Twas, "Too much starch!"—and not,
"Too little lawn!"

'Now, pshaw!' returned the other in
a heat.
A little fretted by being called 'young
friend,'
Or so I took it,—'for Saint Lucy's sake,
If she's the saint to swear by, let us
leave
Our fathers,—plagued enough about our
sons!'
(He stroked his beardless chin), 'yes,
plagued, sir, plagued:
The future generations lie on us
As heavy as the nightmare of a seer;
Our meat and drink grow painful
prophecy:

I ask you,—have we leisure, if we liked,
To hollow out our weary hands to keep
Your intermittent rushlight of the past;

From draughts in lobbies? Prejudice of sex
 And marriage-law . . . the socket drops them through
 While we two speak,—however may protest
 Some over-delicate nostrils like your own,
 'Gainst odours thence arising.'

'You are young,'

Sir Blaise objected.

'If I am,' he said With fire,—'though somewhat less so than I seem, The young run on before, and see the thing That's coming. Reverence for the young, I cry. In that new church for which the world's near ripe, You'll have the younger in the Elder's chair, Presiding with his ivory front of hope O'er foreheads clawed by cruel carrion-birds Of life's experience.'

'Pray your blessing, sir,' Sir Blaise replied good-humouredly,—

'I plucked A silver hair this morning from my beard, Which left me your inferior. Would I were

Eighteen and worthy to admonish you! If young men of your order run before To see such sights as sexual prejudice And marriage-law dissolved,—in plainer words,

A general concubinage expressed In a universal pruriency,—the thing Is scarce worth running fast for, and you'd gain By loitering with your elders.'

'Ah,' he said, 'Who, getting to the top of Pisgah-hill, Can talk with one at bottom of the view,

To make it comprehensible? Why, Leigh Himself, although our ablest man, I said,

Is scarce advanced to see as far as this, Which some are: he takes up imperfectly The social question—by one handle—leaves

The rest to trail. A Christian socialist Is Romney Leigh, you understand.'

'Not I.

I disbelieve in Christian-pagans, much As you in women-fishes. If we mix Two colours, we lose both, and make a third Distinct from either. Mark you! to mistake

A colour is the sign of a sick brain, And mine, I thank the saints, is clear and cool:

A neutral tint is here impossible. The church,—and by the church, I mean of course

The catholic, apostolic, mother-church,— Draws lines as plain and straight as her own wall;

Inside of which, are Christians, obviously, And outside . . . dogs.'

'We thank you. Well I know The ancient mother-church would fain still bite, For all her toothless gums,—as Leigh himself Would fain be a Christian still, for all his wit.

Pass that; you two may settle it, for me. You're slow in England. In a month I learnt

At Göttingen enough philosophy To stock your English schools for fifty years;

Pass that, too. Here alone, I stop you short, —Supposing a true man like Leigh could stand

Unequal in the stature of his life To the height of his opinions. Choose a wife

Because of a smooth skin?—not he, not he!

He'd rail at Venus' self for creaking shoes, Unless she walked his way of righteousness :

And if he takes a Venus Meretrix (No imputation on the lady there), Be sure that, by some sleight of Christian art,

He has metamorphosed and converted her To a Blessed Virgin.'

'Soft!' Sir Blaise drew breath

As if it hurt him,—‘ Soft! no blasphemy,
I pray you !’

‘ The first Christians did the thing :
Why not the last ? ’ asked he of Göttingen,
With just that shade of sneering on the
lip,

Compensates for the lagging of the
beard,—

‘ And so the case is. If that fairest fair
Is talked of as the future wife of Leigh,
She’s talked of too, at least as certainly,
As Leigh’s disciple. You may find her
name

On all his missions and commissions,
schools,
Asylums, hospitals,—he had her down,
With other ladies whom her starry lead
Persuaded from their spheres, to his
country-place

In Shropshire, to the famed phalanstery
At Leigh Hall, christianized from
Fourier’s own

(In which he has planted out his sapling
stocks

Of knowledge into social nurseries),
And there, they say, she has tarried
half a week,

And milked the cows, and churned, and
pressed the curd,

And said “ my sister ” to the lowest drab
Of all the assembled castaways ; such
girls !

Aye, sided with them at the washing-
tub—

Conceive, Sir Blaise, those naked
perfect arms,

Round glittering arms, plunged elbow-
deep in suds,

Like wild swans hid in lilies all a-shake.’

Lord Howe came up. ‘ What, talking
poetry

So near the image of the unfavouring
Muse ?

That’s you, Miss Leigh : I’ve watched
you half an hour,

Precisely as I watched the statue called
A Pallas in the Vatican ;—you mind

The face, Sir Blaise !—intensely calm
and sad,

As wisdom cut it off from fellowship,—
But *that* spoke louder. Not a word
from you !

And these two gentlemen were bold,
I marked,

And unabashed by even your silence,’
‘ Ah,’

Said I, ‘ my dear Lord Howe, you shall
not speak

To a printing woman who has lost her
place

(The sweet safe corner of the household
fire

Behind the heads of children), compli-
ments.

As if she were a woman. We who
have clipt

The curls before our eyes, may see at
least

As plain as men do. Speak out, man
to man ;

No compliments, beseech you.’

‘ Friend to friend,
Let that be. We are sad to-night, I
saw

(—Good night, Sir Blaise ! ah, Smith—
he has slipped away),

I saw you across the room, and stayed,
Miss Leigh,

To keep a crowd of lion-hunters off,
With faces toward your jungle. There
were three ;

A spacious lady, five feet ten and fat,
Who has the devil in her (and there’s
room),

For walking to and fro upon the earth,
From Chipewa to China ; she requires
Your autograph upon a tinted leaf
‘ Twixt Queen Pomare’s and Emperor
Soulouque’s.

Pray give it ; she has energies, though fat ;
For me, I’d rather see a rick on fire
Than such a woman angry. Then
a youth

Fresh from the backwoods, green as
the underboughs,

Asks modestly, Miss Leigh, to kiss your
shoe,

And adds, he has an epic in twelve parts,
Which when you’ve read, you’ll do it
for his boot :

All which I saved you, and absorb next
week

Both manuscript and man,—because a
lord

Is still more potent than a poetess

With any extreme republican. Ah, ah,
You smile, at last, then.'

'Thank you.'

'Leave the smile.
I'll lose the thanks for't,—aye, and
throw you in

My transatlantic girl, with golden eyes,
That draw you to her splendid whiteness
as

The pistol of a water-lily draws,
Adust with gold. Those girls across the
sea

Are tyrannously pretty,—and I swore
(She seemed to mean innocent, frank girl)
To bring her to you for a woman's kiss,
Not now, but on some other day or week:
—We'll call it perjury; I give her up.'

'No, bring her.'

'Now,' said he, 'you make it hard
To touch such goodness with a grimy
palm.

I thought to tease you well, and fret you
cross,
And steel myself, when rightly vexed
with you,
For telling you a thing to tease you more.'

'Of Romney?'

'No, no; nothing worse,' he cried,
'Of Romney Leigh than what is buzzed
about,—

That *he* is taken in an eye-trap too,
Likemany halfaswise. Thething I mean
Refers to you, not him.'

'Refers to me.'

He echoed,—'Me! You sound it like a
stone

Dropped down a dry well very listlessly
By one who never thinks about the toad
Alive at the bottom. Presently perhaps
You'll sound your "me" more proudly—
till I shrink.'

'Lord Howe's the toad, then, in this
question?'

'Brief,
We'll take it graver. Give me sofa-room,
And quiet hearing. You know Eglinton,
John Eglinton, of Eglinton in Kent?'

'Is *he* the toad?—he's rather like the
snail,

Known chiefly for the house upon his
back:

Divide the man and house—you kill the
man;

That's Eglinton of Eglinton, Lord
Howe.'

He answered grave. 'A reputable man,
An excellent landlord of the olden stamp
If somewhat slack in new philanthro-
pies,

Who keeps his birthdays with a tenants'
dance,

Is hard upon them when they miss the
church

Or hold their children back from
catechism,

But not ungentle when the aged poor
Pick sticks at hedge-sides: nay, I've
heard him say,

"The old dame has a twinge because she
stoops;

That's punishment enough for felony,"

'O tender-hearted landlord! may I take
My long lease with him, when the time
arrives

For gathering winter-faggots!'

'He likes art,
Buys books and pictures... of a certain
kind;—

Neglects no patent duty; a good son'...

'To a most obedient mother. Born to
wear

His father's shoes, he wears her hus-
band's too:

Indeed I've heard it's touching. Dear
Lord Howe,

You shall not praise *me* so against your
heart,

When I'm at worst for praise and faggots.'

'Be
Less bitter with me, for... in short,' he
said,

'I have a letter, which he urged me so
To bring you... I could scarcely choose
but yield;

Insisting that a new love, passing through
The hand of an old friendship, caught
from it

Some reconciling odour.'

'Love, you say!

My lord, I cannot love: I only find

The rime for love,—and that's not love,
my lord.
Take back your letter.'

'Pause : you'll read it first !'

'I will not read it : it is stereotyped ;
The same he wrote to,—anybody's name,
Anne Blythe the actress, when she died
so true,

A duchess fainted in a private box :
Pauline the dancer, after the great *pas*
In which her little feet winked overhead
Like other fire-flies, and amazed the pit :
Or Baldinacci, when her F in alt
Had touched the silver tops of heaven
itself

With such a pungent spirit-dart, the Queen
Laid softly, each to each, her white-gloved palms,

And sighed for joy : or else (I thank your friend)
Aurora Leigh,—when some indifferent rimes,

Likethosethe boyssang round the holy ox
On Memphis-highway, chance perhaps to set

Our Apis-public lowing. Oh, he wants,
Instead of any worthy wife at home,
A star upon his stage of Eglinton ?
Advise him that he is not overshrewd
In being so little modest : a dropped star
Makes bitter waters, says a Book I've
read,—

And there's his unread letter.'
 'My dear friend,'
Lord Howe began ..

In haste I tore the phrase.
'You mean your friend of Eglinton, or me ?'

'I mean you, you,' he answered with some fire.

•A happy life means prudent compromise;
The tare runs through the farmer's
garnered sheaves,
And though the gleaner's apron holds
pure wheat
We count her poorer. Tare with wheat,
we cry,
And good with drawbacks. You, you
love your art,

And, certain of vocation, set your soul
On utterance. Only, in this world we have made

(They say God made it first, but if He did
'Twas so long since, and, since, we have
spoiled it so,

He scarce would know it, if He looked
this way,

From hells we preach of, with the flames
blown out),

—In this bad, twisted, topsy-turvy world
Where all the heaviest wrongs get
uppermost,—

In this uneven, unfostering England here,
Where ledger-strokes and sword-strokes
count indeed,

But soul-strokes merely tell upon the flesh
They strike from,—it is hard to stand
.for art,

Unless some golden tripod from the sea
Be fished up, by Apollo's divine chance,
To throne such feet as yours, my
prophetess,

At Delphi. Think,—the god comes
down as fierce

As twenty bloodhounds, shakes you,
strangles you,
Until the oracular shriek shall ooze in
froth !

At best 'tis not all ease,—at worst too
hard :

A place to stand on is a 'vantage gained,
And here's your tripod. To be plain,
dear friend,

You're poor, except in what you richly
give ;

You labour for your own bread painfully,
Or ere you pour our wine. For art's
sake, pause.'

I answered slow,—as some wayfaring man,
Who feels himself at night too far from home

Makes steadfast face against the bitter wind.

'Is art so less a thing than virtue is,
That artists first must cater for their
ease

Or ever they make issue past themselves
To generous use ? alas, and is it so,
That we, who would be somewhat clean,
must sweep

Our ways as well as walk them, and no friend
 Confirm us nobly,—“Leave results to God,
 But you, be clean?” What! “prudent compromise
 Makes acceptable life,” you say instead,
 You, you, Lord Howe!—in things in-
 different, well.
 For instance, compromise the wheaten bread
 For rye, the meat for lentils, silk for serge,
 And sleep on down, if needs, for sleep
 on straw;
 But there, end compromise. I will not bate
 One artist-dream on straw or down, my lord,
 Nor pinch my liberal soul, though I be poor,
 Nor cease to love high, though I live thus low.’

So speaking, with less anger in my voice
 Than sorrow, I rose quickly to depart;
 While he, thrown back upon the noble shame
 Of such high-stumbling natures, murmured words,
 The right words after wrong ones. Ah, the man
 Is worthy, but so given to entertain
 Impossible plans of superhuman life,—
 He sets his virtues on so raised a shelf,
 To keep them at the grand millennial height,
 He has to mount a stool to get at them;
 And, meantime, lives on quite the common way,
 With everybody’s morals.

As we passed,
 Lord Howe insisting that his friendly arm
 Should oar me across the sparkling brawling stream
 Which swept from room to room,—we fell at once
 On Lady Waldemar. ‘Miss Leigh,’ she said,
 And gave me such a smile, so cold and bright,
 As if she tried it in a ‘tiring glass
 And liked it; ‘all to-night I’ve strained at you

As babes at baubles held up out of reach
 By spiteful nurses (“Never snatch,” they say),
 And there you sat, most perfectly shut in
 By good Sir Blaise and clever Mister Smith
 And then our dear Lord Howe! at last indeed
 I almost snatched. I have a world to speak
 About your cousin’s place in Shropshire, where
 I’ve been to see his work . . . our work,
 —you heard
 I went? . . . and of a letter yesterday,
 In which if I should read a page or two
 You might feel interest, though you’re locked of course
 In literary toil.—You’ll like to hear
 Your last book lies at the phalanstery,
 As judged innocuous for the elder girls
 And younger women who still care for books.
 We all must read, you see, before we live,
 Till slowly the ineffable light comes up
 And, as it deepens, drowns the written word,—
 So said your cousin, while we stood and felt
 A sunset from his favourite beech-tree seat.
 He might have been a poet if he would,
 But then he saw the higher thing at once
 And climbed to it. I think he looks well now,
 Has quite got over that unfortunate . . .
 Ah, ah . . . I know it moved you. Tenderheart!
 You took a liking to the wretched girl.
 Perhaps you thought the marriage suitable,
 Who knows? a poet hankers for romance,
 And so on. As for Romney Leigh, ‘tis sure
 He never loved her,—never. By the way,
 You have not heard of her . . . ? quite out of sight,
 And out of saving? lost in every sense?’
 She might have gone on talking half an hour
 And I stood still, and cold, and pale, I think,

As a garden-statue a child pelts with snow
For pretty pastime. Every now and
then
I put in 'yes' or 'no,' I scarce knew why;
The blind man walks wherever the dog
pulls,
And so I answered. Till Lord Howe
broke in;
'What penance takes the wretch who
interrupts
The talk of charming women? I, at last,
Must brave it. Pardon, Lady Waldemar!
The lady on my arm is tired, unwell,
And loyally I've promised she shall say
No harder word this evening, than . . .
good night;
The rest her face speaks for her.'—Then
we went.

And I breathe large at home. I drop
my cloak,
Unclasp my girdle, loose the band that ties
My hair . . . now could I but unloose my
soul!
We are sepulchred alive in this close
world,
And want more room.
The charming woman there—
This reckoning up and writing down her
talk
Affects me singularly. How she talked
To pain me! woman's spite.—You wear
steel-mail;
A woman takes a housewife from her
breast
And plucks the delicatest needle out
As 'twere a rose, and pricks you carefully
'Neath nails, 'neath eyelids, in your
nostrils,—say,
A beast would roar so tortured,—but
a man,
A human creature, must not, shall not
flinch,
No, not for shame.

What vexes, after all,
Is just that such as she, with such as I,
Knows how to vex. Sweet heaven, she
takes me up
As if she had fingered me and dog-eared
me
And spelled me by the fireside half a life!
She knows my turns, my feeble points.
—What then?

The knowledge of a thing implies the
thing;
Of course, she found *that* in me, she saw
that,
Her pencil underscored *this* for a fault,
And I, still ignorant. Shut the book
up,—close!
And crush that beetle in the leaves.
O heart,
At last we shall grow hard too, like the
rest,
And call it self-defence because we are
soft.

And after all, now, . . . why should I be
pained
That Romney Leigh, my cousin, should
espouse
This Lady Waldemar! And, say, she held
Her newly-blossomed gladness in my
face, . . .
'Twas natural surely, if not generous,
Considering how, when winter held her
fast,
I helped the frost with mine, and pained
her more
Than she pains me. Pains me!—but
wherefore pained?
'Tis clear my cousin Romney wants
a wife,—
So, good!—The man's need of the wo-
man, here,
Is greater than the woman's of the man,
And easier served; for where the man
discerns
A sex (ah, ah, the man can generalize,
Said he), we see but one, ideally
And really: where we yearn to lose
ourselves
And melt like white pearls in another's
wine,
He seeks to double himself by what he
loves,
And make his drink more costly by our
pearls.
At board, at bed, at work and holiday,
It is not good for man to be alone,
And that's his way of thinking, first and
last,
And thus my cousin Romney wants a wife.

But then my cousin sets his dignity
On personal virtue. If he understands

By love, like others, self-aggrandizement,
It is that he may verily be great

By doing rightly and kindly. Once he
thought,

For charitable ends set duly forth
In Heaven's white judgement-book, to
marry . . . ah,

We'll call her name Aurora Leigh, al-
though

She's changed since then!—and once,
for social ends,

Poor Marian Erle, my sister Marian Erle,
My woodland sister, sweet maid Marian,
Whose memory moans on in me like the
wind

Through ill-shut casements, making me
more sad

Than ever I find reasons for. Alas,
Poor pretty plaintive face, embodied
ghost!

He finds it easy then, to clap thee off
From pulling at his sleeve and book and
pen,—

He locks thee out at night into the cold
Away from butting with thy horny eyes
Against his crystal dreams, that now
he's strong

To love anew? that Lady Waldemar
Succeeds my Marian?

After all, why not?

He loved not Marian, more than once he
loved

Aurora. If he loves at last that Third,
Albeit she prove as slippery as spilt oil
On marble floors, I will not augur him
Ill-luck for that. Good love, how'er
ill-placed,

Is better for a man's soul in the end,
Than if he loved ill what deserves love
well.

A pagan, kissing for a step of Pan
The wild-goat's hoof-print on the loamy
down,

Exceeds our modern thinker who turns
back

The strata . . . granite, limestone, coal,
and clay,

Concluding coldly with, 'Here's law!

where's God?'

And then at worse,—if Romney loves
her not,—

At worst,—if he's incapable of love,

Which may be—then indeed, for such
a man

Incapable of love, she's good enough;
For she, at worst too, is a woman still
And loves him . . . as the sort of woman
can.

My loose long hair began to burn and
creep,

Alive to the very ends, about my knees:
I swept it backward as the wind sweeps
flame,

With the passion of my hands. Ah,
Romney laughed
One day . . . (how full the memories come
up!)

—Your Florence fire-flies live on in
your hair,'

He said, 'it gleams so.' Well, I wrung
them out,

My fire-flies; made a knot as hard as life
Of those loose, soft, impracticable curls,
And then sat down and thought . . . 'She
shall not think

Her thought of me,'—and drew my desk
and wrote.

'Dear Lady Waldemar, I could not speak
With people round me, nor can sleep
to-night

And not speak, after the great news
I heard

Of you and of my cousin. May you be
Most happy; and the good he meant the
world;

Replenish his own life. Say what I say,
And let my word be sweeter for your
mouth,

As you are *you* . . . I only Aurora Leigh.'

That's quiet, guarded: though she hold
it up

Against the light, she'll not see through
it more

Than lies there to be seen. So much
for pride;

And now for peace, a little. Let me stop
All writing back . . . 'Sweet thanks, my
sweetest friend,

You've made more joyful my great joy
itself.'

—No, that's too simple! she would
twist it thus.

'My joy would still be as sweet as thyme
in drawers,
However shut up in the dark and dry ;
But violets, aired and dewed by love like
yours,
Out-smell all thyme : we keep that in our
clothes,
But drop the other down our bosoms till
They smell like' . . . ah, I see her writing
back
Just so. She'll make a nosegay of her
words,
And tie it with blue ribbons at the end
To suit a poet ;—pshaw !

And then we'll have
The call to church, the broken, sad, bad
dream
Dreamed out at last, the marriage-vow
complete
With the marriage-breakfast ; praying in
white gloves,
Drawn off in haste for drinking pagan
toasts
In somewhat stronger wine than any
sipped
By gods since Bacchus had his way with
grapes.

A postscript stops all that and rescues me.
' You need not write. I have been over-
worked,
And think of leaving London, England
even,
And hastening to get nearer to the sun
Where men sleep better. So, adieu.—

I fold
And seal,—and now I'm out of all the
coil ;
I breathe now, I spring upward like
a branch
The ten-years schoolboy with a crooked
stick
May pull down to his level in search of
nuts,
But cannot hold a moment. How we
twang
Back on the blue sky, and assert our
height,
While he stares after ! Now, the wonder
seems
That I could wrong myself by such
a doubt.
We poets always have uneasy hearts,

Because our hearts, large-rounded as the
globe,
Can turn but one side to the sun at once.
We are used to dip our artist-hands in gall
And potash, trying potentialities
Of alternated colour, till at last
We get confused, and wonder for our skin
How nature tinged it first. Well—here's
the true
Good flesh-colour; I recognize my hand,—
Which Romney Leigh may clasp as just
a friend's,
And keep his clean.

And now, my Italy.
Alas, if we could ride with naked souls
And make no noise and pay no price at all,
I would have seen thee sooner, Italy,
For still I have heard thee crying through
my life,
Thou piercing silence of ecstatic graves,
Men call that name !

But even a witch to-day
Must melt down golden pieces in the nard
Wherewith to anoint her broomstick ere
she rides ;
And poets evermore are scant of gold,
And if they find a piece behind the door
It turns by sunset to a withered leaf.
The Devil himself scarce trusts his
patented
Gold-making art to any who make rimes,
But culls his Faustus from philosophers
And not from poets. 'Leave my Job,'
said God ;
And so the Devil leaves him without
pence,
And poverty proves plainly special grace.
In these new, just, administrative times
Men clamour for an order of merit : why ?
Here's black bread on the table and no
wine !

At least I am a poet in being poor,
Thank God. I wonder if the manuscript
Of my long poem, if 'twere sold outright,
Would fetch enough to buy me shoes to go
Afoot (thrown in, the necessary patch
For the other side the Alps) ? It cannot be.
I fear that I must sell this residue
Of my father's books, although the Elze-
virs
Have fly-leaves over-written by his hand

In faded notes as thick and fine and brown
As cobwebs on a tawny monument
Of the old Greeks—*conferenda haec cum
his—*

Corruptè citat—lege potius,
And so on, in the scholar's regal way
Of giving judgement on the parts of speech,
As if he sate on all twelve thrones up-
piled,

Arraigning Israel. Aye, but books and
notes

Must go together. And this Proclus too,
In these dear quaint contracted Grecian
types,

Fantastically crumpled like his thoughts
Which would not seem too plain; you
go round twice

For one step forward, then you take it
back

Because you're somewhat giddy; there's
the rule

For Proclus. Ah, I stained this middle
leaf

With pressing in 't my Florence iris-bell,
Long stalk and all: my father chid me
For that stain of blue blood,—I recollect
The peevish turn his voice took,—‘Silly
girls,

Who plant their flowers in our philo-
sophy

To make it fine, and only spoil the book!
No more of it, Aurora.’ Yes—no more!
Ah, blame of love, that's sweeter than
all praise

Of those who love not! ‘tis so lost to
me,

I cannot, in such beggared life, afford
To lose my Proclus,—not for Florence
even.

The kissing Judas, Wolff, shall go in-
stead,

Who builds us such a royal book as this
To honour a chief-poet, folio-built,
And writes above, ‘The house of No-
body!’

Who floats in cream, as rich as any
sucked

From Junc's breasts, the broad Homeric
lines,

And, while with their spondaic prodigi-
ous mouths

They lap the lucent margins as babe-gods,

Proclaims them bastards. Wolff's an
atheist;

And if the Iliad fell out, as he says,
By mere fortuitous concourse of old
songs,
Conclude as much too for the universe.

That Wolff, those Platos: sweep the
upper shelves

As clean as this, and so I am almost rich,
Which means, not forced to think of
being poor

In sight of ends. To-morrow: no delay.
I'll wait in Paris till good Carrington
Dispose of such and, having chaffered for
My book's price with the publisher, direct
All proceeds to me. Just a line to ask
His help.

And now I come, my Italy,
My own hills! Are you 'ware of me, my
hills,
How I burn toward you? do you feel
to-night

The urgency and yearning of my soul,
As sleeping mothers feel the sucking babe
And smile?—Nay, not so much as when
in heat

Vain lightnings catch at your inviolate
tops

And tremble while ye are steadfast. Still
ye go

Your own determined, calm, indifferent
way

Toward sunrise, shade by shade, and
light by light,

Of all the grand progression nought left
out,

As if God verily made you for yourselves
And would not interrupt your life with
ours.

SIXTH BOOK

THE English have a scornful insular way
Of calling the French light. The levity
Is in the judgement only, which yet stands,
For say a foolish thing but oft enough
(And here's the secret of a hundred
creeds,

Men get opinions as boys learn to spell,
By reiteration chiefly), the same thing
Shall pass at last for absolutely wise.

And not with fools exclusively. And so
We say the French are light, as if we said
The cat mews or the milch-cow gives us
milk :

Say rather, cats are milked and milch-
cows mew ;

For what is lightness but inconsequence,
Vague fluctuation 'twixt effect and cause
Compelled by neither? Is a bullet light,
That dashes from the gun-mouth, while
the eye

Winks and the heart beats one, to flatten
itself

To a wafer on the white speck on a wall
A hundred paces off? Even so direct,
So sternly undivertible of aim,
Is this French people.

All, idealists
Too absolute and earnest, with them all
The idea of a knife cuts real flesh;
And still, devouring the safe interval
Which Nature placed between the
thought and act
With those too fiery and impatient souls,
They threaten conflagration to the world,
And rush with most unscrupulous logic on
Impossible practice. Set your orators
To blow upon them with loud windy
mouths

Through watchword phrases, jest or
sentiment,
Which drive our burly brutal English
mobs

Like so much chaff, whichever way they
blow,—

This light French people will not thus
be driven.

They turn indeed,—but then they turn
upon

Some central pivot of their thought and
choice,

And veer out by the force of holding fast.
That's hard to understand, for English-
men

Unused to abstract questions, and un-
trained

To trace the involutions, valve by valve,
In each orb'd bulb-root of a general truth,
And mark what subtly fine integument
Divides opposed compartments. Free-
dom's self

Comes concrete to us, to be understood,
Fixed in a feudal form incarnately

To suit our ways of thought and reverence,
The special form, with us, being still the
thing.

With us, I say, though I'm of Italy
By mother's birth and grave, by father's
grave

And memory; let it be;—a poet's heart
Can swell to a pair of nationalities,
However ill-lodged in a woman's breast.

And so I am strong to love this noble
France,

This poet of the nations, who dreams on
And walls on (while the household goes
to wreck)

For ever, after some ideal good,—
Some equal poise of sex, some unvowed
love

Inviolate, some spontaneous brother-
hood,
Some wealth that leaves none poor and
finds none tired,

Some freedom of the many that respects
The wisdom of the few. Heroic dreams!
Sublime, to dream so; natural, to wake:
And sad, to use such lofty scaffoldings,
Erected for the building of a church,
To build instead a brothel or a prison—
May God save France!

And if at last she sighs
Her great soul up into a great man's face,
To flush his temples out so gloriously
That few dare carp at Caesar for being bald,
What then?—this Caesar represents, not
reigns,

And is no despot, though twice absolute:
This Head has all the people for a heart;
This purple-lined with the democracy,—
Now let him see to it! for a rent within
Would leave irreparable rags without.

A serious riddle: find such anywhere
Except in France; and when 'tis found
in France,

Be sure to read it rightly. So, I mused
Up and down, up and down, the terraced
streets,

The glittering boulevards, the white
colonnades

Of fair fantastic Paris who wears trees
Like plumes, as if man made them,
spire and tower
As if they had grown by nature, tossing up

Her fountains in the sunshine of the squares,
As if in beauty's game she tossed the dice,
Or blew the silver down-balls of her dreams
To sow futurity with seeds of thought
And count the passage of her festive hours.

The city swims in verdure, beautiful
As Venice on the waters, the sea-swan.
What bosky gardens dropped in close-walled courts
Like plums in ladies' laps who start and laugh :
What miles of streets that run on after trees,
Still carrying all the necessary shops,
Those open caskets with the jewels seen!
And trade is art, and art's philosophy,
In Paris. There's a silk for instance, there,
As worth an artist's study for the folds,
As that bronze opposite ! nay, the bronze has faults,
Art's here too artful,—conscious as a maid
Who leans to mark her shadow on the wall
Until she lose a 'vantage in her step.
Yet Art walks forward, and knows where to walk ;
The artists also are idealists,
Too absolute for nature, logical
To austerity in the application of
The special theory,—not a soul content
To paint a crooked pollard and an ass,
As the English will because they find it so
And like it somehow.—There the old Tuilleries
Is pulling its high cap down on its eyes,
Confounded, conscience-stricken, and amazed
By the apparition of a new fair face
In those devouring mirrors. Through the grate
Within the gardens, what a heap of babes,
Swept up like leaves beneath the chestnut-trees
From every street and alley of the town,
By ghosts perhaps that blow too bleak this way
A-looking for their heads ! dear pretty babes,
I wish them luck to have their ball-play out

Before the next change. Here the air is thronged
With statues poised upon their columns fine
As if to stand a moment were a feat,
Against that blue ! What squares,—what breathing-room
For a nation that runs fast,—aye, runs against
The dentist's teeth at the corner in pale rows,
Which grin at progress in an epigram.

I walked the day out, listening to the chink
Of the first Napoleon's dry bones in his second grave,
By victories guarded 'neath the golden dome
That caps all Paris like a bubble. 'Shall These dry bones live,' thought Louis Philippe once,
And lived to know. Herein is argument
For kings and politicians, but still more
For poets, who bear buckets to the well
Of ampler draught.

These crowds are very good
Form meditation (when we are very strong),
Though love of beauty makes us timorous,
And draws us backward from the coarse town-sights
To count the daisies upon dappled fields
And hear the streams bleat on among the hills
In innocent and indolent repose,
While still with silken elegiac thoughts
We wind out from us the distracting world
And die into the chrysalis of a man,
And leave the best that may, to come of us,
In some brown moth. I would be bold and bear
To look into the swarbiest face of things,
For God's sake who has made them.

Six days' work ;
The last day shutting 'twixt its dawn and eve
The whole work bettered of the previous five !
Since God collected and resumed in man
The firmaments, the strata, and the lights,

Fish, fowl, and beast, and insect,—all their trains
Of various life caught back upon His arm,
Reorganized, and constituted MAN,
The microcosm, the adding up of works,—
Within whose fluttering nostrils, then at last
Consummating Himself the Maker sighed,
As some strong winner at the foot-race sighs
Touching the goal.

Humanity is great ;
And, if I would not rather pore upon An ounce of common, ugly, human dust,
An artisan's palm or a peasant's brow,
Unsmooth, ignoble, save to me and God,

Than track old Nilus to his silver roots,
Or wait on all the changes of the moon
Among the mountain-peaks of Thessaly
(Until her magic crystal round itself
For many a witch to see in)—set it down
As weakness,—strength by no means.

How is this
That men of science, osteologists
And surgeons, beat some poets in respect
For nature,—count nought common or unclean,

Spend raptures upon perfect specimens
Of indurated veins, distorted joints,
Or beautiful new cases of curved spine,
While we, we are shocked at nature's falling off,

We dare to shrink back from her warts
and blains,
We will not, when she sneezes, look at her,

Not even to say 'God bless her'! That's our wrong ;

For that, she will not trust us often with Her larger sense of beauty and desire,
But tethers us to a lily or a rose
And bids us diet on the dew inside,
Left ignorant that the hungry beggar-boy
(Who stares unseen against our absent eyes,

And wonders at the gods that we must be,
To pass so careless for the oranges!)
Bears yet a breastful of a fellow-world
To this world, undisparaged, undespoiled,
And (while we scorn him for a flower or two,
As being, Heaven help us, less poetical)

Contains himself both flowers and firmaments

And surging seas and aspitable stars,
And all that we would push him out of sight

In order to see nearer. Let us pray
God's grace to keep God's image in repute,
That so, the poet and philanthropist
(Even I and Romney) may stand side by side,

Because we both stand face to face with men,
Contemplating the people in the rough,
Yet each so follow a vocation, his And mine.

I walked on, musing with myself
On life and art, and whether after all
A larger metaphysics might not help
Our physics, a completer poetry
Adjust our daily life and vulgar wants
More fully than the special outside plans,
Phalansteries, material institutes,
The civil conscriptions and lay monasteries

Preferred by modern thinkers, as they thought

The bread of man indeed made all his life,
And washing seven times in the 'People's Baths'

Were sovereign for a people's leprosy,
Still leaving out the essential prophet's word

That comes in power. On which, we thunder down,
We prophets, poets,—Virtue's in the word!

The maker burnt the darkness up with His,
To inaugurate the use of vocal life ;
And, plant a poet's word even, deep enough

In any man's breast, looking presently
For offshoots, you have done more for the man

Than if you dressed him in a broadcloth coat

And warmed his Sunday potage at your fire.

Yet Romney leaves me . . .
God ! what face is that ?

O Romney, O Marian !
Walking on the quays
And pulling thoughts to pieces leisurely,

As if I caught at grasses in a field
And bit them slow between my absent lips
And shred them with my hands . . .

What face is that?
What a face, what a look, what a likeness!
Full on mine
The sudden blow of it came down, till all
My blood swam, my eyes dazzled. Then
I sprang . . .

It was as if a meditative man
Were dreaming out a summer afternoon
And watching gnats a-prick upon a pond,
When something floats up suddenly,
out there,
Turns over . . . a dead face, known once
alive . . .
So old, so new! it would be dreadful now
To lose the sight and keep the doubt of
this :
He plunges—ha! he has lost it in the
splash.

I plunged—I tore the crowd up, either
side,
And rushed on, forward, forward, after
her.
Her? whom?
A woman sauntered slow in front,
Munching an apple,—she left off amazed
As if I had snatched it : that's not she,
at least.

A man walked arm-linked with a lady
veiled,
Both heads dropped closer than the need
of talk :
They started ; he forgot her with his face,
And she, herself, and clung to him as if
My look were fatal. Such a stream of folk,
And all with cares and business of their
own !
I ran the whole quay down against their
eyes ;
No Marian; nowhere Marian. Almost,
now,
I could call Marian, Marian, with the
shriek
Of desperate creatures calling for the
Dead.

Where is she, was she? was she any-
where?
I stood still, breathless, gazing, straining
out

In every uncertain distance, till at last
A gentleman abstracted as myself
Came full against me, then resolved the
clash

In voluble excuses,—obviously
Some learned member of the Institute
Upon his way there, walking, for his
health,

While meditating on the last ‘Discourse’;
Pinching the empty air ‘twixt finger and
thumb,

From which the snuff being ousted by
that shock

Defiled his snow-white waistcoat duly
pricked

At the button-hole with honourable red;
‘Madame, your pardon,—there he
swerved from me

A metre, as confounded as he had heard
That Dumas would be chosen to fill up
The next chair vacant, by his ‘men inus.’
Since when was genius found respect-
able?

It passes in its place, indeed,—which
means

The seventh floor back, or else the
hospital :

Revolving pistols are ingenious things,
But prudent men (Academicians are)
Scarce keep them in the cupboard next
the prunes.

And so, abandoned to a bitter mirth,
I loitered to my inn. O world, O world,
O jurists, rimers, dreamers, what you
please,

We play a weary game of hide-and-seek !
We shape a figure of our fantasy,
Call nothing something, and run after it
And lose it, lose ourselves too in the
search,

Till clash against us comes a somebody
Who also has lost something and is lost,
Philosopher against philanthropist,
Academician against poet, man
Against woman, against the living the
dead,—

Then ‘home, with a bad headache and
worse jest!

To change the water for my heliotropes
And yellow roses. Parishassuch flowers.
But England, also. ‘Twas a yellow rose,

By that south window of the little house,
My cousin Romney gathered with his
hand

On all my birthdays for me, save the
last;
And then I shook the tree too rough,
too rough,
For roses to stay after.

Now, my maps.
I must not linger here from Italy
Till the last nightingale is tired of song,
And the last fire-fly dies off in the maize.
My soul's in haste to leap into the sun
And scorch and seethe itself to a finer
mood,
Which here, in this chill north, is apt
to stand
Too stiffly in former moulds.

That face persists.
It floats up, it turns over in my mind,
As like to Marian, as one dead is like
The same alive. In very deed a face
And not a fancy, though it vanished so;
The small fair face between the darks
of hair,
I used to liken, when I saw her first,
To a point of moonlit water down a well:
The low brow, the frank space between
the eyes,
Which always had the brown pathetic
look
Of a dumb creature who had been
beaten once
And never since was easy with the world.
Ah, ah,—now I remember perfectly
Those eyes, to-day,—how overlarge
they seemed,
As if some patient passionate despair
(Like a coal dropt and forgot on tapestry,
Which slowly burns a widening circle
out)
Had burnt them larger, larger. And
those eyes
To-day, I do remember, saw me too,
As I saw them, with conscious lids
astrain
In recognition. Now a fantasy,
A simple shade or image of the brain,
Is merely passive, does not retro-act,
Is seen, but sees not
'Twas a real face,
Perhaps a real Marian.

Which being so,

I ought to write to Romney, 'Marian's
here;
Be comforted for Marian.'

My pen fell,
My hands struck sharp together, as
hands do
Which hold at nothing. Can I write to
him

A half-truth? can I keep my own soul
blind
To the other half, . . . the worse? What
are our souls,
If still, to run on straight a sober pace
Nor start at every pebble or dead leaf,
They must wear blinkers, ignore facts,
suppress
Six tenths of the road? Confront the
truth, my soul!
And oh, as truly as that was Marian's face,
The arms of that same Marian clasped
a thing
. . . Not hid so well beneath the scanty
shawl,
I cannot name it now for what it was.

A child. Small business has a castaway
Like Marian with that crown of prosper-
ous wives
At which the gentlest she grows arrogant
And says, 'my child.' Who finds an
emerald ring
On a beggar's middle finger and requires
More testimony to convict a thief?
A child's too costly for so mere a wretch;
She filched it somewhere, and it means,
with her,
Instead of honour, blessing, merely
shame.

I cannot write to Romney, 'Here she is,
Here's Marian found! I'll set you on
her track:
I saw her here, in Paris, . . . and her
child.
She put away your love two years ago,
But, plainly, not to starve. You
suffered then;
And, now that you've forgot her utterly
As any last year's annual, in whose place
You've planted a thick flowering ever-
green,
I choose, being kind, to write and tell
you this

To make you wholly easy—she's not dead,
But only . . . damned.'

Stop there: I go too fast;
I'm cruel like the rest,—in haste to take
The first stir in the arras for a rat,
And set my barking, biting thoughts upon 't.

—A child! what then? Suppose a neighbour's sick
And asked her, 'Marian, carry out my child
In this Spring air,'—I punish her for that!
Or say, the child should hold her round the neck
For good child-reasons, that he liked it so
And would not leave her—she had winning ways—

I brand her therefore that she took the child?

Not so.

I will not write to Romney Leigh.
For now he's happy,—and she may indeed
Be guilty,—and the knowledge of her fault
Would draggle his smooth time. But I, whose days
Are not so fine they cannot bear the rain,
And who moreover having seen her face
Must see it again, . . . will see it, by my hopes

Of one day seeing heaven too. The police
Shall track her, hound her, ferret their own soil;

We'll dig this Paris to its catacombs
But certainly we'll find her, have her out,
And save her, if she will or will not—child

Or no child,—if a child, then one to save!

The long weeks passed on without consequence.

As easy find a footprint on the sand
The morning after spring-tide, as the trace
Of Marian's feet between the incessant surfs
Of this live flood. She may have moved this way,—

But so the star-fish does, and crosses out
The dent of her small shoe. The foiled police

Renounced me. 'Could they find a girl and child,

No other signalment but girl and child?
No data shown but noticeable eyes
And hair in masses, low upon the brow,
As if it were an iron crown and pressed?
Friends heighten, and suppose they specify:

Why, girls with hair and eyes are everywhere

In Paris; they had turned me up in vain
No Marian Erle indeed, but certainly Mathildes, Justines, Victoires, . . . or, if I sought

The English, Betsies, Saras, by the score.
They might as well go out into the fields
To find a speckled bean, that's somehow specked,

And somewhere in the pod.'—They left me so.

Shall I leave Marian? have I dreamed a dream?

—I thank God I have found her! I must say
'Thank God,' for finding her, although 'tis true
I find the world more sad and wicked for 't.

But she—
I'll write about her, presently.
My hand's a-tremble, as I had just caught up
My heart to write with, in the place of it.
At least you'd take these letters to be writ
At sea, in storm!—wait now . . .

A simple chance
Did all. I could not sleep last night,
and, tired
Of turning on my pillow and harder thoughts,

Went out at early morning, when the air
Is delicate with some last starry touch.
To wander through the Market-place of Flowers
(The prettiest haunt in Paris), and make sure

At worst that there were roses in the world.
So wandering, musing, with the artist's eye,
That keeps the shade-side of the thing it loves,

Half-absent, whole-observing, while the crowd
Of young vivacious and black-braided heads
Dipped, quick as finches in a blossomed tree,
Among the nosegays, cheapening this
and that
In such a cheerful twitter of rapid speech,—

My heart leapt in me, startled by a voice
That slowly, faintly, with long breaths
that marked

The interval between the wish and word,
Inquired in stranger's French, 'Would
that be much,
That branch of flowering mountain-gorse?'—'So much?
Too much for me, then!' turning the face round

So close upon me that I felt the sigh
It turned with.
'Marian, Marian!'—face to face—
'Marian! I find you. Shall I let you go?'
I held her two slight wrists with both my hands;

'Ah, Marian, Marian, can I let you go?'—
She fluttered from me like a cyclamen,
As white, which taken in a sudden wind
Beats on against the palisade.—'Let pass.'

She said at last. 'I will not,' I replied;
'I lost my sister Marian many days,
And sought her ever in my walks and prayers,

And, now I find her . . . do we throw away
The bread we worked and prayed for,—crumble it

And drop it, . . . to do even so by thee
Whom still I've hungered after more than bread,
My sister Marian?—can I hurt thee, dear?
Then why distrust me? Never trembleso.

Come with me rather where we'll talk and live
And none shall vex us. I've a home for you

And me and no one else' . . .
She shook her head.
'A home for you and me and no one else
Ill-suits one of us : I prefer to such,

A roof of grass on which a flower might spring,
Less costly to me than the cheapest here;
And yet I could not, at this hour, afford A like home even. That you offer yours, I thank you. You are good as heaven itself—
As good as one I knew before . . . Farewell.'

I loosed her hands,—'In *his* name, no farewell!'

(She stood as if I held her.) 'For his sake,
For his sake, Romney's! by the good he meant,
Aye, always! by the love he pressed for once,—
And by the grief, reproach, abandonment,

He took in charge' . . .
'He Romney! who grieved *him*? Who had the heart for't? what reproach touched *him*? Be merciful,—speak quickly.'

'Therefore come,' I answered with authority.—'I think We dare to speak such things and name such names
In the open squares of Paris!'

Not a word She said, but in a gentle humbled way
(As one who had forgot herself in grief) Turned round and followed closely where I went,

As if I led her by a narrow plank Across devouring waters, step by step; And so in silence we walked on a mile.

And then she stopped: her face was white as wax.

'We go much farther?' 'You are ill,' I asked, 'Or tired?' She looked the whiter for her smile.

'There's one at home,' she said, 'has need of me By this time,—and I must not let him wait.'

'Not even,' I asked, 'to hear of Romney Leigh?'

'Not even,' she said, 'to hear of Mister Leigh.'

'In that case,' I resumed, 'I go with you,
And we can talk the same thing there
as here.
None waits for me: I have my day to spend.'

Her lips moved in a spasm without a sound,—
But then she spoke. 'It shall be as you please;
And better so—'tis shorter seen than told:
And though you will not find me worth your pains,
That, even, may be worth some pains to know
For one as good as you are.'

Then she led
The way, and I, as by a narrow plank
Across devouring waters, followed her,
Stepping by her footsteps, breathing by her breath,
And holding her with eyes that would not slip;
And so, without a word, we walked a mile,
And so, another mile, without a word.

Until the peopled streets being all dismissed,
House-rows and groups all scattered like a flock,
The market-gardens thickened, and the long
White walls beyond, like spiders' outside threads,
Stretched, feeling blindly toward the country-fields
Through half-built habitations and half-dug foundations,—intervals of trenchant chalk
That bit betwixt the grassy uneven turfs
Where goats (vine-tendrils trailing from their mouths)
Stood perched on edges of the cellarage
Which should be, staring as about to leap
To find their coming Bacchus. All the place

Seemed less a cultivation than a waste.
Men work here, only,—scarce begin to live:

All's sad, the country struggling with the town,
Like an untamed hawk upon a strong man's fist,
That beats its wings and tries to get away.
And cannot choose be satisfied so soon
To hop through court-yards with its right foot tied,
The vintage plains and pastoral hills in sight.

We stopped beside a house too high and slim
To stand there by itself, but waiting till Five others, two on this side, three on that,
Should grow up from the sullen second floor

They pause at now, to build it to a row.
The upper windows partly were unglazed
Meantime,—a meagre, unripe house: a lime

Of rigid poplars elbowed it behind,
And, just in front, beyond the lime and bricks
That wronged the grass between it and the road,

A great acacia with its slender trunk
And overpoise of multitudinous leaves
(In which a hundred fields might spill their dew
And intense verdure, yet find room enough)
Stood reconciling all the place with green.

I followed up the stair upon her step.
She hurried upward, shot across a face,
A woman's, on the landing,—'How now,
now!

Is no one to have holidays but you?
You said an hour, and stay three hours,
I think,
And Julie waiting for your betters here?
Why if he had waked he might have waked, for me.'

—Just murmuring an excusing word she passed
And shut the rest out with the chamber-door,
Myself shut in beside her.

'Twas a room
Scarce latger than a grave, and near as
bare;
Two stools, a pallet-bed; I saw the room :
A mouse could find no sort of shelter in 't,
Much less a greater secret; curtainless,—
The window fixed you with its torturing
eye,
Defying you to take a step apart
If peradventure you would hide a thing.
I saw the whole room, I and Marian there
Alone.

Alone ? She threw her bonnet off,
Then, sighing as 'twere sighing the last
time,
Approached the bed, and drew a shawl
away :
You could not peel a fruit you fear to
bruise
More calmly and more carefully than so,—
Nor would you find within, a rosier flushed
Pomegranate—

There he lay upon his back,
The yearling creature, warm and moist
with life
To the bottom of his dimples,—to the ends
Of the lovely tumbled curls about his face;
For since he had been covered over-much
To keep him from the light-glare, both
his cheeks

Were hot and scarlet as the first live rose
The shepherd's heart-blood ebbed away
into

The faster for his love. And love was here
As instant; in the pretty baby-mouth,
Shut close as if for dreaming that it
sucked,

The little naked feet, drawn up the way
Of nestled birdlings; everything so soft
And tender,—to the tiny holdfast hands,
Which, closing on a finger into sleep,
Had kept the mould of 't.

While we stood there dumb,
For oh, that it should take such innocence
To prove just guilt, I thought, and stood
there dumb,—

The light upon his eyelids pricked them
wide,
And, staring out at us with all their blue,
As half perplexed between the angelhood
He had been away to visit in his sleep,
And our most mortal presence, gradually
He saw his mother's face, accepting it

In change for heaven itself with such a
smile

As might have well been learnt there,—
never moved,
But smiled on, in a drowse of ecstasy,
So happy (half with her and half with
heaven)

He could not have the trouble to be stirred,
But smiled and lay there. Like a rose,
I said ?

As red and still indeed as any rose,
That blows in all the silence of its leaves,
Content in blowing to fulfil its life.

She leaned above him (drinking him as
wine)

In that extremity of love, 'twill pass
For agony or rapture, seeing that love
Includes the whole of nature, rounding it
To love . . . no more,—since more can
never be

Than just love. Self-forgot, cast out of
self,

And drowning in the transport of the
sight,

Her whole pale passionate face, mouth,
forehead, eyes,
One gaze, she stood : then, slowly as he
smiled

She smiled too, slowly, smiling unaware,
And drawing from his countenance to
hers

A fainter red, as if she watched a flame
And stood in it-a-glow. 'How beautiful,'
Said she.

I answered, trying to be cold.
(Must sin have compensations, was my
thought,
As if it were a holy thing like grief?
And is a woman to be fooled aside
From putting vice down, with that
woman's toy

A baby?)—'Aye ! the child is well
enough.'

I answered. ' If his mother's palms are
clean

They need be glad of course in clasping
such ;

But if not, I would rather lay my hand,
Were I she, on God's brazen altar-bars
Red-hot with burning sacrificial lambs,
Than touch the sacred curls of such a
child.'

She plunged her fingers in his clustering locks,
As one who would not be afraid of fire;
And then with indrawn steady utterance said,
'My lamb, my lamb! although, through such as thou,
The most unclean got courage and approach
To God, once,—now they cannot, even with men,
Find grace enough for pity and gentle words.'

' My Marian,' I made answer, grave and sad,
' The priest who stole a lamb to offer him,
Was still a thief. And if a woman steals
(Through God's own barrier-hedges of true love,
Which fence out licence in securing love)
A child like this, that smiles so in her face,
She is no mother but a kidnapper,
And he's a dismal orphan, not a son,
Whom all her kisses cannot feed so full
He will not miss hereafter a pure home
To live in, a pure heart to lean against,
A pure good mother's name and memory
To hope by, when the world grows thick
and bad
And he feels out for virtue.'

' Oh,' she smiled
With bitter patience, 'the child takes his chance;
Not much worse off in being fatherless
Than I was, fathered. He will say, belike,
His mother was the saddest creature born;
He'll say his mother lived so contrary
To joy, that even the kindest, seeing her,
Grew sometimes almost cruel: he'll not say
She flew contrarious in the face of God
With bat-wings of her vices. Stole my child,—

My flower of earth, my only flower on earth,
My sweet, my beauty! . . . Up she snatched the child,
And, breaking on him in a storm of tears,
Drew out her long sobs from their shivering roots,
Until he took it for a game, and stretched

His feet and flapped his eager arms like wings
And crowed and gurgled through his infant laugh:
' Mine, mine,' she said. ' I have as sure a right
As any glad proud mother in the world,
Whose sets her darling down to cut his teeth
Upon her church-ring. If she talks of law,
I talk of law! I claim my mother-dues
By law,—the law which now is paramount,—

The common law, by which the poor and weak
Are trodden underfoot by vicious men,
And loathed for ever after by the good.
Let pass! I did not filch,—I found the child.'

' You found him, Marian? '
' Aye, I found him where I found my curse,—in the gutter, with my shame!
What have you, any of you, to say to that,
Who all are happy, and sit safe and high,
And never spoke before to arraign my right
To grief itself? What, what, . . . being beaten down
By hoofs of maddened oxen into a ditch,
Half-dead, whole mangled, when a girl at last
Breathes, sees . . . and finds there, bedded in her flesh
Because of the extremity of the shock,
Some coin of price! . . . and when a good man comes
(That's God! the best men are not quite as good)
And says, "I dropped the coin there: take it you,
And keep it; it shall pay you for the loss,"—
You all put up your finger—"See the thief!
Observe what precious thing she has come to filch.
How bad those girls are!" Oh, my flower, my pet,
I dare forget I have you in my arms
And fly off to be angry with the world,
And fright you, hurt you with my tempers, till

You double up your lip? Why, that indeed
Is bad: a naughty mother!

'You mistake,'
I interrupted; 'if I loved you not,
I should not, Marian, certainly be here.'

'Alas,' she said, 'you are so very good;
And yet I wish indeed you had never come
To make me sob until I vex the child.
It is not wholesome for these pleasure-
plats

To be so early watered by our brine.
And then, who knows? he may not like
me now

As well, perhaps, as ere he saw me fret,—
One's ugly fretting! he has eyes the
same

As angels, but he cannot see as deep,
And so I've kept for ever in his sight
A sort of smile to please him,—as you
place

A green thing from the garden in a cup,
To make believe it grows there. Look,
my sweet,
My cowslip-ball! we've done with that
cross face,
And here's the face come back you used
to like.

Ah, ah! he laughs! he likes me. Ah,
Miss Leigh,
You're great and pure; but were you
purer still,—
As if you had walked, we'll say, no
otherwhere

Than up and down the new Jerusalem,
And held your trailing lutestring up
yourself

From brushing the twelve stones, for fear
of some

Small speck as little as a needle-prick,
White stitched on white,—the child
would keep to me,
Would choose his poor lost Marian, like
me best,

And, though you stretched your arms,
cry back and cling,

As we do when God says it's time to die
And bids us go up higher. Leave us, then;
We two are happy. Does he push me off?
He's satisfied with me, as I with him.'

'So soft to one, so hard to others! Nay,
I cried, more angry than she melted me,

'We make henceforth a cushion of our
faults

To sit and practise easy virtues on?
I thought a child was given to sanctify
A woman,—set her in the sight of all
The clear-eyed heavens, a chosen
minister

To do their business and lead spirits up
The difficult blue heights. A woman
lives,

Not bettered, quickened toward the truth
and good

Through being a mother? . . . then she's
none! although
She damps her baby's cheeks by kissing
them,

As we kill roses.'

'Kill! O Christ,' she said,
And turned her wild sad face from side
to side

With most despairing wonder in it,
'What,
What have you in your souls against me
then,

All of you? am I wicked, do you think?
God knows me, trusts me with the child;
but you,

You think me really wicked?'
'Complaisant,'

I answered softly, 'to a wrong you've
done,
Because of certain profits,—which is
wrong

Beyond the first wrong, Marian. When
you left
The pure place and the noble heart, to
take

The hand of a seducer' . . .
'Whom? whose hand?
I took the hand of' . . .

Springing up erect
And lifting up the child at full arm's
length,

As if to bear him like an oriflamme
Unconquerable to armies of reproach,—
'By him,' she said, 'my child's head
and its curls,

By these blue eyes no woman born could
dare

A perjury on, I make my mother's oath,
That if I left that Heart, to lighten it,
The blood of mine was still, except for
grief!

No cleaner maid than I was, took a step
To a sadder end,—no matron-mother
now
Looks backward to her early maidenhood
Through chaster pulses. I speak steadily;
And if I lie so, . . . if, being fouled in will
And paltered with in soul by devil's lust,
I dared to bid this angel take my part, . . .
Would God sit quiet, let us think, in
heaven,
Nor strike me dumb with thunder! Yet
I speak:

He clears me therefore. What,
“seduced”’s your word?
Do wolves seduce a wandering fawn in
France?
Do eagles, who have pinched a lamb
with claws,
Seduce it into carrion? So with me.
I was not ever, as you say, seduced,
But simply, murdered.

There she paused, and sighed,
With such a sigh as drops from agony
To exhaustion,—sighing while she let
the babe
Slide down upon her bosom from her
arms,
And all her face’s light fell after him
Like a torch quenched in falling. Down
she sank,
And sate upon the bedside with the child.

But I, convicted, broken utterly,
With woman’s passion clung about her
waist
And kissed her hair and eyes,—‘I have
been wrong,
Sweet Marian’ . . . (weeping in a tender
rage)
‘Sweet holy Marian! And now, Marian,
now,
I’ll use your oath although my lips are
hard,
And by the child, my Marian, by the child,
I swear his mother shall be innocent
Before my conscience, as in the open
Book

Of Him who reads for judgement. Innocent,
My sister! let the night be ne’er so dark
The moon is surely somewhere in the
sky;
So surely is your whiteness to be found

Through all dark facts. But pardon,
pardon me,
And smile a little; Marian,—for the child,
If not for me, my sister.’

The poor lip
Just motioned for the smile and let it go:
And then, with scarce a stirring of the
mouth,
As if a statue spoke that could not
breathe,
But spoke on calm between its marble
lips,—

‘I’m glad, I’m very glad you clear me so.
I should be sorry that you set me down
With harlots, or with even a better name
Which misbecomes his mother. For the
rest,

I am not on a level with your love,
Nor ever was, you know,—but now am
worse,
Because that world of yours has dealt
with me

As when the hard sea bites and chews
a stone
And changes the first form of it. I’ve
marked

A shore of pebbles bitten to one shape
From all the various life of madrepores;
And so, that little stone, called Marian
Erle,

Picked up and dropped by you and
another friend,
Was ground and tortured by the inces-
sant sea

And bruised from what she was,—
changed! death’s a change,
And she, I said, was murdered; Marian’s
dead.

What can you do with people when they
are dead,

But, if you are pious, sing a hymn and go,
Or, if you are tender, heave a sigh and go,
But go by all means,—and permit the
grass

To keep its green feud up ‘twixt them
and you!

Then leave me,—let me rest. I’m dead,
I say,
And if, to save the child from death as
well,

The mother in me has survived the rest,
Why, that’s God’s miracle you must
not tax,

I'm not less dead for that : I'm nothing more
 But just a mother. Only for the child
 I'm warm, and cold, and hungry, and
 afraid,
 And smell the flowers a little and see
 the sun,
 And speak still, and am silent,—just for
 him !
 I pray you therefore to mistake me not
 And treat me haply as I were alive ;
 For though you ran a pin into my soul,
 I think it would not hurt nor trouble me.
 Here's proof, dear lady,—in the market-
 place
 But now, you promised me to say a word
 About . . . a friend, who once, long years
 ago,
 Took God's place toward me, when He
 leans and loves
 And does not thunder, . . . whom at last
 I left,
 As all of us leave God. You thought
 perhaps
 I seemed to care for hearing of that
 friend ?
 Now, judge me ! we have sate here
 half an hour
 And talked together of the child and me,
 And I not asked as much as, "What's
 the thing
 You had to tell me of the friend . . . the
 friend ?"
 He's sad, I think you said,—he's sick
 perhaps ?
 'Tis nought to Marian if he's sad or sick.
 Another would have crawled beside
 your foot
 And prayed your words out. Why,
 a beast, a dog,
 A starved cat, if he had fed it once with
 milk,
 Would show less hardness. But I'm
 dead, you see,
 And that explains it.'
 Poor, poor thing, she spoke
 And shook her head, as white and calm
 as frost
 On days too cold for raining any more,
 But still with such a face, so much alive,
 I could not choose but take it on my arm
 And stroke the placid patience of its
 cheeks,—

Then told my story out, of Romney Leigh,
 How, having lost her, sought her, missed
 her still,
 He, broken-hearted for himself and her,
 Had drawn the curtains of the world
 awhile
 As if he had done with morning.
 There I stopped,
 For when she gasped, and pressed me
 with her eyes,
 'And now . . . how is it with him ? tell
 me now,'
 I felt the shame of compensated grief,
 And chose my words with scruple—
 slowly stepped
 Upon the slippery stones set here and
 there
 Across the sliding water. 'Certainly,
 As evening empties morning into night,
 Another morning takes the evening up
 With healthful, providential interchange;
 And, though he thought still of her,'—
 'Yes, she knew,
 She understood : she had supposed in-
 deed
 That, as one stops a hole upon a flute,
 At which a new note comes and shapes
 the tune,
 Excluding her would bring a worthier in,
 And, long ere this, that Lady Waldemar
 He loved so' . . .
 'Loved,' I started,—'loved her so !
 Now tell me' . . .
 'I will tell you,' she replied :
 'But, since we're taking oaths, you'll
 promise first
 That he in England, he, shall never learn
 In what a dreadful trap his creature here,
 Round whose unworthy neck he had
 meant to tie
 The honourable ribbon of his name,
 Fell unaware and came to butchery :
 Because,—I know him,—as he takes to
 heart
 The grief of every stranger, he's not like
 To banish mine as far as I should choose
 In wishing him most happy. Now he
 leaves
 To think of me, perverse, who went my
 way,
 Unkind, and left him,—but if once he
 knew . . .
 Ah, then, the sharp nail of my cruel wrong

Would fasten me for ever in his sight,
Like some poor curious bird, through
each spread wing

Nailed high up over a fierce hunter's fire,
To spoil the dinner of all tenderer folk
Come in by chance. Nay, since your

Marian's dead,
You shall not hang her up, but dig a hole
And bury her in silence! ring no bells.'

I answered gaily, though my whole
voice wept,
'We'll ring the joy-bells, not the
funeral-bells,
Because we have her back, dead or alive.'

She never answered that, but shook her
head;
Then low and calm, as one who, safe in
heaven,
Shall tell a story of his lower life,
Unmoved by shame or anger,—so she
spoke.

She told me she had loved upon her knees,
As others pray, more perfectly absorbed
In the act and inspiration. She felt his
For just his uses, not her own at all,
His stool, to sit on or put up his foot,
His cup, to fill with wine or vinegar,
Whichever drink might please him at
the chance

For that should please her always: let
him write

His name upon her... it seemed natural;
It was most precious, standing on his
shelf,

To wait until he chose to lift his hand.
Well, well,—I saw her then, and must
have seen

How bright her life went floating on
her love,
Like wicks the housewives send afloat
on oil

Which feeds them to a flame that lasts
the night.

To do good seemed so much his business,
That, having done it, she was faint to think,
Must fill up his capacity for joy.
At first she never mooted with herself
If he was happy, since he made her so,
Or if she loved her, being so much beloved.
Who thinks of asking if the sun is light,

Observing that it lightens? who's bold,
To question God of His felicity?
Still less. And thus she took for granted
first

What first of all she should have put to
proof,
And sinned against him so, but only so.
'What could you hope,' she said, 'of
such as she?

You take a kid you like, and turn it out
In some fair garden: though the creature's
fond

And gentle, it will leap upon the beds
And break your tulips, bite your tender
trees;

The wonder would be if such innocence
Spoiled less: a garden is no place for kids.'

And, by degrees, when he who had
chosen her

Brought in his courteous and benignant
friends

To spend their goodness on her, which
she took

So very gladly, as a part of his,—
By slow degrees it broke on her slow sense
That she too in that Eden of delight
Was out of place, and, like the silly kid,
Still did most mischief where she meant
most love.

A thought enough to make a woman mad
(No beast in this but she may well go mad);
That saying 'I am thine to love and use'
May blow the plague in her protesting
breath

To the very man for whom she claims
to die,—

That, clinging round his neck, she pulls
him down

And drowns him,—and that, lavishing
her soul,

She hales perdition on him. 'So, being
'mad,'

Said Marian . . . 'Ah—who stirred such
thoughts, you ask?

Whose fault it was, that she should have
such thoughts?

None's fault, none's fault. The light
comes, and we see:

But if it were not truly for our eyes,
There would be nothing seen, for all the
light.

And so with Marian: if she saw at last,
The sense was in her,—Lady Waldemar
Had spoken all in vain else.'

'O my heart,
O prophet in my heart,' I cried aloud,
'Then Lady Waldemar spoke!'

'Did she speak,'
Mused Marian softly, 'or did she only
sign!'

Or did she put a word into her face
And look, and so impress you with the
word?

Or leave it in the foldings of her gown,
Like rosemary smells a movement will
shake out

When no one's conscious? who shall
say, or guess?

One thing alone was certain—from the
day

The gracious lady paid a visit first,
She, Marian, saw things different,—felt
distrust

Of all that sheltering roof of circumstance
Her hopes were building into with clay
nests:

Her heart was restless, pacing up and
down

And fluttering, like dumb creatures before
storms,

Not knowing wherefore she was ill at
ease.'

'And still the lady came,' said Marian
Erle,

'Much oftener than *he* knew it, Mister
Leigh.

She bade me never tell him she had come,
She liked to love me better than he knew,

So very kind was Lady Waldemar:
And every time she brought with her

more light,

And every light made sorrow clearer...
Well,

Ah, well! we cannot give her blame for
that;

'Twould be the same thing if an angel
came,

Whose right should prove our wrong.
And every time

The lady came, she looked more beautiful
And spoke more like a flute among green

trees,

Until at last, as one, whose heart being sad

On hearing lovely music, suddenly
Dissolves in weeping, I brake out in tears
Before her, asked her counsel,—"Had
I erred

In being too happy? would she set me
straight?

For she, being wise and good and born
above

The flats I had never climbed from, could
perceive

If such as I, might grow upon the hills;
And whether such poor herb sufficed to
grow,

For Romney Leigh to break his fast
upon't,—

Or would he pine on such, or haply
starve?"

She wrapt me in her generous arms at
once,

And let me dream a moment how it feels
To have a real mother, like some girls:
But when I looked, her face was
younger... aye,

Youth's too bright not to be a little hard,
And beauty keeps itself still uppermost,
That's true!—Though Lady Waldemar
was kind

She hurt me, hurt, as if the morning-sun
Should smite us on the eyelids when we
sleep,

And wake us up with headache. Aye,
and soon

Was light enough to make my heart
ache too:

She told me truths I asked for,—'twas
my fault,—

"That Romney could not love me, if he
would,
As men call loving: there are bloods
that flow

Together like some rivers and not mix,
Through contraries of nature. Heindre
Was set to wed me, to espouse my class,
Act out a rash opinion,—and, once wed,
So just a man and gentle could not choose
But make my life as smooth as marriage-
ring,

Bespeak me mildly, keep me a cheerful
house,

With servants, brooches, all the flowers
I liked,

And pretty dresses, silk the whole year
round"...

At which I stopped her,—“This for me.
 And now
 For *him*.”—She hesitated,—truth grew
 hard;
 She owned, “‘Twas plain a man like
 Romney Leigh
 Required a wife more level to himself.
 If day by day he had to bend his height
 To pick up sympathies, opinions,
 thoughts,
 And interchange the common talk of life
 Which helps a man to live as well as talk,
 His days were heavily taxed. Who buys
 a staff
 To fit the hand, that reaches but the knee?
 He'd feel it bitter to be forced to miss
 The perfect joy of married suited pairs,
 Who, bursting through the separating
 hedge
 Of personal dues with that sweet eglan-
 tine
 Of equal love, keep saying, ‘So we think,
 It strikes us,—that's our fancy.’”—When
 I asked
 If earnest will, devoted love, employed
 In youth like mine, would fail to raise
 me up
 As two strong arms will always raise a
 child
 To a fruit hung overhead, she sighed and
 sighed . . .
 “That could not be,” she feared. “You
 take a pink,
 You dig about its roots and water it
 And so improve it to a garden-pink,
 But will not change it to a heliotrope,
 The kind remains. And then, the harder
 truth—
 This Romney Leigh, so rash to leap a pale,
 So bold for conscience, quick for martyr-
 dom,
 Would suffer steadily and never flinch,
 But suffer surely and keenly, when his
 class
 Turned shoulder on him for a shameful
 match,
 And set him up as ninepin in their talk
 To bowl him down with jestings.”—
 There, she paused;
 And when I used the pause in doubting
 that
 We wronged him after all in what we
 feared—

“Suppose such things could never touch
 him more
 In his high conscience (if the things
 should be)
 Than, when the queen sits in an upper
 room,
 The horses in the street can spatter
 her!”—
 A moment, hope came,—but the lady
 closed
 That door and nicked the lock and shut
 it out,
 Observing wisely that, “the tender heart
 Which made him over-soft to a lower
 class,
 Would scarcely fail to make him sensitive
 To a higher,—how they thought and
 what they felt.”

‘Alas, alas,’ said Marian, rocking slow
 The pretty baby who was near asleep,
 The eyelids creeping over the blue
 balls,—
 ‘She made it clear, too clear—I saw the
 whole!
 And yet who knows if I had seen my way
 Straight out of it by looking, though
 'twas clear,
 Unless the generous lady, ‘ware of this,
 Had set her own house all afire for me
 To light me forwards! Leaning on my
 face
 Her heavy agate eyes which crushed
 my will,
 She told me tenderly (as when men
 come
 To a bedside to tell people they must die).
 “She knew of knowledge,—aye, of
 knowledge knew,
 That Romney Leigh had loved *her*
 formerly.
 And *she* loved *him*, she might say, now
 the chance
 Was past,—but that, of course, he never
 guessed.—
 For something came between them,
 something thin
 As a cobweb, catching every fly of doubt
 To hold it buzzing at the window-pane
 And help to dim the daylight. Ah,
 man's pride
 Or woman's—which is greatest? most
 averse

To brushing cobwebs? Well, but she
and he
Remained fast friends; it seemed not
more than so,
Because he had bound his hands and
could not stir.
An honourable man, if somewhat rash;
And she, not even for Romney, would
she spill

A blot . . . as little even as a tear . . .
Upon his marriage-contract,—notto gain
A better joy for two than came by that:
For, though I stood between her heart
and heaven,
She loved me wholly.”,

Did I laugh or curse?
I think I sate there silent, hearing all,
Aye, hearing double,—Marian’s tale, at
once,
And Romney’s marriage-vow, ‘*I’ll keep
to THEE*,’
Which means that woman-serpent. Is
it time
For church now?

Lady Waldemar spoke more,
Continued Marian, ‘but, as when a soul
Will pass out through the sweetness of
a song
Beyond it, voyaging the uphill road,
Even so mine wandered from the things
I heard

To those I suffered. It was afterward
I shaped the resolution to the act.
For many hours we talked. What need
to talk?

The fate was clear and close; it touched
my eyes;
But still the generous lady tried to keep
The case afloat, and would not let it go,
And argued, struggled upon Marian’s
side,
Which was not Romney’s! though she
little knew
What ugly monster would take up the
end,—
What gripping death within the drowning
death
Was ready to complete my sum of death.’

I thought,—Perhaps he’s sliding now
the ring
Upon that woman’s finger . . .
She went on :

‘The lady, failing to prevail her way,
Up-gathered my torn wishes from the
ground
And pieced them with her strong
benevolence;
And, as I thought I could breathe freer
air
Away from England, going without pause,
Without farewell, just breaking with a
jerk
The blossomed offshoot from my thorny
life,—
She promised kindly to provide the
means,
With instant passage to the colonies
And full protection,—“would commit
me straight
To one who once had been her waiting-
maid
And had the customs of the world, intent
On changing England for Australia
Herself, to carry out her fortune so.”
For which I thanked the Lady Waldemar,
As men upon their death-beds thank
last friends
Who lay the pillow straight: it is not
much,
And yet ‘tis all of which they are capable,
This lying smoothly in a bed to die.
And so, ‘twas fixed;—and so, from day
to day,
The woman named came in to visit me.’
Just then the girl stopped speaking,—
sate erect,
And stared at me as if I had been a ghost
(Perhaps I looked as white as any ghost)
With large-eyed horror. ‘Does God
make,’ she said,
‘All sorts of creatures really, do you
think?
Or is it that the Devil slavers them
So excellently, that we come to doubt
Who’s stronger, He who makes, or he
who mars?
I never liked the woman’s face or voice
Or ways: it made me blush to look aher;
It made me tremble if she touched my
hand;
And when she spoke a fondling word
I shrank
As if one hated me who had power to
hurt;

And, every time she came, my veins ran cold

As somebody were walking on my grave.
At last I spoke to Lady Waldemar:
" Could such an one be good to trust?"
I asked.

Whereat the lady stroked my cheek and laughed

Her silver-laugh (one must be born to laugh,

To put such music in it),—" Foolish girl,
Your scattered wits are gathering wool beyond

The sheep-walk reaches!—leave the thing to me."

And therefore, half in trust, and half in scorn

That I had heart still for another fear
In such a safe despair, I left the thing.

'The rest is short. I was obedient :
I wrote my letter which delivered him
From Marian to his own prosperities,
And followed that bad guide. The lady?—hush,

I never blame the lady. Ladies who
Sit high, however willing to look down,
Will scarce see lower than their dainty feet;

And Lady Waldemar saw less than I,
With what a Devil's daughter I went forth
Along the swine's road, down the precipice,

In such a curl of hell-foam caught and choked,

No shriek of soul in anguish could pierce through

To fetch some help. They say there's help in heaven

For all such cries. But if one cries from hell . . .

What then?—the heavens are deaf upon that side.

'A woman .. hear me, let me make it plain, ..

A woman .. not a monster .. both her breasts

Made right to suckle babes .. she took me off

A woman also, young and ignorant

And heavy with my grief, my two poor eyes

Near washed away with weeping, till the trees,

The blessed unaccustomed trees and fields
Ran either side the train like stranger dogs

Unworthy of any notice,—took me off
So dull, so blind, so only half alive,
Not seeing by what road, nor by what ship,

Nor toward what place, nor to what end of all.

Men carry a corpse thus,—past the doorway, past

The garden-gate, the children's playground, up

The green lane,—then they leave it in the pit,

To sleep and find corruption, cheek to cheek

With him who stinks since Friday.

'But suppose ;
To go down with one's soul into the grave,
To go down half dead, half alive, I say,
And wake up with corruption, .. cheek to cheek

With him who stinks since Friday !
There it is,

And that's the horror of 't, Miss Leigh.

' You feel ?
You understand?—no, do not look at me,
But understand. The blank, blind, weary way,

Which led, where'er it led, away at least ;

The shifted ship, to Sydney or to France,
Still bound, wherever else, to another land ;

The swooning sickness on the dismal sea,
The foreign shore, the shameful house,
the night,

The feeble blood, the heavy-headed grief, ..

No need to bring their damnable drugged cup,

And yet they brought it. Hell's so prodigal

Of devil's gifts, hunts liberally in packs,
Will kill no poor small creature of the wilds

But fifty red wide throats must smoke at it,

As his at me .. when waking up at last ..
I told you that I waked up in the grave.

'Enough so!—it is plain enough so. True.
We wretches cannot tell all our wrong
Without offence to decent happy folk.
I know that we must scrupulously hint
With half-words, delicate reserves, the
thing
Which no one scrupled we should feel
in full.
Let pass the rest, then; only leave my
oath
Upon this sleeping child,—man's vio-
lence,
Not man's seduction, made me what I am.
As lost as . . . I told *him* I should be lost.
When mothers fail us, can we help our-
selves?
That's fatal!—And you call it being lost.
That down came next day's noon and
caught me there
Half gibbering and half raving on the
floor,
And wondering what had happened up
in heaven,
That suns should dare to shine when
God Himself
Was certainly abolished.

'I was mad,
How many weeks, I know not,—many
weeks.
I think they let me go when I was mad.
They feared my eyes and loosed me, as
boys might
A mad dog which they had tortured.
Up and down
I went, by road and village, over tracts
Of open foreign country, large and
strange,
Crossed everywhere by long thin poplar-
lines
Like fingers of some ghastly skeleton
Hand
Through sunlight and through moonlight
evermore
Pushed out from hell itself to pluck me
back,
And resolute to get me, slow and sure;
While every roadside Christ upon his
cross
Hungredening through his gory wounds
at me,
And shook his nails in anger, and came
down
To follow a mile after, wading up

The low vines and green wheat, crying
"Take the girl!
She's none of mine from henceforth."
Then I knew
(But this is somewhat dimmer than the
rest)
The charitable peasants gave me bread
And leave to sleep in straw : and twice
they tied,
At parting, Mary's image round my
neck—
How heavy it seemed! as heavy as a
stone ;
A woman has been strangled with less
weight:
I threw it in a ditch to keep it clean
And ease my breath a little, when none
looked :
I did not need such safeguards :—brutal
men
Stopped short, Miss Leigh, in insult,
when they had seen
My face,—I must have had an awful
look.
And so I lived: the weeks passed on,—
I lived.
'Twas living my old tramp-life o'er again,
But, this time, in a dream, and hunted
round
By some prodigious Dream-fear at my
back,
Which ended yet: my brain cleared
presently;
And there I sat, one evening, by the road,
I, Marian Erie, myself, alone, undone,
Facing a sunset low upon the flats
As if it were the finish of all time,
The great red stone upon my sepulchre,
Which angels were too weak to roll away.

SEVENTH BOOK

'THE woman's motive? shall we daub
ourselves
With finding roots for nettles? 'tis soft
clay
And easily explored. She had the means,
The moneys, by the lady's liberal grace,
In trust for that Australian scheme and
me,
Which so, that she might clutch with
both her hands

And chink to her naughty uses undis-
turbed,
She served me (after all it was not strange,
'Twas only what my mother would have
done)

A motherly, right damnable good turn.

'Well, after. There are nettles every-
where,
But smooth green grasses are more
common still;

The blue of heaven is larger than the
cloud;

A miller's wife at Clichy took me in
And spent her pity on me,—made me calm
And merely very reasonably sad.

She found me a servant's place in Paris,
where

I tried to take the cast-off life again,
And stood as quiet as a beaten ass
Who, having fallen through overloads,
stands up

To let them charge him with another
pack.

'A few months, so. My mistress, young
and light,

Was easy with me, less for kindness than
Because she led, herself, an easy time
Betwixt her lover and her looking-glass;
Scarce knowing which way she was
praised the most.

She felt so pretty and so pleased all day
She could not take the trouble to be cross,
But sometimes, as I stooped to tie her
shoe,

Would tap me softly with her slender foot
Still restless with the last night's dancing
in 't.

And say, "Fie, pale-face! are you English
girls

All grave and silent? mass-book still,
and Lent?

And first-communion pallor on your
cheeks,

Worn past the time for 't? little fool, be
gay!"

At which she vanished like a fairy,
through

A gap of silver laughter.

'Came an hour
When all went otherwise. She did not
speak,

But clenched her brows, and clapped me
with her eyes

As if a viper with a pair of tongs,
Too far for any touch, yet near enough
To view the writhing creature,—then at
last,

"Stand still there, in the holy Virgin's
name,

Thou Marian; thou'rt no reputable girl,
Although sufficient dull for twenty saints!
I think thou mock'st me and my house,"
she said;

"Confess thou'll be a mother in a month,
Thou mask of saintship."

"Could I answer her?

The light broke in so. It meant *that*
then, *that*?

I had not thought of that, in all my
thoughts,

Through all the cold, numb aching of
my brow,

Through all the heaving of impatient life
Which threw me on death at intervals,—
through all

The outbreak of the fountains of my heart
The rains had swelled too large: it
could mean *that*!

Did God make mothers out of victims,
then,

And set such pure amens to hideous
deeds?

Why not? He overflows an ugly grave
With violets which blossom in the spring.
And I could be a mother in a month?

I hope it was not wicked to be glad.
I lifted up my voice and wept, and
laughed,

To heaven, not her, until it tore my throat.

"Confess, confess!"—what was there
to confess,

Except man's cruelty, except my wrong?

Except this anguish, or this ecstasy?
This shame or glory? The light woman
there

Was small to take it in: an acorn-cup
Would take the sea in sooner.

"Good," she cried;
"Unmarried and a mother, and she
laughs!"

These unchaste girls are always impudent.

Get out, intriguer! leave my house and
trot.

I wonder you should look me in the face,
With such a filthy secret."

"Then I rolled
My scanty bundle up and went my way,
Washed white with weeping, shuddering
head and foot
With blind hysterick passion, staggering
forth
Beyond those doors. 'Twas natural of
course
She should not ask me where I meant
to sleep;
I might sleep well beneath the heavy
Seine,

Like others of my sort; the bed was laid
For us. But any woman, womanly,
Had thought of him who should be in
a month,
The sinless babe that should be in a month,
And if by chance he might be warmer
housed
Than underneath such dreary dripping
eaves.'

I broke on Marian there. 'Yet she
herself,
A wife, I think, had scandals of her own,
A lover not her husband.'
'Aye,' she said,
'But gold and meal are measured other-
wise;
I learnt so much at school,' said Marian
Erle.

'O crooked world,' I cried, 'ridiculous
If not so lamentable! 'Tis the way
With these light women of a thrifty vice,
My Marian,—always hard upon the rent
In any sister's virtue! while they keep
Their own so darned and patched with
perfidy,
That, though a rag itself, it looks as well
Across a street, in balcony or coach,
As any perfect stuff might. For my part,
I'd rather take the wind-side of the stews
Than touch such women with my finger-
end!
They top the poor street-walker by
their lie
And look the better for being so much
worse:
The devil's most devilish when respect-
able.

But you, dear, and your story.'
'All the rest
Is here,' she said, and signed upon the
child.
'I found a mistress-sempstress who was
kind

And let me sew in peace among her girls.
And what was better than to draw the
threads
All day and half the night for him and him!
And so I lived for him, and so he lives,
And so I know, by this time, God lives
too.'

She smiled beyond the sun and ended so,
And all my soul rose up to take her part
Against the world's successes, virtues,
fames.

'Come with me, sweetest sister,' I re-
turned,
'And sit within my house and do me good
From henceforth, thou and thine! ye
are my own
From henceforth. I am lonely in the
world,
And thou art lonely, and the child is half
An orphan. Come,—and henceforth
thou and I
Being still together will not miss a friend,
Nor he a father, since two mothers shall
Make that up to him. I am journeying
south,
And in my Tuscan home I'll find a niche
And set thee there, my saint, the child
and thee,

And burn the lights of love before thy face,
And ever at thy sweet look cross myself
From mixing with the world's prosperi-
ties;
That so, in gravity and holy calm,
We two may live on toward the truer
life.'

She looked me in the face and answered
not,
Nor signed she was unworthy, nor gave
thanks,
But took the sleeping child and held it out
To meet my kiss, as if requiting me
And trusting me at once. And thus, at
once,
I carried him and her to where I live;
She's there now, in the little room, asleep,

I hear the soft child-breathing through
the door,
And all three of us, at to-morrow's break,
Pass onward, homeward, to our Italy.
Oh, Romney Leigh, I have your debts
to pay,
And I'll be just and pay them.

But yourself!

To pay your debts is scarcely difficult,
To buy your life is nearly impossible,
Being sold away to Lamia. My head
aches,
I cannot see my road along this dark;
Nor can I creep and grope, as fits the dark,
For these foot-catching robes of woman-
hood:

A man might walk a little . . . but I!—

He loves

The Lamia-woman,—and I, write to him
What stops his marriage, and destroys
his peace,—
Or what perchaps shall simply trouble him,
Until she only need to touch his sleeve
With just a finger's tremulous white flame,
Saying, ‘Ah,—Aurora Leigh! a pretty
tale,
A very pretty poet! I can guess
The motive’—then, to catch his eyes
in hers

And vow she does not wonder,—and
they two
To break in laughter as the sea along
A melancholy coast, and float up higher,
In such a laugh, their fatal weeds of love!
Aye, fatal, aye. And who shall answer me
Fate has not hurried tides,—and if to-
night

My letter would not be a night too late,
An arrow shot into a man that's dead,
To prove a vain intention? Would I show
The new wife vile, to make the husband
mad?

No, Lamia! shut the shutters, bar the
doors

From every glimmer on thy serpent-skin!
I will not let thy hideous secret out
To agonize the man I love—I mean
The friend I love . . . as friends love.

It is strange,
To-day while Marian told her story like
To absorb most listeners, how I listened
chief

To a voice not hers, nor yet that enemy's,

Nor God's in wrath, . . . but one that
mixed with mine

Long years ago among the garden-trees,
And said to me, to me too, ‘Be my wife,
Aurora.’ It is strange with what a swell
Of yearning passion, as a snow of ghosts
Might beat against the impervious door
of heaven,

I thought, ‘Now, if I had been a woman,
such

As God made women, to save men by
love,—

By just my love I might have saved this
man,

And made a nobler poem for the world
Than all I have failed in.’ But I failed
besides

In this; and now he's lost! through me
alone!

And, by my only fault, his empty house
Sucks in, at this same hour, a wind from
hell

To keep his hearth cold, make his case-
ments creak

For ever to the tune of plague and sin—
O Romney, O my Romney, O my friend,
My cousin and friend! my helper, when
I would,

My love, that might be! mine!

Why, how one weeps
When one's too weary! Were a wit-
ness by,

He'd say some folly . . . that I loved the
man,

Who knows? . . . and make me laugh
again for scorn.

At strongest, women are as weak in flesh,
As men, at weakest, vilest are in soul:
So, hard for women to keep pace with
men!

As well give up at once, sit down at once,
And weep as I do. Tears, tears! why
we weep?

Tis worth inquiry!—that we've shamed
a life,

Or lost a love, or missed a world, perhaps?
By no means. Simply, that we've
walked too far,

Or talked too much, or felt the wind i'
the east,—

And so we weep, as if both body and soul
Broke up in water—this way.

Poor mixed rags

Forsooth we're made of, like those other
dolls

That lean with pretty faces into fairs.
It seems as if I had a man in me,
Despising such a woman.

Yet indeed,
To see a wrong or suffering moves us all
To undo it though we should undo our-
selves,
Aye, all the more, that we undo ourselves;
That's womanly, past doubt, and not ill-
moved.

A natural movement therefore, on my
part,
To fill the chair up of my cousin's wife,
And save him from a devil's company!
We're all so,—made so—'tis our woman's
trade

To suffer torment for another's ease.
The world's male chivalry has perished
out,
But women are knights-errant to the last;
And if Cervantes had been Shakespeare
too,

He had made his Don a Donna.
So it clears,

Put away
This weakness. If, as I have just now said,
A man's within me,—let him act himself,
Ignoring the poor conscious trouble of
blood

That's called the woman merely. I will
write

Plain words to England,—if too late,
too late.

If ill-accounted, then accounted ill;
We'll trust the heavens with something.

'Dear Lord Howe,
You'll find a story on another leaf
Of Marian Erle,—what noble friend of
yours

She trusted once, through what flagitious
means,

To what disastrous ends;—the story's
true.

I found her wandering on the Paris quays,
A babe upon her breast,—unnatural,
Unseasonable outcast on such snow
Unthawed to this time. I will tax in this
Your friendship, friend, if that convicted

She

Be not his wife yet, to denounce the facts

To himself,—but, otherwise, to let them
pass

On tip-toe like escaping murderers,
And tell my cousin merely—Marian lives,
Is found, and finds her home with such
a friend,

Myself, Aurora. Which good news,
"She's found,"
Will help to make him merry in his love:
I send it, tell him, for my marriage-gift,
As good as orange-water for the nerves,
Or perfumed gloves for headache,—
though aware

That he, except of love, is scarcely sick:
I mean the new love this time, . . . since
last year.

Such quick forgetting on the part of men!
Is any shrewder trick upon the cards
To enrich them? pray instruct me how
'tis done:

First, clubs,—and while you look at
clubs, 'tis spades;
That's the prodigy. The lightning strikes
a man,

And when we think to find him dead
and charred..

Why, there he is on a sudden, playing
pipes

Beneath the splintered elm-tree! Crime
and shame

And all their hoggery trample your
smooth world,

Nor leave more footmarks than Apollo's
kine

Whose hoofs were muffled by the thiev-
ing god

In tamarisk-leaves and myrtle. I'm so
sad,

So weary and sad to-night, I'm some-
what sour,—

Forgive me. To be blue and shrewd at once,
Exceeds all toleration, except yours,
But yours, I know, is infinite. Farewell.
To-morrow we take train for Italy.

Speak gently of me to your gracious wife,
As one, however far, shall yet be near
In loving wishes to your house.'

I sign.
And now I loose my heart upon a page,
This—

'Lady Waldemar, I'm very glad
I never liked you; which you knew so
well

You spared me, in your turn, to like me much:
 Your liking surely had done worse for me
 Than has your loathing, though the last appears
 Sufficiently unscrupulous to hurt,
 And not afraid of judgement. Now, there's space
 Between our faces,—I stand off, as if I judged a stranger's portrait and pronounced
 Indifferently the type was good or bad.
 What matter to me that the lines are false,
 I ask you? did I ever ink my lips
 By drawing your name through them as a friend's,
 Or touch your hands as lovers do?
 Thank God I never did: and since you're proved so vile,
 Aye, vile, I say,—we'll show it presently,—
 I'm not obliged to nurse my friend in you,
 Or wash out my own blots, in counting yours,
 Or even excuse myself to honest souls Who seek to press my lip or clasp my palm,—
 "Alas, but Lady Waldemar came first!"
 'Tis true, by this time you may near me so
 That you're my cousin's wife. You've gambled deep
 As Lucifer, and won the morning-star In that case,—and the noble house of Leigh
 Must henceforth with its good roof shelter you:
 I cannot speak and burn you up between Those rafters, I who am born a Leigh,— nor speak
 And pierce your breast through Romney's, I who live His friend and cousin,—so, you're safe.
 You two Must grow together like the tares and wheat
 Till God's great fire.—But make the best of time.

'And hide this letter: let it speak no more Than I shall, how you tricked poor Marian Erie,
 And set her own love digging its own grave
 Within her green hope's pretty garden-ground,—
 Aye, sent her forth with some one of your sort To a wicked house in France, from which she fled With curses in her eyes and ears and throat,
 Her whole soul choked with curses,— mad in short,
 And madly scouring up and down for weeks
 The foreign hedgeless country, lone and lost,— So innocent, male-fiends might slink within Remote hell-corners, seeing her so defiled.
 'But you,—you are a woman and more bold.
 To do you justice, you'd not shrink to face ..
 We'll say, the unsledged life in the other room,
 Which, treading down God's corn, you trod in sight Of all the dogs, in reach of all the guns,—
 Aye, Marian's babe, her poor unfathered child, Her yearling babe!—you'd face him when he wakes And opens up his wonderful blue eyes: You'd meet them and not wink perhaps, nor fear God's triumph in them and supreme revenge When righting His creation's balance-scale
 (You pulled as low as Tophet) to the top Of most celestial innocence. For me Who am not as bold, I own those infant eyes Have set me praying.
 'While they look at heaven, No need of protestation in my words

Against the place you've made them!
let them look.
They'll do your business with the
heavens, be sure:
I spare you common curses.

'Ponder this;
If haply you're the wife of Romney
Leigh

(For which inheritance beyond your birth
You sold that poisonous porridge called
your soul),

I charge you, be his faithful and true wife!
Keep warm his hearth and clean his
board, and, when
He speaks, be quick with your obedience;
Still grind your paltry wants and low
desires

To dust beneath his heel; though, even
thus,

The ground must hurt him,—it was writ
of old,

"Ye shall not yoke together ox and ass,"
The nobler and ignobler. Aye, but you
Shall do your part as well as such ill
things

Can do aught good. You shall not vex
him,—mark,

You shall not vex him, jar him when
he's sad,

Or cross him when he's eager. Under-
stand

To trick him with apparent sympathies,
Nor let him see thee in the face too near
And unlearn thy sweet seeming. Pay
the price

Of lies, by being constrained to lie on
still:

'Tis easy for thy sort: a million more
Will scarcely damn thee deeper.

'Doing which
You are very safe from Marian and myself;
We'll breathe as softly as the infant here,
And stir no dangerous embers. Fail
a point,

And show our Romney wounded, ill-
content,

Tormented in his home, we open mouth,
And such a noise will follow, the last
trump's

Will scarcely seem more dreadful, even
to you;

You'll have no pipers after: Romney will
(I know him) push you forth as none of his,

All other men declaring it well done,
While women, even the worst, your
like, will draw
Their skirts back, not to brush you in
the street,
And so I warn you. I'm . . . Aurora
Leigh.'

The letter written I felt satisfied.
The ashes, smouldering in me, were
thrown out

By handfuls from me: I had writ my heart
And wept my tears, and now was cool
and calm;
And, going straightway to the neigh-
bouring room,

I lifted up the curtains of the bed
Where Marian Erie, the babe upon her
arm,

Both faces leaned together like a pair
Of folded innocences self-complete,
Each smiling from the other, smiled and
slept.

There seemed no sin, no shame, no
wrath, no grief.

I felt she too had spoken words that night,
But softer certainly, and said to God,
Who laughs in heaven perhaps that such
as I

Should make ado for such as she.—
'Defiled'

I wrote? 'defiled' I thought her? Stoop,
Stoop lower, Aurora! get the angels'
leave

To creep in somewhere, humbly, on your
knees,

Within this round of sequestration white
In which they have wrapt earth's found-
lings, heaven's elect.

The next day we took train to Italy
And fled on southward in the roar of
steam.

The marriage-bells of Romney must be
loud,

To sound so clear through all: I was not
well,

And truly, though the truth is like a jest,
I could not choose but fancy, half the way,
I stood alone i' the belfry, fifty bells
Of naked iron, mad with merriment
(As one who laughs and cannot stop
himself),

All clanking at me, in me, over me,
Until I shrieked a shriek I could not hear,
And swooned with noise,—but still, along
my swoon.

Was 'ware the baffled changes backward
rang,

Prepared, at each emerging sense, to beat
And crash it out with clangour. I was
weak;

I struggled for the posture of my soul
In upright consciousness of place and
time,

But evermore, 'twixt waking and asleep,
Slipped somehow, staggered, caught at
Marian's eyes

A moment (it is very good for strength
To know that some one needs you to be
strong);

And so recovered what I called myself,
For that time.

I just knew it when we swept

Above the old roofs of Dijon; Lyons
dropped

A spark into the night, half trodden out
Unseen. But presently the winding
Rhône

Washed out the moonlight large along
his banks

Which strained their yielding curves out
clear and clean

To hold it,—shadow of town and castle
blurred

Upon the hurrying river. Such an air
Blew thence upon the forehead,—half
an air

And half a water,—that I leaned and
looked,

Then, turning back on Marian, smiled
to mark

That she looked only on her child, who
slept,

His face toward the moon too.

So we passed

The liberal open country and the close,
And shot through tunnels, like a lightning-wedge

By great Thor-hammers driven through
the rock,

Which, quivering through the intestine
blackness, splits,

And lets it in at once: the train swept in
Athrob with effort, trembling with
resolve,

The fierce denouncing whistle wailing on
And dying off smothered in the shuddering dark,

While we, self-awed, drew troubled
breath, oppressed

As other Titans underneath the pile
And nightmare of the mountains. Out,
at last,

To catch the dawn afloat upon the land!
—Hills slung forth broadly and gauntly
everywhere,

Not cramp'd in their foundations, pushing
wide

Rich outspreads of the vineyards and the
corn

(As if they entertained i' the name of
France),

While, down their straining sides,
streamed manifest

A soil as red as Charlemagne's knightly
blood,

To consecrate the verdure. Some one
said,

'Marseilles! And lo, the city of
Marseilles,

With all her ships behind her, and be-
yond,

The scimitar of ever-shining sea
For right-hand use, bared blue against
the sky!

That night we spent between the purple
heaven

And purple water: I think Marian slept;
But I, as a dog a-watch for his master's
foot,

Who cannot sleep or eat before he hears,
Is a-tiptoe on the deck and watched the night
And listened through the stars for Italy.
Those marriage-bells I spoke of, sounded
far,

As some child's go-cart in the street
beneath

To a dying man who will not pass the day,
And knows it, holding by a hand he loves.
I too sat quite, satisfied with death,
Sate silent: I could hear my own soul
speak,

And had my friend,—for Nature comes
sometimes

And says, 'I am ambassador for God.'
I felt the wind soft from the land of
souls;

The old miraculous mountains heaved in sight,
One straining past another along the shore,
The way of grand dull Odyssean ghosts,
Athirst to drink the cool blue wine of seas
And stare on voyagers. Peak pushing peak
They stood : I watched, beyond that Tyrian belt
Of intense sea betwixt them and the ship,
Down all their sides the misty olive-woods
Dissolving in the weak congenial moon
And still disclosing some brown convent-tower
That seems as if it grew from some brown rock,
Or many a little lighted village, dropt
Like a fallen star upon so high a point,
You wonder what can keep it in its place
From sliding headlong with the waterfalls
Which powder all the myrtle and orange groves
With spray of silver. Thus my Italy
Was stealing on us. Genoa broke with day,
The Doria's long pale palace striking out,
From green hills in advance of the white town,
A marble finger dominant to ships,
Seen glimmering through the uncertain grey of dawn.

And then I did not think, 'my Italy,'
I thought, 'my father!' O my father's house,
Without his presence!—Places are too much
Or else too little, for immortal man,—
Too little, when love's May o'er-grows the ground,
Too much, when that luxuriant robe of green
Is rustling to our ankles in dead leaves.
'Tis only good to be or here or there,
Because we had a dream on such a stone,
Or this or that,—but, once being wholly waked
And come back to the stone without the dream,
We trip upon 't,—alas, and hurt ourselves;

Or else it falls on us and grinds us flat,
The heaviest grave-stone on this burying earth.
—But while I stood and mused, a quiet touch
Fell light upon my arm, and turning round,
A pair of moistened eyes convicted mine.
'What, Marian! is the babe astir so soon?'

'He sleeps,' she answered; 'I have crept up thrice,
And seen you sitting, standing, still at watch.
I thought it did you good till now, but now...'
'But now,' I said, 'you leave the child alone.'

'And you're alone,' she answered,—and she looked
As if I too were something. Sweet the help
Of one we have helped! Thanks, Marian, for such help.

I found a house at Florence on the hill
Of Bellosuardo. 'Tis a tower which keeps
A post of double-observation o'er
That valley of Arno (holding as a hand
The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole
And Mount Morello and the setting sun,
The Vallombrosan mountains opposite,
Which sunrise fills as full as crystal cups
Turned red to the brim because their wine is red.
No sun could die nor yet be born unseen
By dwellers at my villa: morn and eve
Were magnified before us in the pure
Inimitable space and pause of sky,
Intense as angels' garments blanched with God,
Less blue than radiant. From the outer wall
Of the garden drops the mystic floating grey
Of olive trees (with interruptions green
From maize and vine), until 'tis caught and torn
Upon the abrupt black line of cypresses
Which signs the way to Florence. Beautiful

The city lies along the ample vale,
Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza and
street,
The river trailing like a silver cord
Through all, and curling loosely, both
before
And after, over the whole stretch of
land
Sown whitely up and down its opposite
slopes
With farms and villas.

Many weeks had passed,
No word was granted.—Last, a letter
came
From Vincent Carrington :—‘ My dear
Miss Leigh,
You’ve been as silent as a poet should,
When any other man is sure to speak.
If sick, if vexed, if dumb, a silver piece
Will split a man’s tongue,—straight he
speaks and says,
“ Received that cheque.” But you! . .
I send you funds
To Paris, and you make no sign at all.
Remember I’m responsible and wait
A sign of you, Miss Leigh.

‘ Meantime your book
Is eloquent as if you were not dumb ;
And common critics, ordinarily deaf
To such fine meanings, and, like deaf
men, loath
To seem deaf, answering chance-wise,
yes or no,
“ It must be ” or “ it must not ” (most
pronounced
When least convinced), pronounce for
once aright :
You’d think they really heard,—and so
they do . .
The burr of three or four who really hear
And praise your book aright : Fame’s
smallest trump
Is a great ear-trumpet for the deaf as
posts,
No other being effective. Fear not,
friend ;
We think here you have written a good
book,
And you, a worian ! It was in you—yes,
I felt ‘twas in you : yet I doubted half
If that od-force of German Reichenbach,
Which still from female finger-tips burns
blue,

Could strike out as our masculine white
heats
To quicken a man. Forgive me. All my
heart
Is quick with yours since, just a fort-
night since,
I read your book and loved it.
‘ Will you love
My wife, too ? Here’s my secret I
might keep
A month more from you ! but I yield
it up
Because I know you’ll write the sooner
for t,
Most women (of your height even) count-
ing love
Life’s only serious business. Who’s
my wife
That shall be in a month, you ask ? nor
guess ?
Remember what a pair of topaz eyes
You once detected, turned against the
wall,
That morning in my London painting-
room ;
The face half-sketched, and slurred ;
the eyes alone !
But you . . you caught them up with
yours, and said
“ Kate Ward’s eyes, surely.”—Now I
own the truth :
I had thrown them there to keep them
safe from Jove,
They would so naughtily find out their
way
To both the heads of both my Danaës
Where just it made me mad to look at
them.
Such eyes ! I could not paint or think
of eyes
But those,—and so I flung them into
paint
And turned them to the wall’s care.
Aye, but now
I’ve let them out, my Kate’s : I’ve
painted her,
(I change my style and leave mythologies)
The whole sweet face ; it looks upon
my soul
Like a face on water, to beget itself.
A half-length portrait, in a hanging cloak
Like one you wore once ; ‘tis a little
frayed,—

I pressed too for the nude harmonious arm—
 But she, she'd have her way, and have her cloak;
 She said she could be like you only so,
 And would not miss the fortune. Ah, my friend,
 You'll write and say she shall not miss your love
 Through meeting mine? in faith, she would not change.
 She has your books by heart more than my words,
 And quotes you up against me till I'm pushed
 Where, three months since, her eyes were: nay, in fact,
 Nought satisfied her but to make me paint Your last book folded in her dimpled hands
 Instead of my brown palette as I wished,
 And grant me, the presentment had been newer;
 She'd grant me nothing: I compounded for
 The naming of the wedding-day next month,
 And gladly too. 'Tis pretty, to remark How women can love women of your sort,
 And tie their hearts with love-knots to your feet,
 Grow insolent about you against men And put us down by putting up the lip,
 As if a man,—there *are* such, let us own, Who write not ill,—remains a man, poor wretch,
 While you—! Write weaker than Aurora Leigh,
 And there'll be women who believe of you (Besides my Kate) that if you walked on sand You would not leave a footprint.

'Are you put To wonder by my marriage, like poor Leigh?' "Kate Ward!" he said. "Kate Ward!" he said anew. "I thought . ." he said, and stopped,— "I did not think . ."
 And then he dropped to silence. 'Ah, he's changed. I had not seen him, you're aware, for long,

But went of course. I have not touched on this Through all this letter,—conscious of your heart, And writing lightlier for the heavy fact, As clocks are volatile with lead. 'How poor, To say I'm sorry! dear Leigh, dearest Leigh. In those old days of Shropshire,—pardon me,— When he and you fought many a field of gold On what you should do, or you should not do, Make bread or verses (it just came to that), I thought you'd one day draw a silken peace Through a golden ring. I thought so: foolishly, The event proved,—for you went more opposite To each other, month by month, and year by year, Until this happened. God knows best, we say, But hoarsely. When the fever took him first, Just after I had writ to you in France, They tell me Lady Waldemar mixed drinks And counted grains, like any salaried nurse, Excepting that she wept too. Then Lord Howe, You're right about Lord Howe, Lord Howe's a trump, And yet, with such in his hand, a man like Leigh May lose ashedoes. There's an end to all, Yes, even this letter, though this second sheet May find you doubtful. Write a word for Kate: She reads my letters always, like a wife, And if she sees her name I'll see her smile And share the luck. So, bless you, friend of two! I will not ask you what your feeling is At Florence with my pictures; I can bear Your heart a-flutter over the snow-hills: And, just to pace the Pitti with you once,

I'd give a half-hour of to-morrow's walk
With Kate . . . I think so. Vincent Carrington.'

The noon was hot; the air scorched
like the sun
And was shut out. The closed persiani
threw

Their long-scored shadows on my villa-
floor,

And interlined the golden atmosphere
Straight, still,—across the pictures on
the wall,

The statuette on the console (of young
Love

And Psyche made one marble by a kiss),
The low couch where I leaned, the
table near,

The vase of lilies Marian pulled last night
(Each green leaf and each white leaf
ruled in black

As if for writing some new text of fate),
And the open letter, rested on my knee,
But there the lines swerved, trembled,
though I sate

Untroubled, plainly, reading it again
And three times. Well, he's married;
that is clear.

No wonder that he's married, nor much
more

That Vincent's therefore 'sorry.' Why,
of course

The lady nursed him when he was not
well,

Mixed drinks,—unless nepenthe was the
drink

'Twas scarce worth telling. But a man
in love

Will see the whole sex in his mistress'
hood,

The prettier for its lining of fair rose,
Although he catches back and says at
last,

'I'm sorry.' Sorry. Lady Waldemar
At prettiest, under the said hood, pre-
served

From such a light as I could hold to her face
To flare its ugly wrinkles out to shame,
Is scarce a wife for Romney, as friends
judge,

Aurora Leigh or Vincent Carrington,
That's plain. And if he's 'conscious
of my heart' . . .

It may be natural, though the phrase is
strong
(One's apt to use strong phrases, being
in love);

And even that stuff of 'fields of gold,'
'gold rings,'

And what he 'thought,' poor Vincent,
what he 'thought.'

May never mean enough to ruffle me.

—Why, this room stifles. Better burn
than choke;

Best have air, air, although it comes
with fire,—

Throw open blinds and windows to the
noon

And take a blister on my brow instead
Of this dead weight! best, perfectly be
stunned

By those insufferable cicale, sick
And hoarse with rapture of the summer-
heat,

That sing, like poets, till their hearts
break,—sing

Till men say, 'It's too tedious.'

Books succeed,
And lives fail. Do I feel it so, at last?
Kate loves a worn-out cloak for being
like mine,

While I live self-despised for being my-
self,

And yearn toward some one else, who
yearns away

From what he is, in histurn. Strain a step
For ever, yet gain no step? Are we such,
We cannot, with our admirations even,
Our tip-toe aspirations, touch a thing
That's higher than we? is all a dismal flat,
And God alone above each, as the sun
O'er level lagunes, to make them shine
and stink,—

Laying stress upon us with immediate
flame,

While we respond with our miasmal fog
And call it mounting higher because we
grow

More highly fatal?

Tush, Aurora Leigh!
You wear your sackcloth looped in
Caesar's way

And brag your failings as mankind's.
Be still.

There is what's higher, in this very
world,

Than you can live, or catch at. Stand aside,
And look at others—instance little Kate!
She'll make a perfect wife for Carrington.
She always has been looking round the earth
For something good and green to alight upon
And nestle into, with those soft-winged eyes,
Subsiding now beneath his manly hand
'Twixt trembling lids of inexpressive joy.
I will not scorn her, after all, too much,
That so much she should love me : a wise man
Can pluck a leaf, and find a lecture in 't;
And I, too, . . . God has made me,—I've a heart
That's capable of worship, love, and loss;
We say the same of Shakespeare's.
I'll be meek
And learn to reverence, even this poor myself.

The book, too—pass it. 'A good book,' says he,
'And you a woman.' I had laughed at that,
But long since. I'm a woman,—it is true;
Alas, and woe to us, when we feel it most!
Then, least care have we for the crowns and goals
And compliments on writing our good books.

The book has some truth in it, I believe,
And truth outlives pain, as the soul does life.

I know we talk our Phaedons to the end,
Through all the dismal faces that we make,
O'er-wrinkled with dishonouring agony
From decomposing drugs. I have written truth,
And I a woman,—feeble, partially,
Inaptly in presentation, Romney'll add,
Because a woman. For the truth itself,
That's neither man's nor woman's, but just God's,
None else has reason to be proud of truth:
Himself will see it sifted, disenthralled,
And kept upon the height and in the light,
As far as and no farther than 'tis truth;

For, now He has left off calling firmaments
And strata, flowers and creatures, very good,
He says it still of truth, which is His own.
Truth, so far, in my book ;—the truth which draws
Through all things upwards,—that a twofold world
Must go to a perfect cosmos. Natural things
And spiritual,—who separates those two
In art, in morals, or the social drift,
Tears up the bond of nature and brings death,
Paints futile pictures, writes unreal verse,
Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly with men,
Is wrong, in short, at all points. We divide
This apple of life, and cut it through the pips,—
The perfect round which fitted Venus' hand
Has perished as utterly as if we ate both halves. Without the spiritual, observe,
The natural's impossible,—no form,
No motion : without sensuous, spiritual
Is inappreciable,—no beauty or power : And in this twofold sphere the twofold man
(For still the artist is intensely a man)
Holds firmly by the natural, to reach
The spiritual beyond it,—fixes still
The type with mortal vision, to pierce through,
With eyes immortal, to the antetype
Some call the ideal,—better called the real,
And certain to be called so presently
When things shall have their names.
Look long enough
On any peasant's face here, coarse and lined,
You'll catch Antinous somewhere in that clay,
As perfect featured as he yearns at Rome
From marble pale with beauty ; then persist,
And, if your apprehension's competent,
You'll find some fairer angel at his back,

As much exceeding him as he the boor,
And pushing him with empyreal disdain
For ever out of sight. Aye, Carrington
Is glad of such a creed: an artist must,
Who paints a tree, a leaf, a common
stone

With just his hand, and finds it suddenly
A-piece with and conterminous to his
soul.

Why else do these things move him,
leaf, or stone?

The bird's not moved, that pecks at
a spring-shoot;

Nor yet the horse, before a quarry
a-graze:

But man, the twofold creature, appre-
hends

The twofold manner, in and outwardly,
And nothing in the world comes single
to him,

A mere itself,—cup, column, or candle-
stick,

All patterns of what shall be in the
Mount;

The whole temporal show related royally,
And built up to eterne significance
Through the open arms of God.

'There's nothing great

Nor small,' has said a poet of our day,
Whose voice will ring beyond the
curfew of eve

And not be thrown out by the matin's
bell:

And truly, I reiterate, nothing's small!
No lily-muffled hum of a summer-bee,
But finds some coupling with the
spinning stars;

No pebble at your foot, but proves
a sphere;

No chaffinch, but implies the cherubim;
And (glancing on my own thin, veinèd
wrist),

In such a little tremor of the blood
The whole strong clamour of a vehement
soul

Doth utter itself distinct. Earth's
crammed with heaven,

And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck black-
berries,

And daub their natural faces unaware
More and more from the first similitude.

Truth, so far, in my book! a truth
which draws

From all things upward. I, Aurora, still
Have felt it hound me through the
wastes of life

As Jove did Io; and, until that Hand
Shall overtake me wholly and on my head
Lay down its large unfluctuating peace,
The feverish gad-fly pricks me up and
down.

It must be. Art's the witness of what Is
Behind this show. If this world's show
were all,

Then imitation would be all in Art;
There, Jove's hand gripes us!—For we
stand here, we,

If genuine artists, witnessing for God's
Complete, consummate, undivided work:
—That every natural flower which
grows on earth

Implies a flower upon the spiritual side,
Substantial, archetypal, all a-glow
With blossoming causes,—not so far
away,

But we, whose spirit-sense is somewhat
cleared,
May catch at something of the bloom
and breath.—

Too vaguely apprehended, though in-
deed

Still apprehended, consciously or not,
And still transferred to picture, music,
verse,

For thrilling audient and beholding souls
By signs and touches which are known
to souls.

How known, they know not,—why,
they cannot find,
So straight call outon genius, say, 'A man
Produced this,' when much rather they
should say,

'Tis insight and he saw this.'

Thus is Art
Self-magnified in magnifying a truth
Which, fully recognized, would change
the world

And shift its morals. If a man could feel,
Not one day, in the artist's ecstasy,
But every day, feast, fast, or working-day,
The spiritual significance burn through
The hieroglyphic of material shows,
Henceforward he would paint the globe
with wings,

And reverence fish and fowl, the bull,
the tree,
And even his very body as a man,—
Which now he counts so vile, that all
the towns
Make offal of their daughters for its use,
On summer-nights, when God is sad in
heaven
To think what goes on in His recreant
world
He made quite other; while that moon
He made
To shinethere, at the first love's covenant,
Shines still, convictive as a marriage-ring
Before adulterous eyes.

How sure it is,
That, if we say a true word, instantly
We feel 'tis God's, not ours, and pass it on
Like breadat sacrament we taste and pass
Nor handle for a moment, as indeed
We dared to set up any claim to such!
And I—my poem,—let my readers talk.
I'm closer to it—I can speak as well:
I'll say with Romney, that the book is
weak,
The range uneven, the points of sight
obscure,
The music interrupted.

Let us go.
The end of woman (or of man, I think)
Is not a book. Alas, the best of books
Is but a word in Art, which soon grows
cramped,
Stiff, dubious-statured with the weight of
years,
And drops an accent or digamma down
Some cranny of unfathomable time,
Beyond the critic's reaching. Art itself,
We've called the larger life, must feel
the soul
Live past it. For more's felt than is
perceived,
And more's perceived than can be in-
terpreted,
And Lovestrikes higher with his lambent
flame
Than Art can pile the faggots.

Is it so?
When Jove's hand meets us with com-
posing touch,
And when at last we are hushed and
satisfied,
Then lo does not call it truth, but love?

Well, well! my father was an English-
man:
My mother's blood in me is not so strong
That I should bear this stress of Tuscan
noon
And keep my wits. The town, there,
seems to seethe
In this Medeacan boil-pot of the sun,
And all the patient hills are bubbling
round
As if a prick would leave them flat.
Does heaven
Keep far off, not to set us in a blaze?
Not so,—let drag your fiery fringes,
heaven,
And burn us up to quiet. Ah, we know
Too much here, not to know what's
best for peace;
We have too much light here, not to
want more fire
To purify and end us. We talk, talk,
Conclude upon divine philosophies,
And get the thanks of men for hopeful
books,
Whereat we take our own life up, and ..
pshaw !
Unless we piece it with another's life
(A yard of silk to carry out our lawn)
As well suppose my little handkerchief
Would cover Samminiato, church and
all,
If out I threw it past the cypresses,
As, in this ragged, narrow life of mine,
Contain my own conclusions.

But at least
We'll shut up the persiani and sit down,
And when my head's done aching, in
the cool,
Write just a word to Kate and Carrington.
May joy be with them! she has chosen
well,
And he not ill.
I should be glad, I think,
Except for Romney. Had he married
Kate,
I surely, surely, should be very glad.
This Florence sits upon me easily,
With native air and tongue. My graves
are calm,
And do not too much hurt me. Marian's
good,
Gentle and loving,—lets me hold the
child,

Or drags him up the hills to find me
flowers
And fill these vases ere I'm quite
awake,—
My grandiose red tulips, which grow
wild,
Or Dante's purple lilies, which he blew
To a larger bubble with his prophet
breath,
Or one of those tall flowering reeds that
stand
In Arno, like a sheaf of sceptres left
By some remote dynasty of dead gods
To suck the stream for ages and get green,
And blossom wheresoe'er a hand divine
Had warmed the place with ichor. Such
I find
At early morning laid across my bed,
And wake up pelted with a childish laugh
Which even Marian's low precipitous
‘hush’
Has vainly interposed to put away,—
While I, with shut eyes, smile and
motion for
The dewy kiss that's very sure to come
From mouth and cheeks, the whole
child's face at once
Dissolved on mine,—as if a nosegay burst
Its string with the weight of roses over-
blown,
And dropt upon me. Surely I should
be glad.
The little creature almost loves me now,
And calls my name, ‘Alola,’ stripping off
The *rs* like thorns, to make it smooth
enough
To take between his dainty, milk-fed lips,
God love him! I should certainly be glad,
Except, God help me, that I'm sorrowful
Because of Romney.
Romney, Romney! Well,
This grows absurd!—too like a tune that
runs
I' the head, and forces all things in the
world,
Wind, rain, the creaking gnat, or stut-
tering fly,
To sing itself and vex you,—yet perhaps
A paltry tune you never fairly liked,
Some ‘I'd be a butterfly,’ or ‘C'est
l'amour’:—
We're made so,—not such tyrants to
ourselves

But still we are slaves to nature. Some
of us
Are turned, too, overmuch like some poor
verse
With a trick of ritournelle: the same
thing goes
And comes back ever.
Vincent Carrington
Is ‘sorry,’ and I’m sorry; but he’s strong
To mount from sorrow to his heaven of
love,
And when he says at moments, ‘Poor,
poor Leigh,
Who’ll never call his own so true a heart,
So fair a face even,’—he must quickly lose
The pain of pity, in the blush he makes
By his very pitying eyes. The snow,
for him,
Has fallen in May and finds the whole
earth warm,
And melts at the first touch of the green
grass.
But Romney,—he has chosen, after all.
I think he had as excellent a sun
To see by, as most others, and perhaps
Has scarce seen really worse than some
of us
When all's said. Let him pass. I'm
not too much
A woman, not to be a man for once
And bury all my Dead like Alaric,
Depositing the treasures of my soul
In this drained water-course, then letting
flow
The river of life again with commerce-
ships
And pleasure-barges full of silks and
songs.
Blow, winds, and help us.
Ah, we mock ourselves
With talking of the winds; perhaps as
much
With other resolutions. How it weighs,
This hot, sick air! and how I covet here
The Dead's provision on the river-couch,
With silver curtains drawn on tinkling
rings!
Or else their rest in quiet crypts,—laid by
From heat and noise;—from those cicale,
say,
And this more vexing heart-beat.
So it is:

We covet for the soul, the body's part,
To die and rot. Even so, Aurora, ends
Our aspiration who bespoke our place
So far in the east. The occidental flats
Had fed us fatter, therefore? we have
climbed
Where herbage ends? we want the
beast's part now.
And tire of the angel's?—Men define a
man,
The creature who stands front-ward to
the stars,
The creature who looks inward to him-
self,
The tool-wright, laughing creature. 'Tis
enough:
We'll say instead, the inconsequent
creature, man,
For that's his specialty. What creature
else
Conceives the circle, and then walks the
square?
Loves things proved bad, and leaves a
thing proved good?
You think the bee makes honey half a
year,
To loathe the comb in winter and desire
The little ant's food rather? But a man—
Note men!—they are but women after all,
As women are but Auroras!—there are
men
Born tender, apt to pale at a trodden
worm,
Who paint for pastime, in their favourite
dream,
Spruce auto-vestments flowered with
crocus-flames.
There are, too, who believe in hell, and lie;
There are, too, who believe in heaven,
and fear:
There are, who waste their souls in
working out
Life's problem on these sands betwixt
two tides,
Concluding,—'Give us the oyster's part,
in death.'

Alas, long-suffering and most patient
God,
Thou needst be surer God to bear
with us
Than even to have made us! Thou aspire,
aspire

From henceforth for me! Thou who hast
Thyself
Endured this fleshhood, knowing how
as a soaked
And sucking vesture it can drag us down
And choke us in the melancholy Deep,
Sustain me, that with Thee I walk these
waves,
Resisting!—breathe me upward, Thou
in me
Aspiring who art the way, the truth, the
life,—
That no truth henceforth seem indifferent,
No way to truth laborious, and no life,
Not even this life I live, intolerable!

The days went by. I took up the old days,
With all their Tuscan pleasures worn
and spoiled,
Like some lost book we dropped in the
long grass
On such a happy summer-afternoon
When last we read it with a loving friend,
And find in autumn when the friend is
gone,
The grass cut short, the weather changed,
too late,
And stare at, as at something wonderful
For sorrow,—thinking how two hands
before
Had held-up what is left to only one,
And how we smiled when such a vehe-
ment nail
Impressed the tiny dint here which
presents
This verse in fire for ever. Tenderly
And mournfully I lived. I knew the birds
And insects,—which looked fatter'd by
the flowers
And emulous of their hues: I recognized
The moths, with that great overpoise of
wings
Which make a mystery of them how at all
They can stop flying: butterflies, that
bear
Upon their blue wings such red embers
round,
They seem to scorch the blue air into holes
Each flight they take: and fire-flies, that
suspire
In short soft lapses of transported flame
Across the tingling Dark, while overhead
The constant and inviolable stars

Outburn those light-of-love: melodious owls
 (If music had but one note and was sad,
 'Twould sound just so); and all the silent swirl
 Of bats that seem to follow in the air
 Some grand circumference of a shadowy dome
 To which we are blind: and then the nightingales,
 Which pluck our heart across a garden-wall
 (When walking in the town) and carry it So high into the bowery almond-trees
 We tremble and are afraid, and feel as if The golden flood of moonlight unaware Dissolved the pillars of the steady earth And made it less substantial. And I knew
 The harmless opal snakes, the large-mouthed frogs
 (Those noisy vaunters of their shallow streams);
 And lizards, the green lightnings of the wall,
 Which, if you sit down quiet, nor sigh loud,
 Will flatter you and take you for a stone, And flash familiarly about your feet
 With such prodigious eyes in such small heads!—
 I knew them (though they had somewhat dwindled from My childish imagery), and kept in mind How last I sate among them equally, In fellowship and mateship, as a child Feels equal still toward insect, beast, and bird,
 Before the Adam in him has forgone All privilege of Eden,—making friends And talk with such a bird or such a goat, And buying many a two-inch-wide rush-cage
 To let out the caged cricket on a tree, Saying, ‘Oh, my dear grillino, were you cramped?
 And are you happy with the ilex-leaves? And do you love me who have let you go? Say yes in singing, and I'll understand.’
 But now the creatures all seemed farther off,
 No longer mine, nor like me, only *there*,

A gulf between us. I could yearn indeed,
 Like other rich men, for a drop of dew To cool this heat,—a drop of the early dew,
 The irrecoverable child-innocence (Before the heart took fire and withered life)
 When childhood might pair equally with birds;
 But now . . . the birds were grown too proud for us!
 Alas, the very sun forbids the dew.
 And I, I had come back to an empty nest, Which every bird's too wise for. How I heard
 My father's step on that deserted ground, His voice along that silence, as he told The names of bird and insect, tree and flower,
 And all the presentations of the stars Across Valdarno, interposing still ‘My child,’ ‘my child.’ When fathers say ‘my child,’
 ‘Tis easier to conceive the universe, And life's transitions down the steps of law.
 I rode once to the little mountain-house As fast as if to find my father there, But, when in sight of it, within fifty yards, I dropped my horse's bridle on his neck And paused upon his flank. The house's front Was cased with lingots of ripe Indian corn
 In tessellated order and device Of golden patterns, not a stone of wall Uncovered—not an inch of room to grow A vine-leaf. The old porch had disappeared;
 And right in the open doorway sate a girl At plaiting straws, her black hair strained away
 To a scarlet kerchief caught beneath her chin
 In Tuscan fashion,—her full ebon eyes, Which looked too heavy to be lifted so, Still dropped and lifted toward the mulberry-tree
 On which the lads were busy with their staves

In shout and laughter, stripping every bough
 As bare as winter, of those summer leaves
 My father had not changed for all the silk
 In which the ugly silkworms hide themselves.
 Enough. My horse recoiled before my heart;
 I turned the rein abruptly. Back we went
 As fast, to Florence.

That was trial enough
 Of graves. I would not visit, if I could,
 My father's, or my mother's any more,
 To see if stone-cutter or lichen beat
 So early in the race, or throw my flowers,
 Which could not out-smell heaven or sweeten earth.

They live too far above, that I should look
 So far below to find them : let me think
 That rather they are visiting my grave,
 Called life here (undeveloped yet to life),
 And that they drop upon me, now and then,
 For token or for solace, some small weed
 Least odorous of the growths of paradise,
 To spare such pungent scents as kill with joy.

My old Assunta, too, was dead, was dead—
 O land of all men's past ! for me alone,
 It would not mix its tenses. I was past,
 It seemed, like others,—only not in heaven.
 And many a Tuscan eve I wandered down
 The cypress alley like a restless ghost
 That tries its feeble ineffectual breath
 Upon its own charred funeral-brands
 put out

Too soon, where black and stiff stood up the trees
 Against the broad vermillion of the skies.
 Such skies!—all clouds abolished in a sweep
 Of God's skirt, with a dazzle to ghosts and men,
 As down I went, saluting on the bridge
 The hem of such before 'twas caught away
 Beyond the peaks of Lucca. Underneath,
 The river, just escaping from the weight
 Of that intolerable glory, ran
 In acquiescent shadow murmurously ;

While, up beside it, streamed the festa-folk
 With fellow-murmurs from their feet and fans,
 And *issimo* and *iso* and sweet poise
 Of vowels in their pleasant scandalous talk ;
 Returning from the grand-duke's dairy-farm
 Before the trees grew dangerous at eight
 (For, 'trust no tree by moonlight,' Tuscans say),
 To eat their ice at Donay's tenderly,—
 Each lovely lady close to a cavalier
 Who holds her dear fan while she feeds her smile
 On meditative spoonfuls of vanille
 And listens to his hot-breathed vows of love
 Enough to thaw her cream and scorch his beard.

'Twas little matter. I could pass them by
 Indifferently, not fearing to be known.
 No danger of being wrecked upon a friend,
 And forced to take an iceberg for an isle!
 The very English, here, must wait and learn
 To hang the cobweb of their gossip out
 To catch a fly. I'm happy. It's sublime,
 This perfect solitude of foreign lands !
 To be, as if you had not been till then,
 And were then, simply that you chose to be :

To spring up, not be brought forth from the ground,
 Like grasshoppers at Athens, and skip thrice
 Before a woman makes a pounce on you
 And plants you in her hair !—possess, yourself,
 A new world all alive with creatures new,
 New sun, new moon, new flowers, new people—ah,
 And be possessed by none of them ! no right
 In one, to call your name, inquire your where,
 Or what you think of Mister Some-one's book,
 Or Mister Other's marriage or decease,
 Or how's the headache which you had last week,

Or why you look so pale still, since it's
gone?
—Such most surprising riddance of one's
life
Comes next one's death; 'tis disem-
bodiment
Without the pang. I marvel, people
choose
To stand stock-still like fakirs, till the
moss
Grows on them and they cry out, self-
admired,
'How verdant and how virtuous!'
Well, I'm glad:
Or should be, if grown foreign to myself
As surely as to others.

Musing so,
I walked the narrow unrecognizing
streets,
Where many a palace-front peers
gloomily
Through stony vizards iron-barred (pre-
pared
Alike, should foe or lover pass that way,
For guest or victim), and came wandering
out
Upon the churches with mild open doors
And plaintive wail of vespers, where a
few,
Those chiefly women, sprinkled round
in blots
Upon the dusky pavement, knelt and
prayed
Toward the altar's silver glory. Oft a ray
(I liked to sit and watch) would tremble
out,
Just touch some face more listed, more
in need
(Of course a woman's),—while I dreamed
a tale
To fit its fortunes. There was one who
looked
As if the earth had suddenly grown too
large
Forsuch a little humpbacked thing as she;
The pitiful black kerchief round her neck
Sole proof she had had a mother. One,
again,
Looked sick for love,—seemed praying
some soft saint
To put more virtue in the new fine scarf
She spent a fortnight's meals on, yester-
day,

That cruel Gigi might return his eyes
From Giuliana. There was one, so old.
So old, to kneel grew easier than to
stand,—
So solitary, she accepts at last
Our Lady for her gossip, and frets on
Against the sinful world which goes its
rounds
In marrying and being married, just the
same
As when 'twas almost good and had
the right
(Her Gian alive, and she herself eighteen).
'And yet, now even, if Madonna willed,
She'd win a tern in Thursday's lottery
And better all things. Did she dream
for nought,
That, boiling cabbage for the fast-day's
soup,
It smelt like blessed entrails? such a
dream
For nought? would sweetest Mary cheat
her so,
And lose that certain candle, straight
and white
As any fair grand-duchess in her teens,
Which otherwise should flare here in
a week?
*Bewigna sis, thou beauteous Queen of
heaven!*

I sat there musing, and imagining
Such utterance from such faces: poor
blind souls
That writhe toward heaven along the
devil's trail,—
Who knows, I thought, but He may
stretch His hand
And pick them up? 'tis written in the
Book
He heareth the young ravens when they
cry,
And yet they cry for carrion.—O my
God,
And we, who make excuses for the rest,
We do it in our measure. Then I knelt,
And dropped my head upon the pave-
ment too,
And prayed, since I was foolish in desire
Like other creatures, craving offal-food,
That He would stop His ears to what
I said,
And only listen to the run and beat

Of this poor, passionate, helpless blood—
And then
I lay, and spoke not: but He heard in
heaven.

So many Tuscan evenings passed the
same.

I could not lose a sunset on the bridge,
And would not miss a vigil in the church,
And liked to mingle with the outdoor
crowd

So strange and gay and ignorant of my
face,

For men you know not, are as good as
trees.

And only once, at the Santissima,
I almost chanced upon a man I knew,
Sir Blaise Delorme. He saw me
certainly,
And somewhat hurried, as he crossed
himself,

The smoothness of the action,—then
half bowed,

But only half, and merely to my shade,
I slipped so quick behind the porphyry
plinth

And left him dubious if 'twas really I
Or peradventure Satan's usual trick
To keep a mounting saint uncanonized.
But he was safe for that time, and I too;
The argent angels in the altar-flare
Absorbed his soul next moment. The
good man!

In England we were scarce acquain-
tances,

That here in Florence he should keep
my thought

Beyond the image on his eye, which came
And went; and yet his thought dis-
turbed my life:

For, after that, I oftener sate at home
On evenings, watching how they fined
themselves

With gradual conscience to a perfect
night,

Until the moon, diminished to a curve,
Lay out there like a sickle for His hand
Who cometh down at last to reap the
earth.

At such times, ended seemed my trade
of verse;

I feared to jingle bells upon my robe
Before the four-faced silent cherubim :

With God so near me, could I sing of God?
I did not write, nor read, nor even think,
But sate absorbed amid the quickening
glooms,

Most likesome passive broken lump of salt
Dropped in by chance to a bowl of
oenome,

To spoil the drink a little and lose itself,
Dissolving slowly, slowly, until lost.

EIGHTH BOOK

One eve it happened, when I sate alone,
Alone, upon the terrace of my tower,
A book upon my knees to counterfeit
The reading that I never read at all,
While Marian, in the garden down below,
Knelt by the fountain I could just hear
thrill

The drowsy silence of the exhausted day,
And peeled a new fig from that purple
heap
In the grass beside her, turning out the
red

To feed her eager child (who sucked at it
With vehement lips across a gap of air
As he stood opposite, face and curls a-
flame

With that last sun-ray, crying, 'give me,
give,'

And stamping with imperious baby-feet,
We're all born princes) — something
startled me,—

The laugh of sad and innocent souls,
that breaks

Abruptly, as if frightened at itself.
'Twas Marian laughed. I saw her
glance above

In sudden shame that I should hear her
laugh,

And straightway dropped my eyes upon
my book,
And knew, the first time, 'twas Bo-
caccio's tale,

The Falcon's, of the lover who for love
Destroyed the best that loved him.

Some of us

Do it still, and then we sit and laugh
no more.

Laugh *you*, sweet Marian,—you've the
right to laugh,

Since God Himself is for you, and a child!
For me there's somewhat less,—and so
I sigh.

The heavens were making room to hold
the night,
The sevenfold heavens unfolding all their
gates
To let the stars out slowly (prophesied
In close-approaching advent, not dis-
cerned),
While still the cue-owls from the ey-
presses
Of the Poggio called and counted every
pulse
Of the skyey palpitation. Gradually
The purple and transparent shadowsslown
Had filled up the whole valley to the brim,
And flooded all the city, which you saw
Assomedrowned city in some enchanted
sea,
Cut off from nature,—drawing you who
gaze,
With passionate desire, to leap and
plunge
And find a sea-king with a voice of waves,
And treacherous soft eyes, and slippery
locks
You cannot kiss but you shall bring away
Their salt upon your lips. The duomo-
bell
Strikes ten, as if it struck ten fathoms
down,
Sodeep ; and twenty churches answer it
The same, with twenty various instances.
Some gaslights tremble along squares
and streets :
The Pitti's palace-front is drawn in fire ;
And, past the quays, Maria Novella Place,
In which the mystic obelisks stand up
Triangular, pyramidal, each based
Upon its four-square brazen tortoises,
To guard that fair church, Buonarroti's
Bride,
That stares out from her large blind
dial-eyes
(Her quadrant and armillary dials, black
With rhythms of many suns and moons),
in vain
Inquiry for so rich a soul as his.
Methinks I have plunged, I see it all so
clear . .
And, O my heart, . . the sea-king !

In my ears
The sound of waters. There he stood,
my king !

I felt him, rather than beheld him. Up
I rose, as if he were my king indeed,
And then sate down, in trouble at myself,
And struggling for my woman's empery.
'Tis pitiful ; but women are so made :
We'll die for you perhaps,—'tis prob-
able ;
But we'll not spare you an inch of our
full height :
We'll have our whole just stature,—five
feet four,
Though laid out in our coffins : pitiful.
—'You, Romney !—Lady Waldemar
is here ?'

He answered in a voice which was not
his.

'I have her letter ; you shall read it soon.
But first, I must be heard a little, I,
Who have waited long and travelled far
for that,
Although you thought to have shut
a tedious book
And farewell. Ah, you dog-eared such
a page,
And here you find me.'

Did he touch my hand,
Or but my sleeve ? I trembled, hand
and foot,—
He must have touched me.—'Will you
sit ?' I asked,
And motioned to a chair ; but down he
sate,

A little slowly, as a man in doubt,
Upon the couch beside me.—couch and
chair
Being wheeled upon the terrace.

'You are come,
My cousin Romney ?—this is wonderful.
But all is wonder on such summer-nights ;
And nothing should surprise us any more,
Who see that miracle of stars. Behold.'

I signed above, where all the stars
were out.

As if an urgent heat had started there
A secret writing from a sombre page,
A blank, last moment, crowded suddenly
With hurrying splendours.

'Then you do not know'—
He murmured.

'Yes, I know,' I said, 'I know.
I had the news from Vincent Carrington.
And yet I did not think you'd leave the
work
In England, for so much even,—though
of course
You'll make a work-day of your holiday,
And turn it to our Tuscan people's
use,—'

Who much need helping since the
Austrian boar
(So bold to cross the Alp to Lombardy
And dash his brute front unabashed
against

The steep snow-bosses of that shield of
God

Who soon shall rise in wrath and shake
it clear),
Came hither also, raking up our grape
And olive-gardens with his tyrannous
tusk,
And rolling on our maize with all his
swine.'

'You had the news from Vincent
Carrington,'
He echoed,—picking up the phrase
beyond,
As if he knew the rest was merely talk
To fill a gap and keep out a strong
wind;
'You had, then, Vincent's personal
news?'

'His own,'
I answered. 'All that ruined world of
yours
Seems crumbling into marriage. Carr-
ington
Has chosen wisely.'

'Do you take it so?'
He cried, 'and is it possible at last'...
He paused there,—and then, inward to
himself,
'Too much at last, too late!—yet
certainly'...
(And there his voice swayed as an
Alpine plank
That feels a passionate torrent under-
neath)
'The knowledge, had I known it first
or last,

Could scarce have changed the actual
case for me.

And best for her at this time.'

Nay, I thought,
He loves Kate Ward, it seems, now,
like a man,
Because he has married Lady Waldemar!
Ah, Vincent's letter said how Leigh
was moved
To hear that Vincent was betrothed to
Kate.

With what cracked pitchers go we to
deep wells
In this world! Then I spoke,—'I did
not think,
My cousin, you had ever known Kate
Ward.'

'In fact I never knew her. 'Tis enough
That Vincent did, and therefore chose
his wife

For other reasons than those topaz eyes
We've heard of. Not toundervalue them,
For all that. One takes up the world
with eyes.'

—Including Romney Leigh, I thought
again,
Albeit he knows them only by repute.
How vile must all men be, since he's
a man.

His deep pathetic voice, as if he guessed
I did not surely love him, took the word;
'You never got a letter from Lord Howe
A month back, dear Aurora?'

'None,' I said.

'I felt it was so,' he replied: 'yet,
strange!
Sir Blaise Delorme has passed through
Florence?'

'Aye,
By chance I saw him in Our Lady's
church
(I saw him, mark you, but he saw not me),
Clean-washed in holy water from the
count
Of things terrestrial,—letters, and the
rest;
He had crossed us out together with
his sins.

Aye, strange; but only strange that good
Lord Howe
Preferred him to the post because of
pauls.
For me I'm sworn to never trust a man—
At least with letters.'

' There were facts to tell.
To smooth with eye and accent. Howe
supposed . . .
Well, well, no matter! there was dubious
need;
You heard the news from Vincent
Carrington.
And yet perhaps you had been startled
less
To see me, dear Aurora, if you had read
That letter.'

—Now he sets me down as vexed.
I think I've draped myself in woman's
pride
To a perfect purpose. Oh, I'm vexed,
it seems!

My friend Lord Howe deputes his friend
Sir Blaise
To break as softly as a sparrow's egg
That lets a bird tenderly, the news
Of Romney's marriage to a certain saint;
To smooth with eye and accent,—indicate
His possible presence. Excellently well
You've played your part, my Lady
Waldemar,—
As I've played mine.

' Dear Romney,' I began,
' You did not use, of old, to be so like
A Greek king coming from a taken Troy,
'Twas needful that precursors spread
your path
With three-piled carpets, to receive your
foot
And dull the sound of 't. For myself,
be sure,
Although it frankly grinds the gravel here,
I still can bear it. Yet I'm sorry too
To lose this famous letter, which Sir
Blaise
Has twisted to a lighter absently
To firesome holy taper; dear Lord Howe
Writes letters good for all things but to
lose;
And many a flower of London gossipry
Has dropped wherever such a stem broke
off.

Of course I feel that, lonely among my
vines,
Where nothing's talked of, save the
blight again,
And no more Chianti! Still the letter's use
As preparation . . . Did I start indeed?
Last night I started at a cockchafer,
And shook a half-hour after. Have you
learnt
No more of women, 'spite of privilege,
Than still to take account too seriously
Of such weak flutterings? Why, we
like it, sir,
We get our powers and our effects that
way:
The trees stand stiff and still at time of
frost,
If no wind tears them; but, let summer
come,
When trees are happy,—and a breath
avails
To set them trembling through a million
leaves
In luxury of emotion. Something less
It takes to move a woman: let her start
And shake at pleasure,—nor conclude at
yours,
The winter's bitter,—but the summer's
green.'

He answered, 'Be the summer evergreen
With you, Aurora!—though you sweep
your sex
With somewhat bitter gusts from where
you live
Above them,—whirling downward from
your heights
Your very own pine-cones, in a grand
disdain
Of the lowland burrs with which you
scatter them.
So high and cold to others and yourself,
A little less to Romney were unjust,
And thus, I would not have you. Let
it pass:

I feel content so. You can bear indeed
My sudden step beside you; but for me,
'Twould move me sore to hear your
softened voice,—
Aurora's voice,—if softened unaware
In pity of what I am.'

Ah, friend, I thought,
As husband of the Lady Waldemar

You're granted very sorely pitiable!
And yet Aurora Leigh must guard her
voice
From softening in the pity of your case,
As if from lie or licence. Certainly
We'll soak up all the slush and soil of
life
With softened voices, ere we come to
you.

At which I interrupted my own thought
And spoke out calmly. 'Let us ponder,
friend,
Whate'er our state we must have made
it first;
And though the thing displease us, aye,
perhaps
Displease us warrantably, never doubt
That other states, thought possible once,
and then
Rejected by the instinct of our lives,
If then adopted had displeased us more
Than this in which the choice, the will,
the love,
Has stamped the honour of a patent act
From henceforth. What we choose
may not be good,
But, that we choose it, proves it good
for us
Potentially, fantastically, now
Or last year, rather than a thing we
saw,
And saw no need for choosing. Moths
will burn
Their wings,—which proves that light is
good for moths,
Who else had flown not where they
agonize.

'Aye, light is good,' he echoed, and there
paused;
And then abruptly,.. 'Marian. Marian's
well?'

I bowed my head but found no word.
'Twas hard
To speak of her to Lady Waldemar's
New husband. How much did he know,
at last?
How much? how little?— He would
take no sign,
But straight repeated,—'Marian. Is
she well?'

'She's well,' I answered.

She was there in sight
An hour back, but the night had drawn
her home,
Where still I heard her in an upper room,
Her low voice singing to the child in bed,
Who restless with the summer-heat and
play
And slumber snatched at noon, was long
sometimes
In falling off, and took a score of songs
And mother-hushes ere she saw him
sound.

'She's well,' I answered.

'Here?' he asked.
'Yes, here.'

He stopped and sighed. 'That shall be
presently,
But now this must be. I have words to
say,
And would be alone to say them, I with
you,
And no third troubling.'
'Speak then,' I returned,
'She will not vex you.'

At which, suddenly,
He turned his face upon me with its smile
As if to crush me. 'I have read your
book,
Aurora.'

'You have read it, I replied,
'And I have writ it,—we have done
with it.
And now the rest?'

'The rest is like the first,'
He answered,—'for the book is in my
heart,
Lives in me, wakes in me, and dreams
in me:
My daily bread tastes of it,—and my wine
Which has no smack of it, I pour it out,
It seems unnatural drinking.'

Bitterly
I took the word up; 'Never waste your
wine.
The book lived in me ere it lived in you;
I know it closer than another does,
And how it's foolish, feeble, and afraid,
And all unworthy so much compliment.

Beseech you, keep your wine,—and,
when you drink,
Still wish some happier fortune to a
friend,
Than even to have written a far better
book.'

He answered gently, 'That is con-
sequent:

The poet looks beyond the book he has
made,
Or else he had not made it. If a man
Could make a man, he'd henceforth be
a god

In feeling what a little thing is man :
It is not my case. And this special book,
I did not make it, to make light of it :
It stands above my knowledge, draws
me up;

'Tis high to me. It may be that the book
Is not so high, but I so low, instead ;
Still high to me. I mean no compliment :
I will not say there are not, young or old,
Male writers, aye, or female, let it pass,
Who'll write us richer and completer
books.

A man may love a woman perfectly,
And yet by no means ignorantly maintain
A thousand women have not larger eyes :
Enough that she alone has looked at him
With eyes that, large or small, have won
his soul.

And so, this book, Aurora,—so, your
book'

'Alas,' I answered, 'is it so, indeed?'
And then was silent.

'Is it so, indeed,'
He echoed, 'that *alas* is all your word?'
I said,—'I'm thinking of a far-off June,
When you and I, upon my birthday once,
Discoursed of life and art, with both
untried.

I'm thinking, Romney, how 'twas
morning then,
And now 'tis night.'

'And now,' he said, 'tis night.'

'I'm thinking,' I resumed, 'tis some-
what sad,
That if I had known, that morning in
the dew,

My cousin Romney would have said
such words

On such a night at close of many years,
In speaking of a future book of mine,
It would have pleased me better as a hope,
Than as an actual grace it can at all :
That's sad, I'm thinking.'

'Aye,' he said, "'tis night'

'And there,' I added lightly, 'are the
stars !
And here, we'll talk of stars and not of
books.'

'You have the stars,' he murmured,—
‘it is well :

Be like them ! shine, Aurora, on my dark,
Though high and cold and only like a star,
And for this short night only,—you,
who keep

The same Aurora of the bright June day
That withered up the flowers before my
face,
And turned me from the garden evermore
Because I was not worthy. Oh, de-
served,

Deserved ! that I, who verily had not
learnt

God's lesson half, attaining as a dunce
To obliterate good words with fractious
thumbs

And cheat myself of the context,—I
should push

Aside, with male ferocious impudence,
The world's Aurora who had conned
her part

On the other side the leaf ! ignore her so,
Because she was a woman and a queen,
And had no beard to bristle through her
song,

My teacher, who has taught me with a
book,

My Miriam, whose sweet mouth, when
nearly drowned

I still heard singing on the shore ! De-
served,

That here I should look up into the stars
And miss the glory' ..

'Can I understand ?'

I broke in. 'You speak wildly, Romney
Leigh,

Or I hear wildly. In that morning-time
We recollect, the roses were too red,

The trees too green, reproach too natural
If one should see not what the other saw:
And now, it's night, remember; we have
shades

In place of colours; we are now grown
cold,
And old, my cousin Romney. Pardon
me,—

I'm very happy that you like my book,
And very sorry that I quoted back
A ten years' birthday. 'Twas so mad
a thing

In any woman, I scarce marvel much
You took it for a venturous piece of spite,
Provoking such excuses as indeed
I cannot call you slack in.'

'Understand,'
He answered sadly, 'something, if but so.
This night is softer than an English day,
And men may well come hither when
they're sick,

To draw in easier breath from larger air.
'Tis thus with me; I come to you,—to
you,

My Italy of women, just to breathe
My soul out once before you, ere I go,
As humble as God makes me at the last
(I thank Him), quite out of the way of men
And yours, Aurora,—like a punished
child,

His cheeks all blurred with tears and
naughtiness,
To silence in a corner. I am come
To speak, beloved'..

'Wisely, cousin Leigh,
And worthily of us both!'

'Yes, worthily;
For this time I must speak out and confess
That I, so truculent in assumption once,
So absolute in dogma, proud in aim,
And fierce in expectation,—I, who felt
The whole world tugging at my skirts
for help,

As if no other man than I, could pull,
Nor woman, but I led her by the hand,
Nor cloth hold, but I had it in my coat,
Do know myself to-night for what I was
On that June-day, Aurora. Poor bright
day,

Which meant the best... a woman and
a rose,
And which I smote upon the cheek with
words

Until it turned and rent me! Young
you were,
That birthday, poet, but you talked the
right:

While I... I built up follies like a wall
To intercept the sunshine and your face.
Your face! that's worse.'
'Speak wisely, cousin Leigh'

'Yes, wisely, dear Aurora, though too
late:

But then, not wisely. I was heavy then,
And stupid, and distracted with the cries
Of tortured prisoners in the polished brass
Of that Phalarian bull, society,
Which seems to bellow bravely like ten
bulls

But, if you listen, moans and cries instead
Despairingly, like victims tossed and
gored

And trampled by their hoofs. I heard
the cries

Too close: I could not hear the angels
lift

A fold of rustling air, nor what they said
To help my pity. I beheld the world
As one great famishing carnivorous
mouth,—

A huge, deserted, callow, blind bird
Thing,

With piteous open beak that hurt my
heart,
Till down upon the filthy ground I
dropped,

And tore the violets up to get the worms.
Worms, worms, was all my cry: an
open mouth,

A gross want, bread to fill it to the lips,
No more. That poor men narrowed
their demands

To such an end, was virtue, I supposed,
Adjudicating that to see it so
Was reason. Oh, I did not push the case
Up higher, and ponder how it answers
when

The rich take up the same cry for them-
selves,

Professing equally,—"An open mouth,
A gross need, food to fill us, and no more."
Why that's so far from virtue, only vice
Can find excuse for 't! that makes
liberties,

And slurs our cruel streets from end to end

With eighty thousand women in one
smile,
Who only smile at night beneath the gas.
The body's satisfaction and no more,
Is used for argument against the soul's,
Here too; the want, here too, implies
the right.

—How dark I stood that morning in the
sun,
My best Aurora (though I saw your eyes),
When first you told me... oh, I recollect
The sound, and how you lifted your
small hand,
And how your white dress and your
burnished curls
Went greatening round you in the still
blue air,
As if an inspiration from within
Had blown them all out when you spoke
the words,

Even these,—“You will not compass
your poor ends
Of barley-feeding and material ease,
Without the poet's individualism
To work your universal. It takes a soul,
To move a body,—it takes a high-
souled man,
To move the masses, even to a cleaner
sty:

It takes the ideal, to blow an inch inside
The dust of the actual: and your
Fouriers failed,

Because not poets enough to understand
That life develops from within.” I say
Your words,—I could say other words
of yours,

For none of all your words will let me
go;
Like sweet verbena which, being brushed
against,

Will hold us three hours after by the smell
In spite of long walks upon windy hills.
But these words dealt in sharper per-
fume,—these

Were ever on me, stinging through my
dreams,
And saying themselves for ever o'er my
acts

Like some unhappy verdict. That I
failed,
Is certain. Sty or no sty, to centrise
The swine's propulsion toward the
precipice,

Proved easy and plain. I subtly organized
And ordered, built the cards up high
and higher,
Till, some one breathing, all fell flat
again;
In setting right society's wide wrong,
Mere life's so fatal. So I failed in-
deed,
Once, twice, and oftener,—hearing
through the rents
Of obstinate purpose, still those words
of yours,
“*You will not compass your poor ends,
not you!*”
But harder than you said them; every
time
Still farther from your voice, until they
came
To overgrow me with triumphant scorn
Which vexed me to resistance. Set
down this
For condemnation,—I was guilty here;
I stood upon my deed and fought my
doubt,
As men will,—for I doubted,—till at last
My deed gave way beneath me suddenly
And left me what I am:—the curtain
dropped,
My part quite ended, all the footlights
quenched,
My own soul hissing at me through the
dark,
I ready for confession,—I was wrong.
I've sorely failed, I've slipped the ends
of life,
I yield, you have conquered.’
‘Stay,’ I answered him;
‘I've something for your hearing, also. I
Have failed too.’
‘You!’ he said, ‘you're very great;
The sadness of your greatness fits you
well:
As if the plume upon a hero's casque
Should nod a shadow upon his victor
face.’

I took him up austerely,—‘You have
read
My book, but not my heart; for recollect,
'Tis writ in Sanscrit which you bungle
at.
I've surely failed, I know, if failure
means

To look back sadly on work gladly done,—
 To wander on my mountains of Delight,
 So called (I can remember a friend's words
 As well as you, sir), weary and in want
 Of even a sheep-path, thinking bitterly..
 Well, well! no matter. I but say so much,
 To keep you, Romney Leigh, from saying more,
 And let you feel I am not so high indeed,
 That I can bear to have you at my foot,—
 Or safe, that I can help you. That June-day,
 Too deeply sunk in craterous sunsets now
 For you or me to dig it up alive,—
 To pluck it out all bleeding with spent flame
 At the roots, before those moralizing stars
 We have got instead,—that poor lost day, you said
 Some words as truthful as the thing of mine
 You cared to keep in memory; and I hold
 If I, that day, and, being the girl I was,
 Had shown a gentler spirit, less arrogance,
 It had not hurt me. You will scarce mistake
 The point here: I but only think, you see,
 More justly, that's more humbly, of myself,
 Than when I tried a crown on and supposed..
 Nay, laugh, sir,—I'll laugh with you!—pray you, laugh.
 I've had so many birthdays since that day
 I've learnt to prize mirth's opportunities,
 Which come too seldom. Was it you who said
 I was not changed? the same Aurora? Ah,
 We could laugh there, too! Why, Ulysses' dog
 Knew him, and wagged his tail and died: but if
 I had owned a dog, I too, before my Troy,
 And if you brought him here,.. I warrant you
 He'd look into my face, bark lustily,
 And live on stoutly, as the creatures will

Whose spirits are not troubled by long loves.
 A dog would never know me, I'm so changed,
 Much less a friend.. except that you're misled
 By the colour of the hair, the trick of the voice,
 Like that Aurora Leigh's.'
 'Sweet trick of voice!
 I would be a dog for this, to know it at last,
 And die upon the falls of it. O love,
 O best Aurora! are you then so sad
 You scarcely had been sadder as my wife?'
 'Your wife, sir! I must certainly be changed,
 If I, Aurora, can have said a thing
 So light, it catches at the knightly spurs
 Of a noble gentleman like Romney Leigh
 And trips him from his honourable sense
 Of what befits'.
 'You wholly misconceive,'
 He answered.—'I returned,—“I'm glad of it.
 But keep from misconception, too,
 yourself:
 I am not humbled to so low a point,
 Nor so far saddened. If I am sad at all,
 Ten layers of birthdays on a woman's head
 Are apt to fossilize her girlish mirth,
 Though ne'er so merry: I'm perforce more wise,
 And that, in truth, means sadder. For the rest,
 Look here, sir: I was right upon the whole
 That birthday morning. 'Tis impossible
 To get at men excepting through their souls,
 However open their carnivorous jaws;
 And poets get directlier at the soul,
 Than any of your economists:—for which
 You must not overlook the poet's work
 When scheming for the world's necessities.
 The soul's the way. Not even Christ Himself
 Can save man else than as He holds man's soul;
 And therefore did He come into our flesh,

As some wise hunter creeping on his knees
 With a torch, into the blackness of a cave,
 To face and quell the beast there,—take the soul,
 And so possess the whole man, body and soul.
 I said, so far, right, yes; not farther, though:
 We both were wrong that June-day,—both as wrong
 As an east wind had been. I who talked of art,
 And you who grieved for all men's griefs . . . what then?
 We surely made too small a part for God
 In these things. What we are, imports us more
 Than what we eat; and life, you've granted me,
 Develops from within. But innermost Of the inmost, most interior of the interne,
 God claims His own, Divine humanity Renewing nature,—or the piercingest verse,
 Pressed in by subtlest poet, still must keep As much upon the outside of a man
 As the very bowl in which he dips his beard.
 —And then, . . . the rest; I cannot surely speak:
 Perhaps I doubt more than you doubted then,
 If I, the poet's veritable charge, Have borne upon my forehead. If I have,
 It might feel somewhat liker to a crown, The foolish green one even.—Ah, I think,
 And chiefly when the sun shines, that I've failed.
 But what then, Romney? Though we fail indeed,
 You . . . I . . . a score of such weak workers, . . . He fails never. If He cannot work by us, He will work over us. Does He want a man,
 Much less a woman, think you? Every time
 The star winks there, so many souls are born,

Who all shall work too. Let our own be calm.
 We should be ashamed to sit beneath those stars,
 Impatient that we're nothing.' Could we sit Just so for ever, sweetest friend,' he said,
 'My failure would seem better than success.
 And yet indeed your book has dealt with me
 More gently, cousin, than you ever will! Your book brought down entire the bright June-day,
 And set me wandering in the garden-walks,
 And let me watch the garland in a place You blushed so . . . nay, forgive me, do not stir,—
 I only thank the book for what it taught, And what permitted. Poet, doubt yourself,
 But never doubt that you're a poet to me From henceforth. You have written poems, sweet,
 Which moved me in secret, as the sap is moved
 In still March-branches, signless as a stone:
 But this last book o'ercame me like soft rain
 Which falls at midnight, when the tightened bark Breaks out into unhesitating buds
 And sudden protestations of the spring. In all your other books, I saw but *you*: A man may see the moon so, in a pond, And not be nearer therefore to the moon, Nor use the sight . . . except to drown himself:
 And so I forced my heart back from the sight,
 For what had *I*, I thought, to do with *her*, Aurora.. Romney? But, in this last book, You showed me something separate from yourself,
 Beyond you, and I bore to take it in And let it draw me. You have shown me truths,
 O June-day friend, that help me now at night
 When June is over! truths not yours, indeed,

But set within my reach by means of you,
Presented by your voice and verse the
way
To take them clearest. Verily I was
wrong;
And verily many thinkers of this age,
Aye, many Christian teachers, half in
heaven,
Are wrong in just my sense who under-
stood.
Our natural world too insularly, as if
No spiritual counterpart completed it,
Consummating its meaning, rounding all
To justice and perfection, line by line,
Form by form, nothing single nor alone,
The great below clenched by the great
above,
Shade here authenticating substance
there,
The body proving spirit, as the effect
The cause; we meantime being too
grossly apt
To hold the natural, as dogs a bone
(Though reason and nature beat us in
the face),
So obstinately, that we'll break our teeth
Or ever we let go. For everywhere
We're too materialistic,—eating clay
(Like men of the west) instead of Adam's
corn
And Noah's wine, clay by handfuls, clay
by lumps,
. Until we're filled up to the throat with
clay,
And grow the grimy colour of the ground
On which we are feeding. Aye,
materialist
The age's name is. God Himself, with
some,
Is apprehended as the bare result
Of what His hand materially has made,
Expressed in such an algebraic sign
Called God;—that is, to put it otherwise.
They add up nature to a nought of God
And cross the quotient. There are many
even,
Whose names are written in the Chris-
tian church
To no dishonour, diet still on mud
And splash the altars with it. You might
think
The clay, Christ laid upon their eyelids
when,

Still blind, He called them to the use of
sight,
Remained there to retard its exercise
With clogging incrustations. Close to
heaven,
They see for mysteries, through the
open doors,
Vague puffs of smoke from pots of
earthenware;
And fain would enter, when their time
shall come,
With quite another body than Saint Paul
Has promised,—husk and chaff, the
whole barley-corn,
Or where's the resurrection?
‘Thus it is,’
I sighed. And he resumed with mourn-
ful face:
‘Beginning so, and filling up with clay
The wards of this great key, the natural
world,
And fumbling vainly therefore at the lock
Of the spiritual, we feel ourselves shut in
With all the wild-beast roar of struggling
life,
The terrors and compunctions of our
souls,
As saints with lions,—we who are not
saints,
And have no heavenly lordship in our
stare
To awe them backward. Aye, we are
forced, so pent,
To judge the whole too partially, . . .
confound
Conclusions. Is there any common
phrase
Significant, with the adverb heard alone,
The verb being absent, and the pronoun
out?
But we, distracted in the roar of life,
Still insolently at God's adverb snatch,
And bruit against Him that His thought
is void,
His meaning hopeless,—cry, that every-
where
The government is slipping from His hand,
Unless some other Christ (say Romney
Leigh)
Come up and toil and moil and change
the world,
Because the First has proved inadequate,
However we talk bigly of His work

And piously of His person. We blasphemē

At last, to finish our doxology,
Despairing on the earth for which He died.'

'So now,' I asked, 'you have more hope of men!'

'I hope,' he answered. 'I am come to think

That God will have His work done, as you said,

And that we need not be disturbed too much

For Romney Leigh or others having failed With this or that quack nostrum,—recipes For keeping summits by annulling depths, For wrestling with luxurious lounging sleeves,

And acting heroism without a scratch. We fail,—what then? Aurora, if I smiled To see you, in your lovely morning-pride, Try on the poet's wreath which suits the noon

(Sweet cousin, walls must get the weather-stain

Before they grow the ivy!), certainly I stood myself there worthier of contempt, Self-rated, in disastrous arrogance, As competent to sorrow for mankind And even their odds. A man may well despair,

Who counts himself so needful to success. I failed: I throw the remedy back on God, And sit down here beside you, in good hope.'

'And yet take heed,' I answered, 'lest we lean

Too dangerously on the other side, And so fail twice. Be sure, no earnest work

Of any honest creature, howbeit weak, Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much, It is not gathered as a grain of sand To enlarge the sum of human action used For carrying out God's end. No creature works

So ill, observe, that therefore he's cashiered.

The honest earnest man must stand and work,

The woman also,—otherwise she drops At once below the dignity of man, Accepting serfdom. Free men freely work.

Whoever fears God, fears to sit at ease.'

He cried, 'True. After Adam, work was curse;

The natural creature labours, sweats, and frets.

But, after Christ, work turns to privilege, And henceforth, one with our humanity, The Six-day Worker working still in us Has called us freely to work on with Him

In high companionship. So, happiest! I count that Heaven itself is only work To a surer issue. Let us work, indeed, But no more work as Adam,—nor as Leigh

Erewhile, as if the only man on earth, Responsible for all the thistles blown And tigers couchant, struggling in amaze Against disease and winter, snarling on For ever, that the world's not paradise. Oh, cousin, let us be content, in work, To do the thing we can, and not presume To fret because it's little. 'Twill employ Seven men, they say, to make a perfect pin;

Who makes the head, content to miss the point,

Who makes the point, agreed to leave the join:

And if a man should cry, "I want a pin, And I must make it straightway, head and point,"

His wisdom is not worth the pin he wants. Seven men to a pin,—and not a man too much!

Seven generations, haply, to this world, To right it visibly a finger's breadth, And mend its rents a little. Oh, to storm And say, "This world here is intolerable; I will not eat this corn, nor drink this wine,

Nor love this woman, flinging her my soul Without a bond for 't as a lover should, Nor use the generous leave of happiness As not too good for using generously"— (Since virtue kindles at the touch of joy Like a man's cheek laid on a woman's hand,

And God, who knows it, looks for quick returns
 From joys)—to stand and claim to have a life
 Beyond the bounds of the individual man,
 And raze all personal cloisters of the soul
 To build up public stores and magazines,
 As if God's creatures otherwise were lost,
 The builder surely saved by any means!
 To think,—I have a pattern on my nail,
 And I will carve the world new after it
 And solve so these hard social questions,
 —nay,
 Impossible social questions, since their roots
 Strike deep in Evil's own existence here
 Which God permits because the question's hard
 To abolish evil nor attain free-will.
 Aye, hard to God, but not to Romney Leigh!
 For Romney has a pattern on his nail
 (Whatever may be lacking on the Mount),
 And, not being overnice to separate
 What's element from what's convention,
 hastens
 By line on line to draw you out a world,
 Without your help indeed, unless you take
 His yoke upon you and will learn of Him,
 So much He has to teach! so good a world!
 The same, the whole creation's groaning for!
 No rich nor poor, no gain nor loss nor stint;
 No potage in it able to exclude
 A brother's birthright, and no right of birth,
 The potage,—both secured to every man,
 And perfect virtue dealt out like the rest
 Gratuitously, with the soup at six,
 To whoso does not seek it.’

‘Softly, sir,’ I interrupted,—‘I had a cousin once I held in reverence. If he strained too wide, It was not to take honour but give help; The gesture was heroic. If his hand Accomplished nothing . . . (well, it is not proved) That empty hand thrown impotently out

Were sooner caught, I think, by One in heaven,
 Than many a hand that reaped a harvest in And keeps the scythe's glow on it. Pray you, then,
 For my sake merely, use less bitterness In speaking of my cousin.’

‘Ah,’ he said, ‘Aurora! when the prophet beats the ass, The angel intercedes.’ He shook his head—
 ‘And yet to mean so well and fail so foul, Expresses ne'er another beast than man; The antithesis is human. Hearken, dear; There's too much abstract willing, purposing,
 In this poor world. We talk by aggregates,
 And think by systems, and, being used to face Our evils in statistics, are inclined To cap them with unreal remedies Drawn out in haste on the other side the slate.’

‘That's true,’ I answered, fain to throw up thought
 And make a game of 't,—‘Yes, we generalize
 Enough to please you. If we pray at all, We pray no longer for our daily bread But next centenary's harvests. If we give,
 Our cup of water is not tendered till We lay down pipes and found a Company With Branches. Ass or angel, 'tis the same:
 A woman cannot do the thing she ought, Which means whatever perfect thing she can,
 In life, in art, in science, but she fears To let the perfect action take her part, And rest there: she must prove what she can do
 Before she does it, prate of woman's rights,
 Of woman's mission, woman's function, till The men (who are prating too on their side) cry,
 “A woman's function plainly is...to talk.” Poor souls, they are very reasonably vexed;

They cannot hear each other talk.'

' And you,
An artist, judge so !'

' I, an artist,—yes :
Because, precisely, I'm an artist, sir,
And woman, if another sate in sight,
I'd whisper,—Soft, my sister! not a word!
By speaking we prove only we can speak,
Which he, the man here, never doubted.

What

He doubts is, whether we can do the thing
With decent grace we've not yet done
at all.

Now, do it ; bring your statue,—you
have room !

He'll see it even by the starlight here ;
And if 'tis e'er so little like the god
Who looks out from the marble silently
Along the track of his own shining dart
Through the dusk of ages, there's no
need to speak ;

The universe shall henceforth speak for
you,

And witness, "She who did this thing,
was born

To do it,—claims her licence in her work."
And so with more works. Whoso cures

the plague,

Though twice a woman, shall be called
a leech :

Who rights a land's finances, is excused
For touching coppers, though her hands
be white,—

But we, we talk !

' It is the age's mood,'
He said ; ' we boast, and do not. We
put up

Hostelry signs where'er we lodge a day,
Some red colossal cow with mighty paps
A Cyclops' fingers could not strain to
milk,—

Then bring out presently our saucerful
Of curds. We want more quiet in our
works,

More knowledge of the bounds in which
we work ;

More knowledge that each individual man
Remains an Adam to the general race,
Constrained to see, like Adam, that he
keep

His personal state's condition honestly,
Or vain all thoughts of his to help the
world,

Which still must be developed from its one
If bettered in its many. We indeed,
Who think to lay it out new like a park,
We take a work on us which is not man's,
For God alone sits far enough above
To speculate so largely. None of us
(Not Romney Leigh) is mad enough to
say,

We'll have a grove of oaks upon that slope
And sink the need of acorns. Govern-
ment,

If veritable and lawful, is not given
By imposition of the foreign hand,
Nor chosen from a pretty pattern-book
Of some domestic idealogue who sits
And coldly chooses empire, whereas well
He might republic. Genuine government
Is but the expression of a nation, good
Or less good,—even as all society,
Howe'er unequal, monstrous, crazed,
and cursed,

Is but the expression of men's single lives,
The loud sum of the silent units. What,
We'd change the aggregate and yet retain
Each separate figure? whom do we cheat
by that?

Now, not even Romney.'

' Cousin, you are sad.
Did all your social labour at Leigh Hall
And elsewhere, come to nought then ?'

' It was nought,'
He answered mildly. ' There is room
indeed

For statues still, in this large world of
God's,

But not for vacuums,—so I am not sad ;
Not sadder than is good for what I am.
My vain phalanstery dissolved itself ;
My men and women of disordered lives,
I brought in orderly to dine and sleep,
Broke up those waxen masks I made
them wear,
With fierce contortions of the natural
face,—

And cursed me for my tyrannous con-
straint

In forcing crooked creatures to live
straight ;

And set the country hounds upon my back
To bite and tear me for my wicked deed
Of trying to do good without the church
Or even the squires, Aurora. Do you
mind

Your ancient neighbours? The great book-club teems
 With "sketches," "summaries," and "last tracts" but twelve,
 On socialistic troublers of close bonds
 Betwixt the generous rich and grateful poor.
 The vicar preached from "Revelations"
 (till
 The doctor woke), and found me with
 "the frogs"
 On three successive Sundays; aye, and stopped
 To weep a little (for he's getting old)
 That such perdition should o'ertake a man
 Of such fair acres,—in the parish, too!
 He printed his discourses "by request,"
 And if your book shall sell as his did, then
 Your verses are less good than I suppose.
 The women of the neighbourhood sub-
 scribed,
 And sent me a copy bound in scarlet silk,
 Toolled edges, blazoned with the arms of
 Leigh:
 I own that touched me.'

'What, the pretty ones?
 Poor Romney!'
 'Otherwise the effect was small :
 I had my windows broken once or twice
 By liberal peasants naturally incensed
 At such a vexer of Arcadian peace,
 Who would not let men call their wives
 their own
 To kick like Britons, and made obstacles
 When things went smoothly as a baby
 drugged,
 Toward freedom and starvation,—bring-
 ing down
 The wicked London tavern-thieves and drabs
 To affront the blessed hillside drabs and thieves
 With mended morals, quotha,—fine new
 lives!—
 My windows paid for 't. I was shot at,
 once,
 By an active poacher who had hit a hare
 From the other barrel (tired of springeing
 game
 So long upon my acres, undisturbed,
 And restless for the country's virtue,—
 yet
 He missed me), aye, and pelted very oft

In riding through the village. "There
 he goes
 Who'd drive away our Christian gentle-
 folks,
 To catch us undefended in the trap
 He baits with poisonous cheese, and
 lock us up
 In that pernicious prison of Leigh Hall
 With all his murderers! Give another
 name
 And say Leigh Hell, and burn it up
 with fire."
 And so they did, at last, Aurora.'
 'Did?'

'You never heard it, cousin? Vincent's
 news
 Came stinted, then.'
 'They did! they burnt Leigh Hall!'

'You're sorry, dear Aurora? Yes in-
 deed,
 They did it perfectly: a thorough work,
 And notafailure, this time. Let us grant
 'Tis somewhat easier, though, to burn
 a house
 Than build a system ;—yet that's easy,
 too,
 In a dream. Books, pictures,—aye, the
 pictures! what,
 You think your dear Vandykes would
 give them pause?
 Our proud ancestral Leights, with those
 peaked beards,
 Or bosoms white as foam thrown up on
 rocks
 From the old-spent wave. Such calm
 defiant looks
 They flared up with! now nevermore
 to twit
 The bones in the family-vault with
 ugly death.
 Not one was rescued, save the Lady
 Maud,
 Who threw you down, that morning
 you were born,
 The undeniable lineal mouth and chin
 To wear for ever for her gracious sake,
 For which good deed I saved her; the
 rest went:
 And you, you're sorry, cousin. Well,
 for me,
 With all my phalansterians safely out

(Poor hearts, they helped the burners,
it was said,
And certainly a few clapped hands and
yelled),
The ruin did not hurt me as it might,—
As when for instance I was hurt one day
A certain letter being destroyed. In
fact,
To see the great house flare so . . oaken
floors,
Our fathers made so fine with rushes
once
Before our mothers furbished them with
trains,
Carved wainscoats, panelled walls, the
favourite slide
For draining off a martyr (or a rogue),
The echoing galleries, half a half-mile
long,
And all the various stairs that took you up
And took you down, and took you round
about
Upon their slippery darkness, recollect,
All helping to keep up one blazing jest!
The flames through all the casements
pushing forth
Like red-hot devils crinkled into snakes,
All signifying,—“Look you, Romney
Leigh,
We save the people from your saving,
here,
Yet so as by fire! we make a pretty show
Besides,—and that's the best you've
ever done.”
—To see this, almost moved myself to
clap!
The “vale et plaudite” came too with effect
When, in the roof fell, and the fire that
paused,
Stunned momentarily beneath the stroke
of slates
And tumbling rafters, rose at once and
roared,
And wrapping the whole house (which
disappeared
In a mounting whirlwind of dilated flame),
Blew upward, straight, its drift of fiery
chaff
In the face of Heaven, which blenched,
and ran up higher.”

‘Poor Romney!’

‘Sometimes when I dream,’ he said,

‘I hear the silence after, ‘twas so still.
For all those wild beasts, yelling, cursing
round,
Were suddenly silent, while you counted
five,
So silent, that you heard a young birdfall
From the top-nest in the neighbouring
rookery,
Through edging over-rashly toward the
light.
The old rooks had already fled too far,
To hear the screech they fled with,
though you saw
Some flying still, like scatterings of dead
leaves
In autumn-gusts, seen dark against the
sky,—
All flying,—ousted, like the House of
Leigh.’

‘Dear Romney!’

‘Evidently 'twould have been
A fine sight for a poet, sweet, like you,
To make the verse blaze after. I myself,
Even I, felt something in the grand old
trees,
Which stood that moment like brute
Druid gods
Amazed upon the rim of ruin, where,
As into a blackened socket, the great fire
Had dropped,—still throwing up splinters
now and then
To show them grey with all their
centuries,
Left there to witness that on such a day
The House went out.’

‘Ah!’

‘While you counted five,
I seemed to feel a little like a Leigh,—
But then it passed, Aurora. A child cried,
And I had enough to think of what to do
With all those houseless wretches in
the dark,
And ponder where they'd dance the
next time, they
Who had burnt the viol.’

‘Did you think of that?
Who burns his viol will not dance, I know,
To cymbals, Romney.’

‘O my sweet sad voice.’
He cried,—‘O voice that speaks and
overcomes!
The sun is silent, but Aurora speaks.’

'Alas,' I said, 'I speak I know not what :
I'm back in childhood, thinking as a child,
A foolish fancy—will it make you smile ?
I shall not from the window of my room
Catch sight of those old chimneys any
more.'

'No more,' he answered. 'If you pushed
one day
Through all the green hills to our fathers'
house,
You'd come upon a great charred circle,
where
The patient earth was singed an acre
round ;
With one stone-stair, symbolic of my
life,
Ascending, winding, leading up to
nought !
'Tis worth a poet's seeing. Will you go ?'

I made no answer. Had I any right
To weep with this man, that I dared to
speak ?

A woman stood between his soul and
mine,
And waved us off from touching ever-
more,
With those unclean white hands of hers.
Enough.

We had burnt our viols and were silent.
So,
The silence lengthened till it pressed.
I spoke,
To breathe: 'I think you were ill after-
ward.'

'More ill,' he answered, 'had been
scarcely ill.

I hoped this feeble fumbling at life's knot
Might end concisely,—but I failed to die,
As formerly I failed to live, and thus
Grew willing, having tried all other ways,
To try just God's. Humility's so good,
When pride's impossible. Markus, how
we make

Our virtues, cousin, from our worn-out
sins,
Which smack of them from henceforth.
Is it right,
For instance, to wed here while you
love there ?
And yet because a man sins once, the sin

Cleaves to him, in necessity to sin,
That if he sin not so, to damn himself,
He sins so, to damn others with himself:
And thus, to wed here, loving there,
becomes

A duty. Virtue buds a dubious leaf
Round mortal brows; your ivy's better,
dear.

—Yet she, 'tis certain, is my very wife,
The very lamb left mangled by the wolves
Through my own bad shepherding: and
could I choose
But take her on my shoulder past this
stretch

Of rough, uneasy wilderness, poor lamb,
Poor child, poor child?—Aurora, my
beloved,

I will not vex you any more to-night,
But, having spoken what I came to say,
The rest shall please you. What she
can, in me,—

Protection, tender liking, freedom, ease,
She shall have surely, liberally, for her
And hers, Aurora. Small amends they'll
make

For hideous evils which she had not
known

Except by me, and for this imminent loss,
This forfeit presence of a gracious friend,
Which also she must forfeit for my sake,
Since, . . . drop your hand in mine
a moment, sweet,
We're parting! —ah, my snowdrop,
what a touch,
As if the wind had swept it off! you
grudge

Your gelid sweetness on my palm but so,
A moment? angry, that I could not bear
You . . speaking, breathing, living, side
by side

With some one called my wife . . and
live, myself?

Nay, be not cruel—you must understand!
Your lightest footfall on a floor of mine
Would shake the house, my lintel being
uncrossed

'Gainst angels: henceforth it is night
with me,
And so, henceforth, I put the shutters up;
Auroras must not come to spoil my dark.'

He smiled so feebly, with an empty
hand

Stretched sideway from me,—as indeed
 he looked
 To any one but me to give him help;
 And, while the moon came suddenly out
 full,
 The double-rose of our Italian moons,
 Sufficient plainly for the heaven and
 earth
 (The stars struck dumb and washed away
 in dews
 Of golden glory, and the mountains
 steeped
 In divine languor), he, the man, appeared
 So pale and patient, like the marble man
 A sculptor puts his personal sadness in
 To join his grandeur of ideal thought,—
 As if his mallet struck me from my height
 Of passionate indignation, I who had
 risen
 Pale, doubting paused,... Was Romney
 mad indeed?
 Had all this wrong of heart made sick
 the brain?

 Then quiet, with a sort of tremulous pride,
 'Go, cousin,' I said coldly; 'a farewell
 Was sooner spoken 'twixt a pair of
 friends
 In those old days, than seems to suit
 you now.
 Howbeit, since then, I've writ a book
 or two,
 I'm somewhat dull still in the manly art
 Of phrase and metaphorise. Why, any
 man
 Can carve a score of white Loves out of
 snow,
 As Buonarroti in my Florence there,
 And set them on the wall in some safe
 shade,
 As safe, sir, as your marriage! very good;
 Though if a woman took one from the
 ledge
 To put it on the table by her flowers
 And let it mind her of a certain friend,
 'Twould drop at once (so better), would
 not bear
 Her nail-mark even, where she took
 it up
 A little tenderly,—so best, I say:
 For me, I would not touch the fragile
 thing
 And risk to spoil it half an hour before

The sun shall shine to melt it: leave it
 there.
 I'm plain at speech, direct in purpose:
 when
 I speak, you'll take the meaning as it is,
 And not allow for puckerrings in the silk
 By clever stitches:—I'm a woman, sir,
 I use the woman's figures naturally,
 As you the male licence. So, I wish
 you well.
 I'm simply sorry for the griefs you've had,
 And not for your sake only, but man-
 kind's.
 This race is never grateful: from the
 first,
 One fills their cup at supper with pure
 wine,
 Which back they give at cross-time on
 a sponge,
 In vinegar and gall.'
 ' If graterfuller,'
 He murmured, 'by so much less pitiable!
 God's self would never have come down
 to die,
 Could man have thanked him for it.'
 ' Happily
 'Tis patent that, whatever,' I resumed,
 ' You suffered from this thanklessness of
 men,
 You sink no more than Moses' bulrush-
 boat
 When once relieved of Moses,—for
 you're light,
 You're light, my cousin! which is well
 for you,
 And manly. For myself,—now mark
 me, sir,
 They burnt Leigh Hall; but if, consum-
 mated
 To devils, heightened beyond Lucifers,
 They had burnt instead, a star or two
 of those
 We saw above there just a moment back,
 Before the moon abolished them,—
 destroyed
 And riddled them in ashes through a sieve
 On the head of the foundering universe,—
 what then?
 If you and I remained still you and I,
 It could not shift our places as mere
 friends,
 Nor render decent you should toss
 a phrase

Beyond the point of actual feeling!—nay,
You shall not interrupt me: as you said,
We're parting. Certainly, not once nor
twice
To-night you've mocked me somewhat,
or yourself,
And I, at least, have not deserved it so
That I should meet it unsurprised.
But now,
Enough: we're parting . . . parting.
Cousin Leigh,
I wish you well through all the acts of life
And life's relations, wedlock not the least,
And it shall "please me," in your words,
to know
You yield your wife, protection, freedom,
ease,
And very tender liking. May you live
So happy with her, Romney, that your
friends
Shall praise her for it. Meantime some
of us
Are wholly dull in keeping ignorant
Of what she has suffered by you, and
what debt
Of sorrow your rich love sits down to pay:
But if 'tis sweet for love to pay its debt,
'Tis sweeter still for love to give its gift,
And you, be liberal in the sweeter way,
You can, I think. At least, as touches me,
You owe her, cousin Romney, no amends.
She is not used to hold my gown so fast,
You need entreat her now to let it go;
The lady never was a friend of mine,
Nor capable,—I thought you knew as
much,—
Of losing for your sake so poor a prize
As such a worthless friendship. Be
content,
Good cousin, therefore, both for her
and you!
I'll never spoil your dark, nor dull your
noon,
Nor vex you when you're merry, or at
rest:
You shall not need to put a shutter up
To keep out this Aurora,—though your
north
Can make Auroras which vex nobody,
Scarce known from night, I fancied! let
me add,
My larks fly higher than some windows.
Well,

You've read your Leights. Indeed
'twould shake a house,
If such as I came in with outstretched
hand
Still warm and thrilling from the clasp
of one . . .
Of one we know, . . . to acknowledge,
palm to palm,
As mistress there, the Lady Waldemar.'
'Now God be with us' . . . with a sudden
clash
Of voice he interrupted—"what name's
that?
You spoke a name, Aurora."
"Pardon me;
I would that, Romney, I could name
your wife
Nor wound you, yet be worthy."
"Are we mad?"
He echoed—"wife! mine! Lady Wal-
demar!
I think you said my wife." He sprang
to his feet,
And threw his noble head back toward
the moon
As one who swims against a stormy sea;
Then laughed with such a helpless,
hopeless, scorn,
I stood and trembled.
"May God judge me so,"
He said at last,—"I came convicted here,
And humbled sorely if not enough.
I came,
Because this woman from her crystal
soul
Had shown me something which a man
calls light:
Because too, formerly, I sinned by her
As then and ever since I have, by God,
Through arrogance of nature,—though
I loved . . .
Whom best, I need not say, since that
is writ
Too plainly in the book of my misdeeds:
And thus I came here to abase myself,
And fasten, kneeling, on her regent
brows
A garland which I startled thence one
day
Of her beautiful June-youth. But here
again
I'm baffled,—fail in my abasement as

My aggrandizement : there's no room
left for me
At any woman's foot who misconceives
My nature, purpose, possible actions.
 What !
Are you the Aurora who made large
 my dreams
To frame your greatness ? you conceive
 so small ?
You stand so less than woman, through
 being more,
And lose your natural instinct (like
 a beast)
Through intellectual culture ? since in-
 deed
I do not think that any common she
Would dare adopt such monstrous
 forgeries
For the legible life-signature of such
As I, with all my blots,—with all my
 blots !
At last then, peerless cousin, we are
 peers,
At last we're even. Ah, you've left
 your height,
And here upon my level we take hands,
And here I reach you to forgive you,
 sweet,
And that's a fall, Aurora. Long ago
You seldom understood me,—but before,
I could not blame you. Then, you only
 seemed
So high above, you could not see below;
But now I breathe,—but now I pardon!—
 nay,
We're parting. Dearest, men have
burnt my house,
Maligned my motives,—but not one,
 I swear,
Has wronged my soul as this Aurora
 has,
Who called the Lady Waldemar my
 wife.'

'Not married to her ! yet you said'...
 'Again ?
Nay, read the lines' (he held a letter
 out)
'She sent you through me.'
 By the moonlight there,
I tore the meaning out with passionate
 haste
Much rather than I read it. Thus it ran.

NINTH BOOK

EVEN thus. I pause to write it out at
length,
The letter of the Lady Waldemar.

'I prayed your cousin Leigh to take you
 this,
He says he'll do it. After years of love,
Or what is called so, when a woman frets
And fools upon one string of a man's name,
And fingers it for ever till it breaks,—
He may perhaps do for her such a thing,
And she accept it without detriment
Although she should not love him any
 more.

And I, who do not love him, nor love you,
Nor you, Aurora,—choose you shall
 repent

Your most ungracious letter and confess,
Constrained by his convictions (he's
 convinced),
You've wronged me foully. Are you
 made so ill,
You woman—to impute such ill to *me* ?
We both had mothers,—lay in their
bosom once.

And after all, I thank you, Aurora Leigh,
For proving to myself that there are things
I would not do,—not for my life, nor him,
Though something I have somewhat
 overdone,—

For instance, when I went to see the gods
One morning on Olympus, with a step
That shook the thunder from a certain
cloud,
Committing myself vilely. Could I think,
The Muse I pulled my heart out from
 my breast

To soften, had herself a sort of heart,
And loved my mortal ? He at least loved
her,

I heard him say so,—'twas my recom-
 pense,
When, watching at his bedside fourteen
 days,

He broke out ever like a flame at whiles
Between the heats of fever,—“ Is it thou ?
Breathe closer, sweetest mouth ! ” and
 when at last

The fever gone, the wasted face extinct,

As if itirked him much to know me there,
He said, " 'Twas kind, 'twas good, 'twas
womanly"
(And fifty praises to excuse no love),
"But was the picture safe he had
ventured for?"
And then, half wandering,—"I have
loved her well,
Although she could not love me."—
 "Say instead,"
I answered, "she does love you."—
'Twas my turn
To rave : I would have married him so
changed,
Although the world had jeered me
properly
For taking up with Cupid at his worst,
The silver quiver worn off on his hair.
"No, no," he murmured, "no, she loves
me not;
Aurora Leigh does better: bring her book
And read it softly, Lady Waldemar,
Until I thank your friendship more for
that
Than even for harderservice." So I read
Your book, Aurora, for an hour that day:
I kept its pauses, marked its emphasis ;
My voice, empaled upon its hooks of rime,
Not once would writhe, nor quiver, nor
revolt;
I read on calmly,—calmly shut it up,
Observing, "There's some merit in the
book;
And yet the merit isn't is thrown away,
As chances still with women if we write
Or write not: we want string to tie our
flowers,
So drop them as we walk, which serves
to show
The way we went. Good morning,
 Mister Leigh;
You'll find another reader the next time.
A woman who does better than to love,
I hate; she will do nothing very well:
Male poets are preferable, straining less
And teaching more." I triumphed o'er
 you both,
And left him.

'When I saw him afterward
I had read your shameful letter, and my
heart.
He came with health recovered, strong
though pale,

Lord Howe and he, a courteous pair of
friends,
To say what men dare say to women,
 when
Their debtors. But I stopped them with
a word,
And proved I had never trodden such
a road
To carry so much dirt upon my shoe.
Then, putting into it something of disdain,
I asked forsooth his pardon, and my own,
For having done no better than to love,
And that not wisely,—though 'twas long
ago,
And had been mended radically since.
I told him, as I tell you now, Miss Leigh,
And proved, I took some trouble for his
sake
(Because I knew he did not love the girl)
To spoil my hands with working in the
stream
Of that poor bubbling nature,—till she
went,
Consigned to one I trusted, my own maid
Who once had lived full five months in
my house
(Dressed hair superbly), with a lavish
purse
To carry to Australia where she had left
A husband, said she. If the creature lied,
The mission failed, we all do fail and lie
More or less—and I'm sorry—which is all
Expected from us when we fail the most
And go to church to own it. What I meant,
Was just the best for him, and me, and
her...
Best even for Marian!—I am sorry for 't,
And very sorry. Yet my creature said
She saw her stop to speak in Oxford Street
To one... no matter! I had sooner cut
My hand off (though 'twere kissed the
hour before,
And promised a duke's troth-ring for the
next)
Than crush her silly head with so much
wrong.
Poor child! I would have mended it with
gold,
Until it gleamed like St. Sophia's dome
When all the faithful troop to morning
prayer:
But he, he nipped the bud of such a

With that cold Leigh look which I fancied once,
And broke in, "Henceforth she was called his wife:
His wife required no succour : he was bound
To Florence, to resume this broken bond;
Enough so. Both were happy, he and Howe,
To acquit me of the heaviest charge of all—"
—At which I shot my tongue against my fly
And struck him; "Would he carry,—he was just,
A letter from me to Aurora Leigh,
And ratify from his authentic mouth
My answer to her accusation?"—"Yes,
If such a letter were prepared in time."
—He's just, your cousin,—aye, abhorrently:
He'd wash his hands in blood, to keep them clean.
And so, cold, courteous, a mere gentleman,
He bowed, we parted.

'Parted. Face no more,
Voice no more, love no more! wiped wholly out
Like some ill scholar's scrawl from heart and slate,—
Aye, spit on and so wiped out utterly
By some coarse scholar! I have been too coarse,
Too human. Have we business, in our rank,
With blood i' the veins? I will have henceforth none,
Not even to keep the colour at my lip:
A rose is pink and pretty without blood,
Why not a woman? When we've played in vain

The game, to adore,—we have resources still,
And can play on at leisure, being adored:
Here's Smith already swearing at my feet
That I'm the typic She. Away with Smith!—
Smith smacks of Leigh,—and henceforth I'll admit
No socialist within three crinolines,
To live and have his being. But for you,
Though insolent your letter and absurd,

And though I hate you frankly,—take my Smith!
For when you have seen this famous marriage tied,
A most unspotted Erle to a noble Leigh
(His love astray on one he should not love),
Howbeit you may not want his love, beware,
You'll want some comfort. So I leave you Smith,
Take Smith!—he talks Leigh's subjects, somewhat worse;
Adopts a thought of Leigh's, and dwindleth it;
Goes leagues beyond, to be no inch behind;
Will mind you of him, as a shoe-string may Of a man: and women, when they are made like you,
Grow tender to a shoe-string, footprint even,
Adore averted shoulders in a glass,
And memories of what, present once, was loathed.
And yet, you loathed not Romney,— though you played At "fox and goose" about him with your soul;
Pass over fox, you rub out fox,—ignore A feeling, you eradicate it,—the act's Identical.
‘I wish you joy, Miss Leigh;
You've made a happy marriage for your friend,
And all the honour, well-assorted love,
Derives from you who love him, whom he loves!
You need not wish me joy to think of it;
I have so much. Observe, Aurora Leigh,
Your droop of eyelid is the same as his,
And, but for you, I might have won his love,
And, to you, I have shown my naked heart;
For which three things, I hate, hate, hate you. Hush,
Suppose a fourth!—I cannot choose but think
That, with him, I were virtuouser than you
Without him: so I hate you from this gulf And hollow of my soul, which opens out

To what, except for you, had been my heaven,
And is instead, a place to curse by! Love.'

An active kind of curse. I stood there cursed,
Confounded. I had seized and caught the sense
Of the letter, with its twenty stinging snakes,
In a moment's sweep of eyesight, and I stood Dazed.—‘Ah! not married.’

‘ You mistake,’ he said, ‘ I’m married. Is not Marian Erle my wife? As God sees things, I have a wife and child; And I, as I’m a man who honours God, Am here to claim them as my child and wife.’

I felt it hard to breathe, much less to speak.
Nor word of mine was needed. Some one else Was there for answering. ‘ Romney,’ she began, ‘ My great good angel, Romney.’

Then at first, I knew that Marian Erle was beautiful. She stood there, still and pallid as a saint, Dilated, like a saint in ecstasy, As if the floating moonshine interposed Betwixt her foot and the earth, and raised her up

To float upon it. ‘ I had left my child, Who sleeps,’ she said, ‘ and having drawn this way

I heard you speaking, . . friend!—Confirm me now.

You take this Marian, such as wicked men Have made her, for your honourable wife?’

The thrilling, solemn, proud, pathetic voice.

He stretched his arms out toward that thrilling voice,

As if to draw it on to his embrace.

—‘ I take her as God made her, and as men Must fail to unmake her, for my honoured wife.’

She never raised her eyes, nor took a step, But stood there in her place, and spoke again.

—‘ You take this Marian’s child, which is her shame In sight of men and women, for your child, Of whom you will never feel ashamed?’

The thrilling, tender, proud, pathetic voice.

He stepped on toward it, still with outstretched arms, As if to quench upon his breast that voice. —‘ May God so father me, as I do him, And so forsake me, as I let him feel He’s orphaned haply. Here I take the child

To share my cup, to slumber on my knee, To play his loudest gambol at my foot, To hold my finger in the public ways, Till none shall need inquire, “ Whose child is this?”

The gesture saying so tenderly, “ My own.”

She stood a moment silent in her place; Then turning toward me very slow and cold,

—‘ And you,—what say you?—will you blame me much, If, careful for that outcast child of mine, I catch this hand that’s stretched to me and him,

Nor dare to leave him friendless in the world

Where men have stoned me? Have I not the right

To take so mere an aftermath from life, Else found so wholly bare? Or is it wrong To let your cousin, for a generous bent, Put out his ungloved fingers among briers To set a tumbling bird’s-nest somewhat straight?

You will not tell him, though we’re innocent,

We are not harmless, . . and that both our harms

Will stick to his good smooth noble life like burrs,

Never to drop off though he shakes the cloak?

You’ve been my friend: you will not now be his?

You've known him that he's worthy of
a friend,
And you're his cousin, lady, after all,
And therefore more than free to take his
part,
Explaining, since the nest is surely spoilt
And Marian what you know her,—though
a wife,
The world would hardly understand her
case
Of being just hurt and honest; while,
for him,
'Twould ever twit him with his bastard
child
And married harlot. Speak, while yet
there's time.
You would not stand and let a good man's
dog
Turn round and rend him, because his,
and reared
Of a generous breed,—and will you let
his act,
Because it's generous? Speak. I'm
bound to you,
And I'll be bound by only you, in this.'

The thrilling, solemn voice, so passionless,
Sustained, yet low, without a rise or fall,
As one who had authority to speak,
And not as Marian.

I looked up to feel
If God stood near me, and beheld His
heaven
As blue as Aaron's priestly robe appeared
To Aaron when he took it off to die.
And then I spoke—'Accept the gift, I say,
My sister Marian, and be satisfied.
The hand that gives, has still a soul behind
Which will not let it quail for having
given,
Though foolish worldlings talk they know
not what
Of what they know not. Romney's
strong enough
For this: do you be strong to know he's
strong:
He stands on Right's side; never flinch
for him,
As if he stood on the other. You'll be
bound
By me! I am a woman of repute;
No fly-blow gossip ever specked my life;
My name is clean and open as this hand,

Whose glove there's not a man dares
blab about
As if he had touched it freely. Here's
my hand
To clasp your hand, my Marian, owned
as pure!
As pure,—as I'm a woman and a Leigh!—
And, as I'm both, I'll witness to the
world
That Romney Leigh is honoured in his
choice
Who chooses Marian for his honoured
wife.'

Her broad wild woodland eyes shot out
a light,
Her smile was wonderful for rapture.
'Thanks,
My great Aurora.' Forward then she
sprang,
And dropping her impassioned spaniel
head
With all its brown abandonment of
curls
On Romney's feet, we heard the kisses
drawn
Through sobs upon the foot, upon the
ground—
'O Romney! O my angel! O unchanged,
Though since we've parted I have past
the grave!
But Death itself could only better *thee*,
Not change thee!—*Thee* I do not thank
at all:
I but thank God who made thee what
thou art,
So wholly godlike.'

When he tried in vain
To raise her to his embrace, escaping
thence
As any leaping fawn from a huntsman's
grasp,
She bounded off and 'lighted beyond
reach,
Before him, with a staglike majesty
Of soft, serene defiance,—as she knew
He could not touch her, so was tolerant
He had cared to try. She stood there
with her great
Drowned eyes, and dripping cheeks, and
strange sweet smile
That lived through all, as if one held
a light

Across a waste of waters,—shook her head
 To keep some thoughts down deeper in her soul,—
 Then, white and tranquil like a summer-cloud
 Which, having rained itself to a tardy peace,
 Stands still in heaven as if it ruled the day,
 Spoke out again—‘Although, my generous friend,
 Since last we met and parted you’re unchanged,
 And, having promised faith to Marian Erle,
 Maintain it, as she were not changed at all;
 And though that’s worthy, though that’s full of balm
 To any conscious spirit of a girl
 Who once has loved you as I loved you once,—
 Yet still it will not make her.. if she’s dead,
 And gone away where none can give or take
 In marriage,—able to revive, return
 And wed you,—will it, Romney?
 Here’s the point,
 My friend, we’ll see it plainer : you and I
 Must never, never, never join hands so.
 Nay, let me say it,—for I said it first
 To God, and placed it, rounded to an oath,
 Far, far above the moon there, at His feet,
 As surely as I wept just now at yours,—
 We never, never, never join hands so.
 And now, be patient with me ; do not think
 I’m speaking from a false humility.
 The truth is, I am grown so proud with grief,
 And He has said so often through His nights
 And through His mornings, “Weep a little still,
 Thou foolish Marian, because women must,
 But do not blush at all except for sin,”—
 That I, who felt myself unworthy once
 Of virtuous Romney and his high-born race,
 Have come to learn,—a woman, poor or rich,

Despised or honoured, is a human soul,
 And what her soul is, that, she is herself,
 Although she should be spit upon of men,
 As is the pavement of the churches here,
 Still good enough to pray in. And being chaste
 And honest, and inclined to do the right.
 And love the truth, and live my life out green
 And smooth beneath his steps, I should not fear
 To make him thus a less uneasy time
 Than many a happier woman. Very proud
 You see me. Pardon, that I set a trap
 To hear a confirmation in your voice,
 Both yours and yours. It is so good to know
 ‘Twas really God who said the same before ;
 And thus it is in heaven, that first God speaks,
 And then His angels. Oh, it does me good,
 It wipes me clean and sweet from devil’s dirt,
 That Romney Leigh should think me worthy still
 Of being his true and honourable wife !
 Henceforth I need not say, on leaving earth,
 I had no glory in it. For the rest,
 The reason’s ready (master, angel, friend,
 Be patient with me) wherefore you and I
 Can never, never, never join hands so
 I know you’ll not be angry like a man
 (For you are none) when I shall tell the truth,
 Which is, I do not love you, Romney Leigh,
 I do not love you. Ah well! catch my hands,
 Miss Leigh, and burn into my eyes with yours,—
 I swear I do not love him. Did I once ?
 ‘Tis said that women have been bruised to death
 And yet, if once they loved, that love of theirs
 Could never be drained out with all their blood :
 I’ve heard such things and pondered.
 Did I indeed

Love once; or did I only worship? Yes,
Perhaps, O friend, I set you up so high
Above all actual good or hope of good
Or fear of evil, all that could be mine,
I haply set you above love itself,
And out of reach of these poor woman's
arms,

Angelic Romney. What was in my
thought?

To be your slave, your help, your toy,
your tool.

To be your love... I never thought of that:
To give you love... still less. I gave
you love?

I think I did not give you anything;
I was but only yours,—upon my knees,
All yours, in soul and body, in head and
heart,

A creature you had taken from the ground
Still crumbling through your fingers to
your feet

To join the dust she came from. Did
I love,

Or did I worship? judge, Aurora Leigh!
But, if indeed I loved, 'twas long ago,—
So long! before the sun and moon were
made,

Before the hells were open,—ah, before
I heard my child cry in the desert night,
And knew he had no father. It may be
I'm not as strong as other women are,
Who, torn and crushed, are not undone
from love.

It may be I am colder than the dead,
Who, being dead, love always. But for
me,

Once killed, this ghost of Marian loves
no more,
No more... except the child!... no more
at all.

I told your cousin, sir, that I was dead;
And now, she thinks I'll get up from my
grave,

And wear my chin-cloth for a wedding-
veil,

And glide along the churchyard like a
bride

While all the dead keep whispering
through the wthes,

"You would be better in your place
with us,

You pitiful corruption!" At the thought,
The damps break out on me like leprosy

Although I'm clean. Aye, clean as
Marian Erle:
As Marian Leigh, I know, I were not
clean:
Nor have I so much life that I should love,
Except the child. Ah God! I could not
bear

To see my darling on a good man's knees,
And know, by such a look, or such a sigh,
Or such a silence, that he thought some-
times,
"This child was fathered by some
cursed wretch" . . .

For, Romney,—angels are less tender-
wise.
Than God and mothers: even *you* would
think

What *we* think never. He is ours, the
child;
And we would sooner vex a soul in heaven
By coupling with it the dead body's
thought,

It left behind it in a last month's grave,
Than, in my child, see other than... my
child.

We only, never call him fatherless
Who has God and his mother. O my babe,
My pretty, pretty blossom, an ill-wind
Once blew upon my breast! can any
think

I'd have another,—one called happier,
A fathered child, with father's love and
race

That's worn as bold and open as a smile,
To vex my darling when he's asked his
name

And has no answer! What! a happier
child

Than mine, my best,—who laughed so
loud to-night

He could not sleep for pastime! Nay,
I swear

By life and love, that, if I lived like some,
And loved like... *some*, aye, loved you,
Romney Leigh,

As some love (eyes that have wept so
much, see clear),

I've room for no more children in my
arms,

My kisses are all melted on one mouth,
I would not push my darling to a stool
To dandle babies. Here's a hand shall
keep

For ever clean without a marriage-ring,
To tend my boy until he cease to need
One steadyng finger of it, and desert
(Not miss) his mother's lap, to sit with
men.

And when I miss him (no theme) I'll come
And say, "Now give me some of
Romney's work,
To help your outcast orphans of the world
And comfort grief with grief." For you,
meantime,

Most noble Romney, wed a noble wife,
And open on each other your great
souls,—

I need not farther bless you. If I dared
But strain and touch her in her upper
sphere

And say, "Come down to Romney—
pay my debt!"

I should be joyful with the stream of joy
Sent through me. But the moon is in
my face . . .

I dare not,—though I guess the name he
loves;

I'm learned with my studies of old days,
Remembering how he crushed his under-
lip

When some one came and spoke, or did
not come :

Aurora, I could touch her with my hand,
And fly because I dare not.'

She was gone.
Hesmiled so sternly that I spoke in haste:
'Forgive her—she sees clearly for her-
self:

Her instinct's holy.'

'I forgive!' he said,
'I only marvel how she sees so sure,
While others . . . there he paused,—then
hoarse, abrupt,—

'Aurora! you forgive us, her and me?
For her, the thing she sees, poor loyal
child,

If once corrected by the thing I know,
Had been unspoken, since she loves you
well,

Has leave to love you:—while for me,
alas,

If once or twice I let my heart escape
This night, . . . remember, where hearts
slip and fall

They break beside: we're parting:—
parting,—ah,

You do not love, that you should surely
know
What that word means. Forgive, be
tolerant;

It had not been, but that I felt myself
So safe in impuissance and despair,
I could not hurt you though I tossed my
arms

And sighed my soul out. The most utter
wretch

Will choose his postures when he comes
to die,
However in the presence of a queen;
And you'll forgive me some unseemly
spasms

Which meant no more than dying. Do
you think
I had ever come here in my perfect mind,
Unless I had come here in my settled mind
Bound Marian's, bound to keep the bond
and give

My name, my house, my hand, the things
I could,
To Marian ! For even I could give as
much :

Even I, affronting her exalted soul
By a supposition that she wanted these,
Could act the husband's coat and hat set
up

To creak i' the wind and drive the world-
crows off

From pecking in her garden. Straw
can fil

A hole to keep out vermin. Now, at last,
I own heaven's angels round her life
suffice
To fight the rats of our society,
Without this Romney : I can see it at last;
And here is ended my pretension which
The most pretended. Over-proud of
course,
Even so!—but not so stupid . . . blind . . .
that I,

Whom thus the great Taskmaster of the
world

Has set to meditate mistaken work,
My dreary face against a dim blank wall
Throughout man's natural lifetime,—
could pretend
Or wish . . . O love, I have loved you!
O my soul,

I have lost you!—but I swear by all
yourself.

And all you might have been to me these years
 If that June-morning had not failed my hope,—
 I'm not so bestial, to regret that day
 This night,—this night, which still to you is fair!
 Nay, not so blind, Aurora. I attest
 Those stars above us which I cannot see...’

‘You cannot’...

‘That if Heaven itself should stoop,
 Remix the lots, and give me another chance,
 I'd say, “No other!”—I'd record my blank.
 Aurora never should be wife of mine.’

‘Not see the stars!’

‘Tis worse still, not to see
 To find your hand, although we're parting, dear.
 A moment let me hold it ere we part;
 And understand my last words—these, at last!

I would not have you thinking when I'm gone

That Romney dared to hanker for your love

In thought or vision, if attainable
 (Which certainly for me it never was),
 And wished to use it for a dog to-day
 To help the blind man stumbling. God forbid!

And now I know He held you in His palm,
 And kept you open-eyed to all my faults,
 To save you at last from such a dreary end.
 Believe me, dear, that, if I had known like Him

What loss was coming on me, I had done
 As well in this as He has.—Farewell, you Who are still my light,—farewell! How late it is:

I know that, now. You've been too patient, sweet.
 I will but blow my whistle toward the lane,
 And some one comes,—the same who brought me here.

Get in—Good-night.’

‘A moment. Heavenly Christ!
 A moment. Speak once, Romney. ‘Tis not true.

I hold your hands, I look into your face—
 You see me!’

‘No more than the blessed stars.
 Be blessed too, Aurora. Nay, my sweet,
 You tremble. Tender-hearted! Do you mind

Of yore, dear, how you used to cheat old John,

And let the mice out slyly from his traps,
 Until he marvelled at the soul in mice
 Which took the cheese and left the snare? The same

Dear soft heart always! ‘Twas for this I grieved

Howe's letter never reached you. Ah, you had heard

Of illness,—not the issue, not the extent:
 My life long sick with tossings up and down,

The sudden revulsion in the blazing house,
 The strain and struggle both of body and soul,

Which left fire running in my veins for blood:

Scarce lacked that thunderbolt of the falling beam

Which nicked me on the forehead as I passed

The gallery-door with a burden. Say heaven's bolt,

Not William Erie's, not Marian's father's,—tramp

And poacher, whom I found for what he was,

And, eager for her sake to rescue him, forth swept from the open highway of the world,

Road-dust and all,—till, like a woodland boar

Most naturally unwilling to be tamed, He notched me with his tooth. But not a word

To Marian! and I do not think, besides, He turned the tilting of the beam my way,—

And if he laughed, as many swear, poor wretch,

Nor he nor I supposed the hurt so deep. We'll hope his next laugh may be merrier, In a better cause.’

‘Blind, Romney?’

‘Ah, my friend, You'll learn to say it in a cheerful voice.

I, too, at first desponded. To be blind,
Turned out of nature, mulcted as a man,
Refused the daily largesse of the sun
To humble creatures! When the fever's
heat
Dropped from me, as the flame did from
my house,
And left me ruined like it, stripped of all
The hues and shapes of asplicable life,
A mere bare blind stone in the blaze of
day,
A man, upon the outside of the earth,
As dark as ten feet under, in the grave,—
Why that seemed hard.'

'No hope!'

'A tear! you weep,
Divine Aurora! tears upon my hand!
I've seen you weeping for a mouse, a
bird,—
But, weep for me, Aurora! Yes, there's
hope.
Not hope of sight,—I could be learned,
dear,
And tell you in what Greek and Latin
name
The visual nerve is withered to the root,
Though the outer eyes appear indifferent,
Unspotted in their crystals. But there's
hope,
The spirit, from behind this dethroned
sense,
Sees, waits in patience till the walls
break up
From which the bas-relief and fresco
have dropt:
There's hope. The man here, once so
arrogant
And restless, so ambitious, for his part,
Of dealing with statistically packed
Disorders (from a pattern on his nail),
And packing such things quite another
way,—

Is now contented. From his personal
loss
He has come to hope for others when
they lose,
And wear a gladder faith in what we
gain...
Through bitter experience, compensation
sweet,
Like that tear, sweetest. I am quiet
now,
As tender surely for the suffering world,

But quiet,—sitting at the wall to learn,
Content henceforth to do the thing I can:
For, though as powerless, said I, as a
stone,

A stone can still give shelter to a worm,
And it is worth while being a stone for
that:

There's hope, Aurora.'

'Is there hope for me?
For me?—and is there room beneath the
stone

For such a worm!—And if I came and
said... .

What all this weeping scarce will let
me say,
And yet what women cannot say at all
But weeping bitterly... (the pride keeps
up,

Until the heart breaks under it)... I
love,—

I love you, Romney'..

'Silence!' he exclaimed.
'A woman's pity sometimes makes her
mad.

A man's distraction must not cheat his
soul

To take advantage of it. Yet, 'tis hard—
Farewell, Aurora.'

'But I love you, sir;
And when a woman says she loves a man,
The man must hear her, though he love
her not,
Which... hush!... he has leave to
answer in his turn;
She will not surely blame him. As for me,
You call it pity,—think I'm generous?
'Twere somewhat easier, for a woman
proud

As I am, and I'm very vilely proud,
To let it pass as such, and press on you
Love born of pity,—seeing that excellent
loves

Are born so, often, nor the quicklier
die,—

And this would set me higher by the head
Than now I stand. No matter: let the
truth

Stand high; Aurora must be humble: no,
My love's not pity merely. Obviously
I'm not a generous woman, never was,
Or else, of old, I had not looked so near
To weights and measures, grudging you
the power

To give, as first I scorned your power
to judge

For me, Aurora. I would have no gifts
Forsooth, but God's,—and I would use
them too

According to my pleasure and my choice,
As He and I were equals, you below,
Excluded from that level of interchange
Admitting benefaction. You were wrong
In much! you said so. I was wrong
in most.

Oh, most! You only thought to rescue
men

By half-means, half-way, seeing half
their wants,
While thinking nothing of your personal
gain.

But I who saw the human nature broad
At both sides, comprehending too the
soul's,

And all the high necessities of Art,
Betrayed the thing I saw, and wrunged
my own life

For which I pleaded. Passioned to exalt
The artist's instinct in me at the cost
Of putting down the woman's, I forgot
No perfect artist is developed here
From any imperfect woman. Flower
from root,
And spiritual from natural, grade by
grade

In all our life. A handful of the earth
To make God's image! the despised poor
earth,
The healthy odorous earth,—I missed
with it

The divine Breath that blows the nostrils
out

To ineffable inflatus,—aye, the breath
Which love is. Art is much, but love is
more.

O Art, my Art, thou'rt much, but Love
is more!

Art symbolizes heaven, but Love is God
And makes heaven. I, Aurora, fell from
mine.

I would not be a woman like the rest,
A simple woman who believes in love
And owns the right of love because she
loves,

And, hearing she's beloved, is satisfied
With what contents God: I must analyse,
Confront, and question; just as if a fly

Refused to warm itself in any sun
Till such was *in leone*: I must fret
Forsooth because the month was only
May,

Be faithless of the kind of proffered love,
And captious, lest it miss my dignity,
And scornful, that my lover sought a wife
To use... to use! O Romney, O my love,
I am changed since then, changed wholly,
—for indeed

If now you'd stoop so low to take my love
And use it roughly, without stint or spare,
As men use common things with more
behind

(And, in this, ever would be more behind),
To any mean and ordinary end,—
The joy would set me like a star, in
heaven,

So high up, I should shine because of
height

And not of virtue. Yet in one respect,
Just one, beloved, I am in no wise
changed:

I love you, loved you... loved you first
and last,

And love you on for ever. Now I know
I loved you always, Romney. She
who died

Knew that, and said so; Lady Waldemar
Knows that;... and Marian. I had
known the same,

Except that I was prouder than I knew,
And not so honest. Aye, and, as I live,
I should have died so, crushing in my hand
This rose of love, the wasp inside and all,
Ignoring ever to my soul and you
Both rose and pain,—except for this
great loss.

This great despair,—to stand before
your face

And know you do not see me where
I stand.

You think, perhaps, I am not changed
from pride,

And that I chiefly bear to say such words,
Because you cannot shame me with
your eyes?

O calm, grand eyes, extinguished in
a storm,
Blown out like lights o'er melancholy seas,
Though shrieked for by the ship-
wrecked,—O my Dark,
My Cloud,—to go before me every day

While I go ever toward the wilderness,—
I would that you could see me bare to
the soul!

If this be pity, 'tis so for myself,
And not for Romney! he can stand alone;
A man like *him* is never overcome:
No woman like me, counts him pitiable
While saints applaud him. He mistook
the world;

But I mistook my own heart, and that slip
Was fatal. Romney,—will you leave
me here?

So wrong, so proud, so weak, so un-
consoled,
So mere a woman!—and I love you so,
I love you, Romney—'

Could I see his face,
I wept so! Did I drop against his breast,
Or did his arms constrain me? were
my cheeks

Hot, overflowed, with my tears, or his?
And which of our two large explosive
hearts

So shook me! That, I know not.
There were words

That broke in utterance . . . melted, in
the fire,—

Embrace, that was convulsion, . . . then
a kiss

As long and silent as the ecstatic night,
And deep, deep, shuddering breaths,
which meant beyond

Whatever could be told by word or kiss.

But what he said . . . I have written day
by day,

With somewhat even writing. Did
I think

That such a passionate rain would
intercept

And dash this last page! What he said,
indeed,

I fain would write it down here like the
rest,

To keep it in my eyes, as in my ears,
The heart's sweet scripture, to be read
at night

When weary, or at morning when afraid,
And seal my heaviest oath on when
I swear

That, when all's done, all tried, all
counted here,

All great arts, and all good philosophies,

This love just puts its hand out in a dream
And straight outstretches all things.

What he said,
I fain would write. But if an angel spoke
In thunder, should we haply know
much more

Than that it thundered? If a cloud came
down

And wrapt us wholly, could we draw
its shape,

As if on the outside and not overcome?
And so he spake. His breath against
my face

Confused his words, yet made them
more intense

(As when the sudden finger of the wind
Will wipe a row of single city-lamps
To a pure white line of flame, more
luminous

Because of obliteration), more intense,
The intimate presence carrying in itself
Complete communication, as with souls
Who, having put the body off, perceive
Through simply being. Thus, 'twas
granted me

To know he loved me to the depth and
height

Of such large natures, ever competent,
With grand horizons by the sea or land,
To love's grand sunrise. Small spheres
hold small fires,

But he loved largely, as a man can love
Who, baffled in his love, dares live his life,
Accept the ends which God loves, for
his own,

And lift a constant aspect.

From the day
I brought to England my poor searching
face

(An orphan even of my father's grave)
He had loved me, watched me, watched
his soul in mine,

Which in me grew and heightened into
love.

For he, a boy still, had been told the tale
Of how a fairy bride from Italy
With smells of oleanders in her hair,
Was coming through the vines to touch
his hand;

Whereat the blood of boyhood on the
palm
Made sudden heats. And when at last
I came,

And lived before him, lived, and rarely
smiled,
He smiled and loved me for the thing
I was,
As every child will love the year's first
flower
(Not certainly the fairest of the year,
But, in which, the complete year seems
to blow),
The poor sad snowdrop,—growing
between drifts,
Mysterious medium 'twixt the plant and
frost,
So faint with winter while so quick with
spring,
And doubtful if to thaw itself away
With that snow near it. Not that
Romney Leigh
Hadloved me coldly. If I thought so once,
It was as if I had held my hand in fire
And shook for cold. But now I under-
stood
For ever, that the very fire and heat
Of troubling passion in him burned him
clear,
And shaped, to dubious order, word
and act:
That, just because he loved me over all,
All wealth, all lands, all social privilege,
To which chance made him unexpected
heir,
And, just because on all these lessergifts,
Constrained by conscience and the sense
of wrong
He had stamped with steady hand God's
arrow-mark
Of dedication to the human' need,
He thought it should be so too, with
his love.
He, passionately loving, would bring
down
His love, his life, his best (because the
best),
His bride of dreams, who walked so
still and high
Through flowery poems as through
meadow-grass.
The dust of golden lilies on her feet,
That she should walk beside him on the
rocks
In all that clang and hewing out of men,
And help the work of help which was
his life,

And prove he kept back nothing,—not
his soul.
And when I failed him,—for I failed
him, I,
And when it seemed he had missed my
love, he thought
'Aurora makes room for a working-
noon,'
And so, self-girded with torn strips of
hope,
Took up his life as if it were for death
(Just capable of one heroic aim),
And threw it in the thickest of the
world,—
At which men laughed as if he had
drowned a dog.
No wonder,—since Aurora failed him
first!
The morning and the evening made his
day.

But oh, the night! oh, bitter-sweet!
oh, sweet!
O dark, O moon and stars, O ecstasy
Of darkness! O great mystery of love,
In which absorbed, loss, anguish, trea-
son's self
Enlarges rapture,—as a pebble dropt
In some full wine-cup over-brims the
wine!
While we two sate together, leaned
that night
So close, my very garments crept and
thrilled
With strange electric life, and both my
cheeks
Grew red, then pale, with touches from
my hair
In which his breath was,—while the
golden moon
Was hung before our faces as the badge
Of some sublime inherited despair,
Since ever to be seen by only one,—
A voice said, low and rapid as a sigh,
Yet breaking, I felt conscious, from a
smile,
'Thank God, who made me blind, to
make me see!
Shine on, Aurora, dearest light of souls,
Which rul'st for evermore both day and
night!
I am happy.'
I flung closer to his breast,

As sword that, after battle, flings to sheath ;
 And, in that hurtle of united souls,
 The mystic motions which in common moods
 Areshut beyond our sense, broke in on us,
 And, as we sate, we felt the old earth spin,
 And all the starry turbulence of worlds
 Swing round us in their audient circles, till,
 If that same golden moon were overhead
 Or if beneath our feet, we did not know.
 And then calm, equal, smooth with weights of joy,
 His voice rose, as some chief musician's song
 Amid the old Jewish temple's Selah-pause,
 And bade me mark how we two met at last
 Upon this moon-bathed promontory of earth,
 To give up much on each side, then take all.
 'Beloved,' it sang, 'we must be here to work ;
 And men who work can only work for men,
 And, not to work in vain, must comprehend
 Humanity and so work humanly,
 And raise men's bodies still by raising souls,
 As God did first.'
 'But stand upon the earth,' I said, 'to raise them (this is human too, There's nothing high which has not first been low,
 My humbleness, said One, has made Me great !),
 As God did last.'
 'And work all silently
 And simply,' he returned, 'as God does all ;
 Distort our nature never for our work,
 Nor count our right hands stronger for being hoofs.
 The man most man, with tenderest human hands,
 Works best for men,—as God in Nazareth.'

He paused upon the word, and then resumed :
 'Fewer programmes, we who have no prescience.
 Fewer systems, we who are held and do not hold.
 Less mapping out of masses to be saved, By nations or by sexes. Fourier's void, And Comte absurd,—and Cabet, puerile. Subsist no rules of life outside of life, No perfect manners, without Christian souls :
 The Christ Himself had been no Lawgiver Unless He had given the life, too, with the law.'
 I echoed thoughtfully—'The man, most man,
 Works best for men, and, if most man indeed,
 He gets his manhood plainest from his soul :
 While obviously this stringent soul itself
 Obeyes the old law of development, The Spirit ever witnessing in ours, And Love, the soul of soul, within the soul,
 Evolving it sublimely. First, God's love.'
 'And next,' he smiled, 'the love of wedded souls,
 Which still presents that mystery's counterpart.
 Sweet shadow-rose, upon the water of life,
 Of such a mystic substance, Sharon gave A name to ! human, vital, fructuous rose, Whose calyx holds the multitude of leaves,
 Loves filial, loves fraternal, neighbour-loves
 And civic—all fair petals, all good scents, All reddened, sweetened from one central Heart !'
 'Alas,' I cried, 'it was not long ago, You swore this very social rose smelt ill.'
 'Alas,' he answered, 'is it a rose at all ? The filial's thankless, the fraternal's hard,
 The rest is lost. I do but stand and think, Across the waters of a troubled life

This Flower of Heaven so vainly over-hangs,
What perfect counterpart would be in sight
If tanks were clearer. Let us clean the tubes,
And wait for rains. O poet, O my love,
Since I was too ambitious in my deed
And thought to distance all men in success
(Till God came on me, marked the place
and said,
"Illi-doer, henceforth keep within this line,
Attempting less than others,"—and I stand
And work among Christ's little ones, content),
Come thou, my compensation, my dear sight,
My morning-star, my morning,—rise and shine,
And touch my hills with radiance not their own.
Shine out for two, Aurora, and fulfil
My falling-short that must be! work for two,
As I, though thus restrained, for two, shall love!
Gaze on, with inscient vision toward the sun,
And, from his visceral heat, pluck out the roots
Of light beyond him. Art's a service,—mark:
A silver key is given to thy clasp,
And thou shalt stand unwearied, night and day,
And fix it in the hard, slow-turning wards,
To open, so, that intermediate door
Betwixt the different planes of sensuous form
And form insensuous, that inferior men
May learn to feel on still through these to those,
And bless thy ministration. The world waits
For help. Beloved, let us love so well,
Our work shall still be better for our love,
And still our love be sweeter for our work,
And both commended, for the sake of each,
By all true workers and true lovers born.
Now press the clarion on thy woman's lip
(Love's holy kiss shall still keep consecrate)

And breathe thy fine keen breath along the brass,
And blow all class-walls level as Jericho's Past Jordan,—crying from the top of souls,
To souls, that, here assembled on earth's flats,
They get them to some purer eminence Than any hitherto beheld for clouds!
What height we know not,—but the way we know,
And how by mounting ever, we attain,
And so climb on. It is the hour for souls,
That bodies, leavened by the will and love,
Be lightened to redemption. The world's old,
But the old world waits the time to be renewed,
Toward which, new hearts in individual growth
Must quicken, and increase to multitude
In new dynasties of the race of men;
Developed whence, shall grow spontaneously
New churches, new economies, new laws
Admitting freedom, new societies
Excluding falsehood: He shall make all new.'

My Romney!—Lifting up my hand in his,
As wheeled by Seeing spirits toward the east,
He turned instinctively, where, faint and far,
Along the tingling desert of the sky,
Beyond the circle of the conscious hills,
Were laid in Jasper-stone as clear as glass
The first foundations of that new, near Day
Which should be builded out of heaven to God.
He stood a moment with erected brows
In silence, as a creature might who gazed,—
Stood calm, and fed his blind, majestic eyes
Upon the thought of perfect noon: and when
I saw his soul saw,—'Jasper first,' I said,
'And second, sapphire; third, chalcedony;
The rest in order,—last, an amethyst.'

POEMS BEFORE CONGRESS

PREFACE

THESE poems were written under the pressure of the events they indicate, after a residence in Italy of so many years, that the present triumph of great principles is heightened to the writer's feelings by the disastrous issue of the last movement, witnessed from 'Casa Guidi Windows' in 1849. Yet, if the verses should appear to English readers too pungently rendered to admit of a patriotic respect to the English sense of things, I will not excuse myself on such grounds, nor on the ground of my attachment to the Italian people, and my admiration of their heroic constancy and union. What I have written has simply been written because I love truth and justice *quand même*,—'more than Plato' and Plato's country, more than Dante and Dante's country, more even than Shakespeare and Shakespeare's country.

And if patriotism means the flattery of one's nation in every case, then the patriot, take it as you please, is merely a courtier; which I am not, though I have written 'Napoleon III in Italy.' It is time to limit the significance of certain terms, or to enlarge the significance of certain things. Nationality is excellent in its place; and the instinct of self-love is the root of a man, which will develop into sacrificial virtues. But all the virtues are means and uses; and, if we hinder their tendency to growth and expansion, we both destroy them as virtues, and degrade them to that rankest species of corruption reserved for the most noble organizations. For instance,—non-intervention in the affairs of neighbouring states is a high political virtue; but non-intervention does not mean, passing by on the other side when your neighbour falls among thieves,—or Phariseism would recover it from Christianity. Freedom itself is virtue, as well as privilege; but freedom of the seas

does not mean piracy, nor freedom of the land, brigandage; nor freedom of the senate, freedom to cudgel a dissident member, nor freedom of the press, freedom to calumniate and lie. So, if patriotism be a virtue indeed, it cannot mean an exclusive devotion to one's country's interests,—for that is only another form of devotion to personal interests, family interests, or provincial interests, all of which, if not driven past themselves, are vulgar and immoral objects. Let us put away the little Pedlingtonism unworthy of a great nation, and too prevalent among us. If the man who does not look beyond this natural life is of a somewhat narrow order, what must be the man who does not look beyond his own frontier or his own sea?

I confess that I dream of the day when an English statesman shall arise with a heart too large for England, having courage in the face of his countrymen to assert of some suggested policy,—'This is good for your trade: this is necessary for your domination; but it will vex a people hard by; it will hurt a people farther off; it will profit nothing to the general humanity: therefore, away with it!—it is not for you or for me.' When a British minister dares speak so, and when a British public applauds him speaking, then shall the nation be so glorious, that her praise, instead of exploding from within, from loud civic mouths, shall come to her from without, as all worthy praise must, from the alliances she has fostered, and from the populations she has saved.

And poets who write of the events of that time, shall not need to justify themselves in prefaces, for ever so little jarring of the national sentiment, imputable to their rimes.

ROME, February, 1860.

POEMS BEFORE CONGRESS

NAPOLEON III IN ITALY

I

EMPEROR, Emperor!
From the centre to the shore,
From the Seine back to the Rhine,
Stood eight millions up and swore
By their manhood's right divine
So to elect and legislate,
This man should renew the line
Broken in a strain of fate
And leagued kings at Waterloo,
When the people's hands let go.
Emperor
Evermore.

II

With a universal shout
They took the old regalia out
From an open grave that day:
From a grave that would not close,
Where the first Napoleon lay
Expectant, in repose,
As still as Merlin, with his conquering face
Turned up in its unquenchable appeal
To men and heroes of the advancing
race,—
Prepared to set the seal
Of what has been on what shall be.
Emperor
Evermore.

III

The thinkers stood aside
To let the nation act.
Some hated the new-constituted fact
Of empire, as pride treading on their
pride.
Some quailed, lest what was poisonous
in the past
Should graft itself in that Druidic bough
On this green now.
Some cursed, because at last
The open heavens to which they had
look'd in vain
For many a golden fall of marvellous rain
Were closed in brass; and some
Wept on because a gone thing could not
come;

And some were silent, doubting all things
for
That popular conviction,—evermore
Emperor.

IV

That day I did not hate
Nor doubt, nor quail nor curse.
I, reverencing the people, did not bate
My reverence of their deed and oracie,
Not vainly prize
Of better and of worse
Against the great conclusion of their will.
And yet, O voice and verse,
Which God set in me to acclaim and sing
Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,
We gave no music to the patent thing,
Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb and
swim
About the name of him
Translated to the sphere of domination
By democratic passion!
I was not used, at least,
Nor can be, now or then,
To stroke the ermine beast
On any kind of throne
(Though builded by a nation for its own),
And swell the surging choir for kings of
men—
Emperor
Evermore.

V

But now, Napoleon, now
That, leaving far behind the purple throng
Of vulgar monarchs, thou
Tread'st higher in thy deed
Than stair of throne can lead,
To help in the hour of wrong
The broken hearts of nations to be
strong,—
Now, lifted as thou art
To the level of pure song,
We stand to meet thee on these Alpine
snows!
And while the palpitating peaks break out
Ecstatic from somnambular repose
With answers to the presence and the
shout,

We, poets of the people, who take part
With elemental justice, natural right,
Join in our echoes also, nor refrain.
We meet thee, O Napoleon, at this height
At last, and find thee great enough to
praise.
Receive the poet's chrism, which smells
beyond
The priest's, and pass thy ways;—
An English poet warns thee to maintain
God's word, not England's:—let His
truth be true
And all men liars! with His truth respond
To all men's lie. Exalt the sword and
smite
On that long anvil of the Apennine
Where Austria forged the Italian chain
in view
Of seven consenting nations, sparks offine
Admonitory light,
Till men's eyes wink before convictions
new.
Flash in God's justice to the world's amaze,
Sublime Deliverer!—after many days
Found worthy of the deed thou art come
to do—
Emperor
Evermore.

VI

But Italy, my Italy,
Can it last, this gleam?
Can she live and be strong,
Or is it another dream
Like the rest we have dreamed so long:
And shall it, must it be,
That after the battle-cloud has broken
She will die off again
Like the rain,
Or like a poet's song
Sung of her, sad at the end
Because her name is Italy,—
Die and count no friend?
Is it true,—may it be spoken,—
That she who has lain so still,
With a wound in her breast,
And a flower in her hand,
And a gravestone under her head,
While every nation at will
Beside her has dared to stand
And flout her with pity and scorn,
Saying, 'She is at rest,

She is fair, she is dead,
And, leaving room in her stead
To Us who are later born,
This is certainly best!'
Saying, 'Alas, she is fair,
Very fair, but dead,
And so we have room for the race.'
—Can it be true, be true,
That she lives anew?
That she rises up at the shout of her sons,
At the trumpet of France,
And lives anew?—is it true
That she has not moved in a trance,
As in Forty-eight?
When her eyes were troubled with blood
Till she knew not friend from foe,
Till her hand was caught in a strait
Of her cerement and baffled so
From doing the deed she would;
And her weak foot stumbled across
The grave of a king,
And down she dropt at heavy loss,
And we gloomily covered her face and
said,
'We have dreamed the thing;
She is not alive, but dead.'

VII

Now, shall we say
Our Italy lives indeed?
And if it were not for the beat and bray
Of drum and trump of martial men,
Should we feel the underground heave
and strain,
Where heroes left their dust as a seed
Sure to emerge one day?
And if it were not for the rhythmic march
Of France and Piedmont's double hosts,
Should we hear the ghosts
Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,
Throb along the frescoed wall,
Whisper an oath by that divine
They left in picture, book, and stone,
That Italy is not dead at all?
Aye, if it were not for the tears in our eyes,
These tears of a sudden passionate joy,
Should we see her arise
From the place where the wicked are
overthrown,
Italy, Italy? loosed at length
From the tyrant's thrall,
Pale and calm in her strength?
Pale as the silver cross of Savoy

When the hand that bears the flag is brave,
And not a breath is stirring, save
What is blown

Over the war-trump's lip of brass,
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass !

VIII

Aye, it is so, even so.

Aye, and it shall be so.

Each broken stone that long ago
She flung behind her as she went
In discouragement and bewilderment
Through the cairns of Time, and missed
her way

Between to-day and yesterday,
Up springs a living man.

And each man stands with his face in
the light

Of his own drawn sword,
Ready to do what a hero can.
Wall to sap, or river to ford,
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,
Still ready to do, and sworn to be true,

As a man and a patriot can.

Piedmontese, Neapolitan, .
Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,
Each man's body having a soul,—
Count how many they stand,
All of them sons of the land,
Every live man there
Allied to a dead man below,
And the deadliest with blood to spare
To quicken a living hand
In case it should ever be slow.
Count how many they come
To the beat of Piedmont's drum,
With faces keener and grayer
Than swords of the Austrian slayer,
All set against the foe.

'Emperor
Evermore.'

IX

Out of the dust, where they ground them,
Out of the holes, where they dogged them;
Out of the hulks, where they wound them
In iron, tortured and flogged them;
Out of the streets, where they chased
them,
Taxed them and then bayoneted
them,—
Out of the homes, where they spied on
them

(Using their daughters and wives),
Out of the church, where they fretted
them,
Rotted their souls and debased them,
Trained them to answer with knives,
Then cursed them all at their
prayers!—

Out of cold lands, not theirs,
Where they exiled them, starved them,
lied on them;
Back they come like a wind, in vain
Cramped up in the hills, that roars its
road

The stronger into the open plain;
Or like a fire that burns the hotter
And longer for the crust of cinder,
Serving better the ends of the potter;
Or like a restrained word of God,
Fulfilling itself by what seems to
hinder.

'Emperor
Evermore.'

X

Shout for France and Savoy !
Shout for the helper and doer.
Shout for the good sword's ring,
Shout for the thought still truer.
Shout for the spirits at large
Who passed for the dead this spring,
Whose living glory is sure.
Shout for France and Savoy !
Shout for the council and charge !
Shout for the head of Cavour ;
And shout for the heart of a King
That's great with a nation's joy.
Shout for France and Savoy !

XI

Take up the child, Macmahon, though
Thy hand be red
From Magenta's dead,
And riding on, in front of the troop,
In the dust of the whirlwind of
war
Through the gate of the city of Milan,
stoop
And take up the child to thy saddle-
bow,
Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower
Of his smile as clear as a star!
Thou hast a right to the child, we
say,

Since the women are weeping for joy as
those
Who, by thy help and from this day,
Shall be happy mothers indeed.
They are raining flowers from terrace
and roof :
Take up the flower in the child.
While the shout goes up of a nation freed
And heroically self-reconciled,
Till the snow on that peaked Alp aloof
Starts, as feeling God's finger anew,
And all those cold white marble fires
Of mounting saints on the Duomo-spires
Flicker against the Blue.
‘Emperor
Evermore.’

xii

Aye, it is He,
Who rides at the King's right hand !
Leave room to his horse and draw to the
side,
Nor press too near in the ecstasy
Of a newly delivered impassioned land :
He is moved, you see,
He who has done it all.
They call it a cold stern face ;
But this is Italy
Who rises up to her place !—
For this he fought in his youth,
Of this he dreamed in the past ;
The lines of the resolute mouth
Tremble a little at last.
Cry, he has done it all !
‘Emperor
Evermore.’

xiii

It is not strange that he did it,
Though the deed may seem to strain
To the wonderful, unpermitted,
For such as lead and reign.
But he is strange, this man :
The people's instinct found him
(A wind in the dark that ran
Through a chink where was no door),
And elected him and crowned him
Emperor
Evermore.

xiv

Autocrat ! let them scoff,
Who fail to comprehend
That a ruler incarnate of
The people, must transcend

All common king-born kings.
These subterranean springs
A sudden outlet winning,
Have special virtues to spend.
The people's blood runs through him,
Dilates from head to foot,
Creates him absolute,
And from this great beginning
Evokes a greater end
To justify and renew him—
Emperor
Evermore.

xv

What ! did any maintain
That God or the people (think !)
Could make a marvel in vain !—
Out of the water-jar there,
Draw wine that none could drink ?
Is this a man like the rest,
This miracle, made unaware
By a rapture of popular air,
And caught to the place that was best ?
You think he could barter and cheat
As vulgar diplomats use,
With the people's heart in his breast ?
Prate a lie into shape
Lest truth should cumber the road ;
Play at the fast and loose
Till the world is strangled with tape ;
Maim the soul's complete
To fit the hole of a toad ;
And filch the dogman's meat
To feed the offspring of God ?

xvi

Nay, but he, this wonder,
He cannot palter nor prate,
Though many around him and under,
With intellects trained to the curve,
Distrust him in spirit and nerve
Because his meaning is straight.
Measure him ere he depart
With those who have governed and led ;
Larger so much by the heart,
Larger so much by the head.

Emperor
Evermore.

xvii

He holds that, consenting or dissident,
Nations must move with the time ;
Assumes that crime with a precedent
Doubles the guilt of the crime ;

—Denies that a slaver's bond,
Or a treaty signed by knaves
(*Quorum magna pars* and beyond
Was one of an honest name),
Gives an inexpugnable claim
To abolishing men into slaves.

Emperor
Evermore.

xviii

He will not swagger nor boast
Of his country's meeds, in a tone
Missuitting a great man most
If such should speak of his own;
Nor will he act, on her side,
From motives baser, indeed,
Than a man of a noble pride
Can avow for himself at need;
Never, for lucre or laurels,
Or custom, though such should be rife,
Adapting the smaller morals
To measure the larger life,
He, though the merchants persuade,
And the soldiers are eager for strife,
Finds not his country in quarrels
Only to find her in trade,—
While still he accords her such honour
As never to flinch for her sake
Where men put service upon her,
Found heavy to undertake
And scarcely like to be paid:
Believing a nation may act
Unselfishly—shiver a lance
(As the least of her sons may, in fact)
And not for a cause of finance.

Emperor
Evermore.

xix

Great is he,
Who uses his greatness for all.
His name shall stand perpetually
As a name to applaud and cherish,
Not only within the civic wall
For the loyal, but also without
For the generous and free.
Just is he,
Who is just for the popular due
As well as the private debt.
The praise of nations ready to perish
Fall on him,—crown him in view
Of tyrants caught in the net,
And statesmen dizzy with fear and doubt!

And though, because they are many,
And he is merely one,
And nations selfish and cruel
Heap up the inquisitor's fuel
To kill the body of high intents,
And burn great deeds from their place,
Till this, the greatest of any,
May seem imperfectly done;
Courage, whoever circumvents!
Courage, courage, whoever is base!
The soul of a high intent, be it known,
Can die no more than any soul
Which God keeps by Him under the
throne;
And this, at whatever interim,
Shall live, and be consummated
Into the being of deeds made whole.
Courage, courage! happy is he,
Of whom (himself among the dead
And silent), this word shall be said;
—That he might have had the world with
him,
But chose to side with suffering men,
And had the world against him when
He came to deliver Italy.

Emperor
Evermore.

THE DANCE

I

You remember down at Florence our
Cascine,
Where the people on the feast-days
walk and drive,
And, through the trees, long-drawn in
many a green way,
O'er-roofing hum and murmur like a
hive,
The river and the mountains look alive?

II

You remember the piazzone there, the
stand-place
Of carriages a-brim with Florence
Beauties,
Who lean and melt to music as the band
plays,
Or smile and chat with some one who
afoot is,
Or on horseback, in observance of
male duties?

III

'Tisso pretty, in the afternoons of summer,
So many gracious faces brought together!

Call it rout, or call it concert, they have
come here,
In the floating of the fan and of the
feather,
To reciprocate with beauty the fine
weather.

IV

While the flower-girls offer nosegays
(because *they* too
Go with other sweets) at every car-
riage-door;
Here, by shake of a white finger, signed
away to
Some next buyer, who sits buying
score on score,
Piling roses upon roses evermore.

V

And last season, when the French camp
had its station
In the meadow-ground, things quick-
ened and grew gayer
Through the mingling of the liberating
nation
With this people; groups of French-
men everywhere,
Strolling, gazing, judging lightly . . .
'who was fair.'

VI

Then the noblest lady present took upon
her
To speak nobly from her carriage for
the rest;
'Pray these officers from France to do us
honour
By dancing with us straightway.'—
The request
Was gravely apprehended as ad-
dressed.

VII

And the men of France bareheaded,
bowing lowly,
Led out each a proud signora to the
space
Which the startled crowd had rounded
for them—slowly,

Just a touch of still emotion in his face,
Not presuming, through the symbol,
on the grace.

VIII

There was silence in the people: some
lips trembled,
But none jested. Broke the music,
at a glance:
And the daughters of our princes, thus
assembled,
Stepped the measure with the gallant
sons of France.
Hush! it might have been a Mass, and
not a dance.

IX

And they danced there till the blue that
overskied us
Swooned with passion, though the
footing seemed sedate;
And the mountains, heaving mighty
hearts beside us,
Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to
dilate,
And touch the holy stone where Dante
sate.

X

Then the sons of France bareheaded,
lowly bowing.
Led the ladies back where kinsmen o
the south
Stood, received them;—till, with burs
of overflowing
Feeling . . . husbands, brothers, Flor
ence's male youth,
Turned, and kissed the maria
strangers mouth to mouth.

XI

And a cry went up, a cry from all tha
people!
—You have heard a people cheering
you suppose,
For the Member, Mayor . . . with chorus
from the steeple!
This was different: scarce as lou
perhaps (who knows!),
For we saw wet eyes around us ere
the close.

xii

And we felt as if a nation, too long
borne in
By hard wrongers, comprehending in
such attitude
That God had spoken somewhere since
the morning,
That men were somehow brothers,
by no latitude,
Cried exultant in great wonder and
free gratitude.

A TALE OF VILLAFRANCA

TOLD IN TUSCANY

I

My little son, my Florentine,
Sit down beside my knee,
And I will tell you why the sign
Of joy which flushed our Italy,
Has faded since but yesternight ;
And why your Florence of delight
Is mourning as you see.

II

A great man (who was crowned one day)
Imagined a great Deed :
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,
He touched it finely till the seed
Possessed the flower : from heart and
brain
He fed it with large thoughts humane,
To help a people's need.

III

He brought it out into the sun—
They blessed it to his face :
' O great pure Deed, that hast undone
So many bad and base !'
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,
Deliver by God's grace.'

IV

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north and
south,
Rose up in wrath and fear,
And cried, protesting by one mouth,
' What monster have we here ?
A great Deed at this hour of day ?
A great just Deed—and not for pay ?
Absurd,—or insincere.

v

' And if sincere, the heavier blow
In that case we shall bear,
For where 's our blessed "status quo,"
Our holy treaties, where,—
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,
Protect and pillage, occupy,
And civilize despair ? '

VI

Some muttered that the great Deed
meant
A great pretext to sin ;
And others, the pretext, so lent,
Was heinous (to begin).
Volcanic terms of 'great' and 'just' ?
Admit such tongues of flame, the crust
Of time and law faltis in.

VII

A great Deed in this world of ours ?
Unheard of the preteuce is :
It threatens plainly the great Powers ;
Is fatal in all senses.
A just Deed in the world !—call out
The rifles ! be not slack about
The national defences.

VIII

And many murmured, ' From this source
What red blood must be poured ! '
And some rejoined, ' Tis even worse ;
What red tape is ignored ! '
All cursed the Doer for an evil
Called here, enlarging on the Devil,—
There, monkeying the Lord !

IX

Some said, it could not be explained,
Some, could not be excused ;
And others, ' Leave it unrestrained,
Gehenna's self is loosed.'
And all cried, ' Crush it, maim it, gag it !
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,
Truncated and traduced ! '

X

But HE stood sad before the sun
(The peoples felt their fate).
• The world is many,—I am one ;
 My great Deed was too great.
God's fruit of justice ripens slow :
Men's souls are narrow ; let them grow.
 My brothers, we must wait.'

xi

The tale is ended, child of mine,
Turned graver at my knee.
They say your eyes, my Florentine,
Are English : it may be :
And yet I've marked as blue a pair
Following the doves across the square
At Venice by the sea.

xii

Ah, child! ah, child ! I cannot say
A word more. You conceive
The reason now, why just to-day
We see our Florence grieve.
Ah, child, look up into the sky !
In this low world, where great Deeds die,
What matter if we live ?

A COURT LADY

I

HER hair was tawny with gold, her
eyes with purple were dark,
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red
and restless spark.

II

Never was lady of Milan nobler in name
and in race ;
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in
the face.

III

Never was lady on earth more true as
woman and wife,
Larger in judgement and instinct, prouder
in manners and life.

IV

She stood in the early morning, and
said to her maidens, 'Bring
That silken robe made ready to wear at
the court of the king.'

V

'Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid,
clear of the mote,
Clasp me the large at the waist, and
clasp me the small at the throat.'

vi

'Diamonds to fasten the hair, and
diamonds to fasten the sleeves,
Laces to drop from their rays, like
a powder of snow from the eaves.'

vii

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight
which gathered her up in a flame,
While, straight in her open carriage,
she to the hospital came.

viii

In she went at the door, and gazing
from end to end,
'Many and low are the pallets, but
each is the place of a friend.'

ix

Up she passed through the wards, and
stood at a young man's bed :
Bloody the band on his brow, and livid
the droop of his head.

x

'Art thou a Lombard, my brother ?
Happy art thou,' she cried,
And smiled like Italy on him : he
dreamed in her face and died.

xi

Pale with his passing soul, she went on
still to a second :
He was a grave hard man, whose years
by dungeons were reckoned.

xii

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds
in his life were sorcer.
'Art thou a Romagnole ?' Her eyes
drove lightnings before her.

xiii

'Austrian and priest had joined to double
and tighten the cord
Able to bind thee, O strong one,—free
by the stroke of a sword.'

xiv

'Now be grave for the rest of us, using
the life overcast
To ripen our wine of the present, (too
new,) in glooms of the past.'

xv

Down she stepped to a pallet where lay
a face like a girl's
Young, and pathetic with dying,—a deep
black hole in the curls.

xvi

'Art thou from Tuscany, brother? and
seest thou, dreaming in pain,
Thy mother stand in the piazza, search-
ing the List of the slain!'

xvii

Kind as a mother herself, she touched
his cheeks with her hands :
'Blessed is she who has borne thee,
although she should weep as she
stands.'

xviii

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm
carried off by a ball :
Kneeling, . . . 'O more than my brother!
how shall I thank thee for all?'

xix

'Each of the heroes around us has fought
for his land and line,
But *thou* hast fought for a stranger, in
hate of a wrong not thine.'

xx

'Happy are all free peoples, too strong
to be dispossessed.
But blessed are those among nations, who
dare to be strong for the rest!'

xxi

Ever she passed on her way, and came
to a couch where pined
One with a face from Venetia, white with
a hope out of mind.

xxii

Long she stood and gazed, and twice she
tried at the name,
But two great crystal tears were all that
faltered and came.

xxiii

Only a tear for Venice!—she turned as
in passion and loss,
And stooped to his forehead and kissed
it, as if she were kissing the cross.

xxiv

Faint with that strain of heart she moved
on then to another,
Stern and strong in his death. 'And
dost thou suffer, my brother?'

xxv

Holding his hands in hers :—'Out of the
Piedmont lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom!
sweetest to live or to die on.'

xxvi

Holding his cold rough hands,—'Well,
oh, well have ye done
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would
not be noble alone.'

xxvii

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose
to her feet with a spring,—
'That was a Piedmontese! and this is
the Court of the King.'

AN AUGUST VOICE

Una voce augusta.

MONITORE TOSCANO.

I

You'll take back your Grand Duke!
I made the treaty upon it.
Just venture a quiet rebuke;
Dall' Ongaro write him a sonnet;
Ricasoli gently explain
Some need of the constitution:
He'll swear to it over again,
Providing an 'easy solution.'
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

II

You'll take back your Grand Duke!
I promised the Emperor Francis
To argue the case by his book,
And ask you to meet his advances.
The Ducal cause, we know
(Whether you or he be the wronger),
Has very strong points;—although
Your bayonets, there, have stronger.
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

III

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
 He is not pure altogether,
 For instance, the oath which he took
 (In the Forty-eight rough weather)
 He'd 'nail your flag to his mast,'
 Then softly scuttled the boat you
 Hoped to escape in at last,
 And both by a 'Proprio motu.'
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.

IV

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
 The scheme meets nothing to shock it
 In this smart letter, look,
 We found in Radetsky's pocket;
 Where his Highness in sprightly style
 Of the flower of his Tuscans wrote,
 'These heads be the hottest in file;
 Pray shoot them the quickest.' Quote,
 And call back the Grand Duke.

V

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
 There are some things to object to.
 He cheated, betrayed, and forsook,
 Then called in the foe to protect you.
 He taxed you for wines and for meats
 Throughout that eight years' pastime
 Of Austria's drum in your streets—
 Of course you remember the last time
 You called back your Grand Duke.

VI

You'll take back the Grand Duke?
 It is not race he is poor in,
 Although he never could brook
 The patriot cousin at Turin.
 His love of kin you discern,
 By his hate of your flag and me—
 So decidedly apt to turn
 All colours at sight of the Three¹.
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VII

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
 'Twas weak that he fled from the Pitti;
 But consider how little he shook
 At thought of bombarding your city!
 And, balancing that with this,

¹ The Italian tricolor: red, green, and white.

The Christian rule is plain for us;
 . . . Or the Holy Father's Swiss
 Have shot his Perugians in vain for us,
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VIII

Pray take back your Grand Duke.
 —I, too, have suffered persuasion.
 All Europe, raven and rook,
 Screeched at me armed for your nation.
 Your cause in my heart struck spurs;
 I swept such warnings aside for you:
 My very child's eyes, and Hers,
 Grew like my brother's who died for
 you.
 You'll call back the Grand Duke?

IX

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
 My French fought nobly with reason,—
 Left many a Lombardy nook
 Red as with wine out of season.
 Little we grudged what was done there,
 Paid freely your ransom of blood:
 Our heroes stark in the sun there,
 We would not recall if we could.
 You'll call back the Grand Duke?

X

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
 His son rode fast as he got off
 That day on the enemy's hook,
 When I had an epaulette shot off.
 Though splashed (as I saw him afar, no,
 Near) by those ghastly rains,
 The mark, when you've washed him in
 Arno,
 Will scarcely be larger than Cain's.
 You'll call back the Grand Duke.

XI

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
 'Twill be so simple, quite beautiful:
 The shepherd recovers his crook,
 . . . If you should be sheep, and dutiful.
 I spoke a word worth chalking
 On Milan's wall—but stay,
 Here's Poniatowsky talking,—
 You'll listen to him to-day,
 And call back the Grand Duke.

XII

You'll take back your Grand Duke?
 Observe, there's no one to force it,—
 Unless the Madonna, St. Luke
 Drew for you, choose to endorse it.
I charge you by great St. Martino
 And prodigies quickened by wrong,
 Remember your Dead on Ticino;
 Be worthy, be constant, be strong.
 —Bah!—call back the Grand Duke!!

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

αὐτὸις δέ τοι, αὐτὸις νεκρῷ.
 GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

†

THE Pope on Christmas Day
 Sits in St. Peter's chair;
 But the peoples murmur and say,
 'Our souls are sick and forlorn,
 And who will show us where
 Is the stable where Christ was born?'

II

The star is lost in the dark;
 The manger is lost in the straw;
 The Christ cries faintly... hark!...
 Through bands that swaddle and
 strangle—
 But the Pope in the chair of awe
 Looks down the great quadrangle.

III

The magi kneel at his foot,
 Kings of the east and west,
 But, instead of the angels (mute
 Is the 'Peace on earth' of their song),
 The peoples, perplexed and opprest,
 Are sighing, 'How long, how long?'

IV

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in
 Shadow of aisle and dome,
 The bear who tore up the children,
 The fox who burnt up the corn,
 And the wolf who suckled at Rome
 Brothers to slay and to scorn.

V

Cardinals left and right of him,
 Worshippers round and beneath,
 The silver trumpets at sight of him
 Thrill with a musical blast:
 But the people say through their teeth,
 'Trumpets! we wait for the Last!'

VI

He sits in the place of the Lord,
 And asks for the gifts of the time;
 Gold, for the haft of a sword,
 To win back Romagna averse,
 Incense, to sweeten a crime,
 And myrrh, to embitter a curse.

VII

Then a king of the west said, 'Good!—
 I bring thee the gifts of the time;
 Red, for the patriot's blood,
 Green, for the martyr's crown,
 White, for the dew and the rime,
 When the morning of God comes
 down.'

VIII

—O mystic tricolor bright!
 The Pope's heart quailed like a man's:
 The cardinals froze at the sight,
 Bowing their tonsures hoary:
 And the eyes in the peacock-fans
 Winked at the alien glory.

IX

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,
 'Now blessed be he who has brought
 These gifts of the time to the Pope,
 When our souls were sick and forlorn.
 —And here is the star we sought,
 To show us where Christ was born!'

ITALY AND THE WORLD

I

FLORENCE, Bologna, Parma, Modena.
 When you named them a year ago,
 So many graves reserved by God, in a
 Day of judgement, you seemed to know,
 To open and let out the resurrection.

II

And meantime (you made your reflection
If you were English), was nought to
be done

But sorting sables, in predilection
For all those martyrs dead and gone,
Till the new earth and heaven made
ready ?

III

And if your politics were not heady,
Violent... 'Good,' you added, 'good
In all things ! mourn on sure and steady.
Churchyard thistles are wholesome
food

For our European wandering asses.

IV

'The date of the resurrection passes
Human foreknowledge : men unborn
Will gain by it (even in the lower
classes),

But none of these. It is not the morn
Because the cock of France is crowing.

V

'Cocks crow at midnight, seldom know-
ing

Starlight from dawn-light : 'tis a mad
Poor creature.' Here you paused, and
growing

Scornful, ... suddenly, let us add,
The trumpet sounded, the graves were
open.

VI

Life and life and life ! agrope in
The dusk of death, warm hands,
stretched out

For swords, proved more life still to
hope in,

Beyond and behind. Arise with a
shout,
Nation of Italy, slain and buried !

VII

Hill to hill and turret to turret
Flashing the tricolor,—newly created
Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,
Rise heroic and renovated,
Rise to the final restitution.

VIII

Rise ; prefigure the grand solution
Of earth's municipal, insular schisms,
Statesmen draping self-love's conclusion
In cheap, vernacular patriotisms,
Unable to give up Judaea for Jesus.

IX

Bring us the higher example ; release us
Into the larger coming time :
And into Christ's broad garment piece us
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

X

No more Jew nor Greek then,—taunting
Nor taunted ;—no more England nor
France !
But one confederate brotherhood plant-
ing
One flag only, to mark the advance,
Onward and upward, of all humanity.

XI

For civilization perfected
Is fully developed Christianity.
'Measure the frontier,' shall it be said,
'Count the ships,' in national vanity!
—Count the nation's heart-beats sooner.

XII

For, though behind by a cannon or
schooner,
That nation still is predominant,
Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to
oppugn or
Succour another, in wrong or want,
Passing the frontier in love and abhor-
rence.

XIII

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,
Open us out the wider way !
Dwarf in that chapel of old St. Lawrence
Your Michel Angelo's giant Day,
With the grandeur of this Day breaking
o'er us !

XIV

Ye who, restrained as an ancient chorus,
Mute while the coryphaeus spake,
Hush your separate voices before us,
Sink your separate lives for the sake
Of one sole Italy's living for ever !

xv

Givers of coat and cloak too,—never
Grudging that purple of yours at the
best,—

By your heroic will and endeavour
Each sublimely dispossessed,
That all may inherit what each sur-
renders!

xvi

Earth shall bless you, O noble emenders
On egotist nations! Ye shall lead
The plough of the world, and sow new
splendours
Into the furrow of things, for seed,—
Ever the richer for what ye have given.

xvii

Lead us and teach us, till earth and
heaven
Grow larger around us and higher
above.
Our sacrament-bread has a bitter leaven;
We bait our traps with the name of
love,
Till hate itself has a kinder meaning.

xviii

Oh, this world: this cheating and
screening
Of cheats! this conscience for candle-
wicks,
Not beacon-fires! this overweening
Of underhand diplomatical tricks,
Dared for the country while scorned for
the counter!

xix

Oh, this envy of those who mount here,
And oh, this malice to make them trip!
Rather quenching the fire there, drying
the fount here,
To frozen body and thirsty lip,
Than leave to a neighbour their minis-
tration.

xx

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,
Viewing my England o'er Alp and sea.
I loved her more in her ancient fashion:
She carries her rifles too thick for me,
Who spares them so in the cause of a
brother.

xxi

Suspicion, panic? end this potter.
The sword, kept sheathless at peace-
time, rusts.
None fears for himself while he feels
for another:
The brave man either fights or trusts,
And wears no mail in his private chamber.

xxii

Beautiful Italy! golden amber
Warm with the kisses of lover and
traitor!
Thou who hast drawn us on to remember,
Draw us to hope now: let us be
greater
By this new future than that old story.

xxiii

Till truer glory replaces all glory,
As the torch grows blind at the dawn
of day;
And the nations, rising up, their sorry
And foolish sins shall put away,
As children their toys when the teacher
enters.

xxiv

Till Love's one centre devour these
centres
Of many self-loves; and the patriot's
trick
To better his land by egotist ventures,
Defamed from a virtue, shall make
men sick,
As the scalp at the belt of some red hero.

xxv

For certain virtues have dropped to zero,
Left by the sun on the mountain's
dewy side;
Churchman's charities, tender as Nero,
Indian suttee, heathen suicide,
Service to rights divine, proved hollow:

xxvi

And Heptarchy patriotisms must follow.
—National voices, distinct yet de-
pendent,
Ensphering each other, as swallow does
swallow,
With circles still widening and ever
ascendant,
In multiform life to united progression,—

xxvii

These shall remain. And when, in the session
Of nations, the separate language is heard,
Each shall aspire, in sublime indiscretion,
To help with a thought or exalt with a word
Less her own than her rival's honour.

xxviii

Each Christian nation shall take upon her
The law of the Christian man in vast :
The crown of the getter shall fall to the donor,
And last shall be first while first shall be last,
And to love best shall still be, to reign unsurpassed.

A CURSE FOR A NATION

PROLOGUE

I HEARD an angel speak last night,
And he said, 'Write !
Write a Nation's curse for me,
And send it over the Western Sea.'

I faltered, taking up the word :
' Not so, my lord !
If curses must be, choose another
To send thy curse against my brother.

' For I am bound by gratitude,
By love and blood,
To brothers of mine across the sea,
Who stretch out kindly hands to me.'

' Therefore,' the voice said, ' shalt thou write
My curse to-night.
From the summits of love a curse is driven,
As lightning is from the tops of heaven.'

' Not so, I answered. ' Evermore
My heart is sore
For my own land's sins : for little feet
Of children bleeding along the street :

' For parked-up honours that gainsay
The right of way :
For almsgiving through a door that is
Not open enough for two friends to kiss :

' For love of freedom which abates
Beyond the Straits :
For patriot virtue starved to vice on
Self-praise, self-interest, and suspicion .

' For an oligarchic parliament,
And bribes well-meant.
What curse to another land assign,
When heavy-souled for the sins of mine ?'

' Therefore,' the voice said, ' shalt thou write
My curse to-night.
Because thou hast strength to see and hate
A foul thing done *within* thy gate.'

' Not so,' I answered once again.
' To curse, choose men.
For I, a woman, have only known
How the heart melts and the tears run down.'

' Therefore,' the voice said, ' shalt thou write
My curse to-night.
Some women weep and curse, I say
(And no one marvels), night and day.

' And thou shalt take their part to-night,
Weep and write.
A curse from the depths of womanhood
Is very salt, and bitter, and good.'

So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,
What all may read.
And thus, as was enjoined on me,
I send it over the Western Sea.

THE CURSE

BECAUSE ye have broken your own chain
With the strain
Of brave men climbing a Nation's height,
Yet thence bear down with brand and
thong
On souls of others,—for this wrong
This is the curse. Write.

Because yourselves are standing straight
 In the state
 Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,
 Yet keep calm footing all the time
 On writhing bond-slaves,—for this crime
 This is the curse. Write.

Because ye prosper in God's name,
 With a claim
 To honour in the old world's sight,
 Yet do the fiend's work perfectly
 In strangling martyrs,—for this lie
 This is the curse. Write.

II

Ye shall watch while kings conspire
 Round the people's smouldering fire,
 And, warm for your part,
 Shall never dare—O shame!
 To utter the thought into flame
 Which burns at your heart.
 This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while nations strive
 With the bloodhounds, die or survive,
 Drop faint from their jaws,
 Or throttle them backward to death,
 And only under your breath
 Shall favour the cause.
 This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while strong men draw
 The nets of feudal law
 To strangle the weak,

And, counting the sin for a sin,
 Your soul shall be sadder within
 Than the word ye shall speak.
 This is the curse. Write.

When good men are praying erect
 That Christ may avenge His elect
 And deliver the earth,
 The prayer in your ears, said low,
 Shall sound like the tramp of a foe
 That's driving you forth.
 This is the curse. Write.

When wise men give you their praise,
 They shall pause in the heat of the phrase,
 As if carried too far.

When ye boast your own charters kept
 true,
 Ye shall blush;—for the thing which ye do
 Derides what ye are.
 This is the curse. Write.

When fools cast taunts at your gate,
 Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate
 As ye look o'er the wall,
 For your conscience, tradition, and name
 Explode with a deadlier blame
 Than the worst of them all.
 This is the curse. Write.

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be done,
 Go, plant your flag in the sun
 Beside the ill-doers!
 And recoil from clenching the curse
 Of God's witnessing Universe
 With a curse of yours.
 This is the curse. Write.

LAST POEMS

TO 'GRATEFUL FLORENCE'
TO THE MUNICIPALITY, HER REPRESENTATIVE
AND TO TOMMASEO, ITS SPOKESMAN
MOST GRATEFULLY

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION

THESE Poems are given as they occur on a list drawn up last June. A few had already been printed in periodicals.

There is hardly such direct warrant for publishing the Translations; which were only intended, many years ago, to accompany and explain certain Engravings after ancient Gems, in the projected work of

a friend, by whose kindness they are now recovered: but as two of the original series (the *Adonis* of Bion, and 'Song of the Rose' from Achilles Tatius) have subsequently appeared, it is presumed that the remainder may not improperly follow.

A single recent version is added.

LONDON, February, 1862.

LAST POEMS

LITTLE MATTIE

I

DEAD! Thirteen a month ago!
Short and narrow her life's walk;
Lover's love she could not know
Even by a dream or talk:
Too young to be glad of youth,
Missing honour, labour, rest,
And the warmth of a babe's mouth
At the blossom of her breast.
Must you pity her for this
And for all the loss it is,
You, her mother, with wet face,
Having had all in your case?

II

Just so young but yesternight,
Now she is as old as death.
Meek, obedient in your sight,
Gentle to a beck or breath

Only on last Monday! Yours,
Answering you like silver bells
Lightly touched! An hour matures:
You can teach her nothing else.
She has seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid:
By those eyelids pale and close
Now she knows what Rhamses knows.

III

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth
Down her patient locks of silk,
Cold and passive as in truth
You your fingers in spilt milk
Drew along a marble floor;
But her lips you cannot wring
Into saying a word more,
'Yes,' or 'No,' or such a thing:
Though you call and beg and wreak
Half your soul out in a shriek,
She will lie there in default
And most innocent revolt.

IV

Aye, and if she spoke, may be
 She would answer like the Son,
 'What is now 'twixt thee and me?'
 Dreadful answer! better none.
 Yours on Monday, God's to-day!
 Yours, your child, your blood, your
 heart,
 Called . . . you called her, did you say,
 'Little Mattie' for your part?
 Now already it sounds strange,
 And you wonder, in this change,
 What He calls His angel-creature,
 Higher up than you can reach her.

V

'Twas a green and easy world
 As she took it; room to play
 (Though one's hair might get uncurled
 At the far end of the day).
 What she suffered she shook off
 In the sunshine; what she sinned
 She could pray on high enough
 To keep safe above the wind.
 If reproved by God or you,
 'Twas to better her, she knew;
 And if crossed, she gathered still
 'Twas to cross out something ill.

VI

You, you had the right, you thought,
 To survey her with sweet scorn,
 Poor gay child, who had not caught
 Yet the octave-stretch forlorn
 Of your larger wisdom! Nay,
 Now your places are changed so,
 In that same superior way
 She regards you dull and low
 As you did herself exempt
 From life's sorrows. Grand contempt
 Of the spirits risen awhile,
 Who look back with such a smile!

VII

There's the sting of't. That, I think,
 Hurts the most a thousandfold!
 To feel sudden, at a wink,
 Some dear child we used to scold,
 Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,
 Teach and tumble as our own,
 All its curls about our knees,
 Rise up suddenly full-grown.

Who could wonder such a sight
 Made a woman mad outright?
 Show me Michael with the sword
 Rather than such angels, Lord!

A FALSE STEP

I

SWEET, thou hast trod on a heart.
 Pass! there's a world full of men;
 And women as fair as thou art
 Must do such things now and then.

II

Thou only hast stepped unaware,—
 Malice, not one can impute;
 And why should a heart have been there
 In the way of a fair woman's foot?

III

It was not a stone that could trip,
 Nor was it a thorn that could read:
 Put up thy proud underlip!
 'Twas merely the heart of a friend.

IV

And yet peradventure one day
 Thou, sitting alone at the glass,
 Remarking the bloom gone away,
 Where the smile in its dimplement was,

V

And seeking around thee in vain
 From hundreds who flattered before,
 Such a word as, 'Oh, not in the main
 Do I hold thee less precious, but
 more!' . . .

VI

Thou'l sigh, very like, on thy part,
 'Of all I have known or can know,
 I wish I had only that Heart
 I trod upon ages ago!'

VOID IN LAW

I

SLEEP, little babe, on my knee,
 Sleep, for the midnight is chill,
 And the moon has died out in the tree,
 And the great human world goeth ill.
 Sleep, for the wicked agree:
 Sleep, let them do as they will.

II

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my breast
The last drop of milk that was good ;
And now, in a dream, suck the rest,
Lest the real should trouble thy blood.
Suck, little lips dispossessed,
As we kiss in the air whom we would.
Sleep.

III

O lips of thy father ! the same,
So like ! Very deeply they swore
When he gave me his ring and his name,
To take back, I imagined, no more !
And now is all changed like a game,
Though the old cards are used as of
yore !
Sleep.

IV

'Void in law,' said the Courts. Something wrong
In the forms ? Yet, 'Till death part
us two,
I, James, take thee, Jessie,' was strong,
And ONE witness competent. True
Such a marriage was worth an old song,
Heard in Heaven though, as plain as
the New.
Sleep.

V

Sleep, little child, his and mine !
Her throat has the antelope curve,
And her cheek just the colour and line
Which fade not before him nor swerve :
Yet she has no child !—the divine
Seal of right upon loves that deserve.
Sleep.

VI

My child ! though the world take her part,
Saying, 'She was the woman to choose,
He had eyes, was a man in his heart,'—
We twain the decision refuse :
We . . . weak as I am, as thou art, . . .
Cling on to him, never to loose.
Sleep.

VII

He thinks that, when done with this
place,
All's ended ? he'll new-stamp the ore ?
Yes, Caesar's—but not in our case.
Let him learn we are waiting before

The grave's mouth, the heaven's gate,
God's face,
With implacable love evermore.
Sleep.

VIII

He's ours, though he kissed her but now ;
He's ours, though she kissed in reply ;
He's ours, though himself disavow,
And God's universe favour the lie ;
Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours below,
Ours above, . . . if we live, if we die.
Sleep.

IX

Ah, baby, my baby, too rough
Is my lullaby ? What have I said ?
Sleep ! When I've wept long enough
I shall learn to weep softly instead,
And piece with some alien stuff
My heart to lie smooth for thy head.
Sleep.

X

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet ;
Two loves led thee out to the sun :
Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,
If the one who remains (only one)
Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat
To thine enemy,—were it well done !
Sleep.

XI

May He of the manger stand near
And love thee ! An infant He came
To His own who rejected Him here,
But the Magi brought gifts all the same
I hurry the cross on my Dear !
My gifts are the griefs I declaim !
Sleep.

LORD WALTER'S WIFE

I

'But why do you go,' said the lady,
while both sate under the yew,
And her eyes were alive in their depth,
as the kraken beneath the sea-blue.

II

'Because I fear you,' he answered ;—
'because you are far too fair,
And able to strangle my soul in a mesh
of your gold-coloured hair.'

III

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason:
Such knots are quickly undone,
And too much beauty, I reckon, is
nothing but too much sun.'

IV

'Yet farewell so,' he answered ;—'the
sunstroke's fatal at times.
I value your husband, Lord Walter,
whose gallop rings still from the
limes.'

V

Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason.
You smell a rose through a fence :
If two should smell it, what matter?
who grumbles, and where's the
pretence?'

VI

'But I,' he replied, 'have promised
another, when love was free,
To love her alone, alone, who alone
and afar loves me.'

VII

'Why, that,' she said, 'is no reason.
Love's always free, I am told.
Will you vow to be safe from the head-
ache on Tuesday, and think it
will hold?'

VIII

'But you,' he replied, 'have a
daughter, a young little child,
who was laid
In your lap to be pure ; so I leave you :
the angels would make me afraid.'

IX

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason.
The angels keep out of the way ;
And Dora, the child, observes nothing,
although you should please me
and stay.'

X

At which he rose up in his anger,—
'Why, now, you no longer are
fair!
Why, now, you no longer are fatal, but
ugly and hateful, I swear.'

XI

At which she laughed out in her scorn.—
'These men! Oh, these men over-
nice,
Who are shocked if a colour not virtuous,
is frankly put on by a vice.'

XII

Her eyes blazed upon him.—'And you!
You bring us your vices so near
That we smell them ! You think in our
presence a thought 'twould de-
fame us to hear !

XIII

'What reason had you, and what right,
—I appeal to your soul from my
life,—
To find me too fair as a woman ? Why,
sir, I am pure, and a wife.

XIV

'Is the day-star too fair up above you ?
It burns you not. Dare you imply
I brushed you more close than the star
does, when Walter had set me as
high ?

XV

'If a man finds a woman too fair, he
means simply adapted too much
To uses unlawful and fatal. The praise !
—shall I thank you for such ?

XVI

'Too fair!—not unless you misuse us !
and surely if, once in a while,
You attain to it, straightway you call us
no longer too fair, but too vile.

XVII

'A moment,—I pray your attention !—I
have a poor word in my head
I must utter, though womanly custom
would set it down better unsaid.

XVIII

'You grew, sir, pale to impertinence,
once when I showed you a ring.
You kissed my fan when I dropped it
No matter!—I've broken the
thing.

xxix

' You did me the honour, perhaps, to be moved at my side now and then
In the senses—a vice, I have heard,
which is common to beasts and some men.

xx

' Love's a virtue for heroes!—as white as the snow on high hills,
And immortal as every great soul is that struggles, endures, and fulfils.

xxi

' I love my Walter profoundly,—you, Maude, though you faltered a week,
For the sake of . . . what was it? an eye-brow? or, less still, a mole on a cheek?

xxii

' And since, when all's said, you're too noble to stoop to the frivolous cant About crimes irresistible, virtues that swindle, betray and supplant,

xxiii

' I determined to prove to yourself that, whate'er you might dream or avow By illusion, you wanted precisely no more of me than you have now.

xxiv

' There! Look me full in the face!—in the face. Understand, if you can, That the eyes of such women as I am, are clean as the palm of a man.

xxv

' Drop his hand, you insult him. Avoid us for fear we should cost you a scar—
You take us for harlots, I tell you, and not for the women we are.

xxvi

' You wronged me: but then I considered . . . there's Walter! And so at the end, I vowed that he should not be mulcted, by me, in the hand of a friend.

xxvii

' Have I hurt you indeed? We are quits then. Nay, friend of my Walter, be mine!
Come Dora, my darling, my angel, and help me to ask him to dine.'

BIANCA AMONG THE NIGHTINGALES

I

THE cypress stood up like a church
That night we felt our love would hold,
And saintly moonlight seemed to search
And wash the whole world clean as gold;
The olives crystallized the vales'
Broad-slopes until the hills grew strong;
The fireflies and the nightingales
Throbb'd each to either, flame and song.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

II

Upon the angle of its shade
The cypress stood, self-balanced high;
Half up, half down, as double-made,
Along the ground, against the sky.
And we, too! from such soul-height went
Such leaps of blood, so blindly driven,
We scarce knew if our nature meant
Most passionate earth or intense heaven.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

*

III
We paled with love, we shook with love,
We kissed so close we could not vow;
Till Giulio whispered, 'Sweet, above
God's Ever guarantees this Now.'
And through his words the nightingales
Drove straight and full their long clear call,
Like arrows through heroic mails,
And love was awful in it all.
The nightingales, the nightingales.

IV

O cold white moonlight of the north,
Refresh these pulses, quench this hell!
O coverture of death drawn forth
Across this garden-chamber . . . well!

But what have nightingales to do
 In gloomy England, called the free . . .
 (Yes, free to die in ! . . .) when we two
 Are sundered, singing still to me?
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

v

I think I hear him, how he cried
 'My own soul's life' between their
 notes.
 Each man has but one soul supplied,
 And that's immortal. Though his
 throat's
 On fire with passion now, to *her*
 He can't say what to me he said!
 And yet he moves her, they aver.
 The nightingales sing through my head.
 The nightingales, the nightingales.

vi

He says to *her* what moves her most.
 He would not name his soul within
 Her hearing,—rather pays her cost
 With praises to her lips and chin.
 Man has but one soul, 'tis ordained,
 And each soul but one love, I add;
 Yet souls are damned and love's profaned.
 These nightingales will sing me mad!
 The nightingales, the nightingales.

vii

I marvel how the birds can sing.
 There's little difference, in their view,
 Betwixt our Tuscan trees that spring
 As vital flames into the blue,
 And dull round blots of foliage meant
 Like saturated sponges here
 To suck the fogs up. As content
 Is *he* too in this land, 'tis clear.
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

viii

My native Florence! dear, forgone!
 I see across the Alpine ridge
 How the last feast-day of Saint John
 Shot rockets from Carrara bridge.
 The luminous city, tall with fire,
 Trod deep down in that river of ours.
 While many a boat with lamp and choir
 Skimmed birdlike over glittering
 towers.
 I will not hear these nightingales.

ix

I seem to float, *we* seem to float
 Down Arno's stream in festive guise;
 A boat strikes flame into our boat,
 And up that lady seems to rise
 As then she rose. The shock had flashed
 A vision on us! What a head,
 What leaping eyeballs!—beauty dashed
 To splendour by a sudden dread.
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

x

Too bold to sin, too weak to die;
 Such women are so. As for me,
 I would we had drowned there, he and I,
 That moment, loving perfectly.
 He had not caught her with her loosed
 Gold ringlets . . . rarer in the south . . .
 Nor heard the 'Grazie tanto' bruised
 To sweetness by her English mouth.
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

xi

She had not reached him at my heart
 With her fine tongue, as snakes indeed
 Kill flies; nor had I, for my part,
 Yearned after, in my desperate need,
 And followed him as he did her
 To coasts left bitter by the tide,
 Whose very nightingales, elsewhere
 Delighting, torture and deride!
 For still they sing, the nightingales.

xii

A worthless woman! mere cold clay
 As all false things are! but so fair,
 She takes the breath of men away
 Who gaze upon her unaware.
 I would not play her larcenous tricks
 To have her looks! She lied and stole,
 And spat into my love's pure pyx
 The rank saliva of her soul.
 And still they sing, the nightingales.

xiii

I would not for her white and pink,
 Though such he likes—her grace of
 limb,
 Though such he has praised—nor yet,
 I think,
 For life itself, though spent with him,

Commit such sacrilege, affront
 God's nature which is love, intrude
 'Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt
 Like spiders, in the altar's wood.
 I cannot bear these nightingales.

xiv

If she chose sin, some gentler guise
 She might have sinned in, so it seems :
 She might have pricked out both my eyes,
 And I still seen him in my dreams!
 —Or drugged me in my soup or wine,
 Nor left me angry afterward :
 To die here with his hand in mine
 His breath upon me, were not hard.
 (Our Lady hush these nightingales!)

xv

But set a springe for him, 'mio ben,'
 My only good, my first last love!—
 Though Christ knows well what sin is,
 when
 He sees some things done they must
 move
 Himself to wonder. Let her pass.
 I think of her by night and day.
 Must I too join her . . . out, alas! . . .
 With Giulio, in each word I say!
 And evermore the nightingales!

xvi

Giulio, my Giulio!—sing they so,
 And you be silent? Do I speak,
 And you not hear? An arm you throw
 Round some one, and I feel so weak?
 —Oh, owl-like birds! They sing for spite,
 They sing for hate, they sing for doom!
 They'll sing through death who sing
 through night,
 They'll sing and stun me in the tomb—
 The nightingales, the nightingales!

MY KATE.

I

SHE was not as pretty as women I know,
 And yet all your best made of sunshine
 and snow
 Drop to shade, melt to nought in the
 long-trodden ways,
 While she's still remembered on warm
 and cold days—

My Kate.

II
 Her air had a meaning, her movements
 a grace;
 You turned from the fairest to gaze on
 her face :
 And when you had once seen her fore-
 head and mouth,
 You saw as distinctly her soul and her
 truth—

My Kate.

III

Such a blue inner light from her eyelids
 outbreake,
 You looked at her silence and fancied
 she spoke :
 When she did, so peculiar yet soft was
 the tone,
 Though the loudest spoke also, you heard
 her alone—

My Kate.

IV

I doubt if she said to you much that
 could act
 As a thought or suggestion : she did not
 attract
 In the sense of the brilliant or wise :
 I infer
 'Twas her thinking of others, made you
 think of her—

My Kate.

V

She never found fault with you, never
 implied
 Your wrong by her right; and yet men
 at her side
 Grew nobler, girls purer, as through the
 whole town
 The children were gladder that pulled
 at her gown—

My Kate.

VI

None knelt at her feet confessed lovers
 in thrall ;
 They knelt more to God than they used,
 —that was all :
 If you praised her as charming, some
 asked what you meant,
 But the charm of her presence was felt
 when she went—

My Kate.

vii

The weak and the gentle, the ribald and
rude,
She took as she found them, and did
them all good;
It always was so with her—see what
you have!

She has made the grass greener even
here . . . with her grave—

My Kate.

viii

My dear one!—when thou wast alive
with the rest,
I held thee the sweetest and loved thee
the best:
And now thou art dead, shall I not take
thy part

As thy smiles used to do for thyself, my
sweet Heart—

My Kate?

A SONG FOR THE RAGGED SCHOOLS OF LONDON

WRITTEN IN ROME

I

I AM listening here in Rome.
'England's strong,' say many speakers,
'If she winks, the Czar must come,
Prow and topsail, to the breakers.'

II

'England's rich in coal and oak,'
Adds a Roman, getting moody,
'If she shakes a travelling cloak,
Down our Appian roll the scudi.'

III

'England's righteous,' they rejoin,
'Who shall grudge her exaltations,
When her wealth of golden coin
Works the welfare of the nations?'

IV

I am listening here in Rome.
Over Alps a voice is sweeping—
'England's cruel! save us some
Of these victims in her keeping!'

V

As the cry 'beneath the wheel
Of an old triumphal Roman
Cleft the people's shouts like steel,
While the show was spoilt for no man,

VI

Comes that voice. Let others shout,
Other poets praise my land here :
I am sadly sitting out,
Praying, 'God forgive her grandeur.'

VII

Shall we boast of empire, where
Time with ruin sits commissioned ?
In God's liberal blue air
Peter's dome itself looks wizened;

VIII

And the mountains, in disdain,
Gather back their lights of opal
From the dumb, despondent plain,
Heaped with jawbones of a people.

IX

Lordly English, think it o'er,
Caesar's doing is all undone !
You have cannons on your shore,
And free parliaments in London,

X

Princes' parks, and merchants' homes,
Tents for soldiers, ships for seamen,—
Aye, but ruins worse than Rome's
In your pauper men and women.

XI

Women leering through the gas
(Just such bosoms used to nurse you),
Men, turned wolves by famine—pass!
Those can speak themselves, and curse
you.

XII

But these others—children small,
Spilt like blots about the city,
Quay, and street, and palace-wall—
Take them up into your pity !

XIII

Ragged children with bare feet,
Whom the angels in white raiment
Know the names of, to repeat
When they come on you for payment.

XIV

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,
Huddled up out of the coldness
On your doorsteps, side by side,
Till your footman damns their boldness.

XV

In the alleys, in the squares,
Begging, lying little rebels ;
In the noisy thoroughfares,
Struggling on with piteous trebles.

XVI

Patient children—think what pain
Makes a young child patient—ponder !
Wronged too commonly to strain
After right, or wish, or wonder.

XVII

Wicked children, with peaked chins,
And old foreheads : there are many
With no pleasures except sins,
Gambling with a stolen penny.

XVIII

Sickly children, that whine low
To themselves and not their mothers,
From mere habit,—never so
Hoping help or care from others.

XIX

Healthy children, with those blue
English eyes, fresh from their Maker,
Fierce and ravenous, staring through
At the brown loaves of the baker.

XX

I am listening here in Rome,
And the Romans are confessing.
English children pass in bloom
All the prettiest made for blessing.

XXI

'Angli angeli !' (resumed)
From the mediaeval story)
Such rose angelhoods, emplumed
In such ringlets of pure glory !'

XXII

Can we smooth down the bright hair,
O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in
Our heart's pulses ? Can we bear
The sweet looks of our own children,

XXIII

While those others, lean and small,
Scurf and mildew of the city,
Spot our streets, convict us all
Till we take them into pity ?

XXIV

' Is it our fault ? ' you reply,
' When, throughout civilization,
Every nation's empery
Is asserted by starvation ?

XXV

' All these mouths we cannot feed,
And we cannot clothe these bodies.'
Well, if man's so hard indeed,
Let them learn at least what God is !

XXVI

Little outcasts from life's fold,
The grave's hope they may be joined in,
By Christ's covenant consoled
For our social contract's grinding.

XXVII

If no better can be done,
Let us do but this,—endeavour
That the sun behind the sun
Shine upon them while they shiver !

XXVIII

On the dismal London flags,
Through the cruel social juggle,
Put a thought beneath their rags
To ennable the heart's struggle.

XXIX

O my sisters, not so much
Are we asked for—not a blossom
From our children's nosegay, such
As we gave it from our bosom,—

XXX

Not the milk left in their cup,
Not the lamp while they are sleeping,
Not the little cloak hung up
While the coat's in daily keeping,—

XXXI

But a place in RAGGED SCHOOLS,
Where the outcasts may to-morrow
Learn by gentle words and rules
Just the uses of their sorrow.

XXXII

O my sisters ! children small,
Blue-eyed, wailing through the city—
Our own babes cry in them all :
Let us take them into pity.

MAY'S LOVE

I

You love all, you say,
Round, beneath, above me :
Find me then some way
Better than to love me,
Me, too, dearest May !

II

O world-kissing eyes
Which the blue heavens melt to !
I, sad, otherwise,
Loathe the sweet looks dealt to
All things—men and flies.

III

You love all, you say :
Therefore, Dear, abate me
Just your love, I pray !
Shut your eyes and hate me—
Only *me*—fair May !

AMY'S CRUELTY

I

FAIR Amy of the terraced house,
Assist me to discover
Why you who would not hurt a mouse
Can torture so your lover.

II

You give your coffee to the cat,
You stroke the dog for coming,
And all your face grows kinder at
The little brown bee's humming.

III

But when *he* haunts your door .. the town
Marks coming and marks going ..
You seem to have stitched your eyelids
down
To that long piece of sewing !

IV

You never give a look, not you,
Nor drop him a 'Good morning,'
To keep his long day warm and blue,
So fretted by your scorning.

V

She shook her head—'The mouse and
bee
For crumb or flower will linger :
The dog is happy at my knee,
The cat purrs at my finger.

VI

' But *he* .. to *him*, the least thing given
Means great things at a distance ;
He wants my world, my sun, my heaven,
Soul, body, whole existence.

VII

' They say love gives as well as takes ;
But I'm a simple maiden,—
My mother's first smile when she wakes
I still have smiled and prayed in.

VIII

' I only know my mother's love
Which gives all and asks nothing ;
And this new loving sets the groove
Too much the way of loathing.

IX

' Unless he gives me all in change,
I forfeit all things by him :
The risk is terrible and strange—
I tremble, doubt, .. deny him.

X

' He's sweetest friend, or hardest foe,
Best angel, or worst devil ;
I either hate or .. love him so,
I can't be merely civil !

XI

' You trust a woman who puts forth,
Her blossoms thick as summer's ?
You thinkshed dreams what love is worth,
Who casts it to new-comers ?

XII

' Such love's a cowslip-ball to fling,
A moment's pretty pastime ;
I give .. all me, if anything,
The first time and the last time.

XIII

' Dear neighbour of the trellised house,
A man should murmur never,
Though treated worse than dog and
mouse,
Till doted on for ever !'

MY HEART AND I

I

ENOUGH ! we're tired, my heart and I.
 We sit beside the headstone thus,
 And wish that name were carved for us.
 The moss reprints more tenderly
 The hard types of the mason's knife,
 As heaven's sweet life renew earth's
 life
 With which we're tired, my heart and I.

II

You see we're tired, my heart and I.
 We dealt with books, we trusted men,
 And in our own blood drenched the
 pen,
 As if such colours could not fly.
 We walked too straight for fortune's
 end,
 We loved too true to keep a friend ;
 At last we're tired, my heart and I.

III

How tired we feel, my heart and I !
 We seem of no use in the world ;
 Our fancies hang grey and uncurled
 About men's eyes indifferently ;
 Our voice which thrilled you so, will
 let
 You sleep ; our tears are only wet :
 What do we here, my heart and I ?

IV

So tired, so tired, my heart and I !
 It was not thus in that old time
 When Ralph sate with me 'neath the
 lime
 To watch the sunset from the sky.
 'Dear love, you're looking tired,' he
 said ;
 I, smiling at him, shook my head :
 'Tis now we're tired, my heart and I.

V*

So tired, so tired, my heart and I !
 Though now none takes me on his arm
 To fold me close and kiss me warm
 Till each quick breath end in a sigh
 Of happy languor. Now, alone,
 We lean upon this graveyard stone,
 Uncheered, unkissed, my heart and I.

VI

Tired out we are, my heart and I.
 Suppose the world brought diadems
 To tempt us, crusted with loose gems
 Of powers and pleasures ? Let it try.
 We scarcely care to look at even
 A pretty child, or God's blue heaven,
 We feel so tired, my heart and I.

VII

Yet who complains ? My heart and I !
 In this abundant earth no doubt
 Is little room for things worn out :
 Disdain them, break them, throw them by.
 And if before the days grew rough
 We once were loved, used,—well
 enough,
 I think, we've fared, my heart and I.

THE BEST THING IN THE WORLD

WHAT 's the best thing in the world ?
 June-rose, by May-dew impearled ;
 Sweet south-wind, that means no rain ;
 Truth, not cruel to a friend ;
 Pleasure, not in haste to end ;
 Beauty, not self-decked and curled
 Till its pride is over-plain ;
 Light, that never makes you wink ;
 Memory, that gives no pain ;
 Love, when, so, you're loved again.
 What 's the best thing in the world ?
 —Something out of it, I think.

WHERE'S AGNES ?

I

Nay, if I had come back so,
 And found her dead in her grave,
 And if a friend I know
 Had said, 'Be strong, nor rave :
 She lies there, dead below :

II

'I saw her, I who speak,
 White, stiff, the face one blank :
 The blue shade came to her cheek
 Before they nailed the plank,
 For she had been dead a week.'

III

Why, if he had spoken so,
I might have believed the thing,
Although her look, although
Her step, laugh, voice's ring
Lived in me still as they do.

IV

But dead that other way,
Corrupted thus and lost?
That sort of worm in the clay?
I cannot count the cost,
That I should rise and pay.

V

My Agnes false? such shame?
She? Rather be it said
That the pure saint of her name
Has stood there in her stead,
And tricked you to this blame.

VI

Her very gown, her cloak
Fell chastely: no disguise,
But expression! while she broke
With her clear grey morning-eyes
Full upon me and then spoke.

VII

She wore her hair away
From her forehead,—like a cloud
Which a little wind in May
Peels off finely: disallowed
Though bright enough to stay.

VIII

For the heavens must have the place
To themselves, to use and shine in,
As her soul would have her face
To press through upon mine, in
That orb of angel grace.

IX

Had she any fault at all,
'Twas having none, I thought too—
There seemed a sort of thrall;
As she felt her shadow ought to
Fall straight upon the wall.

X

Her sweetness strained the sense
Of common life and duty;
And every day's expense
Of moving in such beauty
Required, almost, defence.

XI

What good, I thought, is done
By such sweet things, if any?
This world smells ill i' the sun
Though the garden-flowers are
many,—
She is only one.

XII

Can a voice so low and soft
Take open actual part
With Right,—maintain aloft
Pure truth in life or art,
Vexed always, wounded oft?—

XIII

She fit, with that fair pose
Which melts from curve to curve,
To stand, run, work with those
Who wrestle and deserve,
And speak plain without glose!

XIV

But I turned round on my fear
Defiant, disagreeing—
What if God has set her here
Less for action than for Being?—
For the eye and for the ear.

XV

Just to show what beauty may,
Just to prove what music can,—
And then to die away
From the presence of a man,
Who shall learn, henceforth, to pray?

XVI

As a door, left half ajar
In heaven, would make him think
How heavenly-different are
Things glanced at through the chink,
Till he pined from near to far.

XVII

That door could lead to hell?
That shining merely meant
Damnation? What! She fell
Like a woman, who was sent
Like an angel, by a spell?

XVIII

She, who scarcely trod the earth,
Turned mere dirt! My Agnes,—mine!
Called so! felt of too much worth
To be used so! too divine
To be breathed near, and so forth!

XIX

Why, I dared not name a sin
 In her presence : I went round,
 Clipped its name and shut it in
 Some mysterious crystal sound,—
 Changed the dagger for the pin.

XX

Now you name herself *that word*?
 O my Agnes ! O my saint!
 Then the great joys of the Lord
 Do not last ? Then all this paint
 Runs off nature ? leaves a board ?

XXI

Who's dead here ? No, not she :
 Rather I ! or whence this damp
 Cold corruption's misery ?
 While my very mourners stamp
 Closer in the clods on me.

XXII

And my mouth is full of dust
 Till I cannot speak and curse—
 Speak and damn him . . . 'Blame's
 unjust' !
 Sin blots out the universe,
 All because she would and must ?

XXIII

She, my white rose, dropping off
 The high rose-tree branch ! and not
 That the night-wind blew too rough,
 Or the noon-sun burnt too hot,
 But, that being a rose—'twas enough !

XXIV

Then henceforth, may earth grow trees !
 No more roses !—hard straight lines
 To score lies out ! none of these
 Fluctuant curves ! but firs and pines,
 Poplars, cedars, cypresses !

DE PROFUNDIS

I

THE face which, duly as the sun,
 Rose up for me with life begun,
 To mark all bright hours of the day
 With hourly love, is dimmed away,—
 And yet my days go on, go on.

II

The tongue which, like a stream, could run
 Smooth music from the roughest stone,
 And every morning with 'Good day'
 Make each day good, is hushed away,—
 And yet my days go on, go on .

III

The heart which, like a staff, was one
 For mine to lean and rest upon,
 The strongest on the longest day
 With steadfast love, is caught away,—
 And yet my days go on, go on.

IV

And cold before my summer's done,
 And deaf in Nature's general tune,
 And fallen too low for special fear,
 And here, with hope no longer here,—
 While the tears drop, my days go on.

V

The world goes whispering to its own,
 'This anguish pierces to the bone' ;
 And tender friends go sighing round,
 'What love can ever cure this wound' ?
 My days go on, my days go on.

VI

The past rolls forward on the sun
 And makes all night. O dreams begun,
 Not to be ended ! Ended bliss,
 And life that will not end in this !
 My days go on, my days go on.

VII

Breath freezes on my lips to moan :
 As one alone, once not alone,
 I sit and knock at Nature's door,
 Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,
 Whose desolated days go on.

VIII

I knock and cry,—Undone, undone !
 Is there no help, no comfort,—none ?
 No gleanings in the wide wheat-plains
 Where others drive their loaded wains ?
 My vacant days go on, go on.

IX

This Nature, though the snows be down,
 Thinks kindly of the bird of June :
 The little red hip on the tree
 Is ripe for such. What is for me,
 Whose days so winterly go on ?

X

No bird am I, to sing in June,
And dare not ask an equal boon.
Good nests and berries red are Nature's
To give away to better creatures,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

XI

I ask less kindness to be done,—
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon
(Too early worn and grimed), with sweet
Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,
Till days go out which now go on.

XII

Only to lift the turf unmown
From off the earth where it has grown,
Some cubit-space, and say, 'Behold,
Creep in, poor Heart, beneath that fold,
Forgetting how the days go on.'

XIII

What harm would that do? Green anon
The sward would quicken, overshone
By skies as blue; and crickets might
Have leave to chirp there day and night
While my new rest went on, went on.

XIV

From gracious Nature have I won
Such liberal bounty? may I run
So, lizard-like, within her side,
And there be safe, who now am tried
By days that painfully go on?

XV

—A Voice reproves me thereupon,
Moresweethan Nature's when the drone
Of bees is sweetest, and more deep
Than when the rivers overleap
The shuddering pines, and thunder on.

XVI

God's Voice, not Nature's! Night and
noon
He sits upon the great white throne
And listens for the creatures' praise.
What babble we of days and days?
The Dayspring He, whose days go on.

XVII

He reigns above, He reigns alone;
Systems burn out and leave His throne:
Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall
Around Him, changeless amid all,—
Ancient of Days, whose days go on.

XVIII

He reigns below, He reigns alone,
And, having life in love forgone
Beneath the crown of sovereign thorns,
He reigns the Jealous God. Who
mourns
Or rules with Him, while days go on?

XIX

By anguish which made pale the sun,
I hear Him charge His saints that
none
Among His creatures anywhere
Blaspheme against Him with despair,
However darkly days go on.

XX

Take from my head the thorn-wreath
brown!
No mortal grief deserves that crown.
O supreme Love, chief Misery,
The sharp regalia are for THEE
Whose days eternally go on!

XXI

For us,—whatever's undergone,
Thou knowest, wildest what is done.
Grief may be joy misunderstood;
Only the Good discerns the good.
I trust Thee while my days go on.

XXII

Whatever's lost, it first was won:
We will not struggle nor impugn.
Perhaps the cup was broken here,
That Heaven's new wine might show
more clear.
I praise Thee while my days go on.

XXIII

I praise Thee while my days go on;
I love Thee while my days go on:
Through dark and dearth, through fire
and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure lost,
I thank Thee while my days go on.

XXIV

And having in Thy life-depth thrown
Being and suffering (which are one),
As a child drops his pebble small
Down some deep well, and hears it fall
Smiling—so I. THY DAYS GO ON.

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

I

WHAT was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing mud and paddling with hoofs of
a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river.

II

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river :
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

III

High on the shore sate the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river ;
And hacked and hewed as a great god can,
With his hard bleak steel at the patient
reed,
Till there was not a sign of a leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

IV

He cut it short, did the great god Pan
(How tall it stood in the river !),
Then drew the pith, like the heart of
a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes, as he sate by the river.

V

'This is the way,' laughed the great
god Pan
(Laughed while he sate by the river),
'The only way, since gods began
To make sweet music, they could suc-
ceed.'
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in
the reed,
He blew in power by the river.

VI

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan !
Piercing sweet by the river !
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan !
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river.

VII

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,
To laugh as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man :
The true gods sigh for the cost and
pain,—
For the reed which grows nevermore
again
As a reed with the reeds in the river.

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLA-
FRANCA

I

PEACE, peace, peace, do you say ?
What !—with the enemy's guns in our
ears ?
With the country's wrong not rendered
back ?
What !—while Austria stands at bay
In Mantua, and our Venice bears
The cursed flag of the yellow and black !

II

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
And this the Mincio ? Where's the fleet,
And where's the sea ? Are we all blind
Or mad with the blood shed yesterday,
Ignoring Italy under our feet,
And seeing things before, behind ?

III

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
What !—uncontested, undenied ?
Because we triumph, we succumb ?
A pair of Emperors stand in the way
(One of whom is a man, beside),
To sign and seal our cannons dumb ?

IV

No, not Napoleon !—he who mused
At Paris, and at Milan spake,
And at Solferino led the fight :
Not he we trusted, honoured, used
Our hopes and hearts for . . till they
break—
Even so, you tell us . . in his sight.

V

Peace, peace, is still your word ?
We say you lie then !—that is plain.
There is no peace, and shall be none.

Our very Dead would cry ' Absurd !'
And clamour that they died in vain,
And whine to come back to the sun.

VI

Hush ! more reverence for the Dead !
They've done the most for Italy
Evermore since the earth was fair.
Now would that *we* had died instead,
Still dreaming peace meant liberty,
And did not; could not mean despair.

VII

Peace, you say ?—yes, peace, in truth !
But such a peace as the ear can achieve
'Twixt the rifle's click and the rush of
the ball,
'Twixt the tiger's spring and the crunch
of the tooth,
'Twixt the dying atheist's negative
And God's Face—waiting, after all !

KING VICTOR EMANUEL ENTERING FLORENCE, APRIL, 1860

I

KING of us all, we cried to thee, cried to
thee,
Trampled to earth by the beasts impure,
Dragged by the chariots which shame
as they roll :
The dust of our torment far and wide to
thee
Went up, dark'ning thy royal soul.
Be witness, Cavour,
That the King was sad for the people in
thrall,
This King of us all !

II

King, we cried to thee ! Strong in re-
plying,
Thy word and thy sword sprang rapid
and sure,
Cleaving our way to a nation's place.
Oh, first soldier of Italy !—crying
Now grateful, exultant, we look in
thy face.
Be witness, Cavour,
That, freedom's first soldier, the freed
should call
First King of them all !

III
This is our beautiful Italy's birthday ;
High-thoughted souls, whether many
or fewer,
Bring her the gift, and wish her the
good,
While Heaven presents on this sunny
earth-day
The noble king to the land renewed :
Be witness, Cavour !
Roar, cannon-mouths ! Proclaim, install
The King of us all !

IV

Grave he rides through the Florence
gateway,
Clenching his face into calm, to im-
mure
His struggling heart till it half dis-
appears ;
If he relaxed for a moment, straightway
He would break out into passionate
tears—
(Be witness, Cavour !)
While rings the cry without interval,
‘Live, King of us all !’

V

Cry, free peoples ! Honour the nation
By crowning the true man—and none
is truer :
Pisa is here, and Livorno is here,
And thousands of faces, in wild exulta-
tion,
Burn over the windows to feel him
near—
(Be witness, Cavour !)
Burn over from terrace, roof, window,
and wall,
On this King of us all.

VI

Grave ! A good man 's ever the graver
For bearing a nation's trust secure ;
And *he*, he thinks of the Heart, beside,
Which broke for Italy, failing to save her,
And pining away by Oporto's tide :
Be witness, Cavour,
That he thinks of his vow on that royal
pall,
This King of us all.

VII

Flowers, flowers, from the flowery city!
Such innocent thanks for a deed so pure,
As, melting away for joy into flowers,
The nation invites him to enter his Pitti
And evermore reign in this Florence
of ours.
Be witness, Cavour!
He'll stand where the reptiles were used
to crawl,
This King of us all.

VIII

Grave, as the manner of noble men is—
Deeds unfinished will weigh on the doer:
And, baring his head to those crepe-
veiled flags,
He bows to the grief of the South and
Venice.
Oh, riddle the last of theyellow to rags,
And swear by Cavour
That the King shall reign where the
tyrants fall,
True King of us all!

THE SWORD OF CASTRUCCIO
CASTRACANI

Questa è per me.—KING VICTOR EMANUEL.

I

WHEN Victor Emanuel the King,
Went down to his Lucca that day,
The people, each vaunting the thing
As he gave it, gave all things away,—
In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,
As they tore out their hearts for the king.

II

—Gave the green forest-walk on the
wall,
With the Apennine blue through the
trees;
Gave the palaces, churches, and all
The great pictures which burn out of
these:
But the eyes of the King seemed to
freeze
As he glanced upon ceiling and wall.

III

'Good,' said the King as he passed.
Was he cold to the arts?—or else coy
To possession? or crossed, at the last
(Whispered some), by the vote in
Savoy?
Shout! Love him enough for his joy!
'Good,' said the King as he passed.

IV

He, travelling the whole day through
flowers
And protesting amenities, found
At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers
Of red roses, the 'Orphans' (renowned
As the heirs of Puccini), who wound
With a sword through the crowd and
the flowers.

V

'Tis the sword of Castruccio, O King,—
In that strife of intestinal hate,
Very famous! Accept what we bring,
We who cannot be sons, by our fate,
Rendered citizens by thee of late,
And endowed with a country and king.

VI

'Read! Puccini has willed that this sword
(Which once made in an ignorant feud
Many orphans) remain in our ward
Till some patriot its pure civic blood
Wipe away in the foe's and make good,
In delivering the land by the sword.'

VII

Then the King exclaimed, 'This is for
me!'
And he dashed out his hand on the hilt,
While his blue eye shot fire openly,
And his heart overboiled till it spilt
A hot prayer,—'God! the rest as
Thou wilt!
But grant me this!—*This is for me!*'

VIII

O Victor Emanuel, the King,
The sword be for *thee*, and the deed,
And nought for the alien, next spring,
Nought for Hapsburg and Bourbon
agreed—
But, for us, a great Italy freed,
With a hero to head us,—our King!

SUMMING UP IN ITALY

(INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT
PUBLICS OUT OF IT)

I

OBSERVE how it will be at last,
 When our Italy stands at full stature,
 A year ago tied down so fast
 That the cord cut the quick of her
 nature!
 You'll honour the deed and its scope,
 Then, in logical sequence upon it,
 Will use up the remnants of rope
 By hanging the men who have done it.

II

The speech in the Commons, which hits
 you
 A sketch off, how dungeons must feel,—
 The official dispatch, which commits you
 From stamping out groans with your
 heel,—
 Suggestions in journal or book for
 Good efforts,—are praised as is meet :
 But what in this world can men look for,
 Who only achieve and complete?

III

True, you've praise for the fireman who
 sets his
 Brave face to the axe of the flame,
 Disappears in the smoke, and then fetches
 A babe down, or idiot that's lame,—
 For the boor even, who rescues through
 pity
 A sheep from the brute who would
 kick it :

But saviours of nations!—'tis pretty,
 And doubtful: they *may* be so wicked:

IV

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,
 Ricasoli,—doubt by the dozen!—
 here's
 Pepoli too, and Cipriani,
 Imperial cousins and cozeners—
 Arese, Laiatico,—courtly
 Of manners, if stringent of mouth :
 Garibaldi! we'll come to him shortly
 (As soon as he *ends* in the South).

V

Napoleon—as strong as ten armies,
 Corrupt as seven devils—a fact
 You accede to, then seek where the
 harm is
 Drained off from the man to his act,
 And find—a free nation! Suppose
 Some hell-brood in Eden's sweet
 greenery,
 Convoked for creating—a rose!
 Would it suit the infernal machinery?

VI

Cavour,—to the despot's desire,
 Who his own thought so craftily
 marries—
 What is he but just a thin wire
 For conducting the lightning from
 Paris?
 Yes, write down the two as compeers,
 Confessing (you would not permit a
 lie)
 He bore up his Piedmont ten years
 Till she suddenly smiled and was Italy.

VII

And the King, with that 'stain on his
 scutcheon',
 Savoy—as the calumny runs
 (If it be not his blood,—with his clutch
 on
 The sword, and his face to the guns).
 O first, where the battle-storm gathers,
 O loyal of heart on the throne,
 Let those keep the 'graves of their
 fathers,'
 Who quail, in a nerve, from their own!

VIII

For *thee*—through the dim Hades-portal
 The dream of a voice—'Blessed thou
 Who hast made all thy race twice
 immortal!
 No need of the sepulchres now!
 —Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs,
 who fester
 Above-ground with worm-eaten souls,
 While the ghost of some pale feudal
 jester
 Before them strews treaties in holes.'

¹ Blue Book. Diplomatical Correspondence.

IX

But hush!—am I dreaming a poem
Of Hades, Heaven, Justice? Not I—
I began too far off, in my proem,
With what men believe and deny:
And on earth, whatsoever the need is
(To sum up as thoughtful reviewers),
The moral of every great deed is
The virtue of slandering the doers.

'DIED . . .'

(THE 'TIMES' OBITUARY)

I

WHAT shall we add now? He is dead.
And I who praise and you who blame,
With wash of words across his name,
Find suddenly declared instead—
'On Sunday, third of August, dead.'

II

Which stops the whole we talked to-day.
I, quickened to a plausible glance
At his large general tolerance
By common people's narrow way,
Stopped short in praising. Dead, they
say.

III

And you, who had just put in a sort
Of cold deduction—'rather, large.
Through weakness of the continent
marge,
Than greatness of the thing contained'—
Broke off. Dead!—there, you stood
restrained.

IV

As if we had talked in following one
Up some long gallery. 'Would you
choose
An air like that? The gait is loose—
Or noble.' Sudden in the sun
An oubliette-winks. Where is he? Gone.

V

Dead. Man's 'I was' by God's 'I
am'—
All hero-worship comes to that.
High heart, high thought, high fame,
as flat
As a gravestone. Bring your *Jacet jam*—
The epitaph's an epigram.

VI

Dead. There's an answer to arrest
All carping. Dust's his natural place!
He'll let the flies buzz round his face
And, though you slander, not protest?
—From such an one, exact the Best!

VII

Opinions gold or brass are null.
We chuck our flattery or abuse,
Called Caesar's due, as Charon's dues,
I' the teeth of some dead sage or fool,
To mend the grinning of a skull.

VIII

Be abstinent in praise and blame.
The man's still mortal, who stands
first,
And mortal only, if last and worst.
Then slowly lift so frail a fame,
Or softly drop so poor a shame.

THE FORCED RECRUIT

SOLFERINO, 1859

I

In the ranks of the Austrian you found
him,
He died with his face to you all;
Yet bury him here where around him
You honour your bravest that fall.

II

Venetian, fair-featured and slender,
He lies shot to death in his youth,
With a smile on his lips over-tender
For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

III

No stranger, and yet not a traitor,
Though alien the cloth on his breast,
Underneath it how seldom a greater
Young heart, has a shot sent to rest!

IV

By your enemy tortured and goaded
To march with them, stand in their file,
His musket (see) never was loaded,
He facing your guns with that smile!

V

As orphans yearn on to their mothers,
He yearned to your patriot bands ;—
‘Let me die for our Italy, brothers,
If not in your ranks, by your hands !

VI

‘Aim straightly, fire steadily ! spare me
A ball in the body which may
Deliver my heart here, and tear me
This badge of the Austrian away !’

VII

So thought he, so died he this morning.
What then ? many others have died.
Aye, but easy for men to die scorning
The death-stroke, who fought side by
side—

VIII

One tricolor floating above them ;
Struck down ’mid triumphant acclaims
Of an Italy rescued to love them
And blazon the brass with their names.

IX

But he,—without witness or honour,
Mixed, shamed in his country’s regard,
With the tyrants who march in upon her,
Died faithful and passive : ‘twas hard.

X

‘Twas sublime. In a cruel restriction
Cut off from the guerdon of sons,
With most filial obedience, conviction,
His soul kissed the lips of her guns.

XI

That moves you ? Nay, grudge not to
show it,
While digging a grave for him here :
The others who died, says your poet,
Have glory,—let *him* have a tear.

GARIBALDI

I

He bent his head upon his breast
Wherein his lion-heart lay sick :—
‘Perhaps we are not ill-repaid ;
Perhaps this is not a true test ;
Perhaps that was not a foul trick ;
Perhaps none wronged, and none
betrayed.

II

‘Perhaps the people’s vote which here
United, there may disunite,
And both be lawful as they think ;
Perhaps a patriot statesman, dear
For chartering nations, can with right
Disfranchise those who hold the ink.

III

‘Perhaps men’s wisdom is not craft ;
Men’s greatness, not a selfish greed ;
Men’s justice, not the safer side ;
Perhaps even women, when they
laughed,
Wept, thanked us that the land was
freed,
Not wholly (though they kissed us)
lied.

IV

‘Perhaps no more than this we meant,
When up at Austria’s guns we flew,
And quenched them with a cry apiece,
Italia!—Yet a dream was sent . . .
The little house my father knew,
The olives and the palms of Nice.’

V

He paused, and drew his sword out slow,
Then pored upon the blade intent,
As if to read some written thing ;
While many murmured,—‘ He will go
In that despairing sentiment
And break his sword before the King.’

VI

He poring still upon the blade,
His large lid quivered, something fell.
‘ Perhaps,’ he said, ‘ I was not born
With such fine brains to treat and trade,—
And if a woman knew it well,
Her falsehood only meant her scorn.

VII

‘ Yet through Varese’s cannon-smoke
My eye saw clear : men feared this man
At Como, where this sword could seal
Death’s protocol with every stroke :
And now . . . the drop there scarcely can
Impair the keenness of the steel.

VIII

So man and sword may have their use;
And if the soil beneath my foot
In valour's act is forfeited,
I'll strike the harder, take my dues
Out nobler, and all loss confute
From ampler heavens above my head.

IX

'My King, King Victor, I am thine!
So much Nice-dust as what I am
(To make our Italy) must cleave.
Forgive that.' Forward with a sign
He went.

You've seen the telegram?
Palermo's taken, we believe.

ONLY A CURL

I

FRIENDS of faces unknown and a land
Unvisited over the sea,
Who tell me how lonely you stand
With a single gold curl in the hand
Held up to be looked at by me,—

II

While you ask me to ponder and say
What a father and mother can do,
With the bright fellow-locks put away
Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay
Where the violets press nearer than
you.

III

Shall I speak like a poet, or run
Into weak woman's tears for relief?
Oh, children!—I never lost one,—
Yet my arm's round my own little son,
And Love knows the secret of Grief.

IV

And I feel what it must be and is,
When God draws a new angel so
Through the house of a man up to His,
With a murmur of music, you miss,
And a rapture of light, you forgo.

v
How you think, staring on at the door,
Where the face of your angel flashed
in,
That its brightness, familiar before,
Burns off from you ever the more
For the dark of your sorrow and sin.

VI

'God lent him and takes him,' you sigh;
—Nay, there let me break with your
pain:
God's generous in giving, say I,—
And the thing which He gives, I deny
That He ever can take back again.

VII

He gives what He gives. I appeal
To all who bear babes—in the hour
When the veil of the body we feel
Rent round us,—while torments reveal
The motherhood's advent in power,

VIII

And the babe cries!—has each of us
known
By apocalypse (God being there
Full in nature) the child is our own,
Life of life, love of love, moan of moan,
Through all changes, all times, every-
where.

IX

He's ours and for ever. Believe,
O father!—O mother, look back
To the first love's assurance. To give
Means with God not to tempt or deceive
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's sack.

X

He gives what He gives. Be content!
He resumes nothing given,—be sure!
God lend! Where the usurers lent
In His temple, indignant He went
And scourged away all those impure.

XI

He leads not; but gives to the end,
As He loves to the end. If it seem
That He draws back a gift, com-
prehend
'Tis to add to it rather,—amend,
And finish it up to your dream,—

xii

Or keep,—as a mother will toys
Too costly, though given by herself,
Till the room shall be stiller from noise,
And the children more fit for such joys,
Kept over their heads on the shelf.

xiii

So look up, friends! you, who indeed
Have possessed in your house a sweet
piece
Of the Heaven which men strive for,
must need
Be more earnest than others are,—speed
Where they loiter, persist where they
cease.

xiv

You know how one angel smiles there.
Then weep not. 'Tis easy for you
To be drawn by a single gold hair
Of that curl, from earth's storm and
despair,
To the safe place above us. Adieu.

A VIEW ACROSS THE ROMAN
CAMPAGNA

1861

I

OVER the dumb Campagna-sea,
Out in the offing through mist and
rain,
Saint Peter's Church heaves silently
Like a mighty ship in pain,
Facing the tempest with struggle and
strain.

II

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,
Soundless breakers of desolate land:
The sullen surf of the mist devours
That mountain-range upon either hand,
Eaten away from its outline grand.

III

And over the dumb Campagna-sea
Where the ship of the Church heaves
on to wreck,
Alone and silent as God must be,
The Christ walks. Aye, but Peter's
neck
Is stiff to turn on the foundering deck.

IV

Peter, Peter! if such be thy name,
Now leaveth the ship for another to steer,
And proving thy faith evermore the same,
Come forth, tread out through the
dark and drear,
Since He who walks on the sea is here.

V

Peter, Peter! He does not speak;
He is not as rash as in old Galilee:
Safer a ship, though it toss and leak,
Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea!
And he's got to be round in the girth,
thinks he.

VI

Peter, Peter! He does not stir;
His nets are heavy with silver fish;
He reckons his gains, and is keen to infer
—'The broil on the shore, if the Lord
should wish;
But the sturgeon goes to the Caesar's
dish.'

VII

Peter, Peter! thou fisher of men,
Fisher of fish wouldest thou live instead?
Haggling for pence with the other Ten,
Cheating the market at so much a head,
Griping the Bag of the traitor Dead?

VIII

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock
Thou weep'st not, thou, though thine
eyes be dazed:
What bird comes next in the tempest-
shock?
—Vultures! see,—as when Romulus
gazed,—
To inaugurate Rome for a world
amazed!

THE KING'S GIFT

I

TERESA, ah, Teresita!
Now what has the messenger brought her,
Our Garibaldi's young daughter,
To make her stop short in her singing?
Will she not once more repeat a
Verse from that hymn of our hero's,
Setting the souls of us ringing?
Break off the song where the tear rose?
Ah, Teresita!

II

A young thing, mark, is Teresa :
 Her eyes have caught fire, to be sure, in
 That necklace of jewels from Turin,
 Till blind their regard to us men is.
 But still she remembers to raise a
 Sly look to her father, and note—
 ' Could she sing on as well about
 Venice,
 Yet wear such a flame at her throat?
 Decide for Teresa.'

III

Teresa ! ah, Teresita !
 His right hand has paused on her head—
 ' Accept it, my daughter,' he said ;
 ' Aye, wear it, true child of thy mother !
 Then sing, till all start to their feet, a
 New verse ever bolder and freer !
 King Victor's no king like another,
 But verily noble as we are,
 Child, Teresita !'

PARTING LOVERS

SIENA, 1860

I

I LOVE thee, love thee, Giulio ;
 Some call me cold, and some demure ;
 And if thou hast ever guessed that so
 I loved thee.. well, the proof was poor,
 And no one could be sure.

II

Before thy song (with shifted rimes
 To suit my name) did I undo
 The persian ? If it stirred sometimes,
 Thou hast not seen a hand push through
 A foolish flower or two.

III

My mother listening to my sleep,
 Heard nothing but a sigh at night,—
 The short sigh rippling on the deep,
 When hearts run out of breath and
 sight
 Of men, to God's clear light.

IV

When others named thee,—thought thy
 brows
 Were straight, thy smile was tender,—
 ' Here
 He comes between the vineyard-rows !'
 I said not 'Aye,' nor waited, Dear,
 To feel thee step too near.

V

I left such things to bolder girls,—
 Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,
 When that Clotilda, through her curls,
 Held both thine eyes in hers one day,
 I marvelled, let me say.

VI

I could not try the woman's trick :
 Between us straightway fell the blush
 Which kept me separate, blind and sick.
 A wind came with thee in a flush,
 As blown through Sinai's bush.

VII

But now that Italy invokes
 Her young men to go forth and chase
 The foe or perish,—nothing chokes
 My voice, or drives me from the place.
 I look thee in the face.

VIII

I love thee ! It is understood,
 Confest : I do not shrink or start.
 No blushes ! all my body's blood
 Has gone to greaten this poor heart,
 That, loving, we may part.

IX

Our Italy invokes the youth
 To die if need be. Still there's room,
 Though earth is strained with dead in
 truth :
 Since twice the lilies were in bloom
 They have not grudged a tomb.

X

And many a plighted maid and wife
 And mother, who can say since then
 ' My country,'—cannot say through life
 ' My son,' ' my spouse,' ' my flower
 of men,'
 And not weep dumb again.

xi

Heroic males the country bears,—
But daughters give up more than sons :
Flags wave, drums beat, and unawares
You flash your souls out with the guns,
And take your Heaven at once.

xii

But we!—we empty heart and home
Of life's life, love ! We bear to think
You're gone,—to feel you may not
come,—
To hear the door-latch stir and clink,
Yet no more you ! . . . nor sink.

xiii

Dear God ! when Italy is one,
Complete, content from bound to bound,
Suppose, for my share, earth's undone
By one grave in't!—as one small wound
Will kill a man, 'tis found.

xiv

What then ? If love's delight must end,
At least we'll clear its truth from flaws.
I love thee, love thee, sweetest friend !
Now take my sweetest without pause,
And help the nation's cause.

xv

And thus, of noble Italy
We'll both be worthy ! Let her show
The future how we made her free,
Not sparing life . . . nor Giulio,
Nor this . . . this heartbreak ! Go.

MOTHER AND POET¹

TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA,
1861

i

DEAD ! One of them shot by the sea in
the east,
And one of them shot in the west by
the sea.
Dead ! both my boys ! When you sit
at the feast
And are wanting a great song for Italy
free,
Let none look at me !

¹ This was Laura Savio, of Turin, a poetess and patriot, whose sons were killed at Ancona and Gaeta.

ii

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
And good at my art, for a woman,
men said ;
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized
here,
—The east sea and west sea rime
on in her head
For ever instead.

iii

What art can a woman be good at ? Oh,
vain !
What art *is* she good at, but hurting
her breast
With the milk-teeth of babes, and
a smile at the pain ?
Ah, boys, how you hurt ! you were
strong as you pressed,
And I proud, by that test.

iv

What art's for a woman ! To hold on
her knees
Both darlings ! to feel all their arms
round her throat,
Cling, strangle a little ! to sew by
degrees
And 'broider the long-clothes and neat
little coat ;
To dream and to dote.

v

To teach them . . . It stings there ! *I*
made them indeed
Speak plain the word *country*. *I*
taught them, no doubt,
That a country's a thing men should die
for at need.
I prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant cast out.

vi

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my
beautiful eyes ! . . .
I exulted ; nay, let them go forth at
the wheels
Of the guns, and denied not. But then
the surprise
When one sits quite alone ! Then one
weeps, then one kneels !
God, how the house feels !

vii

At first, happy news came, in gay letters
moiled
With my kisses,—of camp-life and
glory, and how
They both loved me; and, soon coming
home to be spoiled,
In return would fan off every fly from
my brow
With their green laurel-bough.

viii

Then was triumph at Turin: ‘Ancona
was free!’
And some one came out of the cheers
in the street.
With a face pale as stone, to say some-
thing to me.
My Guido was dead! I fell down at
his feet,
While they cheered in the street.

ix

I bore it; friends soothed me; my grief
looked sublime
As the ransom of Italy. One boy
remained
To be leant on and walked with, re-
calling the time
When the first grew immortal, while
both of us strained
To the height he had gained.

x

And letters still came, shorter, sadder,
more strong,
Writ now but in one hand, ‘I was
not to faint,—
One loved me for two—would be with
me ere long:
And *Viva l’Italia!*—he died for, our
saint,
Who forbids our complaint?’

xi

My Nanni would add, ‘he was safe, and
aware
Of a presence that turned off the
balls,—was imprest
It was Guido himself, who knew what
I could bear,

And how ‘twas impossible, quite dis-
possessed,
To live on for the rest.’

xii

On which, without pause, up the
telegraph-line
Swept smoothly the next news from
Gaeta:—*Shot.*
Tell his mother. Ah, ah, ‘his,’ ‘their’
mother,—not ‘mine,’
No voice says ‘*My mother*’ again to
me. What!
You think Guido forgot?

xiii

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy
with Heaven,
They drop earth’s affections, conceive
not of woe?
I think not. Themselves were too lately
forgiven
Through THAT Love and Sorrow
which reconciled so
The Above and Below.

xiv

O Christ of the five wounds, who
look’dst through the dark
To the face of Thy mother! consider,
I pray,
How we common mothers stand
desolate, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die
with eyes turned away,
And no last word to say!

xv

Both boys dead! but that’s out of nature.
We all
Have been patriots, yet each house
must always keep one.
‘Twere imbecile, hewing out roads to
a wall;
And, when Italy’s made, for what end
is it done
If we have not a son?

XVI

Ah, ah, ah ! when Gaeta's taken what
then ?
When the fair wicked queen sits no
more at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls
out of men ?
When the guns of Cavalli with final
retort
Have cut the game short ?

XVII

When Venice and Rome keep their new
jubilee,
When your flag takes all heaven for
its white, green, and red,
When you have your country from
mountain to sea,
When King Victor has Italy's crown
on his head,
(And I have my Dead) --

XVIII

What then ? Do not mock me. Ah,
ring your bells low,
And burn your lights faintly ! My
country is there,
Above the star pricked by the last peak
of snow :
My Italy 's THERE, with my brave civic
Pair,
To disfranchise despair !

XIX

Forgive me. Some women bear children
in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain in
self-scorn ;
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring
us at length
Into wail such as this—and we sit on
forlorn
When the man-child is born.

XX

Dead ! One of them shot by the sea in
the east,
And one of them shot in the west by
the sea.
Both ! both my boys ! If in keeping
the feast
You want a great song for your Italy
free,
Let none look at me !

NATURE'S REMORSES

ROME, 1861

I

HER soul was bred by a throne, and fed
From the sucking-bottle used in her
race
On starch and water (for mother's
milk)
Which gives a larger growth instead),
And, out of the natural liberal grace,
Was swaddled away in violet silk.

II

And young and kind, and royally blind,
Forth she stepped from her palace-door
On three-piled carpet of compli-
ments,
Curtains of incense drawn by the wind
In between her for evermore
And daylight issues of events.

III

On she drew, as a queen might do,
To meet a Dream of Italy,—
Of magical town and musical wave,
Where even a god, his amulet blue
Of shining sea, in an ecstasy
Dropt and forgot in a nereid's cave.

IV

Down she goes, as the soft wind blows,
To live more smoothly than mortals
can,
To love and to reign as queen and
wife,
To wear a crown that smells of a rose,
And still, with a sceptre as light as a
fan,
Beat sweet time to the song of life.

V

What is this ? As quick as a kiss
Falls the smile from her girlish mouth !
The lion-people has left its lair,
Roaring along her garden of bliss,
And the fiery underworld of the South
Scorched a way to the upper air.

VI

And a fire-stone ran in the form of a man,
Burningly, boundingly, fatal and fell,
Bowling the kingdom down!
Where was the king?
She had heard somewhat, since life
began,
Ofterrors on earth and horrors in hell,
But never, never of such a thing!

VII

You think she dropped when her dream
was stopped,
When the blotch of Bourbon blood
inlay,
Lividly rank, her new lord's cheek?
Not so. Her high heart overtopped
The royal part she had come to play.
Only the men in that hour were
weak.

VIII

And twice a wife by her ravaged life,
And twice a queen by her kingdom lost,
She braved the shock and the
counter-shock
Of hero and traitor, bullet and knife,
While Italy pushed, like a vengeful
ghost,
That son of the Cursed from Gaeta's
rock.

IX

What will ye give her, who could not
deliver,
German Princesses? A laurel-wreath
All over-scored with your signatures,
Graces, Serenities, Highnesses ever?
Mock her not, fresh from the truth of
Death,
Conscious of dignities higher than
yours.

X

What will ye put in your casket shut,
Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's name?
Guizot's daughter, what have you
brought her?
Withered immortelles, long ago cut
For guilty dynasties perished in shame,
Putrid to memory, Guizot's daugh-
ter?

XI

Ah, poor queen! so young and serene!
What shall we do for her, now hope's
done,
Standing at Rome in these ruins
old,
She too a ruin and no more a queen?
Leave her that diadem made by the
sun
Turning her hair to an innocent gold.

XII

Aye! bring close to her, as'twere a rose,
to her,
Yon free child from an Apennine city
Singing for Italy,—dumb in the
place!
Something like solace, let us suppose,
to her
Given, in that homage of wonder and
pity,
By his pure eyes to her beautiful face.

XIII

Nature, excluded, savagely brooded,
Ruined all queendom and dogmas of
state,—
Then in reaction remorseful and
mild,
Rescues the womanhood, nearly eluded,
Shows her what's sweetest in woman-
ly fate—
Sunshine from Heaven, and the
eyes of a child.

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH

[THE LAST POEM]

ROME, MAY, 1861

I

'Now give us lands where the olives
grow,'
Cried the North to the South,
'Where the sun with a golden mouth
can blow
Blue bubbles of grapes down a vineyard-
row!'
Cried the North to the South.

'Now give us men from the sunless plain,'
 Cried the South to the North,
 'By need of work in the snow and the
 rain,
 Made strong, and brave by familiar pain !'
 Cried the South to the North.

II

'Give lucid hills and intenser seas,'
 Said the North to the South,
 'Since everby symbols and bright degrees
 Art, childlike, climbs to the dear Lord's
 knees,'
 Said the North to the South.

'Give strenuous souls for belief and
 prayer,'
 Said the South to the North,
 'That stand in the dark on the lowest
 stair,
 While affirming of God, "He is certainly
 there,"'
 Said the South to the North.

III

'Yet oh, for the skies that are softer
 and higher !'
 Sighed the North to the South ;
 'For the flowers that blaze, and the trees
 that aspire,
 And the insects made of a song or a fire !'
 Sighed the North to the South.

'And oh, for a seer to discern the
 same !'
 Sighed the South to the North ;
 'For a poet's tongue of baptismal flame,
 To call the tree or the flower by its
 name !'
 Sighed the South to the North.

IV

The North sent therefore a man of men
 As a grace to the South ;
 And thus to Rome came Andersen.
 —'Alas, but must you take him again ?'
 Said the South to the North.

TRANSLATIONS

PARAPHRASE ON THEOCRITUS

THE CYCLOPS

IDYLL XI

AND so an easier life our Cyclops drew,
 The ancient Polyphemus, who in youth
 Loved Galatea while the manhood grew
 Adown his cheeks and darkened round
 his mouth.
 No jot he cared for apples, olives, roses ;
 Love made him mad : the whole world
 was neglected,
 The very sheep went backward to their
 closes
 From out the fair green pastures, self-
 directed.
 And singing Galatea, thus, he wore
 The sunrise down along the weedy
 shore,
 And pined alone, and felt the cruel wound
 Beneath his heart, which Cypris' arrow
 bore,

With a deep pang ; but, so, the cure was
 found ;
 And sitting on a lofty rock he cast
 His eyes upon the sea, and sang at
 last :—

'O whitest Galatea, can it be
 That thou shouldst spurn me off who
 love thee so ?
 More white than curds, my girl, thou
 art to see,
 More meek than lambs, more full of leap-
 ing glee
 Than kids, and brighter than the early
 glow
 On grapes that swell to ripen,—sour like
 thee !
 Thou comest to me with the fragrant sleep,
 And with the fragrant sleep thou goest
 from me ;
 Thou fliest . . . fliest, as a frightened sheep
 Flies the grey wolf!—yet Love did
 overcome me,

So long;—I loved thee, maiden, first of all
When down the hills (my mother fast
beside thee)
I saw thee stray to pluck the summer-fall
Of hyacinth bells, and went myself to
guide thee:
And since my eyes have seen thee, they
can leave thee
No more, from that day's light! But
thou... by Zeus,
Thou wilt not care for *that*, to let it grieve
thee!
I know thee, fair one, why thou
springest loose
From my arm round thee. Why? I tell
thee, Dear!
One shaggy eyebrow draws its smudg-
ing road
Straight through my ample front, from
ear to ear,—
One eye rolls underneath; and yawn-
ing, broad
Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too near.
Yet... ho, ho!—I,—whatever I appear,—
Do feed a thousand oxen! When I
have done,
I milk the cows, and drink the milk that's
best!
I lack no cheese, while summer keeps
the sun;
And after, in the cold, it's ready prest!
And then, I know to sing, as there is
none
Of all the Cyclops can... a song of thee,
Sweet apple of my soul, on love's fair tree,
And of myself who love thee... till the
West
Forgets the light, and all but I have rest.
I feed for thee, besides, eleven fair does,
And all in fawn; and four tame whelps
of bears.
Come to me, Sweet! thou shalt have all
of those
In change for love! I will not halve
the shares.
Leave the blue sea, with pure white arms
extended
To the dry shore; and, in my cave's
recess,
Thou shalt be gladder for the noonlight
ended,—
For here be laurels, spiral cypresses,
Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves enfold

Most luscious grapes; and here is water
cold,
The wooded Aetna pours down through
the trees
From the white snows,—which gods
were scarce too bold
To drink in turn with nectar. Who
with these
Would choose the salt wave of the
lukewarm seas?
Nay, look on me! If I am hairy and
rough,
I have an oak's heart in me; there's
a fire
In these grey ashes which burns hot
enough;
And when I burn for *thee*, I grudge
the pyre
No fuel... not my soul, nor this one eye,—
Most precious thing I have, because
thereby
I see thee, Fairest! Out, alas! I wish
My mother had borne me finned like a fish,
That I might plunge down in the ocean
near thee,
And kiss thy glittering hand between
the weeds,
If still thy face were turned; and I would
bear thee
Each lily white, and poppy fair that
bleeds
Its red heart down its leaves!—one gift,
for hours
Of summer,... one, for winter; since,
to cheer thee,
I could not bring at once all kinds of
flowers.
Even now, girl, now, I fain would learn
to swim,
If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I wis,—
That I may know how sweet a thing it is
To live down with you, in the Deep and
Dim!
Come up, O Galatea, from the ocean,
And having come, forget again to go!
As I, who sing out here my heart's
emotion,
Could sit for ever. Come up from
below!
Come, keep my flocks beside me, milk
my kine,—
Come, press my cheese, distract my
whey and curd!

Ah, mother! she alone . . . that mother of mine . . .
 Did wrong me sore! I blame her!—
 Not a word
 Of kindly intercession did she address
 Thine ear with for my sake; and ne'er-
 theless
 She saw me wasting, wasting, day by
 day!
 Both head and feet were aching, I will
 say,
 All sick for grief, as I myself was sick!
 O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither hast thou
 sent
 Thy soul on fluttering wings? If thou
 wert bent
 On turning bowls, or pulling green and
 thick
 The sprouts to give thy lambkins,—
 thou wouldest make thee
 A wiser Cyclops than for what we
 take thee.
 Milk dry the present! Why pursue too
 quick
 That future which is fugitive aright?
 Thy Galatea thou shalt haply find,—
 Or else a maiden fairer and more kind;
 For many girls do call me through the
 night,
 And, as they call, do laugh out silverly.
I, too, am something in the world,
 I see!

While thus the Cyclops love and lambs
 did fold,
 Ease came with song, he could not buy
 with gold.

PARAPHRASES ON APULEIUS

PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID

Metamorph., Lib. IV

THEN Psyche, weak in body and soul,
 put on
 The cruelty of Fate, in place of strength:
 She raised the lamp to see what should
 be done,
 And seized the steel, and was a man
 at length

In courage, though a woman! Yes, but
 when
 The light fell on the bed whereby she
 stood
 To view the ‘beast’ that lay there,—
 certes, then,
 She saw the gentlest, sweetest beast
 in wood—
 Even Cupid’s self, the beauteous god!
 more beauteous
 For that sweet sleep across his eyelids
 dim!
 The light, the lady carried as she viewed,
 Did blush for pleasure as it lighted him,
 The dagger trembled from its aim un-
 dueitous;
 And *she . . . oh, she*—amazed and soul-
 distraught,
 And fainting in her whiteness like a veil,
 Slid down upon her knees, and, shud-
 dering, thought
 To hide—though in her heart—the dagger
 pale!
 She would have done it, but her hands
 did fail
 To hold the guilty steel, they shivered
 so,—
 And feeble, exhausted, unaware she took
 To gazing on the god,—till, look by look,
 Her eyes with larger life did fill and
 glow.
 She saw his golden head alight with curls:
 She might have guessed their bright-
 ness in the dark
 By that ambrosial smell of heavenly
 mark!
 She saw the milky brow, more pure than
 pearls,
 The purple of the cheeks, divinely
 sundered
 By the globed ringlets, as they glided free,
 Some back, some forwards,—all so
 radiantly,
 That, as she watched them there, she
 never wondered
 To see the lamplight, where it touched
 them, tremble
 On the god’s shoulders, too, she marked
 his wings
 Shine faintly at the edges and resemble
 A flower that’s near to blow. The poet
 sings
 And lover sighs, that Love is fugitive;

And certes, though these pinions lay
reposing,
The feathers on them seemed to stir
and live
As if by instinct, closing and unclosing.
Meantime the god's fair body slumbered
deep,
All worthy of Venus, in his shining
sleep;
While at the bed's foot lay the quiver,
bow,
And darts,—his arms of godhead. Psyche
gazed
With eyes that drank the wonders in,
—said, —‘Lo,
Be these my husband's arms?’—and
straightway raised
An arrow from the quiver-case, and
tried
Its point against her finger,—trembling
till
She pushed it in too deeply (foolish
bride!)
And made her blood some dewdrops
small distil,
And learnt to love Love, of her own
goodwill.

PSYCHE WAFTED BY ZEPHYRUS

Metamorph., Lib. IV

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock for-
saken,
Alone, despairing, dreading,—gradu-
ally
By Zephyrus she was enwrapt and taken:
Still trembling,—like the lilies planted
high,—
Through all her fair white limbs. Her
vesture spread,
Her very bosom eddying with sur-
prise,—
He drew her slowly from the mountain-
head,
And bore her down the valleys with
wet eyes,
And laid her in the lap of a green dell
As soft with grass and flowers as any
nest,
With trees beside her, and a limpid well:
Yet Love was not far off from all that
Rest.

PSYCHE AND PAN

Metamorph., Lib. V

THE gentle River, in her Cupid's honour,
Because he used to warm the very
wave,
Did ripple aside, instead of closing on her,
And cast up Psyche, with a refluence
brave,
Upon the flowery bank,—all sad and
sinning.
Then Pan, the rural god, by chance was
leaning
Along the brow of waters as they
wound,
Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank
to ground,
And teaching, without knowledge of the
meaning,
To run her voice in music after his
Down many a shifting note (the goats
around,
In wandering pasture and most leap-
ing bliss,
Drawn on to crop the river's flowery hair);
And as the hoary god beheld her there,
The poor, worn, fainting Psyche!—
knowing all
The griefs he suffered, he did gently call
Her name, and softly comfort her des-
pair:—
‘O wise, fair lady, I am rough and rude,
And yet experienced through my weary
age!
And if I read aright, as soothsayer
should,
Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrimage,
Thy paleness, deep as snow we
cannot see
The roses through,—thy sighs of quick
returning,
Thine eyes that seem, themselves, two
souls in mourning,—
Thou lovest, girl, too well, and
bitterly!
But hear me: rush no more to a head-
long fall:
Seek no more deaths! leave wail, lay
sorrow down,
And pray the sovereign god; and use
withal

Such prayer as best may suit a tender youth,
Well-pleased to bend to flatteries from thy mouth
And feel them stir the myrtle of his crown.'

—So spake the shepherd-god ; and answer none
Gave Psyche in return : but silently
She did him homage with a bended knee,
And took the onward path.—

PSYCHE PROPITIATING CERES

Metamorph., Lib. VI

THEN mother Ceres from afar beheld her,
While Psyche touched, with reverent fingers meek,
The temple's scythes ; and with a cry compelled her :—
'O wretched Psyche, Venus roams to seek
Thy wandering footsteps round the weary earth,
Anxious and maddened, and adjures thee forth
To accept the imputed pang, and let her wreak
Full vengeance with full force of deity !
Yet thou, forsooth, art in my temple here,
Touching my scythes, assuming my degree,
And daring to have thoughts that are not fear !'
—But Psyche clung to her feet, and as they moved

Rained tears along their track, tear, dropped on tear,
And drew the dust on in her trailing locks,
And still, with passionate prayer, the charge disproved :—
'Now, by thy right hand's gathering from the shocks
Of golden corn,—and by thy gladsome rites
Of harvest,—and thy consecrated sights

Shut safe and mute in chests,—and by the course
Of thy slave-dragons,—and the driving force
Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes profound,—
By thy swift chariot,—by thy steadfast ground,—
By all those nuptial torches that departed
With thy lost daughter,—and by those that shone
Back with her, when she came again glad-hearted,—
And by all other mysteries which are done
In silence at Eleusis,—I beseech thee, O Ceres, take some pity, and abstain
From giving to my soul extremer pain
Who am the wretched Psyche ! Let me teach thee
A little mercy, and have thy leave to spend
A few days only in thy garnered corn,
Until that wrathful goddess, at the end,
Shall feel her hate grow mild, the longer borne,—
Or till, alas !—this faintness at my breast
Pass from me, and my spirit apprehend
From life-long woe a breath-time hour of rest !'
—But Ceres answered, 'I am moved indeed
By prayers so moist with tears, and would defend
The poor beseecher from more utter need:
But where old oaths, anterior ties, command,
I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a friend,
As Venus is to me. Depart with speed !'

PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE

Metamorph., Lib. VI

But sovereign Jove's rapacious Bird, the regal
High percher on the lightning, the great eagle
Drove down with rushing wings ; and, —thinking how,
By Cupid's help, he bore from Ida's brow

A cup-boy for his master,—he inclined
To yield, in just return, an influence
kind:
The god being honoured in his lady's
woe.
And thus the Bird wheeled downward
from the track,
Gods follow gods in, to the level low
Of that poor face of Psyche left in wrack.
—‘Now fie, thou simple girl!’ the
Bird began;
'For if thou think to steal and carry back
A drop of holiest stream that ever ran,
No simpler thought, methinks, were
found in man.
What! know'st thou not these Stygian
waters be
Most holy, even to Jove? that as, on
earth,
Men swear by gods, and by the thunder's
worth.
Even so the heavenly gods do utter forth
Their oaths by Styx's flowing majesty?
And yet, one little urnful, I agree
To grant thy need! ’ Wherat, all
hastily,
He takes it, fills it from the willing
wave,
And bears it in his beak, incarnadined
By the last Titan-prey he screamed to
have;
And, striking calmly out, against the
wind,
Vast wings on each side,—there, where
Psyche stands,
He drops the urn down in her lifted
hands.

PSYCHE AND CERBERUS

Metamorph., Lib. VI

A MIGHTY dog with three colossal necks,
And heads in grand proportion; vast
as fear,
With jaws that bark the thunder out
that breaks
In most innocuous dread for ghosts
anear,
Who are safe in death from sorrow: he
reclines
Across the threshold of queen Proser-
pine's

Dark-sweeping halls, and, there, for
Pluto's spouse,
Doth guard the entrance of the empty
house.
When Psyche threw the cake to him,
once amain
He howled up wildly from his hunger-
pain,
And was still, after.—

PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE

Metamorph., Lib. VI

THEN Psyche entered in to Proserpine
In the dark house, and straightway did
decline
With meek denial the luxurious seat,
The liberal board for welcome stran-
gers spread,
But sate down lowly at the dark queen's
feet,
And told her tale, and brake her
oaten bread.
And when she had given the pyx in
humble duty,
And told how Venus did entreat the
queen
To fill it up with only one day's beauty
She used in Hades, star-bright and
serene,
To beautify the Cyprian, who had been
All spoilt with grief in nursing her
sick boy,—
Then Proserpine, in malice and in joy,
Smiled in the shade, and took the
pyx, and put
A secret in it; and so, filled and
shut,
Gave it again to Psyche. Could she
tell
It held no beauty, but a dream of hell?

PSYCHE AND VENUS

Metamorph., Lib. VI

AND Psyche brought to Venus what was
sent
By Pluto's spouse; the paler, that she
went
So low to seek it, down the dark
descent.

MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO OLYMPUS

Metamorph., Lib. VI

THEN Jove commanded the god Mercury
To float up Psyche from the earth.
And she
Sprang at the first word, as the fountain
springs,
And shot up bright and rustling through
his wings.

MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND CUPID

Metamorph., Lib VI

AND Jove's right-hand approached the ambrosial bowl
To Psyche's lips, that scarce dared yet to smile,—
'Drink, O my daughter, and acquaint thy soul
With deathless uses, and be glad the while!
No more shall Cupid leave thy lovely side ;
Thy marriage-joy begins for never-ending.'
While yet he spake,—the nuptial feast supplied,—
The bridegroom on the festive couch was bending
O'er Psyche in his bosom—Jove, the same,
On Juno, and the other deities, Alike ranged round. The rural cup-boy came
And poured Jove's nectar out with shining eyes,
While Bacchus, for the others, did as much,
And Vulcan spread the meal; and all the Hours
Made all things purple with a sprinkle of flowers,
Or roses chiefly, not to say the touch Of their sweet fingers ; and the Graces glided
Their balm around, and the Muses, through the air,
Struck out clear voices, which were still divided

By that divinest song Apollo there Intoned to his lute; while Aphrodite fair Did float her beauty along the tune, and play The notes right with her feet. And thus, the day Through every perfect mood of joy was carried. The Muses sang their chorus ; Satyrus Did blow his pipes : Pan touched his reed ;—and thus At last were Cupid and his Psyche married.

PARAPHRASES ON NONNUS

HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIADNE SLEEPING

Dionysina, Lib. XLVII

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the desolate And sleeping Ariadne, wonder straight Was mixed with love in his great golden eyes ; He turned to his Bacchantes in surprise, And said with guarded voice,—"Hush ! strike no more Your brazen cymbals ; keep those voices still Of voice and pipe ; and since ye stand before Queen Cypris, let her slumber as she will ! And yet the cestus is not here in proof. A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has stolen aloof : In which case, as the morning shines in view, Wake this Aglaia!—yet in Naxos, who Would veil a Grace so ? Hush ! And if that she Were Hebe, which of all the gods can be The pourer-out of wine ? or if we think She's like the shining moon by ocean's brink, The guide of herds,—why, could she sleep without Endymion's breath on her cheek ? or if I doubt

Of silver-footed Thetis, used to tread
These shores,—even *she* (in reverence
be it said)
Has no such rosy beauty to dress deep
With the blue waves. The Loxian
goddess might
Repose so from her hunting-toil aright
Beside the sea, since toil gives birth to
sleep,
But who would find her with her tunic
loose,
Thus? Stand off, Thracian! stand off!
Do not leap,
Not this way! Leave that piping, since
I choose,
O dearest Pan, and let Athenè rest!
And yet if she be Pallas . . . truly
guessed . . .
Her lance is—where? her helm and
aegis—where?
—As Bacchus closed, the miserable
Fair
Awoke at last, sprang upward from the
sands,
And gazing wild on that wild throng
that stands
Around, around her, and no Theseus
there!—
Her voice went moaning over shore and
sea,
Beside the halcyon's cry; she called her
love;
She named her hero, and raged mad-
deningly
Against the brine of waters; and
above,
Sought the ship's track, and cursed the
hours she slept;
And still the chiefest execration swept
Against queen Paphia, mother of the
ocean;
And cursed and prayed by times in her
emotion
The winds all round.
Her grief did make her glorious; her
despair
Adorned her with its weight. Poor
wailing child!
She looked like Venus when the goddess
smiled
At liberty of godship, debonair;
Poor Ariadne! and her eyelids fair

Hid looks beneath them lent her by Per-
suasion
And every Grace, with tears of Love's
own passion.
She wept long; then she spake :—
“Sweet sleep did come
While sweetest Theseus went. Oh, glad
and dumb,
I wish he had left me still! for in my sleep
I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep
My new bride-state within my Theseus'
hall;
And heard the pomp of Hymen, and the
call
Of “Ariadne, Ariadne,” sung
In choral joy; and there, with joy I hung
Spring-blossoms round love's altar!—
aye, and wore
A wreath myself; and felt him evermore,
Oh, evermore beside me, with his mighty
Grave head bowed down in prayer to
Aphrodité!
Why, what a sweet, sweet dream! *He*
went with it,
And left me here unwedded where I sit!
Persuasion help me! The dark night did
make me
A brideship, the fair morning takes
away;
My Love had left me when the Hour
did wake me;
And while I dreamed of marriage, as
I say,
And blest it well, my blessed Theseus
left me:
And thus the sleep, I loved so, has
bereft me.
Speak to me, rocks, and tell my grief
to-day,
Who stole my love of Athens?

HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE
Dionysiaca, Lib. XLVII

THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her sorrow
crossed :—
‘O maiden, dost thou mourn for having
lost
The false Athenian heart? and dost thou
still
Take thought of Theseus, when thou
mayst at will

Have Bacchus for a husband? Bacchus
bright!
A god in place of mortal! Yes, and
though
The mortal youth be charming in thy
sight,
That man of Athens cannot strive below,
In beauty and valour, with my deity!
Thou'lt tell me of the labyrinthine
dweller,
The fierce man-bull, he slew: I pray
thee, be,
Fair Ariadne, the true deed's true teller,
And mention thy clue's help! because,
forsooth,
Thine armed Athenian hero had not
found
A power to fight on that prodigious
ground,
Unless a lady in her rosy youth
Had lingered near him: not to speak
the truth
Too definitely out till names be known—
Like Paphia's—Love's—and Ariadne's
own.
Thou wilt not say that Athens can com-
pare
With Aether, nor that Minos rules like
Zeus,
Nor yet that Gnossus has such golden
air
As high Olympus. Ha! for noble use
We came to Naxos! Love has well in-
tended
To change thy bridegroom! Happy
thou, defended
From entering in thy Theseus' earthly
hall,
That thou mayst hear the laughters rise
and fall
Instead, where Bacchus rules! Or wilt
thou choose
A still-surpassing glory?—take it all,—
A heavenly house, Kronion's self for
kin,—
A place where Cassiopea sits within
Inferior light, for all her daughter's
sake,
Since Perseus, even amid the stars, must
take
Andromeda in chains ethereal!
But I will wreath thee, sweet, an astral
crown,

And as my queen and spouse thou shalt
be known—
Mine, the crown-lover's! Thus, at
length, he proved
His comfort on her; and the maid was
moved;
And casting Theseus' memory down the
brine,
She straight received the troth of her
divine
Fair Bacchus; Love stood by to close
the rite:
The marriage-chorus struck up clear and
light,
Flowers sprouted fast about the chamber
green,
And with spring-garlands on their heads,
I ween,
The Orchomenian dancers came along
And danced their rounds in Naxos to
the song.
A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dit
Right shrilly: and a Naiad sate beside
A fountain, with her bare foot shelving it,
And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous bride,
Whom thus the god of grapes had deified.
Ortygia sang out, louder than her wont,
An ode which Phoebus gave her to be
tried,
And leapt in chorus, with her steadfast
front,
While prophet Love, the stars have
called a brother,
Burnt in his crown, and twined in one
another
His love-flower with the purple roses,
given
In type of that new crown assigned in
heaven.

PARAPHRASE ON HESIOD

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE

Theog. 947

THE golden-haired Bacchus did espouse
That fairest Ariadne, Minos' daughter,
And made her wifehood blossom in the
house;
Where such protective gifts Kronion
brought her,
Nor Death nor Age could find her when
they sought her.

PARAPHRASE ON EURIPIDES

ANTISTROPHE

Troades, 853¹

LOVE, Love, who once didst pass the Dardan portals,
Because of Heavenly passion ! Who once didst lift up Troy in exultation, To mingle in thy bond the high Immortals !—

Love, turned from his own name To Zeus's shame, Can help no more at all.

And Eos' self, the fair, white-steeded Morning,—

Her light which blesses other lands, returning, Has changed to a gloomy pall !

She looked across the land with eyes of amber,—

She saw the city's fall,— She, who, in pure embraces, Had held there, in the hymeneal chamber, Her children's father, bright Tithonus old,

Whom the four steeds with starry brows and paces Bore on, snatched upward, on the car of gold,

And with him, all the land's full hope of joy !

The love-charms of the gods are vain for Troy.

PARAPHRASES ON HOMER

HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE

Iliad, Lib. VI

SHE rushed to meet him : the nurse following Bore on her bosom the unsaddened child, A simple babe, prince Hector's well-loved son, Like a starshining when the world is dark. Scamandrius, Hector called him ; but the rest Named him Astyanax, the city's prince, Because that Hector only, had saved Troy.

¹ Rendered after Mr. Burges's, reading, in some respects—not quite all.

He, when he saw his son, smiled silently ; While, dropping tears, Andromache pressed on, And clung to his hand, and spake, and named his name.

'Hector, my best one,—thine own nobleness Must needs undo thee. Pity hast thou none For this young child, and this most sad myself, Who soon shall be thy widow—since that soon The Greeks will slay thee in the general rush—

And then, for me, what refuge, 'rest of thee, But to go graveward ? Then, no comfort more Shall touch me, as in the old sad times thou know'st—

Grief only—grief ! I have no father now, No mother mild ! Achilles the divine, He slew my father, sacked his lofty Thebes, Cilicia's populous city, and slew its king, Eetion—father !—did not spoil the corse, Because the Greek revered him in his soul, But burnt the body with its daedal arms, And poured the dust out gently. Round that tomb The Oreads, daughters of the goat-nursed Zeus, Tripped in a ring, and planted their green elms.

There were seven brothers with me in the house, Who all went down to Hades in one day,—

For he slew all, Achilles the divine, Famed for his swift feet,—slain among their herds Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking sheep ! My mother too, who queened it o'er the woods Of Hippoplacia, he, with other spoil, Seized,—and, for golden ransom, freed too late,—

Since, as she went home, arrowy Artemis Met her and slew her at my father's door. But—oh, my Hector,—thou art still to me

Father and mother!—yes, and brother dear,
O thou, who art my sweetest spouse beside!
Come now, and take me into pity! Stay I' the town here with us! Do not make thy child
An orphan, nor a widow, thy poor wife!
Call up the people to the fig-tree, where
The city is most accessible, the wall
Most easy of assault!—for thrice thereby
The boldest Greeks have mounted to
the breach,—
Both Ajaxes, the famed Idomeneus,
Two sons of Atreus, and the noble one
Of Tydeus,—whether taught by some
wise seer,
Or by their own souls prompted and inspired.'

Great Hector answered:—‘Lady, for these things
It is my part to care. And I fear most
My Trojans, and their daughters, and
their wives,
Who through their long veils would
glance scorn at me,
If, coward-like, I shunned the open war.
Nor doth my own soul prompt me to
that end!
I learnt to be a brave man constantly,
And to fight foremost where my Trojans
fight,
And vindicate my father's glory and
mine—
Because I know, by instinct and my
soul,
The day comes that our sacred Troy
must fall,
And Priam and his people. Knowing
which,
I have no such grief for all my Trojans'
sake,
For Hecuba's, for Priam's, our old king,
Not for my brothers', who so many and
brave
Shall bite the dust before our enemies,—
As, sweet, for *thee!*—to think some
mailed Greek
Shall lead thee weeping and deprive thy
life
Of the free sun-sight—that, when gone
away

To Argos, thou shalt throw the distaff there,
Not for thy uses—or shalt carry instead
Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy as
doom,
The water of Greek wells—Messeis' own,
Or Hypereia's!—that some stander-by,
Marking thy tears fall, shall say, “This
is She,
The wife of that same Hector who fought
best
Of all the Trojans, when all fought for
Troy”—
Aye!—and, so speaking, shall renew thy
pang
That, 'rest of Him so named, thou shouldst
survive
To a slave's life! But earth shall hide
my curse
Ere that shriek sound, wherewith thou
art dragged from Troy.’
Thus Hector spake, and stretched his
arms to his child.
Against the nurse's breast, with childly
cry,
The boy clung back, and shunned his
father's face,
And feared the glittering brass and
waving hair
Of the high helmet, nodding horror down.
The father smiled, the mother could not
choose
But smile too. Then he lifted from his
brow
The helm, and set it on the ground to
shine:
Then, kissed his dear child—raised him
with both arms,
And thus invoked Zeus and the general
gods:—
‘Zeus, and all godships! grant this boy
of mine
To be the Trojans' help, as I myself,—
To live a brave life and rule well in Troy!
Till men shall say, “The son exceeds the
sire
By afar glory.” Lethim bring home spoil
Heroic, and make glad his mother's heart.’
With which prayer, to his wife's extended
arms

He gave the child ; and she received him straight
To her bosom's fragrance—smiling up her tears.
Hector gazed on her till his soul was moved ;
Then softly touched her with his hand and spake.
' My best one—'ware of passion and excess
In any fear. There's no man in the world
Can send me to the grave apart from fate,—
And no man . . . Sweet, I tell thee . . . can fly fate—
No good nor bad man. Doom is self-fulfilled.
But now, go home, and ply thy woman's task
Of wheel and distaff ! bid thy maidens haste
Their occupation. War's a care for men—
For all men born in Troy, and chieft for me.'
Thus spake the noble Hector, and resumed
His crested helmet, while his spouse went home ;
But as she went, still looked back lovingly,
Dropping the tears from her reverted face.

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS

Odyss. Lib. XX

AND so these daughters fair of Pandarus,
The whirlwinds took. The gods had slain their kin :
They were left orphans in their father's house.
And Aphroditē came to comfort them
With incense, luscious honey, and fragrant wine ;
And Herē gave them beauty of face and soul
Beyond all women ; purest Artemis Endowed them with her stature and white grace ;
And Pallas taught their hands to flash along
Her famous looms. Then, bright with deity,

Toward far Olympus, Aphroditē went
To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys
And his full knowledge of man's mingled fate)
How best to crown those other gifts with love
And worthy marriage : but, what time she went,
The ravishing Harpies snatched the maids away,
And gave them up, for all their loving eyes,
To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

ANOTHER VERSION

So the storms bore the daughters of Pandarus out into thrall—
The gods slew their parents ; the orphans were left in the hall.
And there, came, to feed their young lives, Aphroditē divine,
With the incense, the sweet-tasting honey, the sweet-smelling wine ;
Herē brought them her wit above woman's, and beauty of face ;
And pure Artemis gave them her stature, that form might have grace :
And Athéné instructed their hands in her works of renown ;
Then, afar to Olympus, divine Aphroditē moved on :
To complete other gifts, by uniting each girl to a mate,
She sought Zeus, who has joy in the thunder and knowledge of fate,
Whether mortals have good chance or ill ! But the Harpies alate
In the storm came, and swept off the maidens, and gave them to wait,
With that love in their eyes, on the Furies who constantly hate.

PARAPHRASE ON ANACREON

ODE TO THE SWALLOW

Thou indeed, little Swallow,
A sweet yearly comer,
Art building a hollow New nest every summer,
And straight dost depart Where no gazing can follow,

PARAPHRASE ON ANACREON

Past Memphis, down Nile!
 Ah! but Love all the while
 Builds his nest in my heart,
 Through the cold winter-weeks :
 And as one Love takes flight,
 Comes another, O Swallow,
 In an egg warm and white,
 And another is callow.
 And the large gaping beaks
 Chirp all day and all night :
 And the Loves who are older
 Help the young and the poor Loves,
 And the young Loves grown bolder
 Increase by the score Loves—
 Why, what can be done?
 If a noise comes from one,
 Can I bear all this rout of a hundred and
 more Loves?

PARAPHRASES ON HEINE

[THE LAST TRANSLATION]

ROME, 1860

I

I

Out of my own great woe
 I make my little songs,
 Which rustle their feathers in throngs
 And beat on her heart even so.

II

They found the way, for their part,
 Yet come again, and complain,
 Complain, and are not fain
 To say what they saw in her heart.

II

I

Art thou indeed so adverse?
 Art thou so changed indeed?
 Against the woman who wrongs me
 I cry to the world in my need.

II

O recreant lips unthankful,
 How could ye speak evil, say,
 Of the man who so well has kissed you
 On many a fortunate day?

III

I

My child, we were two children,
 Small, merry by childhood's law ;
 We used to crawl to the hen-house
 And hide ourselves in the straw.

II

We crowed like cocks, and whenever
 The passers near us drew—
 Cock-a-doodle! they thought
 'Twas a real cock that crew.

III

The boxes about our courtyard
 We carpeted to our mind,
 And lived there both together—
 Kept house in a noble kind.

IV

The neighbour's old cat often
 Came to pay us a visit ;
 We made her a bow and curtsey,
 Each with a compliment in it.

V

After her health we asked,
 Our care and regard to evince—
 (We have made the very same speeches
 To many an old cat since).

VI

We also sate and wisely
 Discoursed, as old folks do,
 Complaining how all went better
 In those good times we knew,—

VII

How love and truth and believing
 Had left the world to itself,
 And how so dear was the coffee,
 And how so rare was the pelf.

VIII

The children's games are over,
 The rest is over with youth—
 The world, the good games, the good
 times,
 The belief, and the love, and the truth.

IV

I

Thou lovest me not, thou lovest me not!
 'Tis scarcely worth a sigh:
 Let me look in thy face, and no king in
 his place
 Is a gladder man than I.

II

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest me
 well—
 Thy little red mouth has told :
 Let it reach me a kiss, and, however it is,
 My child, I am well consoled.

V

I

My own sweet Love, if thou in the
 grave,
 The darksome grave, wilt be,
 Then will I go down by the side, and
 crave
 Love-room for thee and me.

II

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,
 Thou still, thou cold, thou white!
 I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,
 Turn to a corpse at the right.

III

The Dead stand up, the midnight
 calls,
 They dance in airy swarms—
 We two keep still where the grave
 shade falls,
 And I lie on in thine arms.

IV

The Dead stand up, the Judgement-
 day
 Bids such to weal or woe—
 But nought shall trouble us where we
 stay
 Embraced and embracing below.

VI

I

The years they come and go,
 The races drop in the grave,
 Yet never the love doth so,
 Which here in my heart I have.

II

Could I see thee but once, one day,
 And sink down so on my knee,
 And die in thy sight while I say,
 'Lady, I love but thee!'

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE GREEK CHRISTIAN POETS¹

I

THE Greek language was a strong intellectual life, stronger than any similar one which has lived in the breath of 'articulately speaking men,' and survived it. No other language has lived so long and died so hard,—pang by pang, each with a dolphin colour—yielding reluctantly to that doom of death and silence which must come at last to the speaker and the speech. Wonderful it is to look back fathoms down the great past, thousands of years away—where whole generations lie unmade to dust—where the sounding of their trumpets, and the rushing of their scythed chariots, and that great shout which brought down the birds stone dead from beside the sun, are more silent than the dog breathing at our feet, or the fly's paces on our window-pane; and yet, from the heart of which silence, to feel words rise up like a smoke—words of men, even words of women, uttered at first, perhaps, in 'excellent low voices,' but audible and distinct to our times, through 'the dreadful pother' of life and death, the hissing of the steam-engine and the cracking of the cerement! It is wonderful to look back and listen. Blind Homer spoke this Greek after blind Demodocus, with a quenchless light about his brows, which he felt through his blindness. Pindar rolled his chariots in it, prolonging the clamour of the games. Sappho's heart beat through it, and heaved up the world's. Aeschylus strained it to the stature of his high thoughts. Plato crowned it with his divine peradventures. Aristophanes made it drunk with

the wine of his fantastic merriment. The later Platonists wove their souls away in it, out of sight of other souls. The first Christians heard in it God's new revelation, and confessed their Christ in it from the suppliant's knee, and presently from the bishop's throne. To all times, and their transitions, the language lent itself. Through the long summer of above two thousand years, from the grasshopper Homer sang of, to that grasshopper of Manuel Phile, which might indeed have been 'a burden,' we can in nowise mistake the chirping of the bloodless, deathless, wondrous creature. It chirps on in Greek still. At the close of that long summer, though Greece lay withered to her root, her academic groves and philosophic gardens all leafless and bare, still from the depth of the desolation rose up the voice—

O cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice?

which did not grow hoarse, like other cuckoos, but sang not unsweetly, if more faintly than before. Strangely vital was this Greek language—

Some straggling spirits were behind, to be
Laid out with most thirst on its memory.

It seemed as if nature could not part with so lovely a tune, as if she felt it ringing on still in her head—or as if she hummed it to herself, as the watchman used to do, with 'night wandering round' him, when he watched wearily on the palace roof of the doomed house of Atreus.

But, although it is impossible to touch with a thought the last estate of Greek poetical literature without the wonder occurring of its being still Greek, still

¹ Originally printed in the *Alleneum*, February and March, 1842.

poetry,—though we are startled by the phenomenon of lifelike sounds coming up from the ashes of a mighty people—at the aspect of an Alcestis returned from the dead, *veiled* but identical,—we are forced to admit, after the first pause of admiration, that a change has passed upon the great thing we recognize, a change proportionate to the greatness, and involving a caducity. Therefore, in adventuring some imperfect account of the Greek ecclesiastical poets, it is right to premise it with the full and frank admission, that they are not accomplished poets—that they do not, in fact, reach with their highest lifted hand, the lowest foot of those whom the world has honoured as Greek poets, but who have honoured the world more by their poetry. The instrument of the Greek tongue was, at the Christian era, an antique instrument, somewhat worn, somewhat stiff in the playing, somewhat deficient in notes which it had once, somewhat feeble and uncertain in such as it retained. The subtlety of the ancient music, the variety of its cadences, the intersections of sweetness in the rise and fall of melodies, rounded and contained in the unity of its harmony, are as utterly lost to this later period as the digamma was to an earlier one. We must not seek for them; we shall not find them; their place knows them no more. Not only was there lack in the instrument—there was also a deficiency in the players. Thrown aside, after the old flute-story, by a goddess, it was taken up by a mortal hand—by the hand of men gifted and noble in their generation, but belonging to it intellectually, even by their gifts and their nobleness. Another immortal, a true genius, might—nay, would—have asserted himself, and wrung a poem of almost the ancient force from the infirm instrument. It is easy to fancy, and to wish that it had been so—that some martyr or bishop, when bishops were martyrs, and the earth was still warm with the sacrificial blood, had been called to the utterance of his soul's devotion, with the emphasis of a great poet's power. No one, how-

ever, was so called. Of all the names which shall presently be reckoned, and of which it is the object of this sketch to give some account, beseeching its readers to hold several in honourable remembrance, not one can be crowned with a steady hand as a true complete poet's name. Such a crown is a sacred dignity, and, as it should not be touched idly, it must not be used here. A born Warwick could find, here, no head for a crown.

Yet we shall reckon names ‘for remembrance,’ and speak of things not ignoble—of meek heroic Christians, and heavenward faces washed serene by tears—strong knees bending humbly for the very strength's sake—bright intellects burning often to the winds in fantastic shapes, but oftener still with an honest inward heat, vehement on heart and brain—most eloquent fallible lips that convince us less than they persuade—a divine loquacity of human falsities—poetical souls, that are not souls of poets! Surely not ignoble things! And the reader will perceive at once that the writer's heart is not laid beneath the wheels of a cumbrous ecclesiastical antiquity—that its intent is to love what is lovable, to honour what is honourable, and to kiss both through the dust of centuries, but by no means to recognize a *hierarchy*, whether in the church or in literature.

If, indeed, an opinion on the former relation might be regarded here, it would be well to suggest that to these ‘Fathers,’ as we call them filially, with heads turned away, we owe more reverence for the greyness of their beards than theological gratitude for the outstretching of their hands. Devoted and disinterested as many among them were, they themselves were at most times evidently and consciously surer of their *love*, in a theological sense, than of their knowledge in any. It is no place for a reference to religious controversy; and if it were, we are about to consider them simply as poets, without trenching on the very wide ground of their prose works and ecclesiastical opinions. Still,

one passing remark may be admissible, since the fact is so remarkable—how any body of Christian men can profess to derive their opinions from ‘the opinions of the Fathers,’ when all bodies might do so equally. These fatherly opinions are, in truth, multiform, and multitudinous as the fatherly ‘sublime grey hairs.’ There is not only a father apiece for every child, but, not to speak it unfilially, a piece of every father for every child. Justin Martyr would, of himself, set up a wilderness of sects, besides ‘something over,’ for the future ramifications of each several one. What then should be done with our ‘Fathers’? Leave them to perish by the time—Ganges, as old men innocent and decrepit, and worthy of no use or honour? Surely not. We may learn of them, if God will let us, love, and love is much—we may learn devotedness of them and warm our hearts by theirs; and this, although we rather distrust them as commentators, and utterly refuse them the reverence of our souls, in the capacity of theological oracles.

Their place in literature, which we have to do with to-day, may be found, perhaps, by a like moderation. That place is not, it has been admitted, of the highest; and that it is not of the lowest in the poets, ‘elegant’—which is the proof will presently be attempted. There is a mid-air kingdom of the birds called Nephelococcygia, of which I etophanes tells us something; and to might stand there a moment ~~as~~ ^{up} to measure the local adaptitude, ~~Py~~ from the Promethean umbrella to his ‘men the ‘Gods,’ if it were not for ~~as~~ ^{it is,} and columns’ lower down. ~~as~~ ^{sited in,} the very suggestion, if ~~antiquity~~ would sink all the ecclesiast^a If for, to all it is desirable to find ~~far~~ ^{far} of the kindest eternity, in the estimation of the kindest reader. No! the mid-air kingdom of the birds will not serve the wished-for purpose even illustratively, and by grace of the nightingale. ‘May the sweet saints pardon us’ for wronging them by an approach to such a sense, which, if attained and determined, would have consigned them so certainly to what

St. Augustine called—when he was moderate too—*misissima damnatio*, a very mild species of damnation.

It would be, in fact, a rank injustice to the beauty we are here to recognize, to place these writers in the rank of mediocrities, supposing the harsh sense. They may be called mediocrities as poets among poets, but not so as no poets at all. Some of them may sing before gods and men, and in front of any column, from Trajan’s to that projected one in Trafalgar Square, to which is promised the miraculous distinction of making the National Gallery sink lower than we see it now. They may, as a body, sing exultingly, holding the relation of column to gallery, in front of the whole ‘corpus’ of Latin ecclesiastical poetry, and claim the world’s ear and the poet’s palm. That the modern Latin poets have been more read by scholars, and are better known by reputation to the general reader, is unhappily true; but the ~~involved~~ ^{good} reason why Latin be the greater marvel lies in the vicissitudes of posthumous fame, and Time, Justice to the poet, is sometimes busy in pulverizing bones to give the weight to memories. The modern Greeks do, in their degree, claim their ancestral advantage, not the mere advantage of language,—nay, least the advantage of language, a comparative elegance and accuracy of expression being ceded to the Latins,—but that higher distinction inherent in brain and breast, of vivid thought and quick sensibility. What if we swamp for a moment the Tertullians and Prudentius, and touch, by a permitted anachronism, with one hand Vida, with the other Gregory Nazianzen, what then? What though the Italian poet be

smooth as the Italian Canova—working like him out of stone—smooth and cold, disdaining to ruffle his dactyls with the beating of his pulses—what then? Would we change for him our sensitive Gregory, with all his defects in the glorious *scientia metrica*? We would not—perhaps we should not, even if those defects were not attributable, as Mr. Boyd, in the preface to his work on the Fathers, most justly intimates, to the changes incident to a declining language.

It is, too, as religious poets that we are called upon to estimate those neglected Greeks—as religious poets, of whom the universal church and the world's literature would gladly embrace more names than can be counted to either. For it is strange that, although Wilhelm Meister's uplooking and down-looking aspects,—the reverence to things above and things below, the religious clasping spirit—be, and must be, in ~~degree~~ and measure, the grand necessity of every true poet's soul, of religious poets, strictly so called, the earth is very bare. Religious 'arcel-poets' we have, indeed, more than enough; writers of hymns, translators of Scripture into prose, or of prose generally into rimes, of whose heart-devotion a higher faculty were worthy. Also there have been poets, not a few, singing as if earth were still Eden; and poets, many, singing as if in the first hour of exile, when the echo of the curse was louder than the whisper of the promise. But the right 'genius of Christianity' has done little up to this moment, even for Chateaubriand. We want the touch of Christ's hand upon our literature, as it touched other dead things—we want the sense of the saturation of Christ's blood upon the souls of our poets, that it may cry *through* them in answer to the ceaseless wail of the Sphinx of our humanity, expounding agony into renovation. Something of this has been perceived in art when its glory was at the fullest. Something of a yearning after this may be seen among the Greek Christian poets, something which would have been *much* with a stronger faculty.

It will not harm us in any case, as lovers of literature and honest judges, if we breathe away, or peradventure *besom* away, the thick dust which lies upon their heavy folios, and besom away, or peradventure *breathe* away, the inward intellectual dust, which must be confessed to lie thickly, too, upon the heavy poems, and make our way softly and meekly into the heart of such hidden beauties (hidden and scattered), as our good luck, or good patience, or, to speak more reverently, the intrinsic goodness of the Fathers of Christian Poetry, shall permit us to discover. May gentle readers favour the endeavour, with 'gentle airs,' if any!—readers not too proud to sleep, were it only for Homer's sake; nor too passionate, at their worst displeasure, to do worse than growl in their sleeves, after the manner of 'most delicate monsters.' It is not intended to crush this forbearing class with folios, nor even with a folio; only to set down briefly in their sight what shall appear to the writer the characteristics of each poet, and to illustrate the opinion by the translation of a few detached passages, or, in certain possible cases, of short entire poems. And so much has been premised, simply that too much be not expected.

It has the look of an incongruity, to begin an account of the Greek Christian poets with a Jew; and Ezekiel is a Jew in his very name, and a 'poet of the Jews' by profession. Moreover, he is wrapt in such a mystery of chronology that nobody can be quite sure of his not having lived before the Christian era—and one whole whisper establishes him as a unit of the famous seventy or seventy-two, under Ptolemy Philadelphus. Let us waive the chronology in favour of the mystery. He is brought out into light by Clemens Alexandrinus; and being associated with Greek poets, and a writer himself of Greek verses, we may receive him in virtue of the *rotorotorotorotorotorotoryi*, with little fear, in his case, of implying an injustice in that middle bird-locality of Nephelo-coccygia. The reader must beware of

confounding him with the prophet; and the circumstance of the latter's inspiration is sufficiently distinguishing. Our Greek Ezekiel is, indeed, whatever his chronology may be, no *vates* in the ancient sense. A Greek tragedy (and some fragments of a tragedy are all that we hold of him), by a Jew, and on a Jewish subject, *The Exodus from Egypt*, may startle the most serene of us into curiosity—with which curiosity begins and ends the only strong feeling we can bring to bear upon the work; since, if the execution of it is somewhat curious too, there is a gentle collateral dullness which effectually secures us from feverish excitement. Moses prologizes after the worst manner of Euripides (worse than the worse), compendiously relating his adventures among the bulrushes and in Pharaoh's household, concluded by his slaying an Egyptian, because *nobody was looking*. So saith the poet. Then follows an interview between the Israelite and Zipporah, and her companions, wherein he puts to her certain geographical questions, and she (as far as we can make out through fragmentary cracks) rather *brusquely* proposes their mutual marriage: on which subject he does not venture an opinion; but we find him next confiding his dreams in a family fashion to her father, who considers them satisfactory. Here occurs a broad crack down the tragedy—and we are suddenly called to the revelation from the bush by an extraordinarily ordinary dialogue between Deity and Moses. It is a surprising specimen of the kind of composition adverted to some lines ago, as the translation of Scripture into prose; and the sublime simplicity of the scriptural narrative being thus done (away) into Greek for a certain time, the following reciprocation—to which our old moralities can scarcely do more, or less, than furnish a parallel—prays for an English exposure. The Divine Being is supposed to address Moses:—

But what is this thou holdest in thine hand?
Let thy reply be sudden.

Moses.

'Tis my rod—
I chasten with it quadrupeds and men.

Voice from the Bush. Cast it upon the ground—and straight recoil;
For it shall be, to move thy wonderment,

A terrible serpent.

Moses. It is cast. But THOU, Be gracious to me, Lord. How terrible! How monstrous! Oh, be pitiful to me! I shudder to behold it, my limbs shake.

The reader is already consoled for the destiny which mutilated the tragedy, without requiring the last words of the analysis. Happily characteristic of the 'meekest of men' is Moses's naive admission of the uses of his rod—to beat men and animals withal—of course 'when nobody is looking.'

Clemens Alexandrinus, to whom we owe whatever gratitude is due for our fragmentary Ezekiel, was originally an Athenian philosopher, afterwards converted Christian, a Presbyter of the Church at Alexandria, and preceptor of the famous Origen. Clemens flourished at the close of the second century. As a prose writer—and we have no prose writings of his, except such as were produced subsequently to his conversion—he is learned and various. His 'Pedagogue' is a wanderer, to universal intents and purposes; and his 'Tapestry,' if the *Stromata* may be called so, is embroidered in all cross-stitches of philosophy, with not much scruple as to the shading of colours. In the midst of all is something, ycleped a dithyrambic ode, addressed to the Saviour, composite of fantastic epithets in the mode of the old litanies, and almost as bald of merit as the Jew-Greek drama, though Clemens himself (worthier in worthier places) be the poet. Here is the opening, which is less fanciful than what follows it:—

Curb for wild horses,
Wing for bird-courses
Never yet flown!
Helm, safe for weak ones,
Shepherd, bespeak once,
The young lambs thine own.
Rouse up the youth,
Shepherd and feeder,

So let them bless thee,
Praise and confess thee,—
Pure words on pure mouth,—
Christ, the child-leader !
Oh, the saints' Lord,
All-dominant word !
Holding, by Christdom,
God's highest wisdom !
Column in place
When sorrows seize us,—
Endless in grace
Unto man's race,
Saving one, Jesus !
Pastor and ploughman,
Helm, curb, together,—
Pinion that now can
(Heavenly of feather)
Raise and release us !
Fisher who catcheth
Those whom he watcheth. . .

It goes on ; but we need not do so.
'By the pricking of our thumbs,' we
know that the reader has had enough
of it.

II

PASSING rapidly into the fourth century, we would offer our earliest homage to Gregory Nazianzen.

That name must ever be to us a friend, when the two Apolinarii cross our path and intercept the 'all hail.' Apolinarius the grammarian, formerly of Alexandria, held the office of presbyter in the church of Laodicea, and his son Apolinarius, an accomplished rhetorician, that of reader, an ancient ecclesiastical office, in the same church. This younger Apolinarius was a man of indomitable energies and most practical inferences ; and when the edict of Julian forbade to the Christians the study of Grecian letters, he assisted perhaps by his father's hope and hand, stood strong in the gap, not in the attitude of supplication, not with the gesture of consolation, but in power and sufficiency to fill up the void and baffle the tyrant. Both father and son were in the work, by some testimony ; the younger Apolinarius standing out, by all, as the chief worker, and only one in any extensive

sense. 'Does Julian deny us Homer?' said the brave man in his armed soul—'I am Homer!' and straightway he turned the whole Biblical history, down to Saul's accession, into Homeric hexameters—dividing the work, so as to clinch the identity of first and second Homers, into twenty-four books, each superscribed by a letter of the alphabet, and the whole acceptable, according to the expression of Sozomen, *ἀντὶ τῆς Ὁμηρού ποιήσεως*, in the place of Homer's poetry. 'Does Julian deny us Euripides?' said Apolinarius again—'I am Euripides!' and up he sprang—as good a Euripides (who can doubt it?) as he ever was a Homer. 'Does Julian forbid us Menander!—Pindar!—Plato!—I am Menander!—I am Pindar!—I am Plato!' And comedies, lyrics, philosophics, flowed fast at the word ; and the gospels and epistles adapted themselves naturally to the rules of Socratic disputation. A brave man, forsooth, was our Apolinarius of Laodicea, and literally a man of men—for observe, says Sozomen, with a venerable innocence, at which the gravest may smile gravely—as at a doublet worn awry at the Council of Nice—that the old authors did each man his own work, whereas this Apolinarius did every man's work in addition to his own ; and so admirably—intimates the ecclesiastical critic—that if it were not for the common prejudice in favour of antiquity, no ancient could be missed in the all-comprehensive representativeness of the Laodicæan writer. So excellent was his ability to 'outbrave the stars in several kinds of light,' besides the Caesar! Whether Julian, naturally mortified to witness this germination of illustrious heads, under the very iron of his searing, vowed vengeance against the Hydra-spirit, by the sacred memory of the animation of his own beard, we do not exactly know. To embitter the wrong, Apolinarius sent him a treatise upon truth—a confutation of the pagan doctrine, apart from the scriptural argument—the Emperor's notice of which is both worthy of his Caesarship, and a good model-notice

for all sorts of critical dignities. 'Ανέγνως ξύνω κατέγνως, is the Greek of it; so that, turning from the letter to catch something of the point, we may write it down—'I have perused, I have mused, I have abused': which provoked as imperious a retort—'Thou mayest have perused, but thou hast not mused—for hadst thou mused, thou wouldest not have abused!' Brave Laodicæan!

Apolinarius's laudable *double* of Greek literature has perished, the reader will be concerned to hear, from the face of the earth, being, like other *Iulus*, or marvels, or monsters, brief of days. One only tragedy remains, with which the memory of Gregory Nazianzen has been right tragically affronted, and which Gregory—εἰ τις αἰσθάνεις, as he said of Constantine—would cast off with the scorn and angerbefitting an Apolinarian heresy. For Apolinarius, besides being an epoist, dramatist, lyrist, philosopher, and rhetorician, was, we are sorry to add, in the eternal bustle of his soul, a heretic—possibly for the advantage of something additional to do. He not only intruded into the churches hymns which were not authorized, being his own composition—so that reverend brows grew dark to hear women with musical voices sing them softly to the turning of their distaff,—but he fell into the heresy of denying a human soul to the perfect MAN, and of leaving the Divinity in bare combination with the Adamic dust. No wonder that a head so beset with many thoughts and individualities should at last turn round! —that eyes rolling in fifty fine frenzies of twenty-five fine poets should at last turn blind! —that a determination to rival all geniuses should be followed by a disposition more baleful in its exercise, to understand 'all mysteries'! Nothing can be plainer than the step after step whereby, through excess of vainglory and morbid mental activity, Apolinarius, the vice-poet of Greece, subsided into Apolinarius the chief heretic of Christendom.

To go back sighingly to the tragedy, where we shall have to sigh again—the only tragedy left to us of all the tragic

works of Apolinarius (but we do not sigh for *that*!)—let no voice evermore attribute it to Gregory Nazianzen. How could Mr. Alford do so, however hesitatingly, in his *Chapters*, attaching to it, without the hesitation, a charge upon the writer, whether Gregory or another man, that *he*, whoever he was, had, of his own free will and choice, destroyed the old Greek originals out of which his tragedy was constructed, and left it a monument of their sacrifice as of the blood on his barbarian hand! The charge passes, not only before a breath, but before its own breath. The tragedy is, in fact, a specimen of *centoism*, which is the adaptation of the phraseology of one work to the construction of another; and we have only to glance at it to perceive the *Medæa* of Euripides dislocated into the *Christus Patiens*. Instead of the ancient opening—

Oh, would ship Argo had not sailed away
To Colchos by the rough Symplegades!
Nor ever had been felled in Pelion's grove
The pine, hewn for her side! . . .

So she, my queen
Medæa, had not touched this fatal shore,
Soul-struck by love of Jason!

Apolinarius opens it thus—

Oh, would the serpent had not glode along
To Eden's garden-land,—nor ever had
The crafty dragon planted in that grove
A slimy snare! So she, rib-born of man,
The wretched misled mother of our race,
Had dared not to dare on beyond worst
daring,
Soul-struck by love of—apples!

'Let us alone for keeping our countenance'—and at any rate we are bound to ask gravely of Mr. Alford, is the *Medæa* destroyed?—and if not, did the author of the *Christus Patiens* destroy his originals?—and if not, may we not say of Mr. Alford's charge against that author, 'Oh, would he had not made it!' So far from Apolinarius being guilty of destroying his originals, it was his reverence for them which struggled with the edict of the persecutor, and accomplished this dramatic adventure;—and this adventure, the only remaining

specimen of his adventurousness, may help us to the secret of his wonderful fertility and omnirepresentativeness, which is probably this—that the great majority of his works, tragic, comic, lyric, and philosophic, consisted simply of *centos*. Yet we pray for justice to Apolinarius: we pray for honour to his motives and energies. Without pausing to inquire whether it had been better and wiser to let poetry and literature depart at once before the tyranny of the edict, than to drag them back by the hair into attitudes grotesquely ridiculous—better and wiser for the Greek Christian schools to let them forgo altogether the poems of their Euripides, than adapt to the meek sorrows of the tender Virgin-mother the bold, bad, cruel frenzy of Medaea, in such verses as these—

She howls out ancient oaths, invokes the faith
Of pledged right-hands, and calls for witness, God !

—we pray straightforwardly for justice and honour to the motives and energies of Apolinarius. ‘Oh, would that many lived now, as appreciative of the influences of poetry on our schools and country, as impatient of their contraction, as self-devoted in the great work of extending them ! There remains of his poetical labours, besides the tragedy, a translation of David’s Psalms into ‘heroic verse,’ which the writer of these remarks has not seen,—and of which those critics who desire to deal gently with Apolinarius seem to begin their indulgence by doubting the authenticity.

It is pleasant to turn shortly round, and find ourselves face to face, not with the author of *Christus Patiens*, but with one antagonistical both to his poetry and his heresy, Gregory Nazianzen. A noble and tender man was this Gregory, and so tender, because so noble ; a man to lose no cubit of his stature for being looked at steadfastly, or struck at reproachfully. ‘ You may cast me down,’ he said, ‘ from my bishop’s throne, but you cannot banish me from before God’s.’ And bishop as

he was, his saintly crown stood higher than his tiara, and his loving martyr-smile, the crown of a nature more benign than his fortune, shone up toward both. Son of the Bishop of Nazianzen, and holder of the diocese which was his birthplace, previous to his elevation to the level of the storm in the bishopric of Constantinople, little did he care for bishoprics or high places of any kind—the desire of his soul being for solitude, quietude, and that silent religion which should ‘rather be than seem.’ But his father’s head bent whitely before him, even in the chamber of his brother’s death,—and Basil, his beloved friend, the ‘half of his soul,’ pressed on him with the weight of love ; and Gregory, feeling their tears upon his cheeks, did not count his own, but took up the priestly office. Poor Gregory ! not merely as a priest, but as a man, he had a sighing life of it. His student days at Athens, where he and Basil read together poems and philosophies and holier things, or talked low and *misopogonistically* of their fellow student Julian’s bearded boding smile, were his happiest days. He says of himself,

As many stones
Were thrown at me, as other men had flowers.

Nor was persecution the worst evil; for friend after friend, beloved after beloved, passed away from before his face, and the voice which charmed them living spoke brokenly beside their graves—his funeral orations marked severally the wounds of his heart,—and his genius served, as genius often does, to lay an emphasis on his grief. The passage we shall venture to translate is rather a cry than a song :—

Where are my winged words ? Dissolved
in air.
Where is my flower of youth ? All withered,
Where
My glory ? Vanished ! Where the strength
I knew
From comely limbs ? Disease hath changed
it too,

And bent them. Where the riches and the lands?

GOD HATH THEM ! Yea, and sinners' snatching hands

Have grudged the rest. Where is my father, mother,

And where my blessed sister, my sweet brother?—

Gone to the grave !—There did remain for me

Alone my fatherland, till destiny,
Malignly stirring a black tempest, drove
My foot from that last rest. And now I rove
Estranged and desolate a foreign shore,
And drag my mournful life and age all hoar

Throneless and cityless, and childless save
This father-care for children, which I have,
Living from day to day on wandering feet.
Where shall I cast this body ? What will

greet

My sorrows with an end ? What gentle ground

And hospitable grave will wrap me round ?
Who last my dying eyelids stoop to close—
Some saint, the Saviour's friend ? or one of those

Who do not know Him ?—The air interpose,
And scatter these words too.

The return upon the first thought is highly pathetic, and there is a restlessness of anguish about the whole passage which consecrates it with the cross of nature. His happy Athenian associations gave a colour, unwashed out by tears, to his mind and works. Half apostolical he was, and half scholastical; and while he mused, on his bishop's throne, upon the mystic tree of twelve fruits, and the shining of the river of life, he carried, as Milton did, with a gentle and not ungraceful distraction, both hands full of green trailing branches from the banks of the Cephissus, nay, from the very plane-tree which Socrates sat under with Phaedrus, when they two talked about beauty to the rising and falling of its leaves. As an orator, he was greater, all must feel if some do not think, than his contemporaries ; and the 'golden mouth' might confess it meekly. Erasmus compares him to Isocrates, but the *unlikeness* is obvious : Gregory was not excellent at an artful blowing of the pipes. He spoke grandly,

as the wind does, in *gusts* ; and as in a mighty wind, which combines unequal noises, the creaking of trees and rude swinging of doors, as well as the sublime sovereign rush along the valleys, we gather the idea from his eloquence less of music than of power. Not that he is cold as the wind is—the metaphor goes no further : Gregory cannot be cold, even by disfavour of his antithetic points. He is various in his oratory, full and rapid in allusion, briefly graphic in metaphor, equally sufficient for indignation or pathos, and gifted peradventure with a keener dagger of sarcasm than should hang in a saint's girdle. His orations against Julian have all these characteristics, but they are not poetry, and we must pass down lower, and quite over his beautiful letters, to Gregory the poet.

He wrote *thirty thousand verses*, among which are several long poems, severally defective in a defect common but not necessary to short occasional poems, and lamentable anywhere, a want of unity and completeness. The excellences of his prose are transcribed, with whatever faintness, in his poetry—the exaltation, the devotion, the sweetness, the pathos, even to the playing of satirical power about the graver meanings. But although noble thoughts break up the dullness of the groundwork—although, with the instinct of greater poets, he bares his heart in his poetry, and the heart is worth baring, still monotony of construction without unity of intention is the most wearisome of monotonies, and, except in the case of a few short poems, we find it everywhere in Gregory. The lack of variety is extended to the cadences, and the pauses fall stiffly *come corpo morto cade*. Melodious lines we have often : harmonious passages scarcely ever—the music turning heavily on its own axle, as inadequate to living evolution. The poem on his own life (*De Vita sua*) is, in many places, interesting and affecting, yet faulty with all these faults. The poem on Celibacy, which state is commended by Gregory as becometh a bishop, has occasionally

graphic touches, but is dull enough generally to suit the fairest spinster's view of that melancholy subject. If Hercules could have read it, he must have rested in the middle—from which the reader is entreated to forbear the inference that the poem has not been read through by the writer of the present remarks, seeing that that writer marked the grand concluding moment with a white stone, and laid up the memory of it among the chief triumphs, to say nothing of the fortunate deliverances, *vitae suae*. In Gregory's elegiac poems our ears, at least, are better contented, because the sequence of pentameter to hexameter necessarily excludes the various cadence which they yearn for under other circumstances. His anacreontics are sometimes nobly written, with a certain brave recklessness as if the thoughts despised the measure; and we select from this class a specimen of his poetry, both because three of his hymns have already appeared in the *Athenaeum*, and because the anacreontic in question includes to a remarkable extent the various qualities we have attributed to Gregory, not omitting that play of satirical humour with which he delights to ripple the abundant flow of his thoughts. The writer, though also a translator, feels less misgiving than usual in offering to the reader, in such English as is possible, this spirited and beautiful poem.

SOUL AND BODY

What wilt thou possess or be?
O my soul, I ask of thee.
What of great, or what of small,
Counted precious therewithal?
Be it only rare, and want it,
I am ready, soul, to grant it.
Wilt thou choose to have and hold
Lydian Gyges' charm of old,
So to rule us with a ring,
Turning round the jewelled thing,
Hidden by its face concealed,
And revealed by its revealed?—
Or preferrest Midas' fate—
He who died in golden state,
All things being changed to gold?
Of a golden hunger dying,
Through a surfeit of 'would I'-ing!

Wilt have jewels brightly cold?
Or may fertile acres please?
Or the sheep of many a fold,
Camels, oxen, for the wold?
Nay!—I will not give thee these!
These to take thou hast not will—
These to give I have not skill—
Since I cast earth's cares abroad,
That day when I turned to God.

Wouldst a throne—a crown sublime,
Bubble blown upon the time?
So thou mayest sit to-morrow
Looking downward in meek sorrow,
Some one walking by thee scorning,
Who adored thee yester morning,
Some malign one?—Wilt be bound
Fast in marriage? (joy unsound!)
And be turned round and round
As the time turns? Wilt thou catch it,
That sweet sickness? and to match it
Have babies by the hearth, bewildering?
And if I tell thee the best children
Are none—what answer?

Wilt thou thunder
Thy rhetorics—move the people under?
Covetest to sell the laws
With no justice in thy cause,
And bear on, or else be borne,
Before tribunals worthy scorn?
Wilt thou shake a javelin rather
Breathing war? or wilt thou gather
Garlands from the wrestler's ring?
Or kill beasts for glorying?
Covetest the city's shout,
And to be in brass struck out?
Cravest thou that shade of dreaming,
Passing air of shifting seeming,
Rushing of a printless arrow,
Clapping echo of a hand?
What to those who understand
Are to-day's enjoyments narrow,
Which to-morrow go again,—
Which are shared with evil men,—
And of which no man in his dying
Taketh aught for softer lying?
What then wouldst thou, if thy mood
Choose not these? what wilt thou be,
O my soul? a deity?
A God before the face of God,
Standing glorious in His glories,
Choral in His angels' chorus?
Go! upon thy wing arise,
Plumed by quick energies,
Mount in circles up the skies:
And I will bless thy winged passion,
Help with words thine exaltation,

And, like a bird of rapid feather,
Outlaunch thee, Soul, upon the aether.

But thou, O fleshly nature, say,
Thou with odours from the clay,
Since thy presence I must have
As a lady with a slave,
What wouldest thou possess or be,
That thy breath may stay with thee?
Nay! I owe thee nought beside,
Though thine hands be open wide.
Would a table suit thy wishes,
Fragrant with sweet oils and dishes
Wrought to subtle niceness? where
Stringed music strokes the air,
And blithe hand-clappings, and the smooth
Fine postures of the tender youth
And virgins wheeling through the dance
With an unveiled countenance,—
Joys for drinkers, who love shame,
And the maddening wine-cup's flame?—
Wilt thou such, howe'er decried?—
Take them,—and a rope beside!

Nay! this boon I give instead,
Unto friend insatiated,—
May some rocky house receive thee,
Self-rooted, to conceal thee chiefly;
Or if labour there must lurk,
Be it by a short day's work!
And for garment, camel's hair,
As the righteous clothéd were,
Clothe thee! or the bestial skin
Adam's bareness hid within,—
Or some green thing from the way,
Leaf of herb, or branch of vine,
Swelling, purpling as it may,
Fearless to be drunk for wine!
Spread a table there beneath thee,
Which a sweetness shall upbreathe thee,
And which the dearest earth is giving,
Simple present to all living!
When that we have placed thee near it,
We will feed thee with glad spirit.
Wilt thou eat? soft, take the bread,
Oaten cake, if that bestead—
Salt will season all aright,
And thine own good appetite,
Which we measure not, nor fetter:
'Tis an uncooked condiment,
Famine's self the only better.
Wilt thou drink? why, here doth bubble
Water from a cup unspent,
Followed by no tipsy trouble,
Pleasure sacred from the grape!
Wilt thou have it in some shape
More like luxury? we are
No grudgers of wine-vinegar!
But if all will not suffice thee,

And thou covetest to draw
In that pitcher with a flaw,
Brimful pleasures heaven denies thee!
Go, and seek out, by that sign,
Other help than this of mine!
For me, I have not leisure so
To warm thee, sweet, my household foe,
Until, like a serpent frozen,
New-maddened with the heat, thou loosen
Thy rescued fang within mine heart!

Wilt have measureless delights
Of gold-roofed palaces, and sights
From pictured or from sculptured art,
With motion near their life; and splendour
Of bas-relief, with tracery tender,
And varied and contrasted hues?
Wilt thou have, as nobles use,
Broidered robes to flow about thee?
Jewelled fingers? Need we doubt thee?
Gauds for which the wise will flout thee?
I most, who of all beauty know
It must be inward, to be so!

And thus I speak to mortals low,
Living for the hour, and o'er
Its shadow, seing nothing more!
But for those of nobler bearing,
Who live more worthily of wearing
A portion of the heavenly nature—
To low estate of clayey creature,
See, I bring the beggar's need,
Nutriment beyond the need!
Oh, beholder of the Lord,
Prove on me the flaming sword!
Be mine husbandman, to nourish
Holy plants, that words may flourish
Of which mine enemy would spoil me,
Using pleasurehood to foil me!
Lead me closer to the tree
Of all life's eternity;
Which, as I have pondered, is
The knowledge of God's greatnesses:
Light of One, and shine of Three,
Unto whom all things that be
Flow and tend!

In such a guise,
Whoever on the earth is wise
Will speak unto himself,—and who
Such inner converse would eschew,
We say perforce of that poor wight,
'He lived in vain!' and if aright,
It is not the worst word we might.

Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium, was beloved and much appreciated by Gregory, and often mentioned in his writings. Few of the works of Amphilochius

are extant, and of these only one is a poem. It is a didactic epistle to Seleucus, *On the Right Direction of his Studies and Life*, and has been attributed to Gregory Nazianzen by some writers, upon very inadequate evidence,—that adduced (the similar phraseology which conveys, in this poem and a poem of Gregory's, the catalogue of canonical scriptures) being as easily explained by the imitation of one poet, as by the identity of two. They differ, moreover, upon ground more important than phraseology: Amphilochius appearing to reject, or, at least, to receive doubtfully, Jude's epistle, and the Second of Peter. And there is a harsh force in the whole poem, which does not remind us of our Nazianzen, while it becomes, in the course of dissuading Seleucus from the amusements of the amphitheatre, graphic and effective. We hear, through the description, the grinding of the tigers' teeth, the sympathy of the people with the tigers showing still more savage.

They sit unknowing of these agonies,
Spectators at a show. When a man flies
From a beast's jaw, they groan, as if at least
They missed the ravenous pleasure, like the
beast,
And sate there vainly. When, in the next
spring,
The victim is attained, and, uttering
The deep roar or quick shriek between the
fangs,
Beats on the dust the passion of his pangs,
All pity dieth in their glaring look—
They clap to see the blood run like a
brook;
They stare with hungry eyes, which tears
should fill,
And cheer the beasts on with their soul's
good will;
And wish more victims to their maw, and
urge
And lash their fury, as they shared the surge,
Gnashing their teeth, like beasts, on flesh of
men.

There is an appalling reality in this picture. The epistle consists of 333 lines, which we mention specifically, because the poet takes advantage of the circumstance to illustrate or enforce an important theological doctrine :—

Three hundred lines, three decades, monads
three,
Comprise my poem. *Love the Trinity.*

It would be almost a pain, and quite a regret, to pass from this fourth century without speaking a word which belongs to it—a word which rises to our lips, a word worthy of honour—Heliodorus. Though a bishop and an imaginative writer, his *Aethiopica* has no claim on our attention, either by right of Christianity or poetry; and yet we may be pardoned on our part for love's sake, and on account of the false position into which, by negligence of readers or insufficiency of translators, his beautiful romance has fallen, if we praise it heartily and faithfully even here. Our tears praised it long ago—our recollection does so now—and its own pathetic eloquence and picturesque descriptiveness are ripe for any praise. It has, besides, a vivid Arabian Night charm, almost as charming as Scheherazade herself, suggestive of an Arabian Night story drawn out 'in many a winding bout,' and not merely on the ground of extemporaneous loving and methodical (must we say it?) lying. In good sooth—no, not in good sooth, but in evil leasing—every hero and heroine of them all, from Abou Hassan to 'the divine Chariclaea,' does lie most vehemently and abundantly by gift of nature and choice of author, whether bishop or sultana. 'It is,' as Pepys observes philosophically of the comparative destruction of gin-shops and churches in the Great Fire of London, 'pretty to observe' how they all lie. And although the dearest of story-tellers, our own Chaucer, has told us that 'some leasing is, of which there cometh none advauntage to no wight,' even that species is used by them magnanimously in its turn, for the bare glory's sake, and without caring for the 'advauntage.' With equal liberality, but more truth, we write down the Bishop of Tricca's romance *charming*, and wish the charm of it (however we may be out of place in naming him among poets) upon any poet who has not yet felt it, and whose eyes, giving honour, may wander over

these remarks. The poor bishop thought as well of his book as we do, perhaps better; for when commanded, under ecclesiastical censure, to burn it or give up his bishopric, he gave up the bishopric. And who blames Heliodorus! He thought well of his romance; he was angry with those who did not; he was weak with the love of it. Let whosoever blames, speak low. Romance-writers are not educated for martyrs, and the exacted martyrdom was very very hard. Think of that English bishop who burnt his hand by an act of volition—only his hand, and which was sure to be burnt afterwards; and how he was praised for it! Heliodorus had to do with a dearer thing—handwriting, not hands. Authors will pardon him, if bishops do not.

Nonnus of Panopolis, the poet of the *Dionysiaca*, a work of some twenty-two thousand verses, on some twenty-two thousand subjects shaken together, *flourished*, as people say of many a dry-rooted soul, at the commencement of the fifth century. He was converted from paganism, but we are sorry to make the melancholy addition that he was never converted from the *Dionysiaca*. The only Christian poem we owe to him—a paraphrase, in hexameters, of the apostle John's Gospel—does all that a bald verbosity and an obscure tautology can do or undo, to quench the divinity of that divine narrative. The two well-known words, bearing on their brief vibration the whole passion of a world saved through pain from pain, are thus traduced:—

They answered him
'Come and behold.' Then Jesus himself
groaned,
Dropping strange tears from eyes unused to
weep.

'Unused to weep!' Was it so of the Man of sorrows? Oh, obtuse poet! We had translated the opening passage of the Paraphrase, and laid it by for transcription, but are repelled. Enough is said. Nonnus was never converted from the *Dionysiaca*.

III

SYNESIUS, of Cyrene, learnt Plato's philosophy so well of Hypatia of Alexandria at the commencement of the fifth century, or rather before, that, to the obvious honour of that fair and learned teacher, he never, as Bishop of Ptolemais, could attain to unlearning it. He did not wish to be Bishop of Ptolemais; he had divers objections to the throne and the domination. He loved his dogs, he loved his wife; he loved Hypatia and Plato as well as he loved truth; and he loved beyond all things, under the womanly instruction of the former, to have his own way. He was a poet, too; the chief poet, we do not hesitate to record our opinion—the chief, for true and natural gifts, of all our Greek Christian poets; and it was his choice to pray lyrically between the dew and the cloud rather than preach dogmatically between the doxies. If Gregory shrank from the episcopal office through a meek self-distrust and a yearning for solitude, Synesius repulsed the invitation to it through an impatience of control over heart and life, and for the earnest joy's sake of thinking out his own thought in the hunting-grounds, with no deacon or disciple astuter than his dog to watch the thought in his face, and trace it backward or forward, as the case might be, into something more or less than what was orthodox. Therefore he, a man of many and wandering thoughts, refused the bishopric—not weepingly, indeed, as Gregory did, nor feigning madness with another of the *nolentes episcopari* of that earnest period, but with a sturdy enunciation of resolve, more likely to be effectual, of keeping his wife by his side as long as he lived, and of doubting as long as he pleased to doubt upon the resurrection of the body. But Synesius was a man of genius, and of all such true energies as are taken for granted in the name; and the very sullenness of his nay being expressive to grave judges of the faithfulness of his 'yea and amen,' he was

considered too noble a man not to be made a bishop of in his own despite and on his own terms. The fact proves the latitude of discipline, and even of doctrine, permitted to the churches of that age; and it does not appear that the church at Ptolemais suffered any wrong as its result, seeing that Synesius, recovering from the shock militant of his ordination, in the course of which his ecclesiastical friends had 'laid hands upon him' in the roughest sense of the word, performed his new duties willingly—was no sporting bishop otherwise than as a 'fisher of men'—sent his bow to the dogs, and his dogs to Jericho, that nearest Coventry to Ptolemais, silencing his 'staunch hound's authentic voice' as soon as ever any importance became attached to the authenticity of his own. And if, according to the bond, he retained his wife and his Platonisms, we may honour him by the inference that he did so for conscience' sake still more than love's, since the love was inoperative in other matters. For spiritual fervour and exaltation he has honour among men and angels; and however intent upon spiritualizing away the most glorified material body from 'the heaven of his invention,' he held fast and earnestly, as anybody's clenched hand could a horn of the altar, the Homoousion doctrine of the Christian heaven, and other chief doctrines emphasizing the divine sacrifice. But this poet has a higher place among poets than this bishop among bishops; the highest, we must repeat our conviction, of all yet named or to be named by us as 'Greek Christian poets.' Little, indeed, of his poetry has reached us, but this little is great in a nobler sense than that of quantity; and when of his odes, anacreontic for the most part, we cannot say praisefully that 'they smell of Anacreon,' it is because their fragrance is holier and more abiding—it is because the human soul burning in the censer effaces from our spiritual perceptions the altar of a thousand rose-trees whose roots are in Teos. These odes have, in fact, a wonderful rapture and ecstasy.

And if we find in them the phraseology of Plato or Plotinus, for he leaned lovingly to the later Platonists—nay, if we find in them oblique references to the outworn mythology of paganism, even so have we beheld the mixed multitude of unconnected motes wheeling, rising in a great sunshine, as the sunshine were a motive energy,—and even so the burning, adoring poet-spirit sweeps upward the motes of world-fancies (as if being in the world their tendency was Godward) upward in a strong stream of sunny light, while she rushes into the presence of 'the Alone.' We say the *spirit* significantly in speaking of this poet's aspiration. His is an ecstasy of abstract intellect, of pure spirit, cold though impetuous; the heart does not beat in it, nor is the human voice heard; the poet is true to the heresy of the ecclesiastic, and there is no resurrection of the body. We shall attempt a translation of the ninth ode, closer if less graceful and polished than Mr. Boyd's, helping our hand to courage by the persuasion that the genius of its poetry must look through the thickest blanket of our dark.

Well-beloved and glory-laden,
Born of Solyma's pure maiden !
I would hymn Thee, blessed Warden,
Driving from Thy Father's garden
Blinking serpent's crafty lust,
With his bruised head in the dust !
Down Thou camest, low as earth,
Bound to those of mortal birth ;
Down Thou camest, low as hell,
Where shepherd-Death did tend and keep
A thousand nations like to sheep,
While weak with age old Hades fell
Shivering through his dark to view Thee,
And the Dog did backward yell
With jaws all gory to let through Thee !
So, redeeming from their pain
Choirs of disembodied ones,
Thou didst lead whom Thou didst gather,
Upward in ascent again,
With a great hymn to the Father,
Upward to the pure white thrones !
King, the daemon tribes of air
Shuddered back to feel Thee there !
And the holy stars stood breathless,
Trembling in their chorus deathless ;

A low laughter filled ether—
Harmony's most subtle sire
From the seven strings of his lyre
Stroked a measured music hither—
To paean! victory!
Smiled the star of morning—he
Who smileth to foreshow the day!
Smiled Hesperus the golden,
Who smileth soft for Venus gay!
While that horned glory holden
Brimful from the fount of fire,
The white moon, was leading higher
In a gentle pastoral wise
All the mighty deities!
Yea, and Titan threw abroad
The fair shining of his hair
'Neath Thy footsteps holy-fair,
Owning Thee the Son of God;
The Mind artificer of all,
And his own fire's original!

And THOU upon Thy wing of will
Mounting,—Thy God-putt up till
The neck of the blue firmament,—
Soaring, didst alight content
Where the spirit-spheres were singing,
And the fount of good was springing,
In the silent heaven!
Where Time is not with his tide
Ever running, never weary,
Drawing earth-born things aside
Against the rocks: nor yet are given
The plagues death-bold that ride the dreary
Tost matter-depths. Eternity
Assumes the places which they yield!
Not aged, howso'er she held
Her crown from everlasting—
At once of youth, at once of eld,
While in that mansion which is hers
To God and gods she ministers!

How the poet rises in his 'singing clothes' embroidered all over with the mythos and the philosophy! Yet his eye is to the Throne: and we must not call him half a heathen by reason of a Platonic idiosyncrasy, seeing that the *esoteric* of the most suspicious turnings of his phraseology is 'Glory to the true God.' For another ode Paris should be here to choose it—we are puzzled among the beautiful. Here is one with a thought in it from Gregory's prose, which belongs to Synesius by right of conquest:—

O my deathless, O my blessed,
Maid-born, glorious son confessed,

O my Christ of Solyma!
I who earliest learnt to play
This measure for Thee, fain would bring
Its new sweet tune to cittern-string—
Be propitious, O my King!
Take this music which is mine,
Anthem'd from the songs divine!

We will sing Thee, deathless One,
God Himself, and God's great Son—
Of sire of endless generations,
Son of manifold creations!
Nature mutually endued,
Wisdom in infinitude!
God, before the angels burning—
Corpse, among the mortals mourning!
What time Thou wert poured mild
From an earthy vase defiled,
Magi with fair arts besprent,
At Thy new star's orient,
Trembled inly, wondered wild,
Questioned with their thoughts abroad—
'What then is the new-born child?
Who the hidden God?'
God, or corpse, or King?—
Bring your gifts, oh hither bring
Myrrh for rite—for tribute, gold—
Frankincense for sacrifice!
God! Thine incense take and hold!
King! I bring Thee gold of price!
Myrrh with tomb will harmonize!

For Thou, entombed, hast purified
Earthly ground and rolling tide,
And the path of daemon nations,
And the free air's fluctuations,
And the depth below the deep!
Thou God, helper of the dead,
Low as Hades didst Thou tread!
Thou King, gracious aspect keep!
Take this music which is mine,
Anthem'd from the songs divine.

Eudocia—in the twenty-first year of
the fifth century—wife of Theodosius,
and empress of the world, thought good
to extend her sceptre—

(Hac claritate gemina
O gloriosa foemina!)

over Homer's poems, and cento-ize them
into an epic on the Saviour's life. She
was the third fair woman accused of
sacrificing a world for an apple, having
moved her husband to wrath by giving
away his imperial gift of a large one to
her own philosophic friend Paulinus;
and being unhappily more learned than

her two predecessors in the sin, in the course of her exile to Jerusalem she took ghostly comfort by separating Homer's *εἴσωλον* from his *φρένες*. There she sat among the ruins of the holy city, addressing herself most unholy, with whatever good intentions and delicate fingers, to pulling Homer's gold to pieces bit by bit, even as the ladies of France devoted what remained to them of virtuous energy *pour parfiler* under the benignant gaze of Louis Quinze. She, too, who had no right of the purple to literary ineptitude—she, born no empress of Rome, but daughter of Leontius the Athenian, what had she to do with Homer, *parfiant*? Was it not enough for Homer that he was turned once, like her own cast imperial mantle, by Apolinarius into a Jewish epic, but that he must be unpicked again by Eudocia for a Christian epic? The reader, who has heard enough of centos, will not care to hear how she did it. That she did it was too much; and the deed recoiled. For mark the poetical justice of her destiny; let all readers mark it; and all writers, especially female writers, who may be half as learned, and not half as fair—that although she wrote many poems, one *On the Persian War*, whose title and merit are recorded, not one, except this cento, has survived. The obliterative sponge we hear of in Aeschylus has washed out every verse except this cento's 'damned spot.' This remains. This is called Eudocia! this stands for the daughter of Leontius, and this only in the world! O fair mischief! she is punished by her hand.

And yet, are we born critics any more than she was born an empress, that we should not have a heart? and is our heart stone, that it should not wax soft within us while the vision is stirred 'between our eyelids and our eyes,' of this beautiful Athenais, baptized once by Christian waters, and once by human tears, into Eudocia, the imperial mourner!—this learned pupil of a learned father, crowned once by her golden hair, and once by her golden crown,

yet praised more for poetry and learning than for beauty and greatness by such grave writers as Socrates and Evagrius, the ecclesiastical historians!—this world's empress, pale with the purple of her palaces, an exile even on the throne from her Athens, and soon twice an exile, from father's grave and husband's bosom! We relent before such a vision. And what if, relentlessly, we declare her innocent of the Homeric cento?—what if we find her 'a whipping boy' to take the blame?—what if we write down a certain Proba *improba*, and bid her bear it? For Eudocia having been once a mark to slander may have been so again; and Falconia Proba having committed centoism upon Virgil must have been capable of anything. The Homeric cento has been actually attributed to her by certain critics, with whom we would join in all earnestness our most sour voices, gladly, for Eudocia's sake, who is closely dear to us, and not malignly for Proba's, who was *improba* without our help. So shall we impute evil to only one woman, and she not an Athenian; while our worst wish, even to her, assumes this innocuous shape, that she had used a distaff rather than a stylus, though herself and the yet more 'Sleeping Beauty' had owned one horoscope between them! Amen to our wish! A busy distaff and a sound sleep to Proba!

And now that golden-haired, golden-crowned daughter of Leontius, for whom neither the much learning nor the much sorrow drove Hesperus from her sovereign eyes—let her pass on unblenched. Be it said of her, softly as she goes, by all gentle readers—'She is innocent, whether for centos or for apples! She wrote only such Christian Greek poems as Christians and poets might rejoice to read, but which perished with her beauty, as being of one seed with it.'

Midway in the sixth century we encounter Paul Silentarius, called so in virtue of the office held by him in the court of Justinian, and chiefly esteemed for his descriptive poem on the Byzantine

church of St. Sophia, which, after the Arian conflagration, was rebuilt gorgeously by the emperor. This church was not dedicated to a female saint, according to the supposition of many persons, but to the second person of the Trinity, the ἄγια σοφία—holy wisdom; while the poem being recited in the imperial presence, and the poet's gaze often forgetting to rise higher than the imperial smile, Paul Silentiarius dwelt less on the divine dedication and the spiritual uses of the place, than on the glory of the dedicator and the beauty of the structure. We hesitate, moreover, to grant to his poem the praise which has been freely granted to it by more capable critics, of its power to realize this beauty of structure to the eyes of the reader. It is highly elaborate and artistic; but the elaboration and art appear to us architectural far more than picturesque. There is no sequency, no congruity, no keeping, no light and shade. The description has reference to the working as well as to the work, to the materials as well as to the working. The eyes of the reader are suffered to approach the whole only in analysis, or rather in analysis analysed. Every part, part by part, is recounted to him excellently well—is brought close till he may touch it with his eyelashes; but when he seeks for the general effect it is in pieces—there is none of it. Byron shows him more in the passing words,

I have beheld Sophia's bright roofs swell
Their glittering mass i' the sun,

than Silentiarius in all his poem. Yet the poem has abundant merit in diction and harmony; and besides higher nobilities, the pauses are modulated with an artfulness not commonly attained by these later Greeks, and the ear exults in an unaccustomed rhythmic pomp which the inward critical sense is inclined to murmur at, as an explosive verbosity.

Whoever looketh with a mortal eye
To heaven's emblazoned forms, not steadfastly

With unreverted neck can bear to measure
That meadow-round of star-apparelled pleasure,
But drops his eyelids to the verdant hill,
Yearning to see the river run at will,
With flowers on each side,—and the ripening corn,
And grove thick set with trees; and flocks
at morn
Leaping against the dews,—and olives twined,
And green vine-branches trailingly inclined,—
And the blue calmness skimmed by dripping
oar
Along the Golden Horn.

But if he bring
His foot across this threshold, never more
Would he withdraw it; fain, with wandering
Moist eyes, and ever-turning head, to stay,
Since all satiety is driven away
Beyond the noble structure. Such a fane
Of blameless beauty hath our Caesar raised
By God's perfective grace, and not in vain!
O emperor, these labours we have praised,
Draw down the glorious Christ's perpetual
smile:

For thou, the high-peaked Ossa didst not
pile
Upon Olympus' head, nor Pelion throw
Upon the neck of Ossa, opening so
The aether to the steps of mortals! no!
Having achieved a work more high than
hope,
Thou dost not need these mountains as a
slope
Whereby to scale the heaven! Wings take
thee thither
From purest piety to highest aether.

The following passage, from the same 'Description,' is hard to turn into English, through the accumulative riches of the epithets. Greek words alone for their vainglorious redundancy by their beauty, but we cannot think so of these our own pebbles.

Who will unclose me Homer's sounding lips,
And sing the marble mead that oversweeps
The mighty walls and pavements spread
around
Of this tall temple, which the sun has
crowned?
The hammer with its iron tooth was loosed
Into Carythus' summit green, and bruised.
The Phrygian shoulder of the daedal
stone;—

This marble, coloured after roses fused
In a white air, and that, with flowers thereon
Both purple and silver, shining tenderly !
And that which in the broad fair Nile sank
low
The barges to their edge, the porphyry's
glow
Sown thick with little stars ! and thou mayst
see
The green stone of Laconia glitter free !
And all the Carian hill's deep bosom brings,
Streaked bow-wise, with a livid white and
red,—
And all the Lydian chasm keeps covered,—
A hueless blossom with a ruddier one
Soft mingled ! all, besides, the Libyan sun
Warms with his golden splendour, till he
make
A golden yellow glory for his sake,
Along the roots of the Maurusian height !
And all the Celtic mountains give to sight
From crystal clefts : black marbles dappled
fair
With milky distillations here and there !
And all the onyx yields in metal-shine
Of precious greenness !—all that land of
thine,
Aetolia, hath on even plains engendered
But not on mountain-tops,—a marble
rendered
Here nigh to green, of tints which emeralds
use,
Here with a sombre purple in the hues !
Some marbles are like new-dropt snow, and
some
Alight with blackness !—Beauty's rays have
come,
So congregate, beneath this holy dome !

And thus the poet takes us away from
the church and dashes our senses and
admirations down these marble quarries !
Yet it is right for us to admit the miracle
of a poem made out of stones ! and when
he spoke of unclosing Homer's lips on
such a subject he was probably thinking
of Homer's ships, and meant to intimate
that one catalogue was as good for him
as another.

John Geometra arose in no propitious
orient probably with the seventh century,
although the time of his 'elevation'
appears to be uncertain within a hundred
years.

He riseth slowly, as his sullen car
Had all the weights of sleep and death hung
on it.

Plato, refusing his divine fellowship
to any one who was not a geometer or
who was a poet, might have kissed
our Johannes, who was not divine, upon
both cheeks, in virtue of his other name
and in vice of his verses. He was the
author of certain hymns to the Virgin
Mary, as accumulative of epithets and
admirations as ten of her litanies, in-
clusive of a pious compliment, which,
however geometrically exact in its pro-
portions, sounds strangely.

Oh health to thee ! new living car of the sky,
Afire on the wheels of four virtues at once !
Oh health to thee ! Seat, than the cherubs
more high,
More pure than the seraphs, more broad
than the thrones.

Towards the close of the last hymn,
the exhausted poet empties back some-
thing of the ascription into his own lap
by a remarkable *mihi quoque*.

Oh health to me, royal one ! if there belong
Any grace to my singing, that grace is from
thee.

Oh health to me, royal one ! if in my song
Thou hast pleasure—oh, thine is the grace
of the glee !

We may mark the time of George
Pisida, about thirty years deep in the
seventh century. He has been con-
founded with the rhetorical Archbishop
of Nicomedia, but held the office of
scaevophylax, only lower than the high-
est, in the metropolitan church of St.
Sophia, and was a poet, singing half in the
church and half in the court, and
considerably nearer to the feet of the
Emperor Heraclius than can please us
in any measure. Hoping all things,
however, in our poetical charity, we are
willing to hope even this—that the man
whom Heraclius carried about with him
as a singing-man when he went to fight
the Persians, and who sang and recited
accordingly, and provided notes of ad-
miration for all the imperial notes of
interrogation, and gave his admiring
poems the appropriate and suggestive
name of *aeroases*—auscultations, things
intended to be heard,—might nevertheless
love Heraclius the fighting-man,

not slave-wise or flatterer-wise, but man-wise or dog-wise, in good truth, and up to the brim of his praise ; and so hoping, we do not dash the praise down as a libation to the infernal task-masters. Still it is an impotent conclusion to a free-hearted poet's musing on the *Six Days' Work*, to wish God's creation under the sceptre of his particular friend ! It looks as if the particular friend had an ear like Dionysius, and the poet—ah, the poet!—a mark as of a chain upon his brow in the shadow of his court laurel.

We shall not revive the question agitated among his contemporaries, whether Euripides or George Pisida wrote the best iambics; but that our George knew the secret of beauty, and that, having noble thoughts, he could utter them nobly, is clear, despite of Heraclius. That he is, besides, unequal; often coldly perplexed when he means to be ingenious, only violent when he seeks to be inspired; that he premeditates ecstasies, and is inclined to the attitudes of the orators; in brief, that he 'not only' and not seldom sleeps but *snores*—are facts as true of him as the praise is. His Hexámeron, to which we referred as his chief work, is rather a meditation or rhythmical speech upon the finished creation, than a retrospection of the six days—and also there is more of Plato in it than of Moses. It has many fine things, and whole passages of no ordinary eloquence, though difficult to separate and select.

Whatever eyes seek God to view His Light, As far as they behold Him close in night ! Whoever searcheth with insatiate balls Th' abysmal glare, or gazeth on Heaven's walls

Against the fire-disk of the sun, the same According to the vision he may claim, Is dazzled from his sense. What soul of flame

Is called sufficient to view onward thus The way whereby the sun's light came to us ?

O distant Presence in fixed motion ! Known To all men, and inscrutable to one : Perceived—uncomprehended ! unexplained To all the spirits, yet by each attained,

Because its God-sight is Thy work ! O Presence,
Whatever holy greatness of Thine essence Lie virtue-hidden—Thou hast given our eyes The vision of Thy plastic energies ;— Not shown in angels only (those create All fiery-hearted, in a mystic state Of bodiless body), but, if order be Of natures more sublime than they or we, In highest Heaven, or mediate aether, or This world nowseen, or one that came before Or one to come—quick in Thy purpose— there !

Working in fire and water, earth and air— In every tuneful star, and tree, and bird— In all the swimming, creeping life unheard, In all green herbs, and chief of all, in MAN.

There are other poems of inferior length, *On the Persian War*, in three books, or, alas, 'auscultations'—*The Heracliad*, again on the Persian war, and in two (of course) auscultations again,—*Against Severus*, *On the Vanity of Life*, *The War of the Huns*, and others. From the *Vanity of Life*, which has much beauty and force, we shall take a last specimen :—

Some yearn to rule the state, to sit above, And touch the cares of hate as near as love— Some their own reason for tribunal take, And for all thrones the humblest prayers they make !

Some love the orator's vainglorious art.— The wise love silence and the hush of heart,—

Some to ambition's spirit-curse are fain, That golden apple with a bloody stain ; While some do battle in her face (more rife Of noble ends) and conquer strife with strife ! And while your groaning tables gladden these,

Satiety's quick chariot to disease, Hunger the wise man helps, to water, bread, And light wings to the dreams about his head.

The truth becomes presently obvious, that—

The sage o'er all the world his sceptre waves, And earth is common ground to thrones and graves.

John Damascenus, to whom we should not give by any private impulse of admiration the title of Chrysorrhœas

accorded to him by his times, lived at Damascus, his native city, early in the eighth century, holding an unsheathed sword of controversy until the point drew down the lightning. He retired before the affront rather than the injury; and in company with his beloved friend and fellow poet, Cosmas of Jerusalem (whose poetical remains the writer of these remarks has vainly sought the sight of, and therefore can only, as by hearsay, ascribe some value to them), hid the remnant of his life in the monastery of Saba, where Phocas of the twelfth century looked upon the tomb of either poet. John Damascenus wrote several acrostics on the chief festivals of the churches, which are not much better, although very much longer, than acrostics need be. When he writes out of his heart, without looking to the first letters of his verses—as, indeed, in his anacreontic his eyes are too dim for iota hunting—he is another man, and almost a strong man; for the heart being sufficient to speak we want no Delphic oracle—‘Pan is NOT dead.’ In our selection from the anacreontic hymn the tears seem to trickle audibly—we welcome them as a Castalia, or, rather, ‘as Siloa’s brook,’ flowing by an oracle more divine than any Grecian one:—

From my lips in their defilement,
From my heart in its beguilement,
From my tongue which speaks not fair,
From my soul stained everywhere,
O my Jesus, take my prayer!

Spurn me not for all it says,
Not for words and not for ways,—
Not for shamelessness endued!
Make me brave to speak my mood,
O my Jesus, as I would!
Or teach me, which I rather seek,
What to do and what to speak.

I have sinned more than she,
Who learning where to meet with Thee,
And bringing myrrh, the highest priced,
Anointed bravely, from her knee,
Thy blessed feet accordingly—
My God, my Lord, my Christ!—
As Thou saidest not ‘Depart’
To that suppliant from her heart,
Scorn me not, O Word, that art

The gentlest one of all words said!
But give Thy feet to me instead
That tenderly I may them kiss
And clasp them close, and never miss
With over-dropping tears, as free
And precious as that myrrh could be,
T’ anoint them bravely from my knee!

Wash me with Thy tears: draw nigh me,
That their salt may purify me:
THOU remit my sins who knowest
All the sinning, to the lowest—
Knowest all my wounds, and seest
All the stripes Thyselv decrest;
Yea, but knowest all my faith,
Seest all my force to death,—
Hearrest all my wailings low,
That mine evil should be so!
Nothing hidden but appears
In Thy knowledge, O Divine,
O Creator, Saviour mine—
Not a drop of falling tears,
Not a breath of inward moan,
Not a heart-beat . . . which is gone!—

After this deep pathos of Christianity we dare not say a word—we dare not even praise it as poetry: our heart is stirred, and not ‘idly.’ The only sound which can fitly succeed the cry of the contrite soul is that of Divine condonation or of angelic rejoicing. Let us who are sorrowful still, be silent too.

IV

ALTHOUGH doubts, as broad as four hundred years, separate the earliest and latest period talked of as the age of Simeon Metaphrastes by those *viri illustrissimi* the classical critics, we may set him down, without much peril to himself or us, at the close of the tenth century, or very early in the eleventh. He is chiefly known for his *Lives of the Saints*, which have been lifted up as a mark both for honour and dishonour; which Psellus hints at as a favourite literature of the angels, which Leo Allatius exalts as chafing the temper of the heretics, and respecting which we, in an exemplary serenity, shall straightway accede to one-half of the opinion of Bellarmine—that the work speaketh not as things actually happened, but as

they might have happened—‘*non ut res gestae fuerant, sed ut geri potuerant.*’ Our half of this weighty opinion is the first clause—we demur upon ‘*ut geri potuerant*,’—and we need not go further than the former to win a light of commentary for the term ‘metaphrases,’ applied to the saintly biographies in otherwise a doubtful sense, and worn obliquely upon the sleeve of the biographer Metaphrastes, in no doubtful token of his skill in metamorphosing things as they were into things as they might have been. And Simeon having received from Constantinople the honour of his birth within her walls, and returning to her the better honour of the distinctions and usefulness of his life,—so writeth Psellus, his encomiast, with a graceful turn of thought,—expired in an ‘odour of sanctity,’ befitting the biographer of all the saints—breathing out from his breathless remains such an incense of celestial sweetness, that if it had not been for the maladroitness of certain unfragrant persons whose desecration of the next tomb acted instantly as a stopper, the whole earth might at this day be *metaphrased* to our nostrils, as steeped in an attar-gul of Eden or Ede!—we might be dwelling in a phoenix nest at this day. Through the maladroitness, however, in question, there is lost to us every sweeter influence from the life and death of Simeon Metaphrastes than may result from the lives and deaths of his saints, and from other works of his, whether commentaries, orations, or poems; and we cannot add that the aroma from his writings bears any proportion in value to the fragrance from his sepulchre. Little of his poetry has reached us, and we are satisfied with the limit. There were three Simeons, who did precede our Simeon, as the world knoweth, and whose titles were Stylitae or Columarii, because it pleased them in their saintly volition to take the highest place and live out their natural lives supernaturally, each upon the top of a column. Peradventure the columns which our Simeon refused to live upon conspired

against his poetry: peradventure it is on their account that we find ourselves between two alphabetic acrostics, written solemnly by his hand, and take up one wherein every alternate line begins with a letter of the alphabet; its companion in the couplet being left to run behind it, out of livery and sometimes out of breath. Will the public care to look upon such a curiosity? Will our verse-writers care to understand what harm may be done by a conspiracy of columns—gods and men quite on one side? And will candid readers care to confess at last, that there is an earnestness in the poem, acrostic as it is—a leaning to beauty’s side—which is above the acrosticism? Let us try:—

Ah, tears upon mine eyelids, sorrow on
mine heart!
I bring Thee soul-repentance, Creator as
Thou art.
Bounding joyous actions, deep as arrows
go—
Pleasures self-revolving, issue into woe
Creatures of our mortal, headlong rush to
sin—
I have seen them ;—of them—ah me,—I
have been!
Duly pitying Spirits, from your spirit-frame,
Bring your cloud of weeping,—worthy of
the same!
Else I would be bolder—If that light of
Thine,
Jesus, quell the evil, let it on me shine.
Fail me truth, is living, less than death for-
lorn,
When the sinner readeth—‘better be un-
born.’
God, I raise toward Thee both eyes of my
heart,
With a sharp cry—‘Help me!’—while
mine hopes depart.
Help me! Death is bitter, all hearts com-
prehend;
But I fear beyond it—end beyond the
end!
Inwardly behold me, how my soul is black—
Sympathize in gazing, do not spurn me
back!
Knowing that Thy pleasure is not to destroy,
That Thou fain wouldst save me—this is
all my joy.
Lo, the lion, hunting spirits in their deep,
(Stand beside me!) roar eth—(help me!)
nears to leap.

Mayst Thou help me, Master! Thou art
 pure alone—
 Thou alone art sinless—one Christ on
 a throne.
 Nightly deeds I loved them—hated day's
 instead—
 Hence this soul-involving darkness on
 mine head!
 O Word, who constraintest things estranged
 and curst,
 If Thy hand can save me, that work were
 the first!
 Pensive o'er my sinning, counting all its
 ways,
 Terrors shake me, waiting adequate dis-
 mayns.
 Quenchless glories many, hast Thou—
 many a rod—
 Thou, too, hast Thy measures—Can I
 bear Thee, God?
 Rend away my counting from my soul's
 decline,
 Show me of the portion of those saved of
 Thine!
 Slow drops of my weeping to Thy mercy
 run—
 Let its rivers wash me, by that mercy
 won.
 Tell me what is worthy, in our dreary
 now,
 As the future glory? (madness!) what,
 as THOU?
 Union, oh, vouchsafe me to Thy fold be-
 neath,
 Lest the wolf across me gnash his gory
 teeth!
 View me, judge me gently! spare me,
 Master bland,—
 Brightly lift Thine eyelids, kindly stretch
 Thine hand!
 Winged and choral angels! 'twixt my
 spirit lone,
 And all deathly visions, interpose your
 own!
 Yea, my Soul, remember death and woe
 inwrought—
 After-death affliction, wringing earth's to
 nought.
 Zone me, Lord, with graces! Be founda-
 tions built
 Underneath me; save me! as Thou
 know'st and wilt!

The omission of our X (in any case
 too sullen a letter to be employed in
 the service of an acrostic) has permitted
 us to write line for line with the Greek;
 and we are able to infer, to the honour

of the Greek poet, that, although he did
 not live upon a column, he was not far
 below one, in the virtue of self-mortifi-
 cation. We are tempted to accord
 him some more gracious and serious
 justice, by breaking away a passage
 from his *Planctus Mariae*, the lament of
 Mary on embracing the Lord's body; and
 giving a moment's insight into a remarkable
 composition, which, however deprived of its poetical right of
 measure, is, in fact, nearer to a poem, both in purpose and achievement, than
 any versified matter we have looked
 upon from this metaphrastic hand:—

‘O uncovered corse, yet Word of the
 Living One! self-doomed to be uplifted
 on the cross for the drawing of all men
 unto Thee, — what member of Thine
 hath no wound? O my blessed brows,
 embraced by the thorn-wreath which is
 pricking at my heart! O beautiful and
 priestly One, who hadst not where to lay
 Thine head and rest, and now wilt
 lay it only in the tomb, resting *there*—
 sleeping, as Jacob said, a lion's sleep! O
 cheeks turned to the sunter! O lips,
 new hive for bees, yet fresh from the
 sharpness of vinegar and bitterness of
 gall! O mouth, wherein was no guile,
 yet betrayed by the traitor's kiss! O
 hand, creative of man, yet nailed to
 the cross, and since, stretched out unto
 Hades, with help for the first trans-
 gressor! O feet, once walking on the
 deep to hallow the waters of nature! O
 me, my son! . . . Where is thy
 chorus of sick ones?—those whom Thou
 didst cure of their diseases, and bring
 back from the dead? Is none here, but
 only Nicodemus, to draw the nails from
 those hands and feet?—none here, but
 only Nicodemus, to lift Thee from the
 cross, heavily, heavily, and lay Thee in
 these mother-arms, which bore Thee
 long ago, in Thy babyhood, and were
 glad *then*? These hands, which swaddled
 Thee then, let them bind Thy grave-
 clothes now. And yet,—O bitter
 funerals!—O Giver of life from the
 dead, liest Thou dead before mine eyes?
 Must *I*, who said “hush” beside Thy
 cradle, wail this passion upon Thy

grave? I, who washed Thee in Thy first bath, must I drop on Thee these hotter tears? I, who raised Thee high in my maternal arms,—but *then* Thou leapedst,—*then* Thou springest up in Thy child-play. . . .'

It is better to write so than to stand upon a column. And, although the passage does, both generally and specifically, in certain of its ideas, recall the antithetic eloquence of that Gregory Nazianzen before whom this Simeon must be dumb, we have touched his 'oration' so called, nearer than our subject could permit us to do any of Gregory's, because the *Planctus* involves an imagined situation, is poetical in its design. Moreover, we must prepare to look downwards; the poets were descending from the gorgeous majesty of the hexameter and the severe simplicity of iambics, down through the mediate *versus politici*, a loose metre, adapted to the popular ear, to the lowest deep of a 'measured prose,'—which has been likened (but which we will not liken) to the blank verse of our times. Presently we may offer an example from Psellus of a prose acrostic—the reader being delighted with the prospect! 'A whole silver threepence, mistress.'

Michael Psellus lived midway in the eleventh century, and appears to have been a man of much aspiration towards the higher places of the earth. A senator of no ordinary influence, preceptor of the Emperor Michael previous to that accession, he is supposed to have included in his instructions the advantages of sovereignty, and in his precepts the most subtle means of securing them. We were about to add that his acquirements as a scholar were scarcely less imperial than those of his pupil as a prince; but the expression might have been inappropriate. There are cases not infrequent—not entirely opposite to the present case, and worthy always of all meditation by such intelligent men as affect extensive acquisition—when acquirements are not ruled by the man, but rule him. Whatever

originates from the mind cannot obstruct her individual faculty; nay, whatever she receives inwardly and marks her power over by creating out of it a *tertium quid*, according to the law of the perpetual generation of spiritual verities, is not obstructive but impulsive to the evolution of faculty; but the erudition, whether it be erudition as the world showed it formerly, or miscellaneous literature, as the world shows it now, the accumulated acquirement of whatever character, which remains *extraneous* to the mind, is and must be in the same degree an obstruction and deformity. How many are there from Psellus to Bayle, bound hand and foot intellectually with the rolls of their own papyrus—men whose erudition has grown stronger than their souls! How many whom we would gladly see washed in the clean waters of a little ignorance, and take our own part in their refreshment! Not that knowledge is bad, but that wisdom is better; and that it is better and wiser in the sight of the angels of knowledge to think out one true thought with a thrush's song and a green light for all lexicon—or to think it without the light and without the song, because truth is beautiful, where they are not seen or heard—than to mummy our benumbed souls with the circumvolutions of twenty thousand books. And so Michael Psellus was a learned man.

We have sought earnestly, yet in vain—and the fact may account for our ill-humour—a sight of certain iambics upon vices and virtues, and Tantalus and Sphinx, which are attributed to this writer, and cannot be in the moon after all: earnestly, yet with no fairer encouragement to our desire than what befalls it from his *poems*(!) *On the Councils*, the first of which, and only the first, through the softness of our charities, we bring to confront the reader:—

Know the holy councils, King, to their utmost number,
Such as roused the impious ones from their world-wide slumber!

Seven in all those councils were—Nice the first containing,
When the godly master-soul Constantine was reigning,
What time at Byzantium, hallowed with the hyssop,
In heart and word, Metrophanes presided as archbishop !
It cut away Arius' tongue's maniacal delusion,
Which cut off from the Trinity the blessed Homoousion—
blasphemed (O miserable man !) the maker of the creature,
And low beneath the Father cast the equal Filial nature.

The prose acrostic, contained in an office written by Psellus to the honour of Simeon, is elaborated on the words 'I sing thee who didst write the metaphrases'; every sentence being insulated, and beginning with a charmed letter.

Say in a dance how we shall go,
Who never could a measure know?
why thus—(and yet Psellus, who did know everything, wrote a synopsis of the metres!)—why thus :—

'Inspire me, Word of God, with a rhythmic chant, for I am borne onward to praise Simeon Metaphrastes, and Logothetes, as he is fitly called, the man worthy of admiration.'

'Solemnly from the heavenly heights did the Blessed Ghost descend on thee, wise one, and finding thine heart pure, rested there, there verily in the body !'

Surely we need not write any more. But Michael Psellus was a very learned man.

John of Euchaita, or Euchapia, or Theodoropolis—the three names do appear through the twilight to belong to one city—was a bishop, probably contemporary with Psellus—is only a poet now. We turn to see the voice which speaks to us. It is a voice with a soul in it, clear and sweet and living; and we who have walked long in the desert, leap up to its sound as to the dim flowing of a stream, and would take a deep breath by its side both for the weariness which is gone and the repose which is coming. But it is a rarer

thing than a stream in the desert: it is a voice in the desert—the only voice of a city. The city may have three names, as we have said, or the three names may more fitly appertain to three cities—scholars knit their brows and wax doubtful as they talk; but a city denuded of its multitudes it surely is, ruined even of its ruins it surely is: no exhalation arises from its tombs—the foxes have lost their way to it—the bittern's cry is as dumb as the vanished population—only the Voice remains. John Mauropus, of Euchaita, Euchania, Theodoropolis ! one living man among many dead, as the Arabian tale goes of the city of enchantment!—one speechful voice among the silent, sole survivor of the breath which maketh words, effluence of the soul replacing the bittern's cry—speak to us ! And thou shalt be to us as a poet—we will salute thee by that high name. For have we not stood face to face with Michael Psellus and him of the metaphrases ? Surely as a poet may we salute thee !

His poetry has, as if in contrast to the scenery of circumstances in which we find it, or to the fatality of circumstances in which it has *not* been found (and even Mr. Clarke in his learned work upon Sacred Literature, which is, however, incomunicative generally upon sacred poetry, appears unconscious of his being and his bishopric)—his poetry has a character singularly vital, fresh, and serene. There is nothing in it of the rapture of inspiration, little of the operativeness of art—nothing of imagination in a high sense, or of ear-service in any: he is not, he says, of those—

Who rain hard with redundancies of words,
And thunder and lighten out of eloquence.

His Greek being opposed to that of the Silentarii and the Pisidae by a peculiar simplicity and ease of collocation which the reader feels lightly in a moment, the thoughts move through its transparency with a certain calm nobleness and sweet living earnestness, with holy upturned eyes and human tears beneath

the lids, till the reader feels lovingly too. We startle him from his reverie with an octave note on a favourite literary fashion of the living London, drawn from the voice of the lost city ; discovering by that sound the first serial illustrator of pictures by poems, in the person of our Johannes. Here is a specimen from an annual of Euchaita, or Euchania, or Theodoropolis—we may say ‘annual’ although the pictures were certainly not in a book, but were probably ornaments of the beautiful temple in the midst of the city, concerning which there is a tradition. Here is a specimen selected for love’s sake, because it ‘illustrates’ a portrait of Gregory Nazianzen :—

What meditates thy thoughtful gaze, my father?
To tell me some new truth? Thou canst not so!
For all that mortal bands are weak to gather
Thy blessed books unfolded long ago.

These are striking verses, upon the Blessed among women, weeping :—
O Lady of the passion, dost thou weep?
What help can we then through our tears survey,
If such as thou a cause for wailing keep?
What help, what hope, for us, sweet Lady, say?
'Good man, it doth befit thine heart to lay
More courage next it, having seen me so.
All other hearts find other balm to-day—
The whole world's consolation is my woe!'

Would any hear what can be said of a Transfiguration before Raffael’s :—
Tremble, spectator, at the vision won thee—
Stand afar off, look downward from the height,—
Lest Christ too nearly seen should lighten on thee,
And from thy fleshly eyeballs strike the sight,
As Paul fell ruined by that glory white,—
Lo, the disciples prostrate, each apart,
Each impotent to bear the lamping light!
And all that Moses and Elias might,
The darkness caught the grace upon her heart
And gave them strength for! *Thou*, if evermore
A God-voice pierce thy dark,—rejoice, adore!

Our poet was as unwilling a bishop as the most sturdy of the *nolentes*; and there are poems written both in depreciation of, and in retrospective regret for, the ordaining dignity, marked by noble and holy beauties which we are unwilling to pass without extraction. Still we are constrained for space, and must come at last to his chief individual characteristic—to the gentle humanities which, strange to say, preponderate in the solitary voice—to the familiar smiles and sighs which go up and down in it to our ear. We will take the poem *To his Old House*, and see how the house survives by his good help, when the sun shines no more on the golden statue of Constantine :—

Oh, be not angry with me, gentle house,
That I have left thee empty and deserted!
Since thou thyself that evil didst arouse,
In being to thy masters so false-hearted—
In loving none of those who did possess thee—
In ministering to no one to an end—
In no one’s service caring to confess thee,
But loving still the change of friend for friend,
And sending the last, plague-wise, to the door!
And so, or ere thou canst betray and leave me,
I, a wise lord, dismiss thee, servitor,
And antedate the wrong thou mayst achieve me
Against my will, by what my will allows,
Yet not without some sorrow, gentle house!

For oh, beloved house! what time I render
My last look back on thee I grow more tender!
Pleasant possession, hearth for father’s age,
Dear gift of buried hands, sole heritage!
My blood is stirred—and love, that learnt its play
From all sweet customs, moves mine heart thy way!
For thou wert all my nurse and helpful creature—
For thou wert all my tutor and my teacher—
In thee through lengthening toils I struggled deep—
In thee I watched all night without its sleep—
In thee I worked the wearier daytime out,
Exalting truth, or trying by a doubt.

And oh, my father's roof! the memory leaves
Such pangs as break mine heart, beloved
eaves;
But God's word conquers all! . . .

He is forced to a strange land, reverting
with this benediction to the 'dearest
house':—

Farewell, farewell, mine own familiar one,
Estranged for evermore from this day's sun,
Fare-thee-well so! Farewell, O second
mother,
O nurse and help,—remains there not an
other!

My bringing-up to some sublimer measure
Of holy childhood and perfected pleasure!
Now other spirits must thou tend and teach,
And minister thy quiet unto each,
For reasoning uses, if they love such use,
But nevermore to me! God keep thee, house,
God keep thee, faithful corner, where I drew
So calm a breath of life! And God keep you,
Kind neighbours! Though I leave you by

His grace,
Let no grief bring a shadow to your face,
Because whate'er He willeth to be done
His will makes easy, makes the distant one,
And soon brings all embraced before His
throne!

We pass Philip Solitarius, who lived at the close of this eleventh century, even as we have passed one or two besides of his fellow poets: because they, having hidden themselves beyond the reach of our eyes and the endeavour of our hands, and we being careful to speak by knowledge rather than by testimony, nothing remains to us but this same silent passing—this regretful one, as our care to do better must testify—albeit our fancy will not, by any means, account them, with all their advantages of absence, 'the best part of the solemnity.'

Early in the twelfth century we are called to the recognition of Theodore Prodromus, theologian, philosopher, and poet. His poems are unequal, consisting principally of a series of tetrastichs—Greek epigrams for lack of point, French epigrams for lack of poetry—upon the Old and New Testaments, and the Life of Chrysostom,—all nearly as bare of the rags of literary merit as might be expected from the

design; and three didactic poems upon Love, Providence, and against Bareus the heretic, into which the poet has cast the recollected life of his soul. The soul departs herself as a soul should, with a vivacity and energy which work outward and upward into eloquence. The sentiments are lofty, the expression free; there is an instinct to a middle and an end. Music we miss, even to the elementary melody: the poet thinks his thoughts, and speaks them; not indeed what all poets, so called, do esteem a necessary effort, and indeed what we should thank him for doing; but he *sings* them in nowise, and they are not of that divine order which are crowned by right of their divinity with an inseparable aureole of sweet sound. His poem upon Love—*φλια* says the Greek word, but friendship does not answer to it—is a dialogue between the personification and a stranger. It opens thus dramatically, the stranger speaking:—

Love! Lady diademed with honour, whence
And whither goest thou? Thy look presents
Tears to the lid—thy mien is vext and low—
Thy locks fall wildly from thy drooping
brow—

Thy blushes are all pale—thy garb is fit
For mourning in, and shoon and zone are
loose!

So changed thou art to sadness every whit,
And all that pomp and purple thou didst use,
That seemly sweet—that new rose on the
mouth—

Those fair-smoothed tresses, and that graceful
zone,
Bright sandals, and the rest thou haddest on,
Are all departed, gone to nought together!
And now thou walkest mournful in the train
Of mourning women!—where and whence,
again?

Love. From earth to God my Father.

Stranger. Dost thou say
That earth of Love is desolated?

Love. Yea!

It so much scorned me.

Stranger. Scorned?

Love. And cast me out
From its door.

Stranger. From its door?

Love. As if without
I had my lot to die!

Love consents to give her confidence to the wondering stranger ; whereupon, as they sit in the shadow of a tall pine, she tells a Platonic story of all the good she had done in heaven before the stars, and the angels, and the throned Triad, and of all her subsequent sufferings on the melancholy and ungrateful earth. The poem, which includes much beauty, ends with a quaint sweetness in the troth-plighting of the stranger and the lady. Mayst thou have been faithful to that oath, O Theodore Prodromus ! but thou didst swear 'too much to be believed—so much.'

The poems *On Providence* and *Against Bareus* exceed the *Love*, perhaps, in power and eloquence to the full measure of the degree in which they fall short of the interest of the latter's design. Whereupon we dedicate the following selection from the *Providence* to Mr. Carlyle's 'gigmen' and all 'respectable persons' :

Ah me ! what tears mine eyes are welling forth,
To witness in this synagogue of earth
Wise men speak wisely while the scoffers sing,
And rich men folly, for much honouring !
Melitus trifles.—Socrates decrees
Our further knowledge ! Death to Socrates,
And long life to Melitus !

Chiefdom of evil, gold ! blind child of clay,
Gnawing with fixed tooth earth's heart away !
Go ! perish from us ! objurgation vain
To soulless nature, powerless to contain
One ill unthrust upon it ! Rather perish
That turpitude of crowds, by which they
cherish
Bad men for their good fortune, or condemn,
Because of evil fortune, virtuous men !

Oh, for a trumpet-mouth ! an iron tongue
Sufficient for all speech ! foundations hung
High on Parnassus' top to bear my feet—
So from that watch-tower, words which
shall be meet,
I may out-thunder to the nations near me—
'Ye worshippers of gold, poor rich men,
hear me !
Where do ye wander?—for what object
stand?
That gold is earth's ye carry in your hand,

And floweth earthward ! bad men have its curse
The most profusely : would yourselves be worse
So to be richer ?—better in your purse?
Your royal purple—'twas a dog that found it !
Your pearl of price—a sickened oyster owned it !
Your glittering gems are pebbles, dust-stray—
Your palace pomp was wrought of wood and clay,
Smoothed rock and moulded plinth ! earth's clay ! earth's wood !
Earth's common-hearted stones ! Is this your mood,
To honour earth, to worship earth . . . nor blush ?—
What dost thou murmur, savage mouth ?
Hush, hush !
Thy wrath is vainly breathed. The depth to tread
Of God's deep judgements, was not Paul's, he said.

The 'savage mouth' speaks in power, with whatever harshness : and we are tempted to contrast with this vehement utterance another short poem by the same poet, a little quaint withal, but light, soft, almost tuneful—as written for a *Book of Beauty*, and that not of Euchaita ! The subject is *Life*.

Oh, take me, thou mortal, . . . thy Life for thy praiser !
Thou hast met, found, and seized me, and know'st what my ways are.
Nor leave me for slackness, nor yield me for pleasure,
Nor look up too saintly, nor muse beyond measure !
There's the veil from my head—see the worst of my mourning !
There are wheels to my feet—have a dread of their turning !
There are wings round my waist—I may flatter and flee thee !
There are yokes on my hands—fear the chains I decree thee !
Hold me ! hold a shadow, the winds as they quiver ;
Hold me ! hold a dream, smoke, a track on the river.
Oh, take me, thou mortal, . . . thy Life for thy praiser,
Thou hast met not and seized not—not nor know'st what my ways are !

Nay, frown not, and shrink not—nor call
me an aspen ;
There's the veil from my head ! I have
dropped from thy clasping !
A fall-back within it I soon may afford
thee ;
There are wheels to my feet—I may roll
back toward thee—
There are wings round my waist—I may
flee back and clip thee—
There are yokes on my hands—I may soon
cease to whip thee !
Take courage ! I rather would hearten than
hurt thee !

John Tzetzadivides the twelfth century with his name, which is not a great one. In addition to an iambic fragment upon education, he has written indefatigably in the metre *politicus*, what must be read, if read at all, with a corresponding energy,—thirteen 'Chiliads,' of *variae historiae*, so called after Aelian's—Aelian's without the 'honey-tongue,'—very various histories indeed, about crocodiles and flies, and Plato's philosophy and Cleopatra's nails, and Samson and Phidias, and the resurrection from the dead, and the Calydonian boar—'everything under the sun' being, in fact, their imperfect epitome. The omission is simply POETRY! there is no apparent consciousness of her entity in the mind of this versifier; no aspiration towards her presence, not so much as a sigh upon her absence. We do not, indeed, become aware, in the whole course of this laborious work, of much unfolding of faculty; take it lower than the poetical; of nothing much beyond an occasional dry, sly, somewhat boorish humour, which being good humour besides, would not be a bad thing were its traces only more extended. But the general level of the work is a dull talkativeness, a prosy adversity, who is no 'Daughter of Jove,' and a slumberousness without a dream. We adjudge to our reader the instructive history of the Phoenix.

A phoenix is a single bird and synchronous with nature,
The peacock cannot equal him in beauty or in stature !

In radiance he outshines the gold ; the world in wonder yieldeth ; His nest he fixeth in the trees, and all of spices buildeth. And when he dies, a little worm, from out his body twining, Doth generate him back again whene'er the sun is shining ; He lives in Aegypt, and he dies in Aethiopia only, as Asserts Philostratus, who wrote the Life of Apollonius. And as the wise Aegyptian scribe, the holy scribe Choeremon, Hath entered on these Institutes, all centre their esteem on, Seven thousand years and six of age, this phoenix of the story, Expireth from the fair Nile side, whereby he had his glory !

In the early part of the fourteenth century, Manuel Phile, pricked emulously to the heart by the successful labours of Tzetta, embraced into identity with himself the remaining half of Aelian, and developed in his poetical treatise *On the Properties of Animals*, to which Isachimus Camerarius provided a conclusion—the Natural History of that industrious and amusing Greek-Roman. The Natural History is translated into verse, but by no means glorified; and yet the poet of animals, Phile, has carried away far more of the Aelian honey clinging to the edges of his *patera* than the poet of the *Chiliads* did ever wot of. What we find in him is not beauty, what we hear in him is not music, but there is an open feeling for the beautiful which stirs at a word, and we have a scarcely confessed contentment in hearkening to those twice-told stories of birds and beasts and fishes, measured out to us in the low monotony of his chanting voice. Our selections shall say nothing of the live grasshopper, called, with the first breath of these papers, an emblem of the vital Greek tongue; because the space left to us closes within our sight, and the science of the age does not thirst to receive, through our hands, the history of grasshoppers, according to Aelian or Phile either. Everybody knows what Phile tells us here, that grasshoppers

live upon morning dew, and cannot sing when it is dry. Everybody knows that the lady grasshopper sings not at all. And if the moral, drawn by Phile from this latter fact, of the advantage of silence in the female sex generally, be true and important, it is also too obvious to exact our enforcement of it. Therefore we pass by the grasshopper, and the nightingale too, for all her fantastic song, and hasten to introduce to European naturalists a Philhellenic species of *heron*, which has escaped the researches of Cuvier, and the peculiarities of which may account to the philosophic reader for that instinct of the 'wisdom of our forefathers,' which established an English university in approximation with the fens. It is earnestly to be hoped that the nice ear in question for the Attic dialect may still be preserved among the herons of Cambridgeshire.

A Grecian island nourishest to bless
A race of herons in all nobleness.
If some barbarian bark approach the shore,
They hate, they flee,—no eagle can out-
soar!
But if by chance an Attic voice be wist,
They grow softhearted straight, phil-
hellenist;
Press on in earnest flocks along the strand,
And stretch their wings out to the comer's
hand.
Perhaps he nears them with a gentle mind.—
They love his love, though foreign to their
kind!
For so the island giveth winged teachers,
In true love lessons, to all wingless creatures.

He has written, besides, *A Dialogue between Mind and Phile*, and other poems; and we cannot part without taking from him a more solemn tone, which may sound as an 'Amen!' to the good we have said of him. The following address to the Holy Spirit is concentrated in expression:—

O living Spirit, O falling of God-dew,
O Grace which dost console us and renew;
O vital light, O breath of angelhood,
O generous ministration of things good—
Creator of the visible, and best
Upholder of the great unmaniest
Power infinitely wise, new boon sublime,

Of science and of art, constraining might;
In whom I breathe, live, speak, rejoice, and
write,
Be with us in all places, for all time!

'And now,' saith the patientest reader of all, 'you have done. Now we have watched out the whole night of the world with you, by no better light than these poetical rushlights, and the wicks fail, and the clock of the universal hour is near upon the stroke of the seventeenth century, and you have surely done!' Surely *not*, we answer; for we see a hand which the reader sees not, which beckons us over to Crete, and clasps within its shadowy fingers a roll of hymns anacreontical, written by Maximus Margunius! and not for the last of our readers would we lose this last of the Greeks, owing him salutation. Yet the hymns have, for the true anacreontic fragrance, a musty odour, and we have scant praise for them in our nostrils. Their inspiration is from Gregory Nazianzen, whose *Soul and Body* are renewed in them by a double species of transmigration; and although we kiss the feet of Gregory's high excellences, we cannot admit any one of them to be a safe conductor of poetical inspiration. And in union with Margunius's plagiaristic tendencies there is a wearisome lengthiness, harder to bear. He will knit you to the whole length of an *Honi soit qui mal y pense*, till you fall asleep to the humming of the stitches what time you should be reading the 'moral.' We ourselves once dropped into a 'distraction,' as the French say,—for nothing could be more different from what the English say, than our serene state of self-abnegation—at the beginning of a house-building by this Maximus Margunius: when, reading on some hundred lines with our bare bodily eyes, and our soul starting up on a sudden to demand a measure of the progress, behold, he was building it still, with a trowel in the same hand: it was not forwarder by a brick. The swallows had time to hatch two nestfuls in a chimney while he finished the chimney-pot! Nevertheless he has moments of earnestness, and

they leave beauties in their trace. Let us listen to this extract from his fifth hymn :—

Take me as a hermit lone
With a desert life and moan ;
Only Thou anear to mete
Slow or quick my pulse's beat ;
Only Thou, the night to chase
With the sunlight in Thy face !
Pleasure to the eyes may come
From a glory seen afar,
But if life concentre gloom
Scattered by no little star,
Then, how feeble, God, we are !
Nay, whatever bird there be,
(Aether by his flying stirred,)
He, in this thing, must be free—
And I, Saviour, am Thy bird,
Pricking with an open beak
At the words that Thou dost speak
Leave a breath upon my wings,
That above these nether things
I may rise to where Thou art.—
I may flutter next Thine heart !
For if a light within me burn,
It must be darkness in an urn.
Unless within its crystalline,
That unbeginning light of Thine
Shine !—oh, Saviour, let it shine !

He is the last of our Greeks. The light from Troy city, with which all Greek glory began, 'threw three times

six,' said Aeschylus, that man with a soul,—beacon after beacon, into the heart of Greece. 'Three times six,' too, threw the light from Greece, when her own heart-light had gone out like Troy's, onward along the ridges of time. Three times six—but what faint beacons are the last!—sometimes only a red brand; sometimes only a small trembling flame; sometimes only a white glimmer, as of ashes breathed on by the wind; faint beacons and far ! How far ! We have watched them along the cloudy tops of the great centuries, through the ages dark but for them,—and now stand looking with eyes of farewell upon the last pale sign on the last mist-bound hill. But it is the sixteenth century. Beyond the ashes on the hill a red light is gathering—above the falling of the dews a great sun is rising : there is a rushing of life and song upward; let it still be UPWARD !—Shakespeare is in the world ! And the Genius of English Poetry, she who only of all the earth is worthy (Goethe's spirit may hear us say so, and smile), stooping, with a royal gesture, to kiss the dead lips of the Genius of Greece, stands up her successor in the universe, by virtue of that chrism, and in right of her own crown.

THE BOOK OF THE POETS¹

I

THE voice of the turtle is heard in the land. The green book of the earth is open, and the four winds are turning the leaves, while Nature, chief secretary to the creative Word, sits busy at her inditing of many a lovely poem—her *Flower and the Leaf* on this side, her *Cuckoo and the Nightingale* on that; her *Paradise of Dainty Devices* in and out among the valleys, her *Polyolbion* away across the hills, her *Britannia's Pastorals* on the home meadows, her sonnets of tufted primroses, her lyrical outgushings of May blossoming, her epical and didactic solemnities of light and shadow—and many an illustrative picture to garnish the universal annual. What book shall we open side by side with Nature's? First, the book of God. *The Book of the Poets* may well come next—even this book, if it deserve indeed the nobility of its name.

But this book, which is not Campbell's *Selection from the British Poets*, nor Southey's, nor different from either by being better, resembles many others of the nobly named, whether princes or hereditary legislators, in bearing a name too noble for its desert. This book, consisting of short extracts from the books of the poets, beginning with Chaucer, ending with Beattie, and missing sundry by the way—we call it indefinitely 'A book of the poets,' and leave it thankful. The extracts from Chaucer are topsy-turvy—one from the *Canterbury Tales*' prologue thrown in between two from the Knight's Tale; while Gower may blame 'his fortune'—

(And some men hold opinion
That it is constellation,)

¹ Originally published as a review in the *Athenaeum*, June—August, 1812, in a series of five papers, on a selection entitled *The Book of the Poets*.

for the dry specimen crumbled off from his man-mountainism. Of Lydgate there is scarcely a page; of Occleve, Hawes, and Skelton—the two last especially interesting in poetical history,—of Sackville, and the whole generation of dramatists, not a word. 'The table is not full,' and the ringing on it of Phillips's *Splendid Shilling* will not bribe us to endurance. What! place for Pomfret's platitudes, and no place for Shakespeare's divine sonnets! and no place for Jonson's and Fletcher's lyrics! Do lyrics and sonnets perish out of place whenever their poets make tragedies too, quenched by the entity of tragedy? We suggest that Shakespeare has nearly as much claim to place in any possible book of the poets (though also a book of the poetasters) as ever can have John Hughes, who 'as a poet, is chiefly known,' saith the critical editor, 'by his tragedy of the *Siege of Damascus*.' Let this book therefore accept our boon, and remain a book of the poets, thankfully if not gloriously,—while we, on our own side, may be thankful too, that in the present days of the millennium of Jeremy Bentham—a more literally golden age than the laureates of Saturnus dreamed withal—any memory of the poets should linger with the booksellers, and 'come up this way' with the spring. The thing is good, in that it is at all. Send a little child into a garden, and he will be sure to bring you a nosegay worth having, though the red weed in it should 'side the lily,' and sundry of the prettiest flowers be held stalk upwards. Flowers are flowers and poets are poets, and 'A book of the poets' must be right welcome at every hour of the clock.

For the preliminary essay, which is very moderately well done, we embrace it, with our fingers at least, in taking up the volume. It pleases us better on the solitary point of the devotional poets

than Mr. Campbell's beautiful treatise, doing, as it seems to us, more frank justice to the Witherses, the Quarleses, and the Crashaws. Otherwise the criticism and philosophy to be found in it are scarcely of the happiest—although even the first astonishing paragraph which justifies the utility of poetry on the ground of its being an attractive variety of language, a persuasive medium for abstract ideas (as reasonable were the justification of a seraph's essence deduced from the cloud beneath his foot!), shall not provoke us back to discontent from the vision of the poets of England suggested by the title of this 'Book,' and stretching along gloriously to our survey.

Our poetry has an heroic genealogy. It arose, where the sun rises, in the far East. It came out from Arabia, and was tilted on the lance-heads of the Saracens into the heart of Europe, Armorica catching it in rebound from Spain, and England from Armorica. It issued in its first breath from Georgia, wrapt in the gathering cry of Persian Odin: and passing from the orient of the sun to the antagonistic snows of Iceland, and oversweeping the black pines of Germany and the jutting shores of Scandinavia, and embodying in itself all wayside sounds, even to the rude shouts of the brazen-throated Cimbri—so modified, multiplied, resonant in a thousand Runic echoes, it rushed abroad like a blast into Britain. In Britain, the Arabic Saracenic Armorican and the Georgian Gothic Scandinavian mixed sound at last; and the dying suspirations of the Grecian and Latin literatures, the last low stir of the *Gesta Romanorum*, with the apocryphal personations of lost authentic voices, breathed up together through the fissures of the rent universe, to help the new intonation and accomplish the cadence. Genius was thrust onward to a new slope of the world. And soon, when simpler minstrels had sat there long enough to tune the ear of the time—when Layamon and his successors had hummed long enough, like wild bees, upon the lips of our

infant poetry predestined to eloquence,—then Robert Langland, the monk, walking for cloister 'by a wode's syde,' on the Malvern hills, took counsel with his holy 'Plowman,' and sang of other visions than their highest ridge can show. While we write, the woods upon those beautiful hills are obsolete, even as Langland's verses; scarcely a shrub grows upon the hills! but it is well for the thinkers of England to remember reverently, while taking thought of her poetry they stand among the gorse, that if we may boast now of more honoured localities, of Shakespeare's 'rocky Avon,' and Spenser's 'soft-streaming Thames,' and Wordsworth's 'Rydal Mere,' still our first holy poet-ground is there.

But it is in Chaucer we touch the true height, and look abroad into the kingdoms and glories of our poetical literature—it is with Chaucer that we begin our 'Books of the Poets,' our collections and selections, our pride of place and name. And the genius of the poet shares the character of his position: he was made for an early poet, and the metaphors of dawn and spring doubly become him. A morning-star, a lark's exaltation, cannot usher in a glory better. The 'cheerful morn-ing face,' 'the breezy call of incense-breathing morn,' you recognize in his countenance and voice: it is a voice full of promise and prophecy. He is the good omen of our poetry, the 'good bird,' according to the Romans, 'the best good angel of the spring,' the nightingale, according to his own creed of good luck, heard before the cuckoo.

Up rose the sunne, and uprose Emilie,
and uprose her poet, the first of a line
of kings, conscious of futurity in his
smile. He is a king and inherits the
earth, and expands his great soul
smilingly to embrace his greater heritage.
Nothing is too high for him to touch
with a thought, nothing too low to
dower with an affection. As a complete
creature cognate of life and death, he
cries upon God: as a sympathetic

creature he singles out a daisy from the universe ('*si douce est la marguerite*'), to lie down by half a summer's day and bless it for fellowship. His senses are open and delicate, like a young child's—his sensibilities capacious of supersensual relations, like an experienced thinker's. Child-like, too, his tears and smiles lie at the edge of his eyes, and he is one proof more among the many, that the deepest pathos and the quickest gaieties hide together in the same nature. He is too wakeful and curious to lose the stirring of a leaf, yet not too wide awake to see visions of green and white ladies between the branches; and a fair house of fame and a noble court of love are built and holden in the winking of his eyelash. And because his imagination is neither too 'high fantastical' to refuse proudly the gravitation of the earth, nor too 'light of love' to lose it carelessly, he can create as well as dream, and work with clay as well as cloud—and when his men and women stand close by the actual ones, your stop-watch shall reckon no difference in the beating of their hearts. He knew the secret of nature and art—that truth is beauty,—and saying 'I will make "A Wife of Bath" as well as Emilie, and you shall remember her as long,' we do remember her as long. And he sent us a train of pilgrims, each with a distinct individuality apart from the pilgrimage, all the way from Southwark and the Tabard Inn, to Canterbury and Becket's shrine : and their laughter comes never to an end, and their talk goes on with the stars, and all the railroads which may intersect the spoilt earth for ever cannot hush the 'tramp, tramp' of their horses' feet.

Controversy is provocative. We cannot help observing, because certain critics observe otherwise, that Chaucer utters as true music as ever came from poet or musician ; that some of the sweetest cadences in all our English are extant in his—'swete upon his tongue' in completest modulation. Let 'Dennham's strength, and Waller's sweetness join' the Io Paean of a later age, the

eurekamen of Pope and his generation. Not one of the 'Queen Anne's men,' measuring out tuneful breath upon their fingers, like ribbons for topknots, did know the art of versification as the old rude Chaucer knew it. Call him rude for the picturesqueness of the epithet; but his verse has, at least, as much regularity in the sense of true art, and more manifestly in proportion to our increasing acquaintance with his dialect and pronunciation, as can be discovered or dreamed in the French school. Critics indeed have set up a system based upon the crushed atoms of first principles, maintaining that poor Chaucer wrote by accent only! Grant to them that he counted no verses on his fingers; grant that he never disciplined his highest thoughts to walk up and down in a paddock—ten paces and a turn; grant that his singing is not after the likeness of their sing-song—but there end your admissions. It is our ineffaceable impression, in fact, that the whole theory of accent and quantity held in relation to ancient and modern poetry stands upon a fallacy, totters rather than stands; and that when considered in connexion with such old moderns as our Chaucer the fallaciousness is especially apparent. Chaucer wrote by quantity, just as Homer did before him, just as Goethe did after him, just as all poets must. Rules differ, principles are identical. All rhythm presupposes quantity. Organ-pipe or harp, the musician plays by time. Greek or English, Chaucer or Pope, the poet sings by time. What is this accent but a stroke, an emphasis, with a successive pause to make complete the time? And what is the difference between this accent and quantity but the difference between a harp-note and an organ-note? otherwise, quantity expressed in different ways? It is as easy for matter to subsist out of space, as music out of time.

Side by side with Chaucer comes Gower, who is ungratefully disregarded too often, because side by side with Chaucer. He who rides in the king's

chariot will miss the people's *hic est*. Could Gower be considered apart, there might be found signs in him of an independent royalty, however his fate may seem to lie in waiting for ever in his brother's antechamber, like Napoleon's tame kings. To speak our mind, he has been much undervalued. He is nailed to a comparative degree; and everybody seems to make it a condition of speaking of him, that something be called inferior within him, and something superior out of him. He is laid down flat, as a dark background for 'throwing out' Chaucer's lights—he is used as a *mou strō* for leaping up into the empyrean of Chaucer's praise. This is not just nor worthy. His principal poem, the *Confessio Amantis*, preceded the *Canterbury Tales*, and proves an abundant fancy, a full head and full heart, and neither ineloquent. We do not praise its design—in which the father-confessor is set up as a storyteller, like the Bishop of Tricca, 'avec l'âme,' like the Cardinal de Retz, 'la moins ecclésiastique du monde,'—while we admit that he tells his stories as if born to the manner of it, and that they are not much the graver, nor, peradventure, the holier either, for the circumstance of the confessorship. They are indeed told gracefully and pleasantly enough, and if with no superfluous life and gesture, with an active sense of beauty in some sort, and as flowing a rhythm as may bear comparison with many octosyllabics of our day; Chaucer himself having done more honour to their worth as stories than we can do in our praise, by adopting and crowning several of their number for king's sons within his own palaces. And this recalls that, at the opening of one glorious felony, the *Man of Lawes Tale*, he has written, a little unlawfully and ungratefully considering the connexion, some lines of harsh significance upon poor Gower—whence has been conjectured by the grey gossips of criticism, a literary jealousy, an unholy enmity, nothing less than a soul-chasm between the contemporary

poets. We believe nothing of it; no, nor of the Shakespeare and Jonson feud after it—

To alle such cursed stories we saie fy.

That Chaucer wrote in irritation is clear: that he was angry seriously and lastingly, or beyond the pastime of passion spent in a verse as provoked by a verse, there appears to us no reason for crediting. But our idea of the nature of the irritation will expound itself in our idea of the offence, which is here in Dan Gower's proper words, as extracted from the *Ladie Venus's speech* in the *Confessio Amantis*.

And grete well Chaucer whan ye mete,
As my disciple and poete! —

Forith now in his daig old,
Thou shalt him tellë this message,
That he upon his latter age,
To sette an ende of alle his werke
As he who is mine ownë clerke,
Do make his testament of love.

We would not slander Chaucer's temper,—we believe, on the contrary, that he had the sweetest temper in the world,—and still it is our conviction, none the weaker, that he was far from being entirely pleased by this 'message.' We are sure he did not like the message, and not many poets would. His 'elvish countenance' might well grow dark, and 'his sugred mouth' speak somewhat sourly, in response to such a message. Decidedly, in our own opinion, it was an impertinent message, a provocative message, a most inexcusable and odious message! Waxing hotter ourselves the longer we think of it, there is the more excuse for Chaucer. For, consider, gentle reader! this indecorous message preceded the appearance of the *Canterbury Tales*, and proceeded from a rival poet in the act of completing his principal work—its plain significance being 'I have done my poem, and you cannot do yours because you are superannuated.' And this, while the great poet addressed was looking forward farther than the

visible horizon, his eyes dilated with a mighty purpose. And to be counselled by this, to shut them forsooth, and take his crook and dog and place in the valleys like a grey shepherd of the Pyrenees—he, who felt his foot strong upon the heights! he, with no wrinkle on his forehead deep enough to touch the outermost of inward smooth dreams—he, in the divine youth of his healthy soul, in the quenchless love of his embracing sympathies, in the untired working of his perpetual energies—to 'make an ende of alle his werke' and be old, as if he were not a poet! 'Go to, O vain man'—we do not reckon the age of the poet's soul by the shadow on the dial! Enough that it falls upon his grave.

Occléeve and Lydgate both breathed the air of the world while Chaucer breathed it, although surviving him so long as rather to take standing as his successors than contemporaries. Both called him 'master' with a faithful reverting tenderness, and, however we are bound to distinguish Lydgate as the higher poet of the two, Occléeve's 'Alas' may become the other's lips—

Alas, that thou thine excellent prudence
In thy bed mortell mightest not bequeath!
For, alas! it was not bequeathed.
Lydgate's *Thebaid*, attached by its introduction to the *Canterbury Tales*, gives or enforces the occasion for sighing comparisons with the master's picturesque vivacity, while equally in delicacy and intense ness we admit no progress in the disciple. He does, in fact, appear to us so much overrated by the critics, that we are tempted to extend to his poetry his own admission on his monkish dress—

I wear a habit of perfection

Although my life agree not with that same—and to opine concerning the praise and poetry taken together, that the latter agrees not with that same. An elegant poet—*poeta elegans*—was he called by the courteous Pits,—a questionable compliment in most cases, while the application in the particular one agrees

not with that same. An improver of the language he is granted to be by all—and a voluminous writer of respectable faculties in his position could scarcely help being so,—he has flashes of genius, but they are not prolonged to the point of warming the soul,—can strike a bold note, but fails to hold it on,—attains to moments of power and pathos, but wears, for working days, no habit of perfection.

These are our thoughts of Lydgate; and yet when he ceased his singing, none sang better; there was silence in the land. In Scotland, indeed, poet-tongues were not all mute; the air across the borders 'gave delight and hurt not.' Here in the south it was otherwise: and unless we embrace in our desolation such *poems* as the riming chronicles of Harding and Fabian, we must hearken for music to the clashing of 'Bilboa blades,' and be content that the wars of the red and white roses should silent the warbling of the nightingales. That figure dropped to our pen's point, and the reader may accept it as a figure—as no more. To illustrate by figures the times and the seasons of poetical manifestation and decay, is at once easier and more reasonable than to attempt to account for them by causes. We do not believe that poets multiply in peace-time like sheep and sheaves, nor that they fly, like partridges, at the first beating of the drum; and we do believe, having a previous faith in the pneumatic character of their gift, that the period of its bestowment is not subject to the calculations of our philosophy. Let, therefore, the long silence from Chaucer and his disciples down to the sixteenth century be left standing as a fact undisturbed by any good reasons for its existence, or by any other company than some harmless metaphor—harmless and ineffectual as a glow-worm's glitter at the foot of a colossal statue of Harpocrates. Call it, if you please, as Warton does, 'a nipping frost succeeding a premature spring'; or call it, because we would not think our

Chaucer premature, or the silence cruel—the trance of English Poetry! her breath, once emitted creatively, indrawn and retained—herself sinking into deep sleep, like the mother of Apollonius before the glory of a vision, to awaken, to leap up (*éfēθope* says Philostratus, the narrator) in a flowery meadow, at the clapping of the white wings of a chorus of encircling swans. We shall endeavour to realize this awaking.

II

Is Hawes a swan? a black (letter) swan? since we promised to speak of swans in connexion with the sixteenth century. Certain voices will 'say nay, say nay'; and already, and without our provocation, he seems to us unjustly depreciated. Warton was called 'the indulgent historian of our poetry' for being so kind as to discover 'one fine line' in him! What name must the overkind have, in whose susceptible memories whole passages stand up erect, claiming the epithet or the like of the epithet—and that, less as the *largesse* of the indulgent than the debt of the just? Yet Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and Chaucer's *House of Fame*, and Lydgate's *Temple of Glasse*, and the *Pastyme of Plesure*, by Stephen Hawes, are the four columnar marbles, the four allegorical poems, on whose foundation is exalted into light the great allegorical poem of the world, Spenser's *Faery Queen*. There was a force of suggestion which preceded Sackville's, and Hawes uttered it. His work is very grave for a pastime, being a course of instruction upon the seven sciences, the trivium and quadrivium of the schools; whereby Grand Amour, scholar and hero, wooing and winning Belle Pucelle, marries her according to the *lex ecclesiae*, is happy 'all the rest of his life' by the *lex* of all matrimonial romances—and, at leisure and in old age, dies by the *lex naturae*. He tells his own story quite to an end, including the particulars of his funeral and epitaph; and is considerate enough to leave the reader in full assurance of

his posthumous reputation. And now let those who smile at the design dismiss their levity before the poet's utterance:—

O mortall folke, you may beholde and see
Hewe I lye here, sometime a mighty knight.
The ende of joye and all prosperite
Is death at last thorough his course and
micht.

After the day there cometh the dark night,
For though the day appear ever so long,
At last the bell ringeth to even song.

—it 'ringeth' in our ear with a soft and solemn music to which the soul is prodigal of echoes. We may answer for the poetic faculty of its 'maker.' He is, in fact, not merely ingenious and fanciful, but *abounds*—the word, with an allowance for the unhappiness of his subject, is scarcely too strong—with passages of thoughtful sweetness and cheerful tenderness, at which we are constrained to smile and sigh, and both for 'pastyme.'

Was never Payne but it had Joye at last
In the Fayre morrow.

There is a lovely cadence! And then Amour's courtship of his 'swete ladie' —a 'cynosure' before Milton's!—conducted as simply, yet touchingly, as if he were innocent of the seven deadly sciences, and knew no more of 'the Ladie Grammere' than might become a troubadour:—

O swete ladie, the true and perfect star
Of my true heart! Oh, take ye now pitie!
Think on my Payne which am tofore you
here,—

With your swete eyes behold you me, and
see

How thought and woe by great extremitie,
Hath changed my colour into pale and wan!
It was not so when I to love began.

The date assigned to this *Pastyme of Plesure* is 1506, some fifty years before the birth of Spenser. Whether it was written in vain for Spenser, judge ye. To the present generation it is covered deep with the dust of more than three centuries, and few tongues ask above the place—'What lies here?'

Barclay is our next swan—and verily might be mistaken, in any sort taken,

by naturalists, for a crow. He is our first writer of eclogues, the translator of the *Ship of Fools*, and a thinker of his own thoughts with sufficient intrepidity.

Skelton 'floats double, swan and shadow,' as poet laureate of the University of Oxford, and 'royal orator' of Henry VII. He presents a strange specimen of a court-poet, and if, as Erasmus says, 'Britannicarum literarum lumen' at the same time—the light is a pitchy torchlight, wild and rough. Yet we do not despise Skelton: despise him? it were easier to hate. The man is very strong—he triumphs, foams, is rabid, in the sense of strength; he mesmerizes our souls with the sense of strength—it is as easy to despise a wild beast in a forest as John Skelton, poet laureate. He is as like a wild beast as a poet laureate can be. In his wonderful dominion over language he tears it, as with teeth and paws, ravenously, savagely: devastating rather than creating, dominant rather for liberty than for dignity. It is the very *sans-culottism* of eloquence—the oratory of a Silenus drunk with anger only! Mark him as the satyr of poets! fear him as the Juvenal of satyrs! and watch him with his rugged, rapid, picturesque savageness, his 'breathless rimes,' to use the fit phrase of the satirist Hall, or—

His rimes all ragged,
Tattered, and jagged,

to use his own,—climbing the high trees of Delphi, and pelting from thence his victim underneath, whether priest or cardinal, with rough-rinded apples! And then ask, could he write otherwise than so? The answer is this opening to his poem of the *Bouge of Court*, and the impression inevitable, of the serious sense of beauty and harmony to which it gives evidence:—

In autumn when the sun *in virgine*,
By radiant heat enripened hath our corne,
When Luna, full of mutabilitie,
As empresse, the diadem hath worne
Of our pole Arctic, smiling as in scorn
At our folie and our unstedfastnesse.—

But our last word of Skelton must be, that we do not doubt his influence for good upon our language. He was a writer singularly fitted for beating out the knots of the cordage, and straining the lengths to extension; a rough worker at rough work. Strong, rough Skelton! We can no more deride him than my good lord cardinal could. If our critical eyebrows must motion contempt at somebody of the period, we choose Tusser, and his *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry and Housewifery*. Whatever we say of Tusser, no fear of harming a poet,—

Make ready a bin
For chaff to lie in,—

and there may be room *therein*, in compliment to the author of the proposition, for his own verses.

Lord Surrey passes as the tuner of our English nearly up to its present pitch of delicacy and smoothness; and we admit that he had a melody in his thoughts which they dared not disobey. That he is, as has been alleged by a chief critic, 'our first metrical writer,' lies not in our creed; and even Turberville's more measured praise,—

Our mother tongue by him hath got such
lyght,
That ruder speche thereby is banisht
qwyht,—

we have difficulty in accepting. We venture to be of opinion that he did not belong to that order of master-minds with whom transitions originate, although qualified, by the quickness of a yielding grace, to assist effectually a transitional movement. There are names which catch the proverbs of praise as a hedge-thorn catches sheep's wool, by position and approximation rather than adaptitude: and this name is of them. Yet it is a high name. His poetry makes the ear lean to it, it is so sweet and low; the English he made it of being ready to be sweet, and falling ripe in sweetness into other hands than his. For the poems of his friend, Sir Thomas Wyatt, have more thought, freedom, and variety, more general

earnestness, more of the attributes of masterdom, than Lord Surrey's; while it were vain to reproach for lack of melody the writer of that loveliest lyric, 'My lute, be still.' And Wyatt is various in metres, and the first song-writer (that praise we must secure to him) of his generation. For the rest, there is an inequality in the structure of his verses which is very striking and observable in Surrey himself: as if the language, consciously insecure in her position, were balancing her accentual being and the forms of her pronunciation, half giddily, on the very turning point of transition. Take from Wyatt such a stanza as this, for instance,—

The longlove that in my thoughts I harbour,
And in my heart doth keep his residence,
Into my face presseth with bold prentence,
And there campeth, displaying his banner.—
and oppose to it the next example, polished as Pope,—

But I am here in Kent and Christendom,
Among the Muses where I read and rime;
Where, if thou list, mine own John Poins,
to come,
Thou shalt be judge how I do spend my time.

It is well to mark Wyatt as a leader in the art of didactic poetic composition under the epistolary form, 'sternly milde' (as Surrey said of his countenance) in the leaning toward satire. It is very well to mark many of his songs as of exceeding beauty, and as preserving clear their touching simplicity from that plague of over-curious conceits which infest his writings generally. That was the plague of Italian literature transmitted by contagion, together with better things—together with the love of love-lore, and the sonnet structure, the summer-bower for one fair thought, delighted in and naturalized in England by Wyatt and Surrey. For the latter,—

From Tuscane came his ladye's worthy race:
and his Muse as' well as Geraldine.
Drops from Plato's cup, passing through Petrarch's, not merely perfumed and coloured but diluted by the medium, we find in Surrey's cup also. We must not underpraise Surrey to balance the

overpraise we murmur at. Denying him supremacy as a reformer, the denial of his poetic nobleness is far from us. We attribute to him the chivalry of the *light ages*—we call him a scholastic troubadour. The longest and most beautiful of his poems ('describing the lover's whole state') was a memory in the mind of Milton when he wrote his *Allegro*. He has that measure of pathos whose expression is no gesture of passion, but the skilful fingering on a well-tuned lute. He affects us at worst not painfully, and

With easie sighs such as folks draw in love.

He wrote the first English blank verse, in his translation of two books of the *Aeneid*. He leads, in seeming, to the ear of the world, and by predestination of 'popular breath,' that little choral swan-chant which, swelled by Wyatt, Vaux, Bryan, and others, brake the common air in the days of the eighth Henry. And he fulfilled in sorrow his awarded fate as a poet,—his sun going down at noon!—and the cleft head, with its fair youthful curls, testifying like that fabled head of Orpheus to the music of the living tongue!

Sackville, Lord Dorset, takes up the new blank verse from the lips of Surrey, and turns it to its right use of tragedy. We cannot say that he does for it much more. His *Gorboduc*, with some twenty years between it and Shakespeare, is farther from the true drama in versification and all the rest than *Gammer Gurton* is from *Gorboduc*. Sackville's blank verse, like Lord Surrey's before him, is only heroic verse without rime; and we must say so in relation to Gascoigne, who wrote the second blank-verse tragedy, the *Jocasta*, and the first blank-verse original poem, *The Stele Glass*. The secret of the blank verse of Shakespeare, and Fletcher, and Milton, did not dwell with them! the arched cadence, with its artistic key-stone and under-flood of broad continuous sound, was never achieved nor attempted by its first builders. We

sometimes whisper in our silence that Marlowe's 'brave sublunary' instincts should have groped that way. But no! Chaucer had more sense of music in the pause than Marlowe had. Marlowe's rhythm is not, indeed, hard and stiff and uniform, like the sentences of *Gorboduc*, as if the pattern one had been cut in boxwood; there is a difference between uniformity and monotony, and he found it; his cadence revolves like a wheel, progressively, if slowly and heavily, and with an orbicular grandeur of unbroken and unvaried music.

It remains to us to speak of the work by which Sackville is better known than by *Gorboduc* — the *Mirror for Magistrates*. The design of it has been strangely praised, seeing that whatever that peculiar merit were, Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* certainly cast the shadow before. But Sackville's commencement of the execution proved the master's hand; and that the great canvas fell abandoned to the blurring brushes of inadequate disciples was an ill-fortune compensated adequately by the honour attributed to the Induction—of inducing a nobler genius than his own, even Spenser's, to a nobler labour. We cannot doubt the influence of that Induction. Its colossal figures, in high allegorical relief, were exactly adapted to impress the outspread fancy of the most sensitive of poets. A yew-tree cannot stand at noon in an open pleasureance without throwing the outline of its branches on the broad and sunny grass. Still, admitting the suggestion in its fullness, nothing can differ more than the allegorical results of the several geniuses of Lord Dorset and Spenser. Teardrop and dewdrop respond more similarly to analysis—or morbid grief and ideal joy. Sackville stands close wrapt in the 'blanket of his dark,' and will not drop his mantle for the sun. Spenser's business is with the lights of the world, and the lights beyond the world.

But this Sackville, this Earl of Dorset ('Oh, a fair earl was he!'), stands too low for admeasurement with Spenser:

and we must look back, if covetous of comparisons, to some one of a loftier and more kingly stature. We must look back far, and stop at Chaucer. Spenser and Chaucer do naturally remind us of each other, they two being the most cheerful-hearted of the poets—with whom cheerfulness, as an attribute of poetry, is scarcely a common gift. But the world will be upon us! The world moralizes of late, and in its fashion, upon the immorality of mournful poems, upon the criminality of 'melodious tears,' upon the morbidity of the sorrows of poets—because Lord Byron was morbidly sorrowful, and because a crowd of his ephemeral imitators hung their heads all on one side and were insincerely sorrowful. The fact, however, has been, apart from Lord Byron and his disciples, that the '*aū aū*' of Apollo's flower is vocally sad in the prevailing majority of poetical compositions. The philosophy is, perhaps, that the poetic temperament, halfway between the light of the ideal and the darkness of the real, and rendered by each more sensitive to the other, and unable, without a struggle, to pass out clear and calm into either, bears the impress of the necessary conflict in dust and blood! The philosophy may be, that only the stronger spirits do accomplish this victory, having lordship over their own genius—whether they accomplish it by looking bravely to the good ends of evil things, which is the practical ideal, and possible to all men in a measure—or by abstracting the inward sense from sensual things and their influences, which is subjectivity perfected—or by glorifying sensual things with the inward sense, which is objectivity transfigured—or by attaining to the highest vision of the idealist, which is subjectivity turned outward into an actual objectivity.

To the last triumph Shakespeare attained; but Chaucer and Spenser fulfilled their destiny and grew to their mutual likeness as cheerful poets by certain of the former processes. They two are alike in their cheerfulness, yet are their cheerfulnesses most unlike.

Each poet laughs : yet their laughter ring with as far a difference as the sheep-bell on the hill and the joy-bell in the city. Each is earnest in his gladness : each active in persuading you of it. You are persuaded, and hold each for a cheerful man. The whole difference is, that Chaucer has a cheerful humanity : Spenser, a cheerful ideality. One rejoices walking on the sunny side of the street : the other, walking out of the street in a way of his own, kept green by a blessed vision. One uses the adroitness of his fancy by distilling out of the visible universe her occult smiles : the other, by fleeing beyond the possible frown, the occasions of natural ills, to that 'cave of cloud' where he may smile safely to himself. One holds festival with men—seldom so coarse and loud indeed as to startle the deer from their green covert at Woodstock—or with homely Nature and her 'douce Marguerite' low in the grasses : the other adopts for his playfellows imaginary or spiritual existences, and will not say a word to Nature herself, unless it please her to dress for his masque and speak daintily sweet and rare like a spirit. The human heart of one utters oracles—the imagination of the other speaks for his heart, and we miss no prophecy. For music, we praised Chaucer's, and not only as Dryden did, for 'a Scotch tune.' But never issued there from lip or instrument, or the tuned causes of Nature, more lovely sound than we gather from our Spenser's art. His mouth is vowed away from the very possibilities of harshness. Right leans to wrong in its excess. His rhythm is the continuity of melody, not harmony, because too smooth for modulation—because 'by his vow' he dares not touch a discord for the sake of consummating a harmony. It is the singing of an angel in a dream : it has not enough of contrary for waking music. Of his great poem we may say, that we miss no humanity in it, because we make a new humanity out of it and are satisfied in our human hearts—a new humanity vivified by the poet's life, moving in

happy measure to the chanting of his thoughts, and upon ground supernaturally beautified by his sense of the beautiful. As an allegory, it enchant us away from its own purposes. Una is Una to us ; and Sans Foy is a traitor, and Error is 'an ugly monster,' with a 'tayle' ; and we thank nobody in the world, not even Spenser, for trying to prove it otherwise. Do we dispraise an allegorical poem by throwing off its allegory ? we trow not. Probably, certainly to our impression, the highest triumph of an allegory, from this of the *Faery Queen* down to the *Pilgrim's Progress*, is the abnegation of itself.

Oh those days of Elizabeth ! We call them the days of Elizabeth, but the glory fell over the ridge, in illumination of the half-century beyond ! those days of Elizabeth ! Full were they of poets as the summer-days are of birds,—

No branch on which a fine bird did not sit,
No bird but his sweet song did shrilly sing,
No song but did contayne a lovely dit.

We hear of the dramatists, and shall speak of them presently ; but the lyric singers were yet more numerous,—there were singers in every class. Never since the first nightingale brake voice in Eden arose such a jubilee-concert—never before nor since has such a crowd of true poets uttered true poetic speech in one day ! Not in England evermore ! Not in Greece, that we know. Not in Rome, by what we know. Talk of their Augustan era—we will not talk of it, lest we desecrate our own of Elizabeth. The latter was rightly prefigured by our figure of the chorus of swans. It was besides the Milky Way of poetry : it was the miracle-age of poetical history. We may fancy that the master-souls of Shakespeare and Spenser, breathing, stirring in divine emotion, shot vibratory life through other souls in electric association ! we may hear, in fancy, one wind moving every leaf in a forest—one voice responded to by a thousand rock-echoes. Why, a common man walking through the earth in those days grew a poet by position—even as a child's

shadow cast upon a mountain slope is dilated to the aspect of a giant's.

If we, for our own parts, did enact a Briareus, we might count these poets on the fingers of our hundred hands, after the fashion of the poets of Queen Anne's time, counting their syllables. We do not talk of them as 'faultless monsters,' however wonderful in the multitude and verity of their gifts: their faults were numerous, too. Many poets of an excellent sweetness, thinking of poetry that, like love,

It was to be all made of fantasy!

fell poetry-sick, as they might fall lovesick, and knotted associations, far and free enough to girdle the earth withal, into true love-knots of quaintest devices. Many poets affected novelty rather than truth; and many attained to novelty rather by attitude than altitude, whether of thought or word. Worst of all, many were incompetent to Sir Philip Sidney's ordeal—the translation of their verses into prose—and would have perished utterly by that hot ploughshare. Still, the natural healthy eye turns toward the light, and the true calling of criticism remains the distinguishing of beauty. Love and honour to the poets of Elizabeth—honour and love to them all! Honour even to the fellow workers with Sackville in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, to Ferrers, Churchyard, and others, who had their hand upon the ore if "they did not clasp it!"—and to Warner, the poet of *Albion's England*, singing snatches of ballad pathos, while he worked, for the most part heavily, too, with a bowed back as at a stiff soil—and to Gascoigne, reflecting beauty and light from his *Stele Glass*, though his *Fruites of War* are scarcely fruits from Parnassus—and to Daniel, tender and noble, and teaching, in his *Musophilus*, the chivalry of poets, though in his *Civil Wars* somewhat too historical, as Drayton has written of him—and to Drayton, generous in the *Polyolbion* of his poet-blessing on every hill and river through this fair England, and not ineloquent in his *Heroical Epistles*, though

somewhat tame and level in his *Barons' Wars*—and to the two brother Fletchers, Giles and Phineas, authors of *Christ's Victory* and *The Purple Island*, for whom the Muse's kiss followed close upon the mother's, gifting their lips with no vulgar music and their house with that noble kinsman, Fletcher the dramatist! Honour, too, to Davies, who 'reasoned in verse' with a strong mind and strong enunciation, though he wrote one poem on the Soul and another on Dancing, and concentrated the diverging rays of intellect and folly in his sonnets on the reigning Astraea—and to Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, who had deep thoughts enough to accomplish ten poets of these degenerate days, though because of some obscurity in their expression you would find some twenty critics 'full of oaths' by the pyramids, that they all meant nought—and to Chamberlayne, picturesquesque, imaginative, earnest (by no means dramatic) in his poetic romance of *Pharonnida*, though accumulative to excess of figures, and pedantic in such verbal learning as 'entheon charms,' the 'catagraph' of a picture, the exagitations and congestions of elements, *et sic omnia!*—to Chalkhill, wrapt, even bound, 'in soft Lydian airs,' till himself, as well as his Clearachus and Thealma, fall asleep in involutions of harmony—and to Browne, something languid in his *Britannia's Pastorals*, by sitting in the sun with Guarini and Marini, and 'perplexed in the extreme' by a thousand images and sounds of beauty calling him across the dewy fields—and to Wither, author of the *Shepherd's Hunting*, and how much else? Wither, who wrote of poetry like a poet, and in return has been dishonoured and misprised by some of his own kind!—a true sincere poet of blessed oracles! Honour, love, and praise to him and all! May pardon come to us from the unnamed.

Honour also to the translators of poems—to such as Chapman and Sylvester—great hearts, interpreters of great hearts, and afterwards worthily thanked by the Miltons, and Popes, and Keatses, for

their gift of greatness to the language of their England.

Honour to the satirists!—to Marston, who struck boldly and coarsely at an offence from the same level with the offender—to Hall, preserving his own elevation, and flashing downwardly those thick lightnings in which we smell the sulphur—and to Donne, whose instinct to beauty overcame the resolution of his satiric humour.

Honour, again, to the singers of brief poems, to the lyrists and sonneteers! O Shakespeare, let thy name rest gently among them, perfuming the place. We 'swear' that these sonnets and songs do verily breathe, 'not of themselves, but *thee*'; and we recognize and bless them as short sighs from thy large poetic heart, burdened with diviner inspiration! O rare Ben Jonson, let us have thy songs, rounded each with a spherical thought, and the lyrics from thy masques alive with learned fantasy, and thine epigrams keen and quaint, and thy noble epitaphs, under which the dead seem stirring! Fletcher, thou shalt be with us—prophet of *Comus* and *Penseroso*! giddy with inhalation from the fount of the beautiful, speaking out wildly thought upon thought, measure upon measure, as the birds sing, because his own voice is lovely to him. Sidney, true knight and fantastic poet, whose soul did too curiously inquire the fashion of the beautiful—the fashion rather than the secret!—but left us in one line the completest *Ars Poetica* extant,—

Foole, sayde my Muse to mee, looke in thine heart, and write.

Thy name be famous in all England and Arcadia! And Raleigh, tender and strong, of voice sweet enough to answer that 'Passionate Shepherd,' yet trumpet-shrill to speak the 'Soul's errand' thrilling the depths of our own! having honour and suffering as became a poet, from the foot of the Lady of England light upon his cloak, to the cloak of his executioner wrapping redly his breathless corpse. Marlowe, we must not forget his 'Shepherd' in his tragedies:

and 'Come live with me' sounds passionately still through the dead cold centuries. And Drummond, the over-praised and under-praised—a passive poet, if we may use the phraseology—who was not careful to achieve greatness, but whose natural pulses beat music, and with whom the consciousness of life was the sentiment of beauty. And Llyly, shiven from the sins of his *Euphues*, with a quaint grace in his songs; and Donne, who takes his place naturally in this new class, having a dumb *angel*, and knowing more noble poetry than he articulates. Herrick, the Ariel of poets, sucking 'where the bee sucks' from the rose-heart of Nature, and reproducing the fragrance idealized; and Carew, using all such fragrance as a courtly essence, with less of self-abandonment and more of artificial application; and Herbert, with his face as the face of a spirit, dimly bright; and fantastic Quarles, in rude and graphic gesticulation, expounding verity and glory; and Breton, and Turberville, and Lodge, and Hall (not the satirist), and all the hundred swans, nameless, or too numerous to be named, of that Cayster of the rolling time.

Then, high in the miraculous climax, come the dramatists—from whose sinews was knit the overcoming strength of our literature over all the nations of the world. 'The drama is the executive of literature,' said De Stael: and the Greek's 'action, action, action' we shall not miss in our drama. Honour to the dramatists, as honour *from* them! Shakespeare is our security that we shall say so less briefly soon.

III

We must take a few steps backward for position's sake, and then be satisfied with a rapid glance at the Drama. From the days of Norman William, the representations called *Mysteries* and *Moralities* had come and gone without a visible poet; and Skelton appears before us almost the first English claimant of a dramatic reputation, with the author-

ship of the interludes of *Magnificence* and the *Nigromansir*. The latter is chiefly famous for Warton's affirmation of having held it in his hands, giving courteous occasion to Kitson's denial of its existence: and our own palms having never been crossed by the silver of either, we cannot prophesy on the degree of individual honour involved in the literary claim. Bale, one of the eighth Henry's bishops, was an active composer of Moralities; and John Heywood, his royal jester and 'author of that very merry interlude' called *The Four P's*, united in his merriment that caustic sense with that lively ease which have not been too common since in his accomplished dramatic posterity. Yet those who in the bewilderment of their admirations (or senses) attribute to John Heywood the *Pinner of Wakefield* are more obviously—we are sorely tempted to add, more ridiculously—wrong, than those who attribute it to Shakespeare. The Canon of Windsor's *Ralph Royster Doyster*, and the Bishop of Bath and Wells's *Gammer Gurton*, followed each other close into light, the earliest modern comedies, by the force of the *âme ecclésiastique*. A little after came Ferrys, memorialized by Puttenham as 'the principall man of his profession' (of poetry), and 'of no lesse myrthe and felicitie than John Heywood, but of much more skille and magnificence in his meter.' But seeing that even Oblivion forgot Ferrys, leaving his name and Puttenham's praise when she defaced his works, and seeing, too, the broad farcedom of the earlier, however episcopal, writers, we find ourselves in an unwilling posture of recognition before Edwards, as the first extant regular dramatist of England. It is a pitiful beginning. *The Four P's* would be a more welcome A to us. They express more power with their inarticulate roughness than does this *Damon and Pythias*, with its rimed, loitering frigidity, or even than this *Palamon and Arcite*, in which the sound of the hunting horn cast into ecstasy the too gracious soul of Queen Elizabeth. But Sir John Davies's

divine Astraea was, at that grey dawn of her day, ignorant of greater poets; and we ('happy in this') go on toward them. After Edwards, behold Sackville with that *Gorboduc* we have named, the first blank-verse tragedy we can name, praised by Sidney for its exemplary preservation of the unities and for 'climbing to the height of Seneca his stile,'—tight-fitting praise, considering that the composition is high enough to account for its snow, and cold enough to emulate the Roman's. And after Sackville behold the first dramatic geniuses, in juxtaposition with the first dramatists—Peele, and Kyd, mad as his own Hieronimo (we will grant it to such critics as are too utterly in their senses), only—

When he is mad,
Then, methinks, he is a brave fellow!

and then, methinks, and by such madness, the possibility of a Shakespeare was revealed. Kyd's blank verse is probably the first breaking of the true soil; and certainly far better and more dramatic than Marlowe's is—crowned poet as the latter stands before us—poet of the English Faustus, which we will not talk of against the German, nor set up its grand, luxurious, melancholy devil against Goethe's subtle, biting, Voltairish devil, each being devil after its kind,—the poet of the Jew which Shakespeare drew (not), yet a true Jew, 'with a berde,'—and the poet of the first historical drama,—since the *Gorboduc* scarcely can be called one. Marlowe was more essentially a poet than a dramatist; and if the remark appear self-evident and universally applicable, we will take its reverse in Kyd, who was more essentially, with all his dramatic faults, a dramatist than a poet. Passing from the sound of the elemental monotonies of the rhythm of Marlowe, we cannot pause before Nash and Greene to distinguish their characteristics. It is enough to name these names of gifted dramatists, who lived, or at least wrote, rather before Shakespeare than with him, and helped to make him credible.

Through them, like a lens, we behold his light. Of them we conjecture—these are the blind elements working before the earthquake ;—before the great ‘Shakescene,’ as Greene said when he was cross ! And we may say when we are fanciful, these are the experiments of Nature, made in her solution of the problem of how much deathless poetry will agree with how much mortal clay !—these are the potsher'd vessels half filled, and failing at last,—until up to the edge of *one* the liquid inspiration rose and bubbled in hot beads to quench the thirsty lips of the world.

It is hard to speak of Shakespeare—these measures of the statures of common poets fall from our hands when we seek to measure him : it is harder to praise him. Like the tall plane-tree which Xerxes found standing in the midst of an open country, and honoured inappropriately with his ‘barbaric pomp,’ with bracelets and chains and rings suspended on its branches, so has it been with Shakespeare. A thousand critics have commended him with praises as unsuitable as a gold ring to a plane-tree. A thousand hearts have gone out to him, carrying necklaces. Some have discovered that he individualized, and some that he generalized, and some that he subtilized—almost *trans-transcendentally*. Some would have it that he was a wild genius, sowing wild oats and stealing deer to the end, with no more judgement forsooth than ‘youth the hare’ ; and some, that his very pulses beat by that critical law of art in which he was blameless !—some, that all his study was in his horn-book, and not much of that ; and some, that he was as learned a polyglot as ever had been dull but for Babel !—some, that his own ideal burned steadfastly within his own fixed contemplations, unstirred by breath from without ; and some, that he wrote for the gold on his palm and the ‘rank popular breath’ in his nostrils, apart from consciousness of greatness and desire of remembrance. If the opinions prove nothing, their contradictions prove the exaltation of the object ;

their contradictions are praise. For men differ about things above their reach, not within it—about the mountains in the moon, not Primrose Hill : and more than seven cities of men have differed in their talk about Homer also ! Homer, also, was convicted of indiscreet nodding ; and Homer, also, had no manner of judgement ! and the *Arts Poetica* people could not abide his bad taste ! And we find another analogy. We, who have no leaning to the popular cant of Romanticism and Classicism, and believe the old Greek BEAUTY to be both new and old, and as alive and not more grey in Webster’s *Duchess of Malfy* than in Aeschylus’s *Eumenides*, do reverence this Homer and this Shakespeare as the colossal borderers of the two intellectual departments of the world’s age—do behold from their feet the antique and modern literatures sweep outwardly away, and conclude, that whereas the Greek bore in his depth the seed and prophecy of all the Hellenic and Roman poets, so did Shakespeare, ‘whose seed was in himself’ also, those of a later generation !

For the rest we must speak briefly of Shakespeare, and very weakly too, except for love. That he was a great natural genius nobody, we believe, has doubted—the fact has passed with the cheer of mankind ; but that he was a great artist the majority has doubted. Yet Nature and Art cannot be reasoned apart into antagonistic principles. Nature is God’s art—the accomplishment of a spiritual significance hidden in a sensible symbol. Poetic art (man’s) looks past the symbol with a divine guess and reach of soul into the mystery of the significance—disclosing from the analysis of the visible things the synthesis or unity of the ideal—and expounds like symbol and like significance out of the infinite of God’s doing into the finite of man’s comprehending. Art lives by Nature, and not the bare mimetic life generally attributed to Art : she does not imitate, she expounds. *Interpres naturae*—is the poet-artist ; and the poet wisest in Nature is the most

artistic poet! and thus our Shakespeare passes to the presidency unquestioned, as the greatest artist in the world. We believe in his judgement as in his genius. We believe in his learning, both of books and men, and hills and valleys : in his grammars and dictionaries we do not believe. In his philosophy of language we believe absolutely—in his Babel-learning, not at all. We believe reverently in the miracle of his variety ; and it is observable that we become aware of it less by the numerousness of his persons and their positions than by the *depth* of the least of either—by the sense of visibility beyond what we see, as in Nature. Our creed goes on to declare him most passionate and most rational—of an emotion which casts us into thought, of a reason which leaves us open to emotion ! most grave and most gay—while we scarcely can guess that the man Shakespeare is grave or gay, because he interposes between ourselves and his personality the whole breadth and length of his ideality. His associative faculty—the wit's faculty besides the poet's—for him who was both wit and poet, shed sparks like an electric wire. He was wise in the world, having studied it in his heart ; what is called ‘the knowledge of the world’ being just the knowledge of one heart, and certain exterior symbols. What else ? What otherwise could he, the young transgressor of Sir Thomas Lucy's fences, new from Stratford and the Avon, close in theatric London, have seen, or touched, or handled of the Hamlets and Lear's and Othellos, that he should draw them ? ‘How can I take portraits,’ said Marmontel, in a similar inexperience, ‘before I have beheld faces ?’ Voltaire embraced him, in reply. Well applauded, Voltaire. It was a *mot* for Marmontel's utterance, and Voltaire's praise—for Marmontel, not for Shakespeare. Every being is his own centre to the universe, and in himself must one foot of the compasses be fixed to attain to any measurement—nay, every being is his own mirror to the universe. Shakespeare wrote from

within—the beautiful ; and we recognize from within—the true. He is universal, because he is individual. And, without any prejudice of admiration, we may go on to account his faults to be the proofs of his power—the cloud of dust cast up by the multitude of the chariots. The activity of his associative faculty is occasionally morbid : in the abundance of his winged thoughts the locust flies with the bee, and the ground is dark with the shadow of them. Take faults, take excellences, it is impossible to characterize this Shakespeare by an epithet—have we heard the remark before, that it should sound so obvious ? We say of Corneille, the noble ; of Racine, the tender ; of Aeschylus, the terrible ; of Sophocles, the perfect ; but not one of these words, not one appropriately descriptive epithet, can we attach to Shakespeare without a conscious recoil. Shakespeare ! the name is the description.

He is the most wonderful artist in blank verse of all in England, and almost the earliest. We do not say that he first broke the enchainment of monotony, of which the Sackvilles and the Marlowes left us complaining ; because the versification of *Hieronimo* ran at its own strong will, and the *Pinner of Wakefield* may have preceded his first plays. We do not even say, what we might, that his hand first proved the compass and infinite modulation of the new instrument ; but we do say, that it never answered another hand as it answered his. We do say, this fingering was never learned of himself by another. From Massinger's more resonant majesty, from even Fletcher's more numerous and artful cadences, we turn back to his artlessness of art, to his singular and supreme estate as a versifier. Often when he is at the sweetest, his words are poor monosyllables, his pauses frequent to brokenness, and the structure of the several lines less varied than was taught after Fletcher's masterdom ; but the whole results in an ineffable charming of the ear which we acquiesce in without seeking its cause, a happy mystery of music.

This is little for Shakespeare; yet so much for the place, that we are forced into brevities for our observations which succeed. We chronicle only the names of Chapman, Dekker, Webster, Tourneur, Randolph, Middleton, and Thomas Heywood, although great names, and worthy, it is not too much to add, of Shakespeare's brotherhood. Many besides lean from our memory to the paper, but we put them away reverently. It was the age of the dramatists—the age of strong passionate men, scattering on every side their good and evil oracles of vehement humanity, and extenuating no thought in its word: and in that age 'to write like a man' was a deed accomplished by many besides him of whom it was spoken, Jonson's 'son Cartwright.'

At Jonson's name we stop perforce, and do salutation in the dust to the impress of that 'learned sock.' He was a learned man, as everybody knows; and, as everybody does not believe, not the worse for his learning. His material, brought laboriously from east and west, is wrapped in a flame of his own. If the elasticity and abandonment of Shakespeare and of certain of Shakespeare's brothers are not found in his writings, the reason of the defects need not be sought out in his readings. His genius, high and verdant as it grew, yet belonged to the hard woods: it was lance-wood rather than bow-wood—a genius rather noble than graceful—eloquent, with a certain severity and emphasis of enunciation. It would have been the same if he, too, had known 'little Latin and lesse Greek.' There was a dash of the rhetorical in his dramatic. Not that we deny him empire over the passions: his heart had rhetoric as well as his understanding, and he wrote us a *Sad Shepherd* as well as a *Catiline*. His versification heaves heavily with thought. For his comic powers, let *Volpone* and *The Alchymist* attest them with that unextinguishable laughter which is the laughter of gods or poets still more than of the wits' coffee-house. Was it 'done at the Mermaid'—was it ever fancied there, that 'rare Ben Jonson' should be called

a pedantic poet? Nay, but only a scholastic one.

And Beaumont and Fletcher, the Castor and Pollux of this starry poetic sphere (*lucida sidera!*), our silence shall not cover them; nor will we put asunder, in our speech, the names which friendship and poetry joined together, nor distinguish by a laboured analysis the vivacity of one from the solidity of the other; seeing that men who, according to tradition, lived in one house, and wore one cloak, and wrote on one page, may well, by the sanctity of that one grave they have also in common, maintain for ever beyond it the unity they coveted. The characteristics of these writers stand out in a softened light from the deep tragic background of the times. We may liken them to Shakespeare in one mood of his mind, because there are few classes of beauty the type or likeness of which is not discoverable in Shakespeare. From the rest they stand out contrastingly, as the Apollo of the later Greek sculpture-school,—too graceful for divinity and too vivacious for marble,—placed in a company of the antiquer statues with their grand blind look of the almighty ness of repose. We cannot say of these poets as of the rest, 'they write all like men'; we cannot think they write like women either—perhaps they write a little like centaurs. We are of opinion in any way that the grace is more obvious than the strength; and there may be something centauresque and of twofold nature in their rushing mutabilities, and changes on passion and weakness. Clearest of all is that they wrote like poets, and in a versification most surpassingly musical though liberal, as if music served them for love's sake, unbound! They had an excellent genius, but not a strong enough invention to include judgement; judgement being the consistency of invention, and consistency always, whether in morals or literature, depending upon strength. We do not, in fact, find in them any perfect and covenanted whole—we do not find it in character, or in plot, or in composition; and lamenting the defect on many grounds we do so on this chief

one, that their good is just good, their evil just evil, unredeemed into good like Shakespeare's and Nature's evil by unity of design, but lying apart, a willingly chosen, through and through evil—and '*by this time it stinketh.*' If other results are less lamentable they are no less fatal. The mirror which these poets held up to us is vexed with a thousand cracks, and everything visible is in fragments. Their conceptions all tremble on a per-adventure—'peradventure they shall do well': there is no royal absolute will that they should do well—the poets are less kings than workmen. And being workmen they are weak—the moulds fall from their hands—are clutched with a spasm or fall with a faintness. After which querulousness we shall leave the question as to whether their tragic or comic powers be put to more exquisite use—not for solution, nor for doubt (since we hold fast an opinion), but for praise the most rarely appropriate or possible.

One passing word of Ford, the pathetic—for he may wear on his sleeve the epithet of Euripides, and no daw peck there. Most tender is he, yet not to feebleness—most mournful, yet not to languor; yet we like to hear the war-horse leaps of Dekker on the same tragic ground with him, producing at once contrast and completeness. Ungrateful thought!—the *Witch of Edmonton* bewitched us to it. Ford can fill the ear and soul singly with the trumpet-note of his pathos; and in its pauses you shall hear the murmuring voices of Nature—such a nightingale, for instance, as never sang on a common night. Then that death scene in the *Broken Heart*: who has equalled that? It is single in the drama—the tragic of tragedy, and the sublime of grief. A word, too, of Massinger, who writes all like a giant—a dry-eyed giant. He is too ostentatiously strong for flexibility, and too heavy for rapidity, and monotonous through his perpetual final trochee; his gesture and enunciation are slow and majestic. And another word of Shirley, an inferior writer, though touched, to our fancy,

with something of a finer ray, and closing, in worthy purple, the procession of the Elizabethan men. Shirley is the last dramatist. *Valete et plaudite, o posteri.*

Standing in his traces, and looking backward and before, we become aware of the distinct demarcations of five eras of English poetry: the first, the Chaucerian, although we might call it *Chauer*; the second, the Elizabethan; the third, which culminates in Cowley; the fourth, in Dryden and the French school; the fifth, the return to nature in Cowper and his successors of our day. These five rings mark the age of the fair and stingless serpent we are impelled, like the ancient mariner, to bless—but not 'un-aware.' *Ah benedicite!* we bless her so, out of our Chaucer's rubric, softly, but with a plaintiveness of pleasure! For when the last echo of the Elizabethan harmonies had died away with Shirley's footsteps, in the twilight of that golden day; when Habington and Lovelace, and every last bird before nightfall was dumb, and Crashaw's fine rapture, holy as a summer sense of silence, left us to the stars—the first voices startling the thinker from his reverting thoughts are verily of another spirit. The voices are eloquent enough, thoughtful enough, fanciful enough; but something is defective. Can any one suffer, as an experimental reader, the transition between the second and third periods, without feeling that something is defective? What is so! And who dares to guess that it may be INSPIRATION?

IV

'POETRY is of too spiritual a nature,' Mr. Campbell has observed, 'to admit of its authors being exactly grouped by a Linnaean system of classification.' Nevertheless, from those subtle influences which poets render and receive, and from other causes less obvious but no less operative, it has resulted, even to ourselves in this slight survey of the poets of our country, that the signs used by us simply as signs of historical de-

marcation have naturally fallen or risen into signs of poetical classification. The five eras we spoke of in our last paper have each a characteristic as clear in poetry as in chronology; and a deeper gulf than an *Anno Domini* yawns betwixt an Elizabethan man and a man of that third era upon which we are entering. The change of the poetical characteristic was not, indeed, without gradation. The hands of the clock had been moving silently for a whole hour before the new one struck—and even in Davies, even in Drayton, we felt the cold foreshadow of a change. The word ‘sweetness,’ which presses into our sentences against the will of our rhetoric whenever we speak of Shakespeare (‘sweetest Shakespeare’) or his kin, we lose the taste of in the later waters—they are brackish with another age.

In what did the change consist? Practically and partially in the idol-worship of *rime*. Among the elder poets, the rime was only a felicitous adjunct, a musical accompaniment, the tinkling of a cymbal through the choral harmonies. You heard it across the changes of the pause, as an undertone of the chant, marking the time with an audible indistinctness, and catching occasionally and reflecting the full light of the emphasis of the sense in mutual elucidation. But the new practice endeavoured to identify in all possible cases the rime and what may be called the sentimental emphasis; securing the latter to the tenth riming syllable, and so dishonouring the emphasis of the sentiment into the base use of the marking of the time. And not only by this unnatural provision did the emphasis minister to the rime, but the pause did so also. ‘Away with all pauses,’ said the reformers, ‘except the legitimate pause at the tenth riming syllable. O rime, live for ever! Rime alone take the incense from our altars—tinkling cymbal alone be our music!’—And so arose, in dread insignificance, ‘the heart and impart men.’

Moreover, the corruption of the versification was but a type of the change in the poetry itself, and sufficiently ex-

pressive. The accession to the throne of the poets, of the *wits* in the new current sense of the term, or of the *beaux esprits*—a term to be used the more readily because descriptive of the actual pestilential influence of French literature—was accompanied by the substitution of elegant thoughts for poetic conceptions (‘elegant,’ alas! beginning to be the critical pass-word), of adroit illustrations for beautiful images, of ingenuity for genius. Yet this third era is only the preparation for the fourth consummating one—the hesitation before the crime—we smell the blood through it in the bath-room. And our fancy grows hysterical, like poor Octavia, while the dismal extent of the *quantum mutatus* develops itself in detail.

‘Waller’s sweetness!’ it is a needy antithesis to Denham’s strength—and, if anything beside, a sweetness as far removed from that which we have lately recognized, as the saccharine of the palate from the melodious of the ear. Will Saccharissa frown at our comparison from the high sphere of his verse? or will she, a happy ‘lady who can sleep when she pleases,’ please to oversleep our offence? It is certain that we but walk in her footsteps in our disdain of her poet, even if we disdain him—and most seriously we disown any such partaking of her ‘crueltie.’ Escaping from the first astonishment of an unhappy transition, and from what is still more vexing, those ‘base, common, and popular’ critical voices, which, in and out of various ‘arts of poetry,’ have been pleased to fix upon this same transitional epoch as the genesis of excellence to our language and versification, we do not, we hope it of ourselves, undervalue Waller. There is a certain grace ‘beyond the reach of art,’ or rather beyond the destructive reach of his ideas of art, to which, we opine, if he had not been a courtier and a renegade, the Lady Dorothea might have bent her courtly head unabashed, even as the Penshurst beeches did. We gladly acknowledge

in him, as in Denham and other poets of the transition, an occasional remorseful recurrence by half lines and whole lines, or even a few lines together, to the poetic past. We will do anything but agree with Mr. Hallam, who, in his excellent and learned work on *The Literature of Europe*, has passed some singular judgements upon the poets, and none more startling than his comparison of Waller to Milton, on the ground of the sustenance of power. The crying truth is louder than Mr. Hallam, and cries, in spite of fame, with whom poor Waller was an *enfant trouvé*, an heir by chance, rather than merit—that he is feeble poetically quite as surely as morally and politically, and that, so far from being an equal and sustained poet, he has not strength for unity even in his images, nor for continuity in his thoughts, nor for adequacy in his expression, nor for harmony in his versification. This is at least our strong and sustained impression of Edmund Waller.

With a less natural gift of poetry than Waller, Denham has not only more strength of purpose and language (an easy superiority), but some strength in the abstract: he puts forth rather a sinewy hand to the new structure of English versification. It is true, indeed, that in his only poem which survives to any competent popularity—his *Cooper's Hill*—we may find him again and again, by an instinct to a better principle, receding to the old habit of the medial pause, instead of the would-be sufficiency of the final one. But, generally, he is true to his modern sect of the Pharisees; and he helps their prosperity otherwise by adopting that pharisaic fashion of setting forth, vaingloriously, a little virtue of thought and poetry in pointed and antithetic expression, which all the wits delighted in, from himself, a chief originator, to Pope, the perfecter. The famous lines, inheriting by entail a thousand critical admirations—

Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full,
and, as Sydney Smith might put it,

'a great many other things, without a great many other things,' contain the germ and prophecy of the whole Queen Anne's generation. For the rest, we will be brief in our melancholy, and say no more of Denham than that he was a Dryden *in small*.

The genius of the new school was its anomaly, even Abraham Cowley. We have said nothing of 'the metaphysical poets' because we disclaim the classification, and believe with Mr. Leigh Hunt that every poet, inasmuch as he is a poet, is a metaphysician. In taking note, therefore, of this Cowley, who stands on the very vibratory soil of the transition, and stretches his faltering and protesting hands on either side to the old and to the new, let no one brand him for 'metaphysics.' He was a true poet, both by natural constitution and cultivation, but without the poet's heart. His admirers have compared him to Pindar—and, taking Pindar out of his rapture, they may do so still: he was a Pindar writing by *métier* rather than by *verve*. In rapidity and subtlety of the associative faculty, which, however, with him, moved circularly rather than onward, he was sufficiently Pindaric: but, as it is a fault in the Greek lyrist to leave his buoyancy to the tumultuous rush of his associations too unmisgivingly and entirely for the right reverence of Unity in Beauty, so is it the crime of the English poet to commit coldly what the other permitted passively, and with a conscious volition, quick yet calm, calm when quickest, to command from the ends of the universe the associations of material sciences and spiritual philosophies. Quickness of the associative or suggestive faculty is common, we have had occasion to observe, to the wit (in the modern sense) and the poet—its application only being of a reverse difference. Cowley confounded the application, and became a witty poet. The Elizabethan writers were inclined to a too curious illuminating of thought by imagery. Cowley was coarsely curious: he went to the shambles for his cham-

bers of imagery, and very often through the mud. All which faults appear to us attributable to his coldness of temperament, and his defectiveness in the instinct towards Beauty; to having the intellect only of a great poet, not the sensibility. His *Davidis*, our first epic in point of time, has fine things in it. His translations (or rather paraphrases) of Anacreon are absolutely the most perfect of any English composition of their order. His other poems contain profuse material, in image and reflection, for the accomplishment of three poets, each greater than himself. He approached the beautiful and the true as closely as mere Fancy could; but that very same Fancy, unfixed by feeling, too often, in the next breath, approximated him to the hideous and the false. Noble thoughts are in Cowley—we say noble, and we might say sublime; but, while we speak, he falls below the first praise. Yet his influence was for good rather than for evil, by faciting to a struggle backward, a delay in the revolutionary movement: and this, although a wide gulf yawned between him and the former age, and his heart's impulse was not strong enough to cast him across it. For his actual influence, he lifts us up and casts us down—charms, and goes nigh to disgust us—does all but make us love and weep.

And then came ‘glorious John,’ with the whole fourth era in his arms—and eloquent above the sons of men, to talk down, thunder down poetry as if it were an exhalation. Do we speak as if he were not a poet? nay, but we speak of the character of his influences! nay, but he was a poet—an excellent poet—in marble! and Phidias, with the sculpturesque ideal separated from his working tool, might have carved him. He was a poet without passion, just as Cowley was—but, then, Cowley lived by fancy, and that would have been poor living for John Dryden. Unlike Cowley, too, he had an earnestness which of itself was influential. He was inspired in his understanding and his senses only; but to the point of dis-

enchanted the world most marvellously. He had a large soul for a man, containing sundry Queen Anne's men, one within another, like quartetto tables; but it was not a large soul for a poet, and it entertained the universe by potato patches. He established finally the reign of the literati for the reign of the poets—and the critics clapped their hands. He established finally the despotism of the final emphasis—and no one dared, in affecting criticism, to speak any more at all against a tinkling cymbal. And so, in distinctive succession to poetry and inspiration, began the new system of harmony ‘as by law established’—and so he translated Virgil not only into English but into Dryden; and so he was kind enough to translate Chaucer too, as an example—made him a much finer speaker, and not, according to our doxy, so good a versifier—and cured the readers of the old ‘Knight’s Tale’ of sundry of their tears!—and so he reasoned powerfully in verse—and threw into verse, besides, the whole force of his strong sensual being; and so he wrote what has been called from generation to generation, down to the threshold of our days, ‘the best ode in the English language.’ To complete which successes he thrust out nature with a fork; and for a long time, and in spite of Horace’s prophecy, she never came back again. Do we deny our gratitude and his glory to glorious John because we speak thus? In nowise would we do it. He was a man greatly endowed; and our language and our literature remain, in certain respects, the greater for his greatness—more practical, more rapid, and with an air of mixed freedom and adroitness which we welcome as an addition to the various powers of either. With regard to his influence—and he was most influential upon POETRY—we have spoken; and have the whole of the opening era from which to prove.

While we return upon our steps for a breathing moment, and pause before Milton, the consideration occurs to us that a person of historical ignorance in respect to this divine poet would hesitate

and be at a loss to which era of our poetry to attach him through the internal evidence of his works. He has not the tread of a contemporary of Dryden, and Rochester's *nothingness* is a strange accompaniment to the voice of his greatness. Neither can it be quite predicated of him that he walks an Elizabethan man —there is a certain fine bloom or farina, rather felt than seen, upon the old poems, unrecognized upon his. But the love of his genius leant backward to those olden oracles: and it is pleasant to think that he was actually born before Shakespeare's death; that they too looked upwardly to the same daylight and stars; and that he might have stretched his baby arms (*animosus infans*) to the faint hazel eyes of the poet of poets. Let us think in any wise that he drew in some living subtle Shakespearian benediction, providing for greatness.

The Italian poets had 'rained influence' on the Elizabethan 'field of the cloth of gold'; and from the Italian poets, as well as the classical sources and the elder English ones, did Milton accomplish his soul. Yet the poet Milton was not made by what he received; not even by what he loved. High above the current of poetical influences he held his own grand personality; and there never lived poet in any age (unless we assume ignorantly of Homer) more isolated in the contemporaneous world than he. He was not worked upon from out of it, nor did he work outwardly upon it. As Cromwell's secretary and Salmasius's antagonist, he had indeed an audience; but as a poet, a scant one; his music, like the spherical tune, being inaudible because too fine and high. It is almost awful to think of him issuing from the arena of controversy victorious and *blind*—putting away from his dark brows the bloody laurel—left alone after the heat of the day by those for whom he had combated; and originating in that enforced dark quietude his epic vision for the inward sight of the unborn; so to avenge himself on the world's neglect by exacting

from it an eternal future of reminiscence. The circumstances of the production of his great work are worthy in majesty of the poem itself; and the writer is the ideal to us of the majestic personality of a poet. He is the student, the deep thinker, the patriot, the believer, the thorough brave man —breathing freely for truth and freedom under the leaden weights of his adversities, never reproaching God for his griefs by his despair, working in the chain, praying without ceasing in the serenity of his sightless eyes; and, because the whole visible universe was swept away from betwixt them and the Creator, contemplating more intently the invisible infinite, and shaping all his thoughts to it in grander proportion! O noble Christian poet! Which is hardest? self-renunciation, and the sackcloth and the cave? or grief-renunciation, and the working on, on, under the stripe? He did what was hardest. He was Agonistes building up, instead of pulling down; and his high religious fortitude gave a character to his works. He stood in the midst of those whom we are forced to consider the corrupt verisificators of his day, an iconoclast of their idol rime, and protesting practically against the sequestration of pauses. His lyrical poems, move they ever so softly, step loftily, and with something of an epic air. His sonnets are the first sonnets of a free rhythm—and this although Shakespeare and Spenser were sonneteers. His *Comus*, and *Samson*, and *Lycidas*—how are we to praise them? His epic is the second to Homer's, and the first in sublime effects—a sense as of divine benediction flowing through it from end to end. Not that we compare, for a moment, Milton's genius with Homer's; but that Christianity is in the poem besides Milton. If we hazard a remark which is not admiration, it shall be this—that with all his heights and breadths (which we may measure geometrically if we please from the *Davidis* of Cowley), with all his rapt devotions and exaltations towards the highest of all, we do miss

something—we, at least, who are writing—miss something—of what may be called; but rather metaphysically than theologically, *spirituality*. His spiritual personages are vast enough, but not rarefied enough. They are humanities, enlarged, uplifted, transfigured—but no more. In the most spiritual of his spirits there is a conscious, obvious, even ponderous materialism. And hence comes the celestial gunpowder, and hence the clashing with swords, and hence the more continuous evil which we feel better than we describe, the thick atmosphere clouding the heights of the subject. And if anybody should retort, that complaining so we complain of Milton's humanity—we shake our heads. For Shakespeare also was a *man*; and our creed is, that the *Midsummer Night's Dream* displays more of the fairyhood of fairies than the *Paradise Lost* does of the angelhood of angels. The example may serve the purpose of explaining our objection; both leaving us room for the one remark more—that Ben Jonson and John Milton, the most scholastic of our poets, brought out of their scholarship different gifts to our language; that Jonson brought more Greek, and Milton more Latin—while the influences of the latter and greater poet were at once more slowly and more extensively effectual.

Butler was the contemporary of Milton: we confess a sort of continuous 'innocent surprise' in the thought of it, however the craziness of our imagination may be in fault. We have stood by as witnesses while the great poet sanctified the visible earth with the oracle of his blindness; and are startled that a profane voice should be hardy enough to break the echo, and jest in the new consecrated temple. But this is rather a roundheaded than a longheaded way of advertising to poor Butler; who, for all his gross injustice to the purer religionists, in the course of 'flattering the vices and daubing the iniquities' of King Charles's court, does scarcely deserve at our hands, either to be treated as a poet or punished for being

a contemporary of the poet Milton. Butler's business was the business of desecration, the exact reverse of a poet's; and by the admission of all the world his business is well done. His learning is various and extensive, and his fancy communicates to it its mobility. His wit has a gesture of authority, as if it might, if it pleased, be wisdom. His power over language, 'tattered and ragged' like Skelton's, is as wonderful as his power over images. And if nobody can command the design of his *Hudibras*, which is the English counterpart of *Don Quixote*—a more objectionable servility than an adaptation from a serious composition, in which case that humorous effect would have been increased by the travesty, which is actually injured, and precisely in an inverse ratio, by the burlesque copy of the burlesque—everybody must admit the force of the execution. When Prior attempted afterwards the same line of composition with his peculiar grace and airiness of diction—when Swift ground society into jests with a rougher turning of the wheel—still, then and since, has this Butler stood alone. He is the genius of his class—a natural enemy to poetry under the form of a poet: not a great man, but a powerful man.

V

We return to the generation of Dryden and to Pope his inheritor—Pope, the perfecter, as we have already taken occasion to call him—who stood in the presence of his father Dryden, before that energetic soul, weary with its long literary work which was not always clean and noble, had uttered its last wisdom or foolishness through the organs of the body. Unfortunately, Pope had his advisers apart from his muses; and their counsel was 'be correct.' To be correct, therefore, to be great through correctness, was the end of his ambition, an aspiration scarcely more calculated for the production of noble poems than the philosophy of utilitarianism is for that of lofty virtues. Yet correctness seemed

a virtue rare in the land ; Dr. Johnson having crowned Lord Roscommon over Shakespeare's head, 'the only correct writer before Addison' ! The same critic predicated of Milton, that he could not cut figures upon cherry-stones—Pope glorified correctness, and dedicated himself to cherry-stones from first to last. A cherry-stone was the apple of his eye.

Now we are not about to take up any popular cry against Pope ; he has been over-praised and is under-praised ; and, in the silence of our poetical experience, ourselves may confess personally to the guiltiness of either extremity. He was not a great poet ; he meant to be a correct poet, and he was what he meant to be, according to his construction of the thing meant—there are few amongst us who fulfil so literally their ambitions. Moreover, we will admit to our reader in the confessional, that, however convinced in our innermost opinion of the superiority of Dryden's genius, we have more pleasure in reading Pope than we ever could enjoy or imagine under Pope's master. We incline to believe that Dryden being the greatest poet-power, Pope is the best poet-manual ; and that whatever Dryden has done—we do not say conceived, we do not say suggested, but DONE—Pope has done that thing better. For translations, we hold up Pope's Homer against Dryden's Virgil and the world. Both translations are utterly and equally contrary to the antique, both bad with the same sort of excellence ; but Pope's faults are Dryden's faults, while Dryden's are not Pope's. We say the like of the poems from Chaucer ; we say the like of the philosophic and satirical poems : the art of reasoning in verse is admirably attained by either poet, but practised with more grace and point by the later one. To be sure, there is the *Alexander's Feast* ode, called, until people half believed what they said, the greatest ode in the language ! But here is, to make the scales even again, the *Eloisa*, with tears on it—faulty but tender—of a sensibility which glorious

John was not born with a heart for. To be sure, it was not necessary that John Dryden should keep a Bolingbroke to think for him : but to be sure again, it is something to be born with a heart, particularly for a poet. We recognize besides, in Pope, a delicate fineness of tact, of which the precise contrary is unpleasantly obvious in his great master; Horace Walpole's description of Selwyn, *une bête inspirée*, with a restriction of *bête* to the animal sense, fitting glorious John like his crown. Now there is nothing of this coarseness of the senses about Pope ; the little pale Queen Anne's valetudinarian had a nature fine enough to stand erect upon the point of a needle like a schoolman's angel ; and whatever he wrote coarsely, he did not write from inward impulse, but from external conventionality, from a bad social Swift-sympathy. For the rest, he carries out his master's principles into most excellent and delicate perfection : he is rich in his degree. And there is, indeed, something charming even to an enemy's ear in this exquisite balancing of sounds and phrases, these 'shining rows' of oppositions and appositions, this glorifying of commonplaces by antithetic processes, this catching, in the rebound, of emphasis upon rime and rime ; all, in short, of this Indian jugglery and Indian carving upon . . . cherry-stones !—'and she herself' (that is, poetry)—

And she herself one fair Antithesis.

When Voltaire threw his *Henriade* into the fire and Héault rescued it, 'Souvenez-vous,' said the president to the poet, 'that I burnt my lace ruffles for the sake of your epic.' It was about as much as the epic was worth. For our own part, we would sacrifice not only our point, but the prosperity of our very fingers, to save from a similar catastrophe these works of Pope ; and this, although the most perfect and original of all of them, *The Rape of the Lock*, had its fortune in a fire-safe. They are the works of a master. A great poet?—oh no ! A true poet?—perhaps not. Yet a man, be it remembered, of

such mixed gracefulness and power, that Lady Mary Wortley deigned to coquet with him, and Dennis shook before him in his shoes.

Nature, as we have observed, had been expelled by a fork, under the hand of Pope's progenitors; and if in him and around him we see no sign of her return, we do not blame Pope for what is, both in spirit and in form, the sin of his school. Still less would we 'play at bowles' with Byron, and praise his right use of the right poetry of Art. Our views of Nature and of Art have been sufficiently explained to leave our opinion obvious of the controversy in question, in which, as in a domestic broil, 'there were faults on both sides.' Let a poet never write the words 'tree,' 'hill,' 'river,' and he may still be true to nature. Most untrue, on the other hand, most narrow, is the poetical sectarianism, and essentially most unpoetical, which stands among the woods and fields announcing with didactic phlegm, 'Here only is nature.' Nature is where God is! Poetry is where God is! Can you go up or down or around and not find Him? In the loudest hum of your machinery, in the dunkest volume of your steam, in the foulest street of your city—there, as surely as in the Brocken pine-woods and the watery thunders of Niagara—there, as surely as He is above all, lie Nature and Poetry in full life. Speak, and they will answer! Nature is a large meaning! Let us make column-room for it in the comprehension of our love! for the coral rock built up by the insect and the marble erected by the man.

In this age of England, however, pet-named the Augustan, there was no room either for Nature or Art: Art and Nature (for we will not separate their names) were at least maimed and dejected and sickening day by day—

Quoth she, I grieve to see your leg
Stuck in a hole here, like a peg;

and even so, or like the peg of a top humming drowsily, our poetry stood still. There was an abundance of 'correct writers,' yes, and of 'elegant

writers': there was Parnell, for instance, who would be called besides a pleasing writer by any pleasing critic; and Addison, a proverb for the 'virtuousest, discreetest, best' with all the world. Or if, after the Scotch mode of Monk-barns, we call our poets by their possessions, not so wronging their characteristics, there was *The Dispensary*, the *Art of Preserving Health*, the *Art of Cookery*,—and *Trivia*, or the *Fan*—take Gay by either of those names! and *Cider*, or the *Splendid Shilling*—take Phillips, Milton's imitator, by either of these! and there was Pomfret, not our 'choice,' the concentrate essence of namby-pambyism; and Prior, a brother spirit of the French Gresset—a half-brother, of an inferior race, yet to be praised by us for one instinct obvious in him, a blind stretching of the hand to a sweeter order of versification than was current. Of Young we could write much: he was the very genius of antithesis; a genius breaking from 'the system,' with its broken chain upon his limbs, and frowning darkly through the grey monotony—a grander writer by spasms than by volitions. Blair was of his class, but rougher; a brawny contemplative Orson. And how many of our readers may be unaware of the underground existence of another *Excursion* than the deathless one of our days, and in blank verse, too, and in several cantos; and how nobody will thank us for digging at these fossil remains! It is better to remember Mallet by his touching ballad of the *William and Margaret*, a word taken from diviner lips to becoming purpose; only we must not be thrown back upon the 'Ballads,' lest we wish to live with them for ever. Our literature is rich in ballads, a form epitomical of the epic and dramatic, and often vocal when no other music is astir; and to give a particular account of which would take us far across our borders.

As it is, we are across them; we are benighted in our wandering and straitened for room. We glance back vainly to the lights of the later drama, and see Dryden, who had the heart to write

rimed plays after Shakespeare, and but little heart for anything else,—and Congreve, and Lillo, and Southerne, and Rowe, all gifted writers, and Otway, master of tears, who starved in our streets for his last tragedy—a poet most effective in broad touches; rather moving, as it appears to us, by scenes than by words.

Returning to the general poets, we meet, with bent faces toward hillside Nature, Thomson and Dyer; in writing which names together we do not depreciate Thomson's, however we may a little exalt Dyer's. We praise neither of these writers for being descriptive poets; but for that faithful transcript of their own impressions, which is a common subject of praise in both—Dyer being more distinct, perhaps, in his images, and Thomson more impressive in his general effect. Both are faulty in their blank-verse diction; the latter too florid and verbose, the former (although *Grongar Hill* is simple almost to baldness) too pedantic and *constructive*—far too ‘sapaceous’ and ‘pomaceous.’ We offer pastoral salutation also to Shenstone and Hammond; pairing them like Polyphemus's sheep; fain to be courteous if we could: and we could if we were *Phyllida*. Surely it is an accomplishment to utter a pretty thought so simply that the world is forced to remember it; and that gift was Shenstone's, and he the most poetical of country gentlemen. May every shrub on the lawn of Leasowes be evergreen to his brow. And next, O most patient reader, pressed to a conclusion and in a pairing humour, we come to Gray and Akenside together—yes, together! because if Gray had written a philosophic poem he would have written it like the *Pleasures of Imagination*, and because Akenside would have written odes like Gray, if he could have commanded a rapture. Gray, studious and sitting in the cold, learnt the secret of a simulated and innocent fire (the Greek fire he might have called it), which burns beautifully to the eye, but never would have harmed M. Hénault's ruffles. Collins had twenty times the lyric genius

of Gray; we feel his fire in our cheeks. But Gray, but Akenside—both with a volition towards enthusiasm—have an under-constitution of most scholastic coldness: *Si vis me fler*, you must weep; but they only take out their pocket-handkerchiefs. We confess humbly, before gods and men, that we never read to the end of Akenside's *Pleasures*, albeit we have read Plato: some pleasures, say the moralists, are more trying than pains. Let us turn for refreshment to Goldsmith—that amiable genius, upon whose diadem we feel our hands laid ever and anon in familiar love,—to Goldsmith, half emerged from ‘the system,’ his forehead touched with the red ray of the morning; a cordial singer. Even Johnson, the ponderous critic of the system, who would hang a dog if he read *Lycidas* twice, who wrote the lives of the poets and left out the poets, even he loved Goldsmith! and Johnson was Dryden's critical bear—a rough bear, and with points of noble beardom. But while he growled the leaves of the greenwood fell; and oh, how sick to faintness grew the poetry of England! Anna Seward, ‘by'r lady,’ was the ‘muse’ of those days, and Mr. Hayley ‘the bard,’ and Hannah More wrote our dramas, and Helen Williams our odes, and Rosa Matilda our elegiacs,—and Blacklock, blind from his birth, our descriptive poems, and Mr. Whalley our ‘domestic epics,’ and Darwin our poetical philosophy, and Lady Millar encouraged literature at Bath, with red taffeta and ‘the vase.’ But the immortal are threatened vainly. It was the sickness of renewal rather than of death; St. Leon had his fainting hand on the elixir: the new era was alive in Cowper. We do not speak of him as the master of a transition, only as a hinge on which it slowly turned; only as an earnest, tender writer, and true poet enough to be true to himself. Cowper sang in England, and Thomas Warton also—of a weaker voice but in tune: and Beattie, for whom we have too much love to analyse it, seeing that we drew our childhood's first poetic pleasure from his

Minstrel. And Burns walked in glory on the Scotch mountain's side; and everywhere Dr. Percy's collected ballads were sowing the great hearts of some still living for praise with impulses of greatness. It was the revival of poetry—the opening of the fifth era—the putting down of the Dryden dynasty—the breaking of the *serf* bondage—the wrenching of the iron from the soul. And Nature and Poetry did embrace one another! and all men who were lovers of either and of our beloved England were enabled to resume the pride of their consciousness, and looking round the world say gently, yet gladly, 'Our Poets.'

VI¹

WHEN Mr. Wordsworth gave his first poems to the public it was not well with poetry in England. The 'system' riveted upon the motions of poetry by Dryden and his dynasty had gradually added to the restraint of slavery its weakness and emasculation. The change from poetry to rhetoric had issued in another change, to the commonplaces of rhetoric. We had no longer to complain of Pope's antithetic glories—there was 'a vile antithesis' for those also. The followers were not as the master; and the very facility with which the trick of acoustical mechanics was caught up by the former—admitting of 'singing for the million,' with ten fingers each for natural endowment, and the ability to count them for requirement—made wider and more apparent the difference of dignity between the Popes and the Pope Joans. Little by little, by slow and desolate degrees, Thought had perished out of the way of the appointed and most beaten rhythm; and we had the beaten rhythm, without the living footstep—we had the monotony of the military movement, without the heroic impulse—the cross of the Legion of Honour, hung, as

it once was, in a paroxysm of converted Bourbonism, at a horse's tail; and the 'fork,' which expelled Nature, dropped feebly downward, blunted of its *point*. And oh! to see who sat then in England in the seats of the elders! The Elizabethan men would have gnashed their teeth at such a sight; the Queen Anne's men would have multiplied Duncians. Of the third George's men (*Ἀχαΐδες οὐκ ἔρ' Ἀχαιοί*), Hayley, too good a scholar to bear to be so bad a poet, was a chief hope; and Darwin, mistaker of the optic nerve for the poetical sense, an inventive genius.

But Cowper had a great name, and Burns a greater; and the *réveillé* of Dr. Percy's *Reliques of English Poetry* was echoed presently by the *Scottish Minstrelsy*. There was a change—a revival, an awaking—a turning, at least upon the pillow, of some who slept on in mediocrity, as if they felt the daylight on their shut eyelids: there was even a group of noble hearts (Coleridge, the idealist, poet among poets, in their midst), foreseeing the sun. Nature, the long banished, re-dawned like the morning—Nature, th. true mother, cried afar off to her children, 'Children, I am here!—come to me.' It was a hard act to come, and involved the learning and the leaving of much. Conventionalities of phrase and rhythm, conventional dialects set apart for poets, conventional words, attitudes, and manners, consecrated by 'wits,'—all such Nessian trappings were to be wrench'd off, even to the cuticle into which they had urged their poison. But it was an act not too hard for the doing. There was a visible movement towards Nature; the majority moving of course with reservation, but individuals with decision; some rending downward their garments of pestilent embroidery, and casting themselves at her feet. As the chief of the movement, the Xenophon of the return, we are bound to acknowledge this great Wordsworth, and to admire how, in a bravery bravest of all because born of love, in a passionate unreservedness sprung of genius, and to the actual scandal of the

¹ Originally published in the *Athenaeum*, Aug. 27, 1842, as a review on Wordsworth's *Poems, chiefly of early and late years, including The Borderers, a Tragedy*.

world which stared at the filial familiarity, he threw himself not at the feet of Nature, but straightway and right tenderly upon her bosom! And so, trustfully as child before mother, self-renouncingly as child after sin, absorbed away from the consideration of publics and critics as child at play-hours, with a simplicity startling to the *blaze* critical ear as inventiveness, with an innocent utterance felt by the competent thinker to be wisdom, and with a faithfulness to natural impressions acknowledged since by all to be the highest art—this William Wordsworth did sing his *Lyrical Ballads* where the ‘Art of criticism’ had been sung before, and ‘the world would not let them die.’

The voice of Nature has a sweetness which few of us, when sufficiently tried, can gainsay; it penetrates our artificial ‘tastes,’ and overcomes us; and our ignorance seldom proves strong in proportion to our instincts. We recognize, like Ulysses’ dog, with feeble joyous gesture the master’s voice—and the sound is nearly always pleasant to us, however we may want strength to follow after it. But while, at the period we refer to, the recognition and gratulation were true and deep, the old conventionalities and prejudices hung heavily in bondage and repression. The great body of readers would recoil to the Drydenic rhythm, to the Queen Anne’s poetical cant, to anti-Saxonisms, whether in Latin or French; or exacted, as a condition of a poet’s faithfulness to Nature, such an effervescence of his emotions as had rendered Pope natural in the *Eloisa*. ‘Let us all forsooth be Eloisa, and so natural,—the want was an excuse for loving Nature; and the opinion went that the daily heart-beat was more obnoxious in poetry than the incidental palpitation. Poor Byron (true miserable genius, soul-blind great poet!) ministered to this singular need, identifying poetry and passion. Poetry ought to be the revelation of the complete man—and Byron’s manhood having no completion nor entirety, consisting on the contrary of a one-sided

passionateness, his poems discovered not a heart, but the wound of a heart; not humanity, but disease; not life, but a crisis. It was not so—it was not in the projection of a passionate emotion—that William Wordsworth committed himself to Nature, but in full resolution and determinate purpose. He is scarcely, perhaps, of a passionate temperament, although still less is he cold; rather quiet in his love, as the stock-dove, and brooding over it as constantly, and with as soft an inward song lapsing outwardly—serene through deepness—saying himself of his thoughts, that they ‘do often lie too deep for tears’; which does not mean that their painfulness will not suffer them to be wept for, but that their closeness to the supreme Truth hallows them, like the cheek of an archangel, from tears. Call him the very opposite of Byron, who, with narrower sympathies for the crowd, yet stood nearer to the crowd, because everybody understands passion. Byron was a poet through pain. Wordsworth is a feeling man because he is a thoughtful man; he knows grief itself by a reflex emotion; by sympathy, rather than by suffering. He is eminently and humanly expansive; and, spreading his infinite egotism over all the objects of his contemplation, reiterates the love, life, and poetry of his peculiar being in transcribing and chanting the material universe, and so sinks a broad gulf between his descriptive poetry and that of the Darwinian painter-poet school. Darwin was, as we have intimated, all optic nerve. Wordsworth’s eye is his soul. He does not see that which he does not intellectually discern, and he beholds his own cloud-capped Helvellyn under the same conditions with which he would contemplate a grand spiritual abstraction. In his view of the exterior world—as in a human Spinozism—mountains and men’s hearts share in a sublime unity of humanity; yet his Spinozism does in nowise affront God, for he is eminently a religious poet, if not, indeed, altogether as generous and capacious in his Christianity as in his

poetry ; and, being a true Christian poet, he is scarcely least so when he is not writing directly upon the subject of religion—just as we learn sometimes without looking up, and by the mere colour of the grass, that the sky is cloudless. But what is most remarkable in this great writer is his poetical consistency. There is a wonderful unity in these multiform poems of one man : they are 'bound each to each in natural piety,' even as his days are. And why ? because they *are* his days—all his days, work days and Sabbath days—his *life*, in fact, and not the unconnected works of his life, as vulgar men do opine of poetry and do rightly opine of vulgar poems, but the sign, seal, and representation of his life—nay, the actual audible breathing of his inward spirit's life. When Milton said that a poet's life should be a poem he spoke a high moral truth ; if he had added a reversion of the saying, that a poet's poetry should be his life, he would have spoken a critical truth, not low.

'Foole, saide my muse to mee, looke in thine hearte and write.' And not only, we must repeat, at feast times, fast times, or curfew times—not only at times of crisis and emotion, but at all hours of the clock ; for that which God thought good enough to write, or permit the writing of, on His book, the heart, is not too common, let us be sure, to write again in the best of our poems. William Wordsworth wrote these common things of nature, and by no means in a phraseology nor in a style. He was daring in his commonness as any of your Tamerlanes may be daring when far fetching an alien image from an outermost world ; and, notwithstanding the ribald cry of that *vox populi* which has, in the criticism of poems, so little the character of divinity, and which loudly and mockingly, at his first utterance, denied the sanctity of his simplicities—the Nature he was faithful to 'betrayed not the heart which loved her,' but, finally, justifying herself and him, 'did'—without the *Edinburgh Review*.

'Hero-worshippers' as we are, and sitting for all the critical pretence—in right or wrong of which we speak at all—at the feet of Mr. Wordsworth,—recognizing him, as we do, as poet-hero of a movement essential to the better being of poetry, as poet-prophet of utterances greater than those who first listened could comprehend, and of influences most vital and expansive—we are yet honest to confess that certain things in the *Lyrical Ballads* which most provoked the ignorant innocent hootings of the mob do not seem to us all heroic. Love, like ambition, may overvault itself ; and Betty Foys of the Lake school (so called) may be as subject to conventionalities as Pope's Lady Bettys. And, perhaps, our great poet might, through the very vehemence and nobleness of his hero and prophet-work for Nature, confound, for some blind moment, and by an association easily traced and excused, nature with rusticity, the simple with the bald ; and even fall into a vulgar conventionality in the act of spurning a graceful one. If a trace of such confounding may occasionally be perceived in Mr. Wordsworth's earlier poetry, few critics are mad enough, today, to catch at the loose straws of the full golden sheaf and deck out withal their own arrogant fronts in the course of mouthing mocks at the poet. The veriest critic of straw knoweth well, at this hour of the day, that if Mr. Wordsworth was ever over-rustic, it was not through incapacity to be right royal ; that of all poets, indeed, who have been kings in England, not one has swept the purple with more majesty than this poet, when it hath pleased him to be majestic. *Vivat rex*—and here is a new volume of his reign. Let us rejoice, for the sake of literature and the age, in the popularity which is ready for it, and in the singular happiness of a great poet living long enough to rebound from the 'fell swoop' of his poetical destiny, survive the ignorance of his public, and convict the prejudices of his reviewers. It is a literal 'poetical justice' and one rarest of all, that a

great poet should stand in a permitted sovereignty, without doing so, like poor Inez de Castro, by right of death. It is almost wonderful that his country should clap her hands in praise of him before he has ceased to hear: the applause resembles an anachronism. Is Mr. Wordsworth startled at receiving from his contemporaries what he expected only from posterity?—is he asking himself ‘Have I done anything wrong?’ Probably not—it is at least with his usual air of calm and advised dignity that he addresses his new volume in its *Envoy*—

Go single,—yet aspiring to be joined
With thy forerunners, that through many a
year

Have faithfully prepared each other’s way—
Go forth upon a mission best fulfilled
When and wherever, in this changeful world,
*Power hath been given to please for higher
ends*

Than pleasure only; gladdening to prepare
For wholesome sadness, troubling to refine,
Calming to raise.

—words of the poet which form a nobler description of the character and uses of his poetry than could be given in any words of a critic.

We do not say that the finest of Mr. Wordsworth’s productions are to be found, or should be looked for, in the present volume; but the volume is worthy of its forerunners, consistent in noble earnestness and serene philosophy, true poet’s work—the hand trembling not a jot for years or weariness—the full face of the soul turned hopefully and stilly as ever towards the True, and catching across its ridge the idealized sunlight of the Beautiful. And yet if we were recording angel, instead of only recording reviewer, we should drop a tear . . . another . . . and end by weeping out that series of sonnets in favour of capital punishments—moved that a hand which has traced life-warrants so long for the literature of England should thus sign a misplaced ‘Benedicite’ over the hangman and his victim. We turn away from them to other sonnets—to forget aught in Mr.

Wordsworth’s poetry we must turn to his poetry!—and however the greatest poets of our country—the Shakespeares, Spensers, Miltons—worked upon high sonnet ground, not one opened over it such broad and pouring sluices of various thought, imagery, and emphatic eloquence as he has done. This is a worthy counsel from one worthy to counsel:—

A poet! he hath put his heart to school,
Nor dares to move unpropped upon the staff
Which Art hath lodged within his hand—
must laugh

By precept only, and shed tears by rule.
Thy Art be Nature; the live current quaff,
And let the groveller sip his stagnant pool,
In fear that else, when Critics grave and cool
Have killed him, Scorn should write his
epitaph.

How does the meadow-flower its bloom
unfold?

Because the lovely little flower is free
Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold;
And so the grandeur of the forest-tree
Comes not by casting in a formal mould,
But from its own divine vitality.

Here is a sonnet of softer sense, and not less true, referring, we have heard, to a portrait of that lovely ‘Lady of her own’ which Nature made long ago for herself—and for the poet, we suppose—his sonnet being addressed to the painter:—

All praise the likeness by thy skill por-
trayed,
But ‘tis a fruitless task to paint for me,
Who, yielding not to changes Time has
made,
By the habitual light of memory see
Eyes unbedimmed, see bloom that cannot
fade,
And smiles that from their birthplace ne’er
shall flee
Into the land where ghosts and phantoms
be;
And seeing this, own nothing in its stead.
Couldst thou go back into far-distant years,
Or share with me, fond thought! that in-
ward eye,
Then, and then only, Painter, could thy Art
The visual powers of Nature satisfy,
Which hold, whate’er to common sight
appears,
Their sovereign empire in a faithful heart.

The tender Palinodia is beyond Petrarch:—

Though I beheld at first with blank surprise
This work, I now have gazed on it so long,
I see its truth with unreluctant eyes;
Oh, my beloved! I have done thee wrong,
Conscious of blessedness, but, whence it
springs

Ever too heedless, as I now perceive:
Morn into noon did pass, noon into eve,
And the old day was welcome as the young,
As welcome and as beautiful—in sooth
More beautiful, as being a thing more holy;
Thanks to thy virtues, to the eternal youth
Of all thy goodness, never melancholy;
To thy large heart and humble mind, that
cast

Into one vision, future, present, past!

That '*more beautiful*' is most beautiful!
all human love's cunning is in it; besides
the full glorifying smile of Christian love!

Last in the volume is the tragedy of *The Borderers*, which, having lain for some fifty years 'unregarded' among its author's papers—a singular destiny for these printing days when our very morning talk seems to fall naturally into pica type—caused, in its announcement from afar, the most faithful disciples to tremble for the possible failure of their master. Perhaps they trembled with cause. The master, indeed, was a prophet of humanity; but he was wiser in love than terror, in admiration than pity, and rather intensely than actively human; capacious to embrace within himself the whole nature of things and beings, but not going out of himself to embrace anything; a poet of one large sufficient soul, but not polypsychial like a dramatist. Therefore his disciples trembled: and we will not say that the tragedy, taken as a whole, does not justify the fear. There is something grand and Greek in the intention which hinges it, showing how crime makes crime in cursed generation, and how black hearts, like whiter ones (*Topaze* or *Ebène*), do cry out and struggle for sympathy and brotherhood; granting that black heart (*Oswald*) may stand something too much on the extreme of evil to represent humanity broadly enough for a drama to turn upon. The

action, too, although it does not, as might have been apprehended, lose itself in contemplation, has no unhesitating firm dramatic march—perhaps it 'potters' a little, to take a word from Mrs. Butler;—and when all is done we look vainly within us for an impression, the response to the unity of the whole. But, again, when all is done, the work is Mr. Wordsworth's, and the conceptions and utterances living and voiceful in it bear no rare witness to the master. The old blind man, left to the ordeal of the desert—the daughter in agony hanging upon the murderer for consolation—knock against the heart, and take back answers; and ever and anon there are sweet gushings of such words as this poet only knows, showing how, in a 'late remorse of love,' he relapses into pastoral dreams, notwithstanding his new vocation, and within the very sight of the theatic *thymels*:—

A grove of darker and more lofty shade
I never saw. The music of the birds
Drops deadened from a roof so thick with
leaves.

Who can overpass the image of the old
innocent man praying?—

The name of daughter on his lips, he prays!
With nerves so steady, that the very flies
Sit unmolested on his staff.

And now to give a fragment from a scene in which Oswald, the black genius of the drama, brings his blackness to bear on Marmaduke, who is no genius at all. A passage, well known and rightly honoured, will be recognized in the extract:—

Osw. It may be
That some there are, squeamish half-thinking
cowards,
Who will turn pale upon you, call you
murderer,
And you will walk in solitude among them.
A mighty evil for a strong-built mind!—
Join twenty tapers of unequal height
And light them joined, and you will see the
less
How 'twill burn down the taller; and they all
Shall prey upon the tallest. Solitude!—
The Eagle lives in Solitude!
Mrs. Even so,

The sparrow so on the house-top, and I,
The weakest of God's creatures, stand re-
solved

To abide the issue of my act, alone.

Osw. Now would you? and for ever?—

My young friend,

As time advances either we become

The prey or masters of our own past deeds.
Fellowship we *must* have, willing or no;
And if good Angels fail, slack in their duty,
Substitutes, turn our faces where we may,
Are still forthcoming; some which, though

they bear

Ill names, can render no ill services,
In recompense for what themselves re-
quired.

So meet extremes in this mysterious world,
And opposites thus melt into each other.

Mar. Time, since Man first drew breath,
has never moved

With such a weight upon his wings as now;
But they will soon be lightened.

Osw. Aye, look up—
Cast round you your mind's eye, and you
will learn

Fortitude is the child of Enterprise:
Great actions move our admiration, chiefly
Because they carry in themselves an earnest
That we can suffer greatly.

Mar. Very true.

Osw. Action is transitory—a step, a blow,
The motion of a muscle—this way or that—
'Tis done, and in the after-vacancy
We wonder at ourselves like men betrayed:
Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark,
And shares the nature of infinity.

Mar. Truth—and I feel it.

Osw. What! if you had bid
Eternal farewell to unmingled joy
And the light dancing of the thoughtless
heart;

It is the toy of fools, and little fit
For such a world as this. The wise abjure
All thoughts whose idle composition lives
In the entire forgetfulness of pain.
—I see I have disturbed you.

Mar. By no means.

Osw. Compassion!—pity!—pride can do
without them;
And what if you should never know them
more!—

He is a puny soul who, feeling pain,
Finds ease because another feels it too.
If e'er I open out this heart of mine
It shall be for a nobler end—to teach
And not to purchase piling sympathy.
—Nay, you are pale.

Mar. It may be so.

Osw. Remorse—

It cannot live with thought; think on, think
on.

And it will die. What! in this universe,
Where the least things control the greatest,
where

The faintest breath that breathes can move
a world;

What! feel remorse, where, if a cat had
sneezed,

A leaf had fallen, the thing had never been
Whose very shadow gnaws us to the vitals¹.

Anxious to conclude our extracts by
something truer to Mr. Wordsworth's
personal opinions than this strong black
writing we have hesitated, as we turned
the leaves, before many touching and
beautiful poems, wise in their beauty—
before the 'Grave of Burns,' for instance,
and the 'Widow of Windermere,' and
the 'Address to the Clouds,' and others
beyond meaning—a certain sonnet which
discovers our poet sitting on the chair
of Dante at Florence, tempting us for
many reasons. But the sun and air (by
courtesy) are heavy on us while we
write, and subdued besides by the charm
of the loveliest, freshest landscape-
making (oh, never say *painting*) in the
world, and by the prospect presently of
a 'little breeze,' we forget our difficulty
of breathing and selecting, and fall from
the elevation of Fahrenheit down in a
swoon in 'Airey-Force Valley':—

—Not a breath of air

Ruffles the bosom of this leafy glen.
From the brook's margin, wide around, the
trees

Are steadfast as the rocks; the brook itself,
Old as the hills that feed it from afar,
Doth rather deepen than disturb the calm
Where all things else are still and motionless.
And yet, even now, a little breeze, perchance
Escaped from boisterous winds that rage
without,

Has entered, by the sturdy oaks unfelt,
But to its gentle touch how sensitive.
Is the light ash! that, pendent from the
brow

Of yon dim cave, in seeming silence makes
A soft eye-music of slow-waving boughs,
Powerful almost as vocal harmony
To stay the wanderer's steps and soothe his
thoughts.

¹ *The Borderers*, Act III. ll. 1507-67.

But we start from the languor, and the dream floated upon our eyes by such charmed writing, and come hastily to the moral of our story,—seeing that Mr. Wordsworth's life does present a high moral to his generation, to forget which in his poetry would be an unworthy compliment to the latter. It is advantageous for us all, whether poets or poetasters, or talkers about either, to know what a true poet is, what his work is, and what his patience and successes must be, so as to raise the popular idea of these things, and either strengthen or put down the individual aspiration. 'Art,' it was said long ago, 'requires the whole man,' and 'Nobody,' it was said later, 'can be a poet who is anything else'; but the present idea of Art requires the segment of a man, and everybody who is anything at all is a poet in a parenthesis. And our shelves groan with little books over which their readers groan less metaphorically—there is a plague of poems in the land apart from poetry—and many poets who live and are true do not live by their truth, but hold back their full strength from Art because they do not reverence it fully; and all booksellers cry aloud and do not spare, that poetry will not sell; and certain critics utter melancholy frenzies, that poetry is worn out for ever—as if the morning-star was worn out from heaven, or 'the yellow primrose' from the grass! and Mr. Disraeli the younger, like Bildad comforting Job, suggests that we may content ourselves for the future with a rhythmic prose, printed like prose for decency, and supplied, for comfort, with a parish allowance of two or three rimes to a paragraph. Should there be any whom such a 'New Poor Law' would content, we are far from wishing to disturb the virtue of their serenity—let them continue, like the hypochondriac, to be very sure that they have lost their souls, inclusive of their poetic instincts. In the meantime the hopeful and believing will hope—trust on; and, better still, the Tennysons and the Brownings, and other high-

gifted spirits, will work, wait on, until, as Mr. Horne has said—

Strong deeds awake,
And, clamouring, throng the portals of the hour.

It is well for them and all to count the cost of this life of a master in poetry, and learn from it what a true poet's crown is worth—to recall both the long life's work for its sake—the work of observation, of meditation, of reaching past models into Nature, of reaching past Nature unto God! and the early life's loss for its sake—the loss of the popular cheer, of the critical assent, and of the 'money in the purse.' It is well and full of exultation to remember now what a silent, blameless, heroic life of poetic duty this man has lived—how he never cried rudely against the world because he was excluded for a time from the parsley garlands of its popularity; nor sinned morally because he was sinned against intellectually; nor, being tempted and threatened by paymaster and reviewer, swerved from the righteousness and high aims of his inexorable genius. And it cannot be ill to conclude by enforcing a high example by some noble precepts which, taken from the *Musophilus* of old Daniel, do contain, to our mind, the very code of chivalry for poets:—

Be it that my unseasonable song
Come out of Time, that fault is in the
Time,
And I must not do virtue so much wrong,
As love her aught the worse for other's
crime.

And for my part, if only one allow
The care my labouring spirits take in this,
He is to me a theatre large enow,
And his applause only sufficient is—
All my respect is bent but to his brow;
That is my all, and all I am is his.
And if some worthy spirits be pleased too,
It shall more comfort breed, but not more
will.

BUT WHAT IF NONE? *It cannot yet undo
The love I bear unto this holy skill.
This is the thing that I was born to do:
This is my scene; this part must I fulfil.*

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