

The Poetical Works of
James Thomson (B.V.)

Miss K. Waterhouse



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THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

JAMES THOMSON



James Thomson.

A. Evershed. 1838

The Poetical Works of James Thomson

THE CITY OF DREADFUL
NIGHT

VANE'S STORY

WEDDAH & OM-EL-BONAIN

VOICE FROM THE NILE

& POETICAL REMAINS

By JAMES THOMSON

(‘B. V.’)

Edited by BERTRAM DOBELL

With a Memoir of the Author

IN TWO VOLUMES

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LAST POEMS

VOL. II.

A

A VOICE FROM THE NILE *

I COME from mountains under other stars
Than those reflected in my waters here ;
Athwart broad realms, beneath large skies, I
 flow,
Between the Libyan and Arabian hills,
And merge at last into the great Mid-Sea ;
And make this land of Egypt. All is mine :
The palm-trees and the doves among the palms,
The corn-fields and the flowers among the corn,
The patient oxen and the crocodiles,
The ibis and the heron and the hawk,
The lotus and the thick papyrus reeds,
The slant-sailed boats that flit before the wind
Or up my rapids ropes hale heavily ;
Yea, even all the massive temple-fronts
With all their columns and huge effigies,
The pyramids and Memnon and the Sphinx,
This Cairo and the City of the Greek

* Reprinted by permission from the *Fortnightly Review*.

As Memphis and the hundred-gated Thebes,
Sais and Denderah of Isis queen ;
Have grown because I fed them with full life,
And flourish only while I feed them still.
For if I stint my fertilising flood,
Gaunt famine reaps among the sons of men
Who have not corn to reap for all they sowed,
And blight and languishment are everywhere ;
And when I have withdrawn or turned aside
To other realms my ever-flowing streams,
The old realms withered from their old renown,
The sands came over them, the desert-sands
Incessantly encroaching, numberless
Beyond my water-drops, and buried them,
And all is silence, solitude, and death,
Exanimate silence while the waste winds howl
Over the sad immeasurable waste.

Dusk memories haunt me of an infinite past,
Ages and cycles brood above my springs,
Though I remember not my primal birth.
So ancient is my being and august,
I know not anything more venerable ;
Unless, perchance, the vaulting skies that hold
The sun and moon and stars that shine on me ;
The air that breathes upon me with delight ;
And Earth, All-Mother, all-beneficent,
Who held her mountains forth like opulent breasts

To cradle me and feed me with their snows,
And hollowed out the great sea to receive
My overplus of flowing energy :
Blessèd for ever be our Mother Earth.

Only, the mountains that must feed my springs
Year after year and every year with snows
As they have fed innumerable years,
These mountains they are evermore the same,
Rooted and motionless ; the solemn heavens
Are evermore the same in stable rest ;
The sun and moon and stars that shine on me
Are evermore the same although they move :
I solely, moving ever without pause,
Am evermore the same and not the same ;
Pouring myself away into the sea,
And self-renewing from the farthest heights ;
Ever-fresh waters streaming down and down,
The one old Nilus constant through their change.

The creatures also whom I breed and feed
Perpetually perish and dissolve,
And other creatures like them take their place,
To perish in their turn and be no more :
My affluent waters perish not from life,
Absorbed into the ever-living sea
Whose life is in their full replenishment.

Of all these creatures whom I breed and feed,
One only with his works is strange to me,
Is strange and admirable and pitiable,
As homeless where all others are at home.
My crocodiles are happy in my slime,
And bask and seize their prey, each for itself,
And leave their eggs to hatch in the hot sun,
And die, their lives fulfilled, and are no more,
And others bask and prey and leave their eggs.
My doves they build their nests, each pair its own,
And feed their callow young, each pair its own,
None serves another, each one serves itself ;
All glean alike about my fields of grain,
And all the nests they build them are alike,
And are the self-same nests they built of old
Before the rearing of the pyramids,
Before great Hekatompylos was reared ;
Their cooing is the cooing soft and sweet
That murmured plaintively at evening-tide
In pillared Karnak as its pillars rose ;
And they are happy floating through my palms.

But Man, the admirable, the pitiable,
These sad-eyed peoples of the sons of men,
Are as the children of an alien race
Planted among my children, not at home,
Changelings aloof from all my family.
The one is servant and the other lord,

And many myriads serve a single lord :
So was it when the pyramids were reared,
And sphinxes and huge columns and wrought stones
Were haled long lengthening leagues adown my
banks

By hundreds groaning with the stress of toil
And groaning under the taskmaster's scourge,
With many falling foredone by the way,
Half-starved on lentils, onions, and scant bread ;
So is it now with these poor fellaheen
To whom my annual bounty brings fierce toil
With scarce enough of food to keep-in life.
They build mud huts and spacious palaces ;
And in the huts the moiling millions dwell,
And in the palaces their sumptuous lords
Pampered with all the choicest things I yield :
Most admirable, most pitiable Man.

Also their peoples ever are at war,
Slaying and slain, burning and ravaging,
And one yields to another and they pass,
While I flow evermore the same great Nile,
The ever-young and ever-ancient Nile :
The swarthy is succeeded by the dusk,
The dusky by the pale, the pale again
By sunburned turbaned tribes long-linen-robbed :
And with these changes all things change and pass,
All things but Me and this old Land of mine,

Their dwellings, habitudes, and garbs, and tongues :
I hear strange voices ; * never more the voice
Austere priests chanted to the boat of death
Gliding across the Acherusian lake,
Or satraps parleyed in the Pharaoh's halls ;
Never the voice of mad Cambyses' hosts,
Never the voice of Alexander's Greece,
Never the voice of Cæsar's haughty Rome :
And with the peoples and the languages,
With the great Empires still the great Creeds change ;
They shift, they change, they vanish like thin dreams,
As unsubstantial as the mists that rise
After my overflow from out my fields,
In silver fleeces, golden volumes, rise,
And melt away before the mounting sun ;
While I flow onward solely permanent
Amidst their swiftly-passing pageantry.

Poor men, most admirable, most pitiable,
With all their changes all their great Creeds change :
For Man, this alien in my family,
Is alien most in this, to cherish dreams
And brood on visions of eternity,
And build religions in his brooding brain
And in the dark depths awe-full of his soul.
My other children live their little lives,

* "and Nilus heareth strange voices."—*Sir Thomas Browne.*

Are born and reach their prime and slowly fail,
And all their little lives are self-fulfilled ;
They die and are no more, content with age
And weary with infirmity. But Man
Has fear and hope and phantasy and awe,
And wistful yearnings and unsated loves,
That strain beyond the limits of his life,
And therefore Gods and Demons, Heaven and Hell:
This Man, the admirable, the pitiable.

Lo, I look backward some few thousand years,
And see men hewing temples in my rocks
With seated forms gigantic fronting them,
And solemn labyrinthine catacombs
With tombs all pictured with fair scenes of life
And scenes and symbols of mysterious death ;
And planting avenues of sphinxes forth,
Sphinxes couched calm, whose passionless regard
Sets timeless riddles to bewildered time,
Forth from my sacred banks to other fanes
Islanded in the boundless sea of air,
Upon whose walls and colonnades are carved
Tremendous hieroglyphs of secret things ;
I see embalming of the bodies dead
And judging of the disembodied souls ;
I see the sacred animals alive,
And statues of the various-headed gods,
Among them throned a woman and a babe,

The goddess crescent-horned, the babe divine,
Then I flow forward some few thousand years,
And see new temples shining with all grace,
Whose sculptured gods are beautiful human forms.
Then I flow forward not a thousand years,
And see again a woman and a babe,
The woman haloed and the babe divine ;
And everywhere that symbol of the cross
I knew aforetime in the ancient days,
The emblem then of life, but now of death.
Then I flow forward some few hundred years,
And see again the crescent, now supreme
On lofty cupolas and minarets
Whence voices sweet and solemn call to prayer.
So the men change along my changeless stream,
And change their faiths ; but I yield all alike
Sweet water for their drinking, sweet as wine,
And pure sweet water for their lustral rites :
For thirty generations of my corn
Outlast a generation of my men,
And thirty generations of my men
Outlast a generation of their gods :
O admirable, pitiable Man,
My child yet alien in my family.

And I through all these generations flow
Of corn and men and gods, all-bountiful,
Perennial through their transientness, still fed

By earth with waters in abundancy ;
And as I flowed here long before they were,
So may I flow when they no longer are,
Most like the serpent of eternity :
Blessèd for ever be our Mother Earth.

November 1881.

RICHARD FOREST'S MID-
SUMMER NIGHT

I.

THE sun is setting in pale lucid gold,
From out that strange sweet green
The heavens through half their lucid breadth unfold,
Unfathomably serene.

The moon is risen, formless, vague and wan,
Until the glory wane ;
Less moon as yet than thin white cloud, whereon
Young yearning eyes fix fain.

The splendour ripples on the broad calm bay
Where still some white sails gleam
Like sea-birds in the offing far away,
Suspended as in dream.

The wavelets whisper on the soft sands wide,
Soothing their thread of foam,
The silver fringe of the advancing tide,
Nearer and nearer home.

The hammers ringing on the building ships
 Are ceasing from their chime ;
 Our toils are closing in this sweet eclipse
 Of tranquil vesper-time.

O day slow-dying in the golden west,
 O far flushed clouds above,
 O slowly rising moon, your infinite rest
 Brings infinite longing love.

II.

But what come forth with the dark,
 With the dusk of the eve and the night ?
 When the lessening sails of that single barque
 Shall be wholly lost to sight,
 And the latest song of the latest lark
 Shall be mute in the mute moonlight.

All the stars come forth on high
 Like spirits that cast their shrouds,
 And the solemn depths of the darkening sky
 Are filled with their radiant crowds,
 And Hesper, lovely as Love's own eye,
 Shines beneath purple clouds ;

And the maidens and youths on earth,
 On the shores of the sands and the piers,

Like a sudden bountiful beautiful birth,
 In the flower of their happy years,
 With babble and laughter and musical mirth
 Under the silent spheres.

With the silent stars above,
 And the maidens and youths below
 With their murmurs sweeter than voice of the dove,
 By the calm sea's splash and flow,
 All the soft warm air breathes bliss and love
 In the sunset's after-glow.

For the burning hours are past,
 And the toils of the day are done,
 And the peace of the night is come at last,
 And the moon succeeds the sun ;
 And the pulses of Heaven and Earth throb fast,
 All the thousands throbbing as one.

III.

Oh, a myriad stars may shine,
 But ever the one sole Moon,
 The Queen of the stars and the night divine,
 The Queen most fair and boon,
 For her mystical shine is Love's best wine,
 And her midnight Love's own noon.

I have heard that the smallest star
Is a much more mighty sphere,
Than the regnant moon in her silver car
That we love and worship here ;
But behold, the star it is faint and far,
While our moon is bright and near.

Let the star in its distant skies
Burn glorious and great,
A sun of life to the far-off eyes
In the planets that swell its state ;
But it sways not the tides of our seas as it rides,
Nor the tides of our human fate.

So, there on the shining sand,
And there on the long curved pier,
Fair ladies circle fulgent and grand,
Each in her proper sphere ;
But the sun so far is a little star,
While my Love is near and dear :

Is near and dear and bright,
The Queen of my Heavens above,
The pure sweet light of my darkest night,
My Lotus, my Lily, my Dove ;
And my pulses flow and thrill and glow
In the sway of Her splendid love.

IV.

Farewell, fair margent of the sea,
Fair city of the noble bay ;
I seek my Love who looks for me,
Not far away, not far away,
Over the hill of wood and lea,
And near that other bay adown
The winding valley lone and lown.

The valley with its tethered kine,
The orchard plots and fields of grain,
So tranquil in the broad sunshine,
More tranquil now the high stars reign,
And tranquil most and most divine
When over it comes floating soon
The mystic splendour of the moon.

The cottage nestles sheltered well
Among rich apple-trees, embowered
In its side-nook of dimpled dell ;
Roses and jasmine starry-flowered
Clothe all its front ; the tide's long swell
Sounds up the valley slow and calm,
To ebb away a dying psalm.

Through clouds of delicate blossom white
The red tiles burn with steadfast glow,

Or through green leaves and apples bright
 And hoary stems a-slanting low,
 When morning crowns the eastern height ;
 The blue smoke quivering up the air
 Its slender breath of household prayer ;

The sweet flowers flush and glow and yearn,
 With wild bees humming in their bloom,
 The lane comes winding like a burn
 Through banks of golden gorse and broom,
 And edged with grass and fringed with fern ;
 The rapturous larks are singing high
 In all the regions of the sky.

But that is day, these days of June
 A-verging into hot July,
 And this is night, more rich and boon,
 Although its hours so swiftly fly :
 O light of lovers, gracious moon,
 My own Moon waits me full of love,
 Brighter than all heaven's stars above.

v.

Ere the road curves up through the shade
 With its transverse moonlight bars,
 While above in the leafy gloom of the glade
 Hang the glittering fruits of the stars ;

Let me pause for a moment and turn and look down
 Beyond all the villa clumps duskily brown,
 And beyond all the pale yellow lamps of the town ;

To the sea and the noble bay
 Lulled asleep in the broad moonshine ;
 To the shore where our youths and our maidens stray
 On the sands and the pier's long line,
 Like a swarm of bees that suspend their flight
 To gather the honey of love and delight
 In the heart of the azure-leaved Flower of the Night.

Like a swarm of buzzing bees
 Whose busy murmurs float
 On the wide-wafting wings of the southerly breeze,
 Merged into one vague note :
 They are drunk with the honey of love and of bliss,
 And they throb with the stars of the azure abyss,
 And the air is as soft as a tremulous kiss.

I shall find Her all alone
 At the wicket of garden and lane,
 Or out of the porch by the rose o'ergrown
 She will glide all flushed and fain :
 So gather your honey, you bees that swarm,
 I drink-in my nectar all golden and warm
 From a flower-cup the fairest in colour and form.

VI.

Do I love you more for your own grand sake,
Or more for the bliss you bring to me?
You big black arms of the elms that make
The little white arms cling to me.

Do I love you more for your own sweet sake,
Or more for my heart's desire to me?
You flowers of the night whose perfumes make
The sweetest breath suspire to me.

Do I love you more for your own dear sake,
Or more for the joys that rill through me?
You nightingales whose voices make
The dearest soft voice thrill through me.

Do I love you more for your own bright sake,
Or more for the joys that stream on me?
You stars of the heaven whose glances make
The brightest moist eyes beam on me.

Do I love you more for your own dear sake,
Or more for the bliss possessing me?
You whispering waves of the sea that make
The dear lips mute caressing me.

Do I love you more for your own pure sake,
 Or more for the Heavens you declare to me?
 You naked moon, whose splendours make
 The soul of her pure love bare to me.

Oh, I love you all for your own love's sake,
 And my love of my Love and her love to me,
 Dear earth and sea and heavens that make
 This life as the life above to me.

VII.

She is not there at the rustic gate,
 Nor in the garden, nor in the porch :
 Lucy! the hour is not yet late,
 The moon, our this night's signal torch,
 The beacon-fire of our heart's desire,
 Over the wooded promontory
 Shines on our bay in all her glory.

Good Father nods in his old arm-chair,
 A-dozing over his evening pipe,
 The old brown jug at his elbow there
 Half-full of the old ale humming-ripe ;
 For his work is done with the set o' the sun,
 And he settles down content and placid,
 Sweetness without one drop of acid.

And our little Mother upright sits,
 Under her glasses glancing keen
 And listening sharp as she knits and knits ;
 Nothing unheard, nothing unseen ;
Her work is not done with the set o' the sun,
 And she never nods and she never dozes
 Until her head in the bed reposes.

Or else the dear old couple play
 Some game they have played this thirty year ;
 Cribbage,—and how she pegs away !
 Perhaps Don Pedro when I appear,
 And Lucy and I must join and try
 Which shall prove the more prompt and able,
 Or youth or eld at the old oak-table.

But Lucy, Lucy, where is She ?
 Not in the garden, not at the gate,
 Not in the porch a-looking for me,
 Not at the parlour-lattice in wait !
 Can she sew or read and take no heed
 How the stars are bright and the moon is
 shining,
 And I am without here longing and pining ?

O Lucy, Lucy ! can you dream
 O'er the loves in a book with your own Love
 near?—

Out from the back-shade darts a gleam ;

Lucy is here ! Lucy is here !

Dancing light in her eyes of a wicked surprise,

White rose in her hair, red rose in her fingers,

How she hastens !—and how she lingers !

Oh, the smile of your mouth !—but I want my own
kiss !

Oh, the flush of your face !—but your head on
my breast !

Oh, the rose in your yellow hair fragrant with
bliss !

Oh, the rose in your hand by my own hand
caressed !

O dear form I enlace in this perfect embrace,

My Love all a-tremble with passion and
yearning,

While under my kisses the pure neck is
burning !

VIII.

Oh, how the nights are short,

These heavenly nights of June !

The long day all amort

With toil, the time to court

So stinted in its boon !

In winter brief work-days,
 Long rest-nights dark and cold,
 Dank mists and miry ways,
 Black boughs and leafless sprays,
 No sweet birds singing bold.

I find this order strange,
 And not at all the right ;
 Not thus would I arrange :
 May I propose a change
 In seasons, day and night ?

Cold days, warm nights, be long,
 Cold nights, warm days, be brief :
 Warm nights of scent and song,
 Nights long as love is strong,—
 Oh, Love should have relief !

Yet some days we would spare,
 Long days of love and rest,
 So long, so rich, so rare,
 When but to breathe the air
 Is to be fully blest.

When deep in fern we lie
 With golden gorse above ;

Deep sapphire sea and sky,
 Ringing of larks on high,
 Our whole world breathing love.

Long days of perfect rest !
 Long days of infinite bliss !
 Your head upon my breast ;
 Possessing and possessed,
 Dissolving in a kiss.

IX.

Oh, how the nights are short,
 These heavenly nights of June !
 The long hot day amont
 With toil, the time to court
 So stinted in its boon !

But three or four brief hours
 Between the afterglow
 And dawnlight ; while the flowers
 Are dreaming in their bowers,
 And birds their song forego ;

And in the noon of night,
 As in the noon of day,
 Flowers close on their delight,
 Birds nestle from their flight,
 Deep stillness holdeth sway :

Only the nightingales
 Yet sing to moon and stars,
 Although their full song fails ;
 The corn-crake never quails,
 But through the silence jars.

So few brief hours of peace ;
 And only one for us,
 Alone, in toil's surcease,
 To feed on love's increase :
 It is too cruel thus !

Did little Mother chide
 Because our sewing dropped
 And we sat dreamy-eyed ?
 Dear Mother, good betide,
 The scolding must be stopped.

Dear Mother, good and true,
 All-loving while you blame,
 When spring brings skies of blue
 And buds and flowers anew,
 I come in with my claim !

I claim my Love, my Own,
 Yet ever yours the while,
 Under whose care hath grown
 The sweetest blossom blown
 In all our flower-loved isle.

The Spring renews its youth
 And youth renews its Spring :
 Love's wildest dreams are truth,
 Magic is sober sooth ;
 Charm of the Magic Ring !

x.

As we gaze and gaze on the sleeping sea
 Beneath the moon's soft splendour,
 The wide expanse inspires a trance
 Most solemn and most tender.

The heavens all silent with their stars,
 The sweet air hardly breathing,
 The liquid light of ripples bright
 Wreathing and interwreathing.

The tide self-poised now at the full,
 Scarce swaying, almost soundless ;
 The sea between twin skies serene,
 Calm, fathomless and boundless.

What specks are we in this vast world,
 Our little lives how fleeting !
 While star on star is throbbing far,
 What matter two hearts beating ?

How many many million years
Those living lights supernal
Shone ere our birth on this small earth !
Yet they are not eternal.

How many many million years,
When we have passed death's portal,
Those stars shall shine as now divine !
Yet they are not immortal.

Deep as may be the deepest sea,
Yet deeper is our love, dear ;
Our souls dilate with bliss as great
As all the heavens above, dear.

We float in dream until we seem
With all these worlds revolving ;
Our love intense, our bliss immense,
Throughout the whole dissolving.

A calm profound and infinite
Within us as without us ;
Our pulses beat in union sweet
With all the Life about us.

We are the whole World yet ourself
By some divine illusion ;
The I in Thee and Thou in Me
By mystic interfusion.

Our soul-tides poising at the full,
 Scarce swaying, tranced in glory,
 Have reached the clime of timeless time
 Amid the transitory.

We have not spoken now so long,
 But mute in still caressing,
 Without one kiss have breathed the bliss
 Too perfect for expressing.

XI.

Good night; good night! how truly hath been sung,
 It is good night then only when the tongue
 Need never say Good night;
 When hearts may beat together till the morrow
 Dawns on long hours fulfilled of bliss not sorrow,
 And eyes that close for darkness, frayed and stung
 By the so less sweet light.

Good night; good night! I leave you to sweet sleep
 And lovely dreams of love divinely deep;
 May this be your good night:
 My straining arms reluctantly surrender
 Into the arms of sleep divinely tender
 My Dearest thus, to safely surely keep
 Until the morn shines bright.

Good night ; good night ! I leave you and go
back

Into the silent city ; and, alack !

Can this be my good night ?

Yet Love, Bliss, Memory, radiant Hope are burning

In brain all throbbing and in heart all yearning,

As moon and stars in skies that else were black

With glorifying might.

Good night ; good night ! If parting when so
brief

Is yet so bitter, what would be our grief

With Good-bye for Good night !—

Farewell ! for weeks, for months, for years, for
ever !

Alas for Lovers whom the Fates thus sever !

Where can they look for comfort or relief ?

Oh, worse than mortal blight !

Good night ; good night ! for more than twenty
hours !

The sleeping time of all the birds and flowers,

For whom it is good night ;

The waking time of all the sun's wide glory :

Ere yet the moon has crowned yon promontory

To-morrow evening, back to Eden's bowers

I come with swerveless flight.

30 FOREST'S MIDSUMMER NIGHT

Good night ; good night ! my Life, my Love, my
Bliss !

But one more last embrace, one more last kiss,
To sweeten sour Good night :

O dear Heavens, have her in your holy keeping !

O moon and stars, watch tenderly her sleeping !

O sun, thou regent of our World-abyss,
Awake her to delight !

December 1881.

INSOMNIA

“Sleepless himself to give to others sleep.”

“He giveth His beloved sleep.”

I HEARD the sounding of the midnight hour ;
The others one by one had left the room,
In calm assurance that the gracious power
Of sleep's fine alchemy would bless the gloom,
Transmuting all its leaden weight to gold,
To treasures of rich virtues manifold,
New strength, new health, new life ;
Just weary enough to nestle softly, sweetly,
Into divine unconsciousness, completely
Delivered from the world of toil and care and strife.

Just weary enough to feel assured of rest,
Of Sleep's divine oblivion and repose,
Renewing heart and brain for richer zest
Of waking life when golden morning glows,
As young and pure and glad as if the first
That ever on the void of darkness burst
With ravishing warmth and light ;

On dewy grass and flowers and blithe birds
singing,
And shining waters, all enraptured springing,
Fragrance and shine and song, out of the womb of
night.

But I with infinite weariness outworn,
Haggard with endless nights unblessed by
sleep,
Ravaged by thoughts unutterably forlorn,
Plunged in despairs unfathomably deep,
Went cold and pale and trembling with affright
Into the desert vastitude of Night,
Arid and wild and black ;
Foreboding no oasis of sweet slumber,
Counting beforehand all the countless number
Of sands that are its minutes on my desolate track.

And so I went, the last, to my drear bed,
Aghast as one who should go down to lie
Among the blissfully unconscious dead,
Assured that as the endless years flowed by
Over the dreadful silence and deep gloom
And dense oppression of the stifling tomb,
He only of them all,
Nerveless and impotent to madness, never
Could hope oblivion's perfect trance for ever :
An agony of life eternal in death's pall.

But that would be for ever, without cure!—
And yet the agony be not more great ;
Supreme fatigue and pain, while they endure,
Into Eternity their time translate ;
Be it of hours and days or countless years,
And boundless æons, it alike appears
To the crushed victim's soul ;
Utter despair foresees no termination,
But feels itself of infinite duration ;
The smallest fragment instant comprehends the
whole.

The absolute of torture as of bliss
Is timeless, each transcending time and space ;
The one an infinite obscure abyss,
The other an eternal Heaven of grace.—
Keeping a little lamp of glimmering light
Companion through the horror of the night,
I laid me down aghast
As *he* of all who pass death's quiet portal
Malignantly reserved alone immortal,
In consciousness of bale that must for ever last.

I laid me down and closed my heavy eyes,
As if sleep's mockery might win true sleep ;
And grew aware, with awe but not surprise,
Blindly aware through all the silence deep,

Of some dark Presence watching by my bed,
 The awful image of a nameless dread ;
 But I lay still fordone ;
 And felt its Shadow on me dark and solemn
 And steadfast as a monumental column,
 And thought drear thoughts of Doom, and heard
 the bells chime One.

And then I raised my weary eyes and saw,
 By some slant moonlight on the ceiling thrown
 And faint lamp-gleam, that Image of my awe,
 Still as a pillar of basaltic stone,
 But all enveloped in a sombre shroud
 Except the wan face drooping heavy-browed,
 With sad eyes fixed on mine ;
 Sad weary yearning eyes, but fixed remorseless
 Upon my eyes yet wearier, that were forceless
 To bear the cruel pressure ; cruel, unmalign.

Wherefore I asked for what I knew too well :
 O ominous midnight Presence, What art Thou ?
 Whereto in tones that sounded like a knell :
 “ I am the Second Hour, appointed now
 To watch beside thy slumberless unrest.”
 Then I : Thus both, unlike, alike unblest ;
 For I should sleep, you fly :
 Are not those wings beneath thy mantle moulded ?
 O Hour ! unfold those wings so straitly folded,
 And urge thy natural flight beneath the moonlit sky.

“ My wings shall open when your eyes shall close
In real slumber from this waking drear ;
Your wild unrest is my enforced repose ;
Ere I move hence you must not know me here.”
Could not your wings fan slumber through my
brain,

Soothing away its weariness and pain ?

“ Your sleep must stir my wings :
Sleep, and I bear you gently on my pinions
Athwart my span of hollow night’s dominions,
Whence hour on hour shall bear to morning’s golden
springs.”

That which I ask of you, you ask of me,

O weary Hour, thus standing sentinel
Against your nature, as I feel and see

Against my own your form immovable :
Could I bring Sleep to set you on the wing,
What other thing so gladly would I bring ?

Truly the poet saith :

If that is best whose absence we deplore most,
Whose presence in our longings is the foremost,
What blessings equal Sleep save only love and death ?

I let my lids fall, sick of thought and sense,

But felt that Shadow heavy on my heart ;
And saw the night before me an immense
Black waste of ridge-walls, hour by hour apart,

Dividing deep ravines : from ridge to ridge
Sleep's flying hour was an aërial bridge ;
 But I, whose hours stood fast,
Must climb down painfully each steep side hither,
And climb more painfully each steep side thither,
And so make one hour's span for years of travail
 last.

Thus I went down into that first ravine,
 Wearily, slowly, blindly, and alone,
Staggering, stumbling, sinking depths unseen,
Shaken and bruised and gashed by stub and
 stone ;
And at the bottom paven with slipperiness,
A torrent-brook rushed headlong with such stress
 Against my feeble limbs,
Such fury of wave and foam and icy bleakness
Buffeting insupportably my weakness
That when I would recall dazed memory swirls and
 swims.

How I got through I know not, faint as death ;
 And then I had to climb the awful scarp,
Creeping with many a pause for panting breath,
 Clinging to tangled root and rock-jut sharp ;
Perspiring with faint chills instead of heat,
Trembling, and bleeding hands and knees and
 feet ;

Falling, to rise anew ;
Until, with lamentable toil and travel
Upon the ridge of arid sand and gravel
I lay supine half-dead and heard the bells chime Two ;

And knew a change of Watchers in the room
Without a stir or sound beside my bed ;
Only the tingling silence of the gloom,
The muffled pulsing of the night's deep dread ;
And felt an image mightier to appal,
And looked ; the moonlight on the bed-foot wall
And corniced ceiling white
Was slanting now ; and in the midst stood solemn
And hopeless as a black sepulchral column
A steadfast shrouded Form, the Third Hour of the
night.

The fixed regard implacably austere,
Yet none the less ineffably forlorn.
Something transcending all my former fear
Came jarring through my shattered frame
outworn :
I knew that crushing rock could not be stirred ;
I had no heart to say a single word,
But closed my eyes again ;
And set me shuddering to the task stupendous
Of climbing down and up that gulf tremendous
Unto the next hour-ridge beyond Hope's farthest ken.

Men sigh and plain and wail how life is brief :
 Ah yes, our bright eternities of bliss
Are transient, rare, minute beyond belief,
 Mere star-dust meteors in Time's night-abyss ;
Ah no, our black eternities intense
Of bale are lasting, dominant, immense,
 As Time which is their breath ;
The memory of the bliss is yearning sorrow,
The memory of the bale clouds every morrow
Darkening through nights and days unto the night
 of Death.

No human words could paint my travail sore
 In the thick darkness of the next ravine,
Deeper immeasurably than that before ;
 When hideous agonies, unheard, unseen,
In overwhelming floods of torture roll,
And horrors of great darkness drown the soul,
 To be is not to be
In memory save as ghastliest impression,
And chaos of demoniacal possession.
I shuddered on the ridge, and heard the bells
 chime Three.

And like a pillar of essential gloom,
 Most terrible in stature and regard,
Black in the moonlight filling all the room
 The Image of the Fourth Hour, evil-starred,

Stood over me ; but there was Something more,
Something behind It undiscerned before,
 More dreadful than Its dread,
Which overshadowed it as with a fateful
Inexorable fascination hateful,—
A wan and formless Shade from regions of the dead.

I shut my eyes against that spectral Shade,
 Which yet allured them with a deadly charm,
And that black Image of the Hour, dismayed
 By such tremendous menacing of harm ;
And so into the gulf as into Hell ;
Where what immeasurable depths I fell,
 With seizures of the heart
Whose each clutch seemed the end of all pulsation,
And tremors of exanimate prostration,
Are horrors in my soul that never can depart.

If I for hope or wish had any force,
 It was that I might rush down sharply hurled
From rock to rock until a mangled corse
 Down with the fury of the torrent whirled,
The fury of black waters and white foam,
To where the homeless find their only home,
 In the immense void Sea,
Whose isles are worlds, surrounding, unsur-
 rounded,
Whose depths no mortal plummet ever sounded,
Beneath all surface storm calm in Eternity.

Such hope or wish was as a feeble spark,
A little lamp's pale glimmer in a tomb,
To just reveal the hopeless deadly dark
And wordless horrors of my soul's fixed doom :
Yet some mysterious instinct obstinate,
Blindly unconscious as a law of Fate,
Still urged me on and bore
My shattered being through the unfeared peril
Of death less hateful than the life as sterile :
I shuddered on the ridge, and heard the bells chime
Four.

The Image of that Fifth Hour of the night
Was blacker in the moonlight now aslant
Upon its left than on its shrouded right ;
And over and behind It, dominant,
The shadow not Its shadow cast its spell,
Most vague and dim and wan and terrible,
Death's ghastly aureole,
Pregnant with overpowering fascination,
Commanding by repulsive instigation,
Despair's envenomed anodyne to tempt the Soul.

I closed my eyes, but could no longer keep
Under that Image and most awful Shade,
Supine in mockery of blissful sleep,
Delirious with such fierce thirst unallayed ;

Of all worst agonies the most unblest
Is passive agony of wild unrest :
 Trembling and faint I rose,
And dressed with painful efforts, and descended
With furtive footsteps and with breath suspended,
And left the slumbering house with my unslumber-
 ing woes.

Constrained to move through the unmoving hours,
 Accurst from rest because the hours stood still ;
Feeling the hands of the Infernal Powers
 Heavy upon me for enormous ill,
Inscrutable intolerable pain,
Against which mortal pleas and prayers are vain,
 Gaspings of dying breath,
And human struggles, dying spasms yet vainer :
 Renounce defence when Doom is the Arraigner ;
Let impotence of Life subside appeased in Death.

I paced the silent and deserted streets
 In cold dark shade and chillier moonlight grey ;
Pondering a dolorous series of defeats
 And black disasters from life's opening day,
Invested with the shadow of a doom
That filled the Spring and Summer with a gloom
 Most wintry bleak and drear ;
Gloom from within as from a sulphurous censer
 Making the glooms without for ever denser,
To blight the buds and flowers and fruitage of my year.

Against a bridge's stony parapet

I leaned, and gazed into the waters black ;
And marked an angry morning red and wet

Beneath a livid and enormous rack
Glare out confronting the belated moon,
Huddled and wan and feeble as the swoon

Of featureless Despair :

When some stray workman, half-asleep but lusty,
Passed urgent through the rainpour wild and gusty,
I felt a ghost already, planted watching there.

As phantom to its grave, or to its den

Some wild beast of the night when night is
sped,

I turned unto my homeless home again

To front a day only less charged with dread
Than that dread night ; and after day, to front
Another night of—what would be the brunt ?

I put the thought aside,

To be resumed when common life unfolded
In common daylight had my brain remoulded ;
Meanwhile the flaws of rain refreshed and fortified.

The day passed, and the night ; and other days,

And other nights ; and all of evil doom ;

The sun-hours in a sick bewildering haze,

The star-hours in a thick enormous gloom,

With rending lightnings and with thunder-knells ;
The ghastly hours of all the timeless Hells :—

Bury them with their bane !

I look back on the words already written,
And writhe by cold rage stung, by self-scorn
smitten,

'They are so weak and vain and infinitely inane. . . .

“ How from those hideous Malebolges deep

I ever could win back to upper earth,

Restored to human nights of blessed sleep

And healthy waking with the new day's birth? ”—

How do men climb back from a swoon whose
stress,

Crushing far deeper than all consciousness,

Is deep as deep death seems ?

Who can the steps and stages mete and number

By which we re-emerge from nightly slumber?—

Our poor vast petty life is one dark maze of dreams.

March 1882.

HE HEARD HER SING

WE were now in the midmost Maytime, in the
full green flood of the Spring,
When the air is sweet all the daytime with the
blossoms and birds that sing ;
When the air is rich all the night, and richest of
all in its noon
When the nightingales pant the delight and keen
stress of their love to the moon ;
When the almond and apple and pear spread
wavering wavelets of snow
In the light of the soft warm air far-flushed with
a delicate glow ;
When the towering chestnuts uphold their masses
of spires red or white,
And the pendulous tresses of gold of the slim
laburnum burn bright,
And the lilac guardeth the bowers with the gleam
of a lifted spear,
And the scent of the hawthorn flowers breathes
all the new life of the year,

And the linden's tender pink bud by the green
of the leaf is o'errun,
And the bronze-beech shines like blood in the
light of the morning sun,
And the leaf-buds seem spangling some network
of gossamer flung on the elm,
And the hedges are filling their fretwork with
every sweet green of Spring's realm ;
And the flowers are everywhere budding and
blowing about our feet,
The green of the meadows star-studding and the
bright green blades of the wheat.

An evening and night of song. For first when I
left the town,
And took the lane that is long and came out on
the breeze-swept down,
The sunset heavens were all ringing wide over
the golden gorse
With the skylarks' rapturous singing, a revel of
larks in full force,
A revel of larks in the raptures surpassing all
raptures of Man,
Who ponders the blessings he captures and finds
in each blessing some ban.
And then I went on down the dale in the light of
the afterglow,
In that strange light green and pale and serene
and pathetic and slow

In its fading round to the north, while the light of
the unseen moon
From the east comes brightening forth an ever-
increasing boon.
And there in the cottage my Alice, through the
hours so short and so long,
Kept filled to the brim love's chalice with the wine
of music and song :
And first with colossal Beethoven, the gentlest
spirit sublime
Of the harmonies interwoven, Eternity woven with
Time ;
Of the melodies slowly and slowly dissolving away
through the soul,
While it dissolves with them wholly and our being
is lost in the Whole ;
As gentle as Dante the Poet, for only the lulls of
the stress
Of the mightiest spirits can know it, this ineffable
gentleness :
And then with the delicate tender fantastic
dreamer of night,
Whose splendour is starlike splendour and his light
a mystic moonlight,
Nocturn on nocturn dreaming while the mind
floats far in the haze
And the dusk and the shadow and gleaming of a
realm that has no days :

And then she sang ballads olden, ballads of love
and of woe,
Love all burningly golden, grief with heart's-blood
in its flow ;
Those ballads of Scotland that thrill you, keen
from the heart to the heart,
Till their pathos is seeming to kill you, with an
exquisite bliss in the smart.

And then we went out of the valley and over the
spur of the hill,
And down by a woodland alley where the sprinkled
moonlight lay still ;
For the breeze in the boughs was still and the
breeze was still in the sprays,
And the leaves had scarcely a thrill in the stream
of the silver rays,
But looked as if drawn on the sky or etched with
a graver keen,
Sharp shadows thrown from on high deep out of
the azure serene :
And a certain copse we knew, where never in
Maytime fails,
While the night distils sweet dew, the song of the
nightingales :
And there together we heard the lyrical drama of love
Of the wonderful passionate bird which swelleth the
heart so above

All other thought of this life, all other care of this
earth,
Be it of pleasure or strife, be it of sorrow or
mirth,
Saving the one intense imperious passion supreme
Kindling the soul and the sense, making the world
but a dream,
The dream of an aching delight and a yearning afar
and afar,
While the music thrills all the void night to the
loftiest pulsating star :—
“ Love, love only, for ever ; love with its torture and
bliss ;
All the world’s glories can never equal two souls in
one kiss.”

And when I had bidden farewell to my Love at the
cottage door,
For a night and a day farewell, for a night and a day
and no more,
I went down to the shining strand of our own be-
lovèd bay,
To the shore of soft white sand caressed by the pure
white spray,
In the arms of the hills serene, clothed from the
base to the crest
With garments of manifold green, curving to east
and to west ;

And high in the pale blue south where the clouds
were white as wool,
Over the little bay-mouth the moon shone near the
full ;
And I walked by the waves' soft moan, for my heart
was beyond control,
And I needed to be alone with the night and my
love and my soul,
And I could not think of sleep in the moonlight
broad and clear,
For a music solemn and deep filled all my spirit's
sphere,
A music interwoven of all that night I had heard,
From the music of mighty Beethoven to the song of
the little brown bird.

And thus as I paced the shore beneath the azure
abyss,
And my soul thrilled more and more with a yearning
and sadness of bliss,
A voice came over the water from over the eastern
cape,
Like the voice of some ocean daughter wailing a
lover's escape,—
A voice so plaintive and distant, as faint as a
wounded dove,
Whose wings are scarcely resistant to the air be
neath and above,

Wavering, panting, urging from the farthest east to
the west,
Over some wild sea surging in the hope forlorn of
its nest ;
A voice that quivered and trembled, with falls of a
broken heart,
And then like that dove reassembled its forces to
play out its part ;
Till it came to a fall that was dying, the end of an
infinite grief,
A sobbing and throbbing and sighing that death
was a welcome relief :
And so there was silence once more, and the moon-
light looked sad as a pall,
And I stood entranced on the shore and marvelled
what next would befall.

And thus all-expectant abiding I waited not long,
for soon
A boat came gliding and gliding out in the light of
the moon,
Gliding with muffled oars, slowly, a thin dark line,
Round from the shadowing shores into the silver
shine
Of the clear moon westering now, and still drew on
and on,
While the water before its prow breaking and
glistering shone,

Slowly in silence strange ; and the rower rowed till
it lay

Afloat within easy range deep in the curve of the
bay :

And besides the rower were two ; a Woman, who
sat in the stern,

And Her by her fame I knew, one of those fames
that burn,

Startling and kindling the world, one whose likeness
we everywhere see ;

And a man reclining half-curved with an indolent
grace at her knee,

The Signor, lord of her choice ; and he lightly
touched a guitar ;—

A guitar for that glorious voice ! Illumine the sun
with a star !

She sat superb and erect, stately, all-happy,
serene,

Her right hand toying unchecked with the hair of
that page of a Queen ;

With her head and her throat and her bust like the
bust and the throat and the head

Of Her who has long been dust, of her who shall
never be dead,

Preserved by the potent art made trebly potent
by love,

While the transient ages depart from under the
heavens above,—

Preserved in the colour and line on the canvas
fulgently flung
By Him the Artist divine who triumphed and
vanished so young :
Surely there rarely hath been a lot more to be
envied in life
Than thy lot, O FORNARINA, whom RAPHAEL'S
heart took to wife.

There was silence yet for a time save the tinkling
capricious and quaint,
Then She lifted her voice sublime, no longer
tender and faint,
Pathetic and tremulous, no ! but firm as a column
it rose,
Rising solemn and slow with a full rich swell to
the close,
Firm as a marble column soaring with noble pride
In a triumph of rapture solemn to some Hero
deified ;
In a rapture of exultation made calm by its stress
intense,
In a triumph of consecration and a jubilation
immense.
And the Voice flowed on and on, and ever it
swelled as it poured,
Till the stars that throbbed as they shone seemed
throbbing with it in accord ;

Till the moon herself in my dream, still Empress
of all the night,
Was only that voice supreme translated into pure
light :
And I lost all sense of the earth though I still had
sense of the sea ;
And I saw the stupendous girth of a tree like the
Norse World-Tree ;
And its branches filled all the sky, and the deep
sea watered its root,
And the clouds were its leaves on high and the
stars were its silver fruit ;
Yet the stars were the notes of the singing and the
moon was the voice of the song,
Through the vault of the firmament ringing and
swelling resistlessly strong ;
And the whole vast night was a shell for that
music of manifold might,
And was strained by the stress of the swell of the
music yet vaster than night.
And I saw as a crystal fountain whose shaft was a
column of light
More high than the loftiest mountain ascend the
abyss of the night ;
And its spray filled all the sky, and the clouds
were the clouds of its spray,
Which glittered in star-points on high and filled
with pure silver the bay ;

And ever in rising and falling it sang as it rose
and it fell,
And the heavens with their pure azure walling all
pulsed with the pulse of its swell,
For the stars were the notes of the singing and the
moon was the voice of the song
Through the vault of the firmament ringing and
swelling ineffably strong ;
And the whole vast night was a shell for that music
of manifold might,
And was strained by the stress of the swell of the
music yet vaster than night :
And the fountain in swelling and soaring and filling
beneath and above,
Grew flushed with red fire in outpouring, trans-
muting great power into love,
Great power with a greater love flushing, immense
and intense and supreme,
As if all the World's heart-blood outgushing ensan-
guined the trance of my dream ;
And the waves of its blood seemed to dash on the
shore of the sky to the cope
With the stress of the fire of a passion and yearning
of limitless scope,
Vast fire of a passion and yearning, keen torture of
rapture intense,
A most unendurable burning consuming the soul
with the sense :—

“Love, love only, forever; love with its torture of bliss;
All the world’s glories can never equal two souls
in one kiss :
Love, and ever love wholly; love in all time and
all space ;
Life is consummate then solely in the death of a
burning embrace.”

And at length when that Voice sank mute, and
silence fell over all
Save the tinkling thin of that lute, the deep heavens
rushed down like a pall,
The stars and the moon for a time with all their
splendours of light,
Were quenched with that Voice sublime, and great
darkness filled the night
When I felt again the scent of the night-flowers
rich and sweet,
As ere my senses went, and knew where I stood on
my feet,
And saw the yet-bright bay and the moon gone low
in my dream,
The boat had passed away with Her the Singer
supreme ;
She was gone, the marvellous Singer whose wonder-
ful world-wide fame
Could never possibly bring her a tithe of her just
acclaim.

And I wandered all night in a trance of rapture
and yearning and love,
And saw the dim grey expanse flush far with the
dawning above ;
And I passed that copse in the night, but the
nightingales all were dumb
From their passionate aching delight, and perhaps
whoever should come
On the morrow would find, I have read, under its
bush or its tree
Some poor little brown bird dead, dead of its
melody,
Slain by the agitation, by the stress and the strain
of the strife,
And the pang of the vain emulation in the music
yet dearer than life.
And I heard the skylarks singing high in the
morning sun,
All the sunrise heavens ringing as the sunset heavens
had done :
And ever I dreamed and pondered while over the
fragrant soil,
My happy footsteps wandered before I resumed my
toil :—
Truly, my darling, my Alice, truly the whole night
long
Have I filled to the brim love's chalice with the
wine of music and song.

I have passed and repassed your door from the
singing until the dawn
A dozen times and more, and ever the curtains
drawn ;
And now that the morn is breaking out of the
stillness deep,
Sweet as my visions of waking be all your visions
of sleep !
Could you but wake, O my dearest, a moment, and
give one glance,
Just a furtive peep the merest, to learn the day's
advance !
For I must away up the dale and over the hill to
my toil,
And the night's rich dreams grow pale in the work-
ing day's turmoil ;
But to-night, O my darling, my Alice, till night it
will not be long,
We will fill to the brim love's chalice with the wine
of music and song ;
And never the memory fails of what I have learnt
in my dream
From the song of the nightingales and the song of
the Singer supreme :—
“ Love, love only, for ever ; love with its torture
and bliss ;
All the world's glories can never equal two souls in
one kiss :

Love, love ever and wholly; love in all time and
all space;

Love is consummate then solely in the death of a
burning embrace."

February 1882.

TO H. A. B.

ON MY FORTY-SEVENTH BIRTHDAY.

Wednesday, November 23, 1881.

WHEN one is forty years and seven,
Is seven and forty sad years old,
He looks not onward for his Heaven,
The future is too blank and cold,
Its pale flowers smell of graveyard mould ;
He looks back to his lifeful past ;
If age is silver, youth is gold :—
Could youth but last, could youth but last !

He turns back toward his youthful past
A-throb with life and love and hope,
Whose long-dead joys in memory last,
Whose shining days had ample scope ;
He turns and lingers on the slope
Whose dusk leads down to sightless death :—
The sun once crowned that darkening cope,
And song once thrilled this weary breath.

Ah, he plods wearily to death,
Adown the gloaming into night,
But other lives breathe joyous breath
In morning's boundless golden light ;
Their feet are swift, their eyes are bright,
Their hearts beat rhythms of hope and love,
Their being is a pure delight
In earth below and heaven above.

And *you* have hope and joy and love,
And you have youth's abounding life,
Whose crystal currents flow above
The stones and sands of care and strife.
May all your years with joys be rife,
May you grow calmly to your prime,
A maiden sweet, a cherished wife,
A happy mother in due time.

All good you wish me, past my prime,
I wish with better hope to you,
And richer blessings than old Time
And Fate or Fortune found my due :
For you are kind and good and true,
And so when *you* are forty-seven
May spouse and children in your view
Make Home the happiest life-long Heaven.

P R O E M

O ANTIQUE fables ! beautiful and bright -
And joyous with the joyous youth of yore ;
O antique fables ! for a little light
Of that which shineth in you evermore,
To cleanse the dimness from our weary eyes,
And bathe our old world with a new surprise
Of golden dawn entrancing sea and shore.

We stagger under the enormous weight
Of all the heavy ages piled on us,
With all their grievous wrongs inveterate,
And all their disenchantments dolorous,
And all the monstrous tasks they have bequeathed ;
And we are stifled with the airs they breathed ;
And read in theirs our dooms calamitous.

Our world is all stript naked of their dreams ;
No deities in sky or sun or moon,
No nymphs in woods and hills and seas and streams ;
Mere earth and water, air and fire, their boon ;

No God in all our universe we trace,
No Heaven in the infinitude of space,
No life beyond death—coming not too soon.

Our souls are stript of their illusions sweet,
Our hopes at best in some far future years
For others, not ourselves ; whose bleeding feet
Wander this rocky waste where broken spears
And bleaching bones lie scattered on the sand ;
Who know *we* shall not reach the Promised
Land ;—
Perhaps a mirage glistening through our tears.

And if there be this Promised Land indeed,
Our children's children's children's heritage,
Oh, what a prodigal waste of precious seed,
Of myriad myriad lives from age to age,
Of woes and agonies and blank despairs,
Through countless cycles, that some fortunate heirs
May enter, and conclude the pilgrimage !

But if it prove a mirage after all !
Our last illusion leaves us wholly bare,
To bruise against Fate's adamantine wall,
Consumed or frozen in the pitiless air ;
In all our world, beneath, around, above,
One only refuge, solace, triumph,—Love,
Sole star of light in infinite black despair.

O antique fables ! beautiful and bright,
And joyous with the joyous youth of yore ;
O antique fables ! for a little light
Of that which shineth in you evermore,
To cleanse the dimness from our weary eyes,
And bathe our old world with a new surprise
Of golden dawn entrancing sea and shore.

January 1882.

THE POET AND HIS MUSE

I SIGHED unto my Muse, "O gentle Muse,
Would you but come and kiss my aching brow,
And thus a little life and joy infuse

Into my brain and heart so weary now ;
Into my heart so sad with emptiness
Even when unafflicted by the stress
Of all our kind's poor life ;
Into my brain so feeble and so listless,
Crushed down by burthens of dark thought
resistless

Of all our want and woe and unresulting strife.

"Would you but come and kiss me on the brow,
Would you but kiss me on the pallid lips
That have so many years been songless now,
And on the eyes involved in drear eclipse ;
That thus the barren brain long overwrought
Might yield again some blossoms of glad thought,
And the long-mute lips sing,
And the long-arid eyes grow moist and tender
With some new vision of the ancient splendour
Of beauty and delight that lives in everything.

“Would you but kiss me on the silent lips
 And teach them thus to sing some new sweet
 song ;

Would you but kiss my eyes from their eclipse
 With some new tale of old-world right and
 wrong :

Some song of love and joy or tender grief
 Whose sweetness is its own divine relief,
 Whose joy is golden bliss ;

Some solemn and impassioned antique story
 Where love against dark doom burns out in glory,
 Where life is freely staked to win one mutual kiss.

“Would you but sing to me some new dear song
 Of love in bliss or bale alike supreme ;

Some story of our old-world right and wrong
 With noble passion burning through the theme :

What though the story be of darkest doom,
 If loyal spirits shining through its gloom
 Throb to us from afar ?

What though the song with heavy sorrows languish,
 If loving hearts pulse to us through its anguish ?
 Is not the whole black night enriched by one pure
 star ? ”

And lo ! She came, the ever-gentle Muse,
 Sad as my heart, and languid as my brain ;
 Too gentle in her loving to refuse,
 Although her steps were weariness and pain ;

Although her eyes were blank and lustreless,
Although her form was clothed with heaviness
 And drooped beneath the weight ;
Although her lips were blanched from all their
 blooming,
Her pure face pallid as from long entombing,
Her bright regard and smile sombre and deso-
 late.—

“Sad as thy heart and languid as thy brain
 I come unto thy sighing through the gloom,
I come with mortal weariness and pain,
 I come as one compelled to leave her tomb :
Behold, am I not wrapt as in the cloud
Of death’s investiture and sombre shroud ?
 Am I not wan as death ?
Look at the withered leafage of my garland,
Is it not nightshade from the sad dim far land
Of night and old oblivion and no mortal breath ?

“I come unto thy sighing through the gloom,
 My hair dishevelled dank with dews of
 night,
Reluctantly constrained to leave my tomb ;
 With eyes that have for ever lost their light ;
My vesture mouldering with deep death’s dis-
 grace,
My heart as chill and bloodless as my face,

My forehead like a stone ;
 My spirit sightless as my eyes are sightless,
 My inmost being nerveless, soulless, lightless,
 My joyous singing voice a harsh sepulchral moan.

“ My hair dishevelled dank with dews of night,
 From that far region of dim death I come,
 With eyes and soul and spirit void of light,
 With lips more sad in speech than stark and
 dumb :

Lo, you have ravaged me with dolorous thought
 Until my brain was wholly overwrought,
 Barren of flowers and fruit ;
 Until my heart was bloodless for all passion,
 Until my trembling lips could no more fashion
 Sweet words to fit sweet airs of tremblinglyre and lute.

“ From the sad regions of dim death I come ;
 We tell no tales there for our tale is told,
 We sing no songs there for our lips are dumb,
 Likewise our hearts and brains are graveyard
 mould ;
 No wreaths of laurel, myrtle, ivy or vine,
 About our pale and pulseless brows entwine,
 And that sad frustrate realm
 Nor amaranths nor asphodels can nourish,
 But aconite and black-red poppies flourish
 On such Lethean dews as fair life overwhelm.

“We tell no tales more, we whose tale is told ;
As your brain withered and your heart grew
chill

My heart and brain were turned to churchyard
mould,

Wherefore my singing voice sank ever still ;
And I, all heart and brain and voice, am
dead ;

It is my Phantom here beside your bed
That speaketh to you now ;

Though you exist still, a mere form inurning
The ashes of dead fires of thought and yearning,
Dead faith, dead love, dead hope, in hollow breast
and brow.”

When It had moaned these words of hopeless
doom,

The Phantom of the Muse once young and
fair,

Pallid and dim from its disastrous tomb,

Of Her so sweet and young and *débonnaire*,
So rich of heart and brain and singing voice,
So quick to shed sweet tears and to rejoice

And smile with ravishing grace ;

My soul was stupefied by its own reaping,

Then burst into a flood of passionate weeping,
Tears bitter as black blood streaming adown my
face.

“ O Muse, so young and sweet and glad and
fair,

O Muse of hope and faith and joy and love,
O Muse so gracious and so *débonnaire*,

Darling of earth beneath and heaven above ;
If Thou art gone into oblivious death,
Why should I still prolong my painful breath ?

Why still exist, the urn
Holding of once-great fires the long dead ashes,
No sole spark left of all their glow and flashes,
Fires never to rekindle more and shine and burn ?

“ O Muse of hope and faith and joy and love,
Soul of my soul, if Thou in truth art dead,
A mournful alien in our world above,

A Phantom moaning by my midnight bed ;
How can I be alive, a hollow form
With ashes of dead fires once bright and warm ?

What thing is worth my strife ?
The Past a great regret, the Present sterile,
The Future hopeless, with the further peril
Of withering down and down to utter death-
in-life.

“ Soul of my soul, canst Thou indeed be dead ?

What mean for me if I accept their lore ;
Thy words, O Phantom moaning by my bed,
‘ I cannot sing again for evermore ’ ?

I nevermore can think or feel or dream
Or hope or love—the fatal loss supreme !
 I am a soulless clod ;
No germ of life within me that surpasses
The little germs of weeds and flowers and grasses
Wherewith our liberal Mother decks the graveyard
 sod.

“ I am half-torpid yet I spurn this lore,
 I am long silent yet cannot avow
My singing voice is lost for evermore ;
 For lo, this beating heart, this burning brow,
This spirit gasping in keen spasms of dread
And fierce revulsion that it is not dead,
 This agony of the sting :
What soulless clod could have these tears and
 sobblings,
These terrors that are hopes, these passionate
 throbbings?
Dear Muse, revive ! we yet may dream and love and
 sing ! ”

February 1882.

THE SLEEPER *

THE fire is in a steadfast glow,
The curtains drawn against the night ;
Upon the red couch soft and low
Between the fire and lamp alight
She rests half-sitting, half-reclining,
Encompassed by the cosy shining,
Her ruby dress with lace trimmed white.

Her left hand shades her drooping eyes
Against the fervour of the fire,
The right upon her cincture lies
In languid grace beyond desire,
A lily fallen among roses ;
So placidly her form reposes,
It scarcely seemeth to respire.

She is not surely all awake,
As yet she is not all asleep ;
The eyes with lids half-open take
A startled deprecating peep

* Reprinted by permission from the *Cornhill Magazine*.

Of quivering drowsiness, then slowly
The lids sink back, before she wholly
Resigns herself to slumber deep.

The side-neck gleams so pure beneath
The underfringe of gossamer,
The tendrils of whose faery wreath
The softest sigh suppressed would stir.
The little pink-shell ear-rim flushes
With her young blood's translucent blushes,
Nestling in tresses warm as fur.

The contour of her cheek and chin
Is curved in one delicious line,
Pure as a vase of porcelain thin
Through which a tender light may shine ;
Her brow and blue-veined temple gleaming
Beneath the dusk of hair back-streaming
Are as a virgin's marble shrine.

The ear is burning crimson fire,
The flush is brightening on the face,
The lips are parting to suspire,
The hair grows restless in its place
As if itself new tangles wreathing ;
The bosom with her deeper breathing
Swells and subsides with ravishing grace.

The hand slides softly to caress,
Unconscious, that fine-pencilled curve
“ Her lip’s contour and downiness,”
Unbending with a sweet reserve ;
A tender darkness that abashes
Steals out beneath the long dark lashes,
Whose sightless eyes make eyesight swerve.

The hand on chin and throat downslips,
Then softly, softly on her breast ;
A dream comes fluttering o’er the lips,
And stirs the eyelids in their rest,
And makes their undershadows quiver,
And like a ripple on a river
Glides through her breathing manifest.

I feel an awe to read this dream
So clearly written in her smile ;
A pleasant not a passionate theme,
A little love, a little guile ;
I fear lest she should speak revealing
The secret of some maiden feeling
I have no right to hear the while.

The dream has passed without a word
Of all that hovered finely traced ;
The hand has slipt down, gently stirred
To join the other at her waist ;

Her breath from that light agitation
Has settled to its slow pulsation ;
She is by deep sleep re-embraced.

Deep sleep, so holy in its calm,
So helpless, yet so awful too ;
Whose silence sheds as sweet a balm
As ever sweetest voice could do ;
Whose trancèd eyes, unseen, unseeing
Shadowed by pure love, thrill our being
With tender yearnings through and through.

Sweet sleep ; no hope, no fear, no strife ;
The solemn sanctity of death,
With all the loveliest bloom of life ;
Eternal peace in mortal breath :
Pure sleep from which she will awaken
Refreshed as one who hath partaken
New strength, new hope, new love, new faith.

January 1882.

MODERN PENELOPE

(RIDDLE SOLVED.)

WHAT did she mean by that crochet work ?

The work that never got done,
Lolling as indolent as a Turk,
Looking demure as a Nun :
What subtle mystery might lurk
(Of course there must be one)
In that Penelope web of work,
The work that never got done ?

She lolled on the low couch just under the light
So very serene and staid :

We had some other guests that night,
One sang, another played,
A couple discovered the stars were bright,
Of course a youth and a maid,
I watched her knitting under the light
So very serene and staid.

I knew that she was a rogue in her heart,
As roguish as ever could be,
And she knew that I knew, yet would not dart
A single glance at me,

But seemed as it were withdrawn apart
Amid the companie,
A nun in her face with a rogue in her heart
As roguish as ever could be.

I like a riddle when its knot
Involves a pretty girl,
I puzzle about, now cold, now hot,
Through every loop and twirl,
For the question is "Who" as well as "What" ?
And the answer is thus a pearl,
And really you cannot study the knot,
Unless you study the girl.

With a graceful lazy kittypuss air
She fingered the net and the ball :
At first she started to work on the square,
And then she undid all :
To make it round was next her care,
But the progress was strangely small,
With a graceful lazy kittypuss air
Trifling with net and ball.

About her lips a quiet smile
Came hovering, then took rest :
A butterfly in the selfsame style
Will choose some sweet flower's breast :

Her eyes were drooping all the while,
But the drooping lids expressed
The satisfaction of a smile
Like a butterfly at rest.

Her hands kept floating to and fro
Like a pair of soft white doves,
In gentle dalliance coy and slow
Around a nest of Loves :
And against my chair her couch was low,
And six was the size of her gloves,
They were charming those hands there to and fro
Like a pair of soft white doves.

Her fair face opened like a flower,
And a sigh thrilled the smile on her lips,
And her eyes shone out with a dazzling power
From the dream of their half-eclipse
As she welcomed the trill of "A summer shower"
With plausive finger-tips—
Oh ! her eyes so bright, and her face like a flower,
And the exquisite smile of her lips !

Those hands kept floating soft and white
Our hearts to mesmerise,
Those dark eyes keep half-veiled their light
To lure and lure our eyes ;

That web is but a subtle sleight
To mesh us by surprise :
Do I not read your riddle right,
Penelope the wise ?

O you nun in face with the rogue in your heart
As roguish as ever can be,
You have played an immensely wiser part
Than the old Penelope :
You have caught twin loves in the toils of your art,
And neither will ever get free :
You have won the game of a heart for a heart,
And when shall the settling be ?

AT BELVOIR

Sunday, July 3, 1881.

A BALLAD, HISTORICAL AND PROPHEPIC.

("In maiden meditation, fancy free.")

MY thoughts go back to last July,
Sweet happy thoughts and tender ;—
"The bridal of the earth and sky,"
A day of noble splendour ;
A day to make the saddest heart
In joy a true believer ;
When two good friends we roamed apart
The shady walks of Belvoir.

A maiden like a budding rose,
Unconscious of the golden
And fragrant bliss of love that glows
Deep in her heart infolden ;
A Poet old in years and thought,
Yet not too old for pleasance,
Made young again and fancy-fraught
By such a sweet friend's presence.

The other two beyond our ken
Most shamefully deserted,
And far from all the ways of men
Their stealthy steps averted :
Of course our Jack would go astray,
Erotic and erratic ;
But Mary !—well, I own the day
Was really too ecstatic.

We roamed with many a merry jest
And many a ringing laughter ;
The slow calm hours too rich in zest
To heed before and after :
Yet lingering down the lovely walks
Soft strains anon came stealing,
A finer music through our talks
Of sweeter, deeper feeling :

Yes, now and then a quiet word
Of seriousness dissembling
In smiles would touch some hidden chord
And set it all a-trembling :
I trembled too, and felt it strange ;—
Could I be in possession
Of music richer in its range
Than yet had found expression ?

The cattle standing in the mere,
The swans upon it gliding,
The sunlight on the waters clear,
The radiant clouds dividing ;
The solemn sapphire sky above,
The foliage lightly waving,
The soft air's Sabbath peace and love
To satisfy all craving.

We mapped the whole fair region out
As Country of the Tender,
From first pursuit in fear and doubt
To final glad surrender :
Each knoll and arbour got its name,
Each vista, covert, dingle ;—
No young pair now may track the same
And long continue single !

And in the spot most thrilling-sweet
Of all this Love-Realm rosy
Our truant pair had found retreat,
Unblushing, calm and cosy :
Where seats too wide for one are placed,
And yet for two but narrow,
It's " Let my arm steal round your waist,
And be my winsome marrow ! "

Reclining on a pleasant lea
Such tender scenes rehearsing,
A freakish fit seized him and me
For wildly foolish versing :
We versed of this, we versed of that,
A pair of mocking sinners,
While our lost couple strayed or sat
Oblivious of their dinners.

But what was strange, our maddest rhymes
In all their divagations
Were charged and over-charged at times
With deep vaticinations :
I yearn with wonder at the power
Of Poetry prophetic
Which in my soul made that blithe hour
With this hour sympathetic.

For though we are in winter now,
My heart is in full summer :
Old Year, old Wish, have made their bow ;
I welcome each new-comer.
“The King is dead, long live the King !
The throne is vacant never !”
Is true, I read, of everything,
So of my heart for ever !

My thoughts go on to next July,
More happy thoughts, more tender ;
“The bridal of the earth and sky,”
A day of perfect splendour ;
A day to make the saddest heart
In bliss a firm believer ;
When two True Loves may roam apart
The shadiest walks of Belvoir.

There may be less of merry jest
And less of ringing laughter,
Yet life be much more rich in zest
And richer still thereafter ;
The love-scenes of that region fair
Have very real rehearsing,
And tremulous kisses thrill the air
Far sweetlier than sweet versing ;

The bud full blown at length reveal
Its deepest golden burning ;
The heart inspired with love unseal
Its inmost passionate yearning :
The music of the hidden chord
At length find full expression ;
The Seraph of the Flaming Sword
Assume divine possession.

A STRANGER

I.

IT is not surely, this, a little thing,
That day and night and every Sabbath day
Throughout these months of winterless glad Spring,

March mild as April, April sweet as May,
And May as rich as June in common years,
It has been given me upon my way,

Given to me and all my village peers,
But most to me as my full heart knows well,
Brimming my eyes with tender wistful tears

And throbbing with strange awe ineffable,
To meet and pass, to follow with slow pace,
Or on the street or in our quiet dell

Or through the fields, that Lady of all grace
With sweet sad eyes and noble mournful face.

II.

We know not who she is or whence she came,
She and her little boy with her own eyes
And brow and patient smile, whose Christian name

Without the surname tells us where he lies
With her heart buried in the self-same grave :
The larks were singing in the soft blue skies,

And even some few violets were brave
To breathe faint sweetness on the bland warm air,
Good Valentine such benediction gave,

When she arrived with him, her anxious care,
Her only joy, her terrible dark grief :
In early April he was lying there ;

The Spring all blithe with bud and flower and leaf
And scent and song above his Spring so brief.

III.

Only the Christian name upon the stone
Above the date of birth and date of death ;
Two syllables of everlasting moan,

Immortal sorrow breathing mortal breath,
Continual weeping that would fain not weep,
Sad comforting that vainly comforteth

The deadly anguish graven far more deep
Upon the heart than on the marble cold,
“ For so He giveth His belovèd sleep.”

Yet with a lofty patience she controlled
The outward signs of anguish ; eve and morn
Tending that little bed of sacred mould

And others near it that were left forlorn ;
Praying, I think, to sleep herself outworn.

IV.

Her sorrow flowed with blessings from above ;
Her heart of joy and hope was in that tomb,
But not her heart of sympathy and love :

While her young flower was fading from its bloom
She had been wonderfully sweet and kind ;
And now that it was buried in the gloom

Her own sore suffering did but closelier bind
Her heart to other hearts in all distress ;
The little angel in her sad soul shrined

Was a true angel of pure gentleness
And soft compassion and unwearying will
To soothe and aid and with all solace bless :

Our joys and sorrows take our nature still ;
Hers wrought bright good from her own darkest ill.

v.

Tenderness, worship, bliss in yearning pain !—
To see her young and fair and more than fair,
Amidst us yet not of us, sole remain

As sanctified already unaware ;
To see the peacefulness of pure white brow
Beneath the smoothness of the rich brown hair ;

The cloistral solitude without the vow ;
The self-renunciation mild and meek
With meekness that is ever glad to bow,

Evading honours such as others seek,
Yet in its stooping cannot help but rise ;
To hear that soft slow voice its good words speak ;

To feel the fascination of those eyes,
Solemn and dark and deep as midnight skies.

VI.

I did not wonder she could be so pure
Amidst our petty cares and sordid strife,
But how our common meanness could endure
Beneath the lofty radiance of her life ;
Until I saw how, fine and soft and clear
As starbeams quivering through the darkness rife,
Her effluence shone on souls all dull and drear :
Then as the Moon in moving through the Night
Bears round her ever her own hemisphere
Of tranquil beauty and entrancing light
By solemn shadows more mysterious made,
Her regnant beauty turned all darkness bright
Or glorified mysteriously its shade ;
Fair Queen most queenly as in Night arrayed.

VII.

Oh, joyless joy of this most bounteous June,
For with the Maytide She is gone, is gone !
All men adore and love the one sole Moon ;
But she of all on whom her light has shone,
Of all her pure and gracious light has blest,
Discerns no mortal save Endymion,

To him alone unveils her virgin breast,
On him alone outpours her love divine.
What shall we do who undistinguished rest?

Shall we against her solemn choice repine?
Or shall we rather lift our souls above
To hold her ever in a crystal shrine,

The perfect beauty of Heaven's brooding Dove,
The sacred vision of Heaven's reachless Love?

March 1882.

LAW v. GOSPEL*

THE Gospel and the Law of late
Have been at sad dissension
Before the Judge and Magistrate :
Old Satan's last invention.
Of course the Law upholds the Law,
The Gospel over-ruling ;
And those who have St. Paul in awe
Must seek more modern schooling.

The Gospel says, Swear not at all ;
The Law, or good or bad law,
Says, You must swear, whate'er befall,
Or else I fine you, Bradlaugh.
Whereon he goes and swears himself
In solemn legal banter ;
His fellow-members on the shelf
Deposit him instanter.

* This and the two pieces following are reprinted from the *Weekly Dispatch*. "Despotism Tempered by Dynamite" was the last poem written by the author.

And then we have that narrow sect
Of most Peculiar People,
Who by the Book their way direct,
And not by the Church steeple.
They read how Asa sought not God,
But doctors, being sickly ;
And therefore slept beneath the sod
With his forefathers quickly.

St. James enjoins, When one is ill,
Send for an elder straightway ;
Anoint and pray (no doctor's bill !)
And thus elude Death's gateway.
So said so done ; and then report
Of death of son or daughter,
And parents sentenced by the Court
To prison for manslaughter.

And now a new and noisy set—
The Army of Salvation—
Our equal-minded justice fret
With constant botheration :
For sometimes they obstruct the way,
And sometimes cause a riot ;
Too much of zeal—too much, we say,
Why can't the fools keep quiet ?

The dean and canons in their stalls
Are placid as stalled cattle,
And never rush out from St. Paul's
To give the devil battle.
In streets and lanes to brawl and fight
Is far too low and rowdy ;
No, if he wants a spar, invite
Him home to Mrs. Proudie.

On Tuesday, March, the fourteenth day,
Before Sir Thomas Owden,
A youth was brought who blocked the way,
Already over-crowden—
Threadneedle-street—the wild *War Cry*,
This well-dressed youth was selling :
A camel and a needle's eye—
The rest requires no telling.

Sir Thomas said he understood
How men in shabby raiment,
To get a living, bad or good,
Should do this thing for payment ;
But he could never understand
How any young man, dressed all
In decent clothes, could join the band,
Like this young Henry Restall.

“It’s not to get a living, sir,”
This youth spoke fast and faster ;
“I have been called to minister—
I work for God, my Master.”
Sir Thomas answered (much I grieve
If you don’t find it *bon sens*),
He never could be made believe
In such outrageous nonsense.

This hardened youth he made reply,
“We have reformed some thousand
Poor drunkards ;” Sir T. winked full sly,
And sneezing sneered, “*Der Tausend!*”
And for a fortnight did remand,
Upon his good behaviour,
That youth, who now should understand
He mustn’t cry his Saviour.

Just think of Simon Peter thus,
And all the zealous dozen,
Brought up before Asinius,
Our Owden’s great fore-cousin.
He would have quickly stopped their prate
On a police-court summons ;
We should have no Archbishop Tait,
No pious House of Commons !

'Tis true they were but fishermen
And suchlike, poor and humble ;
And thus might earn a living then
Approved by every Bumble.
But preach a Gospel *not* for pelf !
Absurd to Owden thinkers !—
Just keep your Good News to yourself,
And cease reforming drinkers !

March 1882.

THE OLD STORY AND THE NEW STOREY

(HOUSE OF COMMONS, *Thursday, March 23.*)

“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance : but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”—MATTHEW xiii. 12.

THE Old Story says : We've another
Young prince who will wed like a man ;
Let us give him, because of his mother,
An extra ten thousand per ann.
She has barely enough for herself, sirs ;
Not five hundred a week is his sum ;
Some of you have vastly more pelf, sirs ;
Let our vote be unanimous, come !

The New Storey* says—(It is mentioned
How, hating such meanness to hear,
The noble array of the pensioned
Assailed him with laughter and jeer)—

* Mr. Storey, M.P. for Sunderland.

He says : Public money should solely
For good public service be spent.
(Dear lords, what a doctrine unholy !
Why it saps at your rights to your rent !)

He says : What I urge 'gainst a wasteful
And unjust proposal like this
Must to many of you be distasteful,
And the wherefore too palpable is ;
Since one hundred and ten of your body,
And one hundred and twenty-six peers,
For no service, or service of shoddy,
Keep bleeding us numberless years.

He says : This ten thousand per annum
You would lavish on one wealthy pair—
Many hundred a grandad and grannam
Would keep in a comfort too rare ;
Or in Sunderland—that's my own borough—
A small place—laugh on !—would secure
Education quite free and quite thorough
Without any rate on the poor.

He says : These same princes as dummies
In army and navy fill posts,
While veterans, scorched up like mummies,
Must starve in the cold like their ghosts.

He says : Sweep away lordly flunkeys,
If you really this money must clutch,
Those bedizened and posturing monkeys—
Your Gold Sticks in Waiting and such.

He says—But fine ears we won't batter
With more of his speech unpolite ;
So we'll give our own view of the matter,
And *our* view of course is the right.
We say : When your State-ship you're building,
If you *will* have a gilt figure-head,
Of course you must pay for the gilding ;
We say—there's no more to be said.

It is true that the head a ship carries
In proportion costs little when built ;
It is true that this head never marries
And breeds little heads to be gilt.
It is true—but sane words are a treasure
Too precious for subjects like these—
Having set up such heads at your pleasure,
You can set them aside when you please.

April 1882.

DESPOTISM TEMPERED BY DYNAMITE

THERE is no other title in the world
So proud as mine, who am no law-cramped king,
No mere imperial monarch absolute,
The WHITE TSAR worshipped as a visible God,
As Lord of Heaven no less than Lord of Earth—

I look with terror to my crowning day.

Through half of Europe my dominions spread,
And then through half of Asia to the shores
Of Earth's great ocean washing the New World ;
And nothing bounds them to the Northern Pole,
They merge into the everlasting ice—

I look with terror to my crowning day.

Full eighty million subjects worship me—
Their father, high priest, monarch, God on earth ;
My children who but hold their lives with mine
For our most Holy Russia dear and great,
Whose might is concentrated in my hands—

I look with terror to my crowning day.

I chain and gag with chains and gags of iron
 The impious hands and mouths that dare express
 A word against my sacred sovranty ;
 The half of Asia is my prison-house,
 Myriads of convicts lost in its Immense—
 I look with terror to my crowning day.

I cannot chain and gag the evil thoughts
 Of men and women poisoned by the West,
 Frenzied in soul by the anarchic West ;
 These thoughts transmute themselves to dynamite ;
 My sire was borne all shattered to his tomb—
 I look with terror to my crowning day.

My peasants rise to their unvarying toil,
 And go to sleep outwearied by their toil,
 Without the hope of any better life.
 But with no hope they have no deadly fear,
 They sleep and eat their scanty food in peace—
 I look with terror to my crowning day.

My palaces are prisons to myself ;
 I taste no food that may not poison me ;
 I plant no footstep sure it will not stir
 Instant destruction of explosive fire ;
 I look with terror to each day and night—
 With tenfold terror to my crowning day.

May 1882.

ADDRESS

ON THE

OPENING OF THE NEW HALL

OF THE

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY, *March 6, 1881.*

“So Man created god in His own image, in the image of Man created He him; male and female created He them.”—*The New Book of Genesis.*

Lo, all the lands wherein our wandering race
Have led their flocks, or fixed their dwelling-place
To till with patient toil the fruitful sod,
Abound with altars TO THE UNKNOWN GOD
Or GODS, whom MAN created from of old,
In His own image, one yet manifold,
And ignorantly worshipped. We now dare,
Taught by millenniums of barren prayer,
Of mutual scorn and hate and bloody strife
With which these dreams have poisoned our poor life,
To build *our* temples on another plan,
Devoting them to god's Creator, MAN ;
Not to MAN's creature, god. And thus, indeed,
All men and women, of whatever creed,
We welcome gladly if they love their kind ;
No other valid test of worth we find.

We gaze into the living world and mark
Infinite mysteries for ever dark :
And if there is a god beyond our thought
(How could he be within its compass brought ?);
He will not blame the eyes he made so dim
That they cannot discern a trace of him ;
He must approve the pure sincerity
Which, seeing not, declares it cannot see ;
He cannot love the blasphemous pretence
Of puny mannikins with purblind sense
To see him thoroughly, to know him well,
His secret purposes, His Heaven and hell,
His inmost nature—formulating this
With calmest chemical analysis,
Or vivisecting it, as if it were
Some compound gas, or dog with brain laid
bare.

And if we *have* a life beyond our death,
A life of nobler aims and ampler breath,
What better preparation for such bliss
Than honest work to make the best of this ?

He who is faithful in a few things found
Becomes the lord of many ; he whose pound
Is well employed may look for many more ;
Waste adds to waste as store increaseth store.
Who cannot run a mile will win no place
Among the champions for a ten-mile race ;

Who cannot order well a little farm
 Shall have no great estate to bring to harm ;
 Who squanders months and years can never be
 Entrusted with an immortality ;
 Who loveth not the brother at his side,
 How can he love a dim dream deified ?

We know our lives at best are full of care,
 But we may learn to bear and to forbear,
 By sympathy and human fellowship,—
 Sweet cup of solace to the parching lip,
 Doubling all joy, diminishing all grief,
 Soothing despair itself with some relief.

Each life is as a little plot of ground,
 Whose owner should not blankly wall it round
 To shut it in from others, shutting out
 Himself from those that neighbour it about :
 The plots must differ both in size and soil,
 The poorest will reward kind care and toil
 With fruits of sustenance and flowers of grace ;
 All good, though varying in every case.
 Down with our dead walls !—let us all enjoy
 Our neighbours' industry without alloy ;
 The bloom and odours of their fruits and flowers
 Which are so like and yet so unlike ours ;
 The singing of the birds among their trees,
 Their glancing butterflies and honey-bees :

And sharing thus the pleasures of the whole,
Tend that which is within our own control
More cheerfully, more earnestly, lest weeds
Disgracing ours, taint theirs with wafted seeds ;
And let us cherish kindly interchange
Of help and produce in our social range.

This is the spirit in which we have wrought
To build our little Temple of Free Thought
And mere Humanity—to us Divine
Above the deity of any shrine :
This modest Hall for Club and Institute
Which we now open ; may it bear good fruit !
No rigid barriers of sex or sect
Or party in these walls do we erect :
*In*clusion not *ex*clusion is our aim :
Whatever freedom for ourselves we claim,
We wish all others to enjoy the same,
In simple womanhood's and manhood's name !
Freedom within one law of sacred might,
Trench not on any other's equal right.

Our creed is simple, All men are one man !
Our sole commandment, Do what good you can.
We gladly welcome truth where'er it shines,
The gold and silver of the ancient mines,
Dug out and smelted by good men of yore,
And mines but newly opened, still in ore ;

Submitting old and modern to the test,
 Most surely fallible but yet our best,
 Of self-experience, knowledge, reason ; then
 Inviting the assays of other men.
 Buddha and Jesus, Zeno, Socrates,
 Mohammed, Paine, Voltaire,—alike from these
 The precious metals we accept with joy ;
 But pray, friends, spare us from the proved alloy !

Having no rich endowments from the State,
 Our means are small as our good-will is great :—
 A platform for Free Thought in courteous speech,
 And free discussion of the views of each ;
 Some books, our true “Communion of the Saints,”
 To feed the mind and cheer the heart that faints ;
 Some classes for instruction and delight ;
 A club wherein our members may unite
 For cordial converse and such innocent pleasure
 As makes a blessing, not a curse, of leisure !
 Some social gatherings, where we trust to see
 Not the Man only but the Family,
 Where poetry and music, dance and song,
 Shall make the sweet hours blithely dance along.

Thus all our youths and maidens, girls and boys,
 Must link this place with all their purest joys,
 And growing in their turn husbands and wives,
 Fathers and mothers, may devote their lives,

Not as an irksome task, but gracious duty,
Full-fraught with light and sweetness, love and
 beauty,
To cherish, cultivate, and propagate,
Or here or elsewhere as shall be their fate,
When we ourselves are dead save in our deeds,
This nursling from the ever-precious seeds
Which we have in our time inherited
From the brave culture of our noble Dead ;
Our small addition to their great work done,
The present work in our loved town begun
This Sunday, March sixth, Eighteen eighty-one.

EARLY POEMS

THE DOOM OF A CITY

A FANTASIA.

PART I.

THE VOYAGE.

I.

FROM out the house I crept,
The house which long had caged my homeless life :
The mighty City in vast silence slept,
Dreaming away its tumult, toil, and strife :
But sleep and sleep's rich dreams were not for me,
For me, accurst, whom terror and the pain
Of baffled longings, and starved misery,
And such remorse as sears the breast,
And hopeless doubt which gnaws the brain
Till wildest action blind and vain
Would be more welcome than supine unrest,
Drove forth as one possest
To leave my kind and dare the desert sea ;
To drift alone and far,
Dubious of any port or isle to gain,
Ignorant of chart and star,
Upon that infinite and mysterious main

Which wastes in foam against our shore ;
Whose moans and murmurs evermore,
 Insupportably sublime,
Haunting the crowded tumult of our Time,
 Suspend its hurrying breath—
Like whispers of sad ghosts and spirits free
 From world's beyond our life and death,
The unknown awful realm where broods Eternity.

II.

I paced through desert streets, beneath the gleam
Of lamps that lit my trembling life alone ;
Like lamps sepulchral which had slowly burned
Through sunless ages, deep and undiscerned,
Within a buried City's maze of stone ;
Whose peopling corpses, while they ever dream
Of birth and death—of complicated life
 Whose days and months and years
Are wild with laughters, groans, and tears,
 As with themselves and Doom
They wage, with loss or gain, incessant strife,
Indeed, lie motionless within their tomb,
Lie motionless and never laugh or weep,
 All still, and buried deep
 For ever in death's sleep,
While burn the quiet lamps amidst the breathless
gloom.

III.

My boat lay waiting there,
Upon the moonless river
Whose pulse had ceased to quiver
In that unnatural hush of brooding night.
I thought, Free breezes course the billowy deep !
And rowed on panting through the feverous air,
Leaving the great main waters on my right
For that canal which creeps into the sea
Across the livid marshes wild and bare.
So, slowly faded back from sight,
As doth a dream insensibly
Fade backward on the ebbing tide of sleep,
That city which had home nor hope for me,
That stifling tomb from which I now was free.

IV.

Like some weak life whose sluggish moments
creep
Diffused on worthless objects, yet whose tide
With dull reluctance hard to understand
Refrains its death-in-life from death's full sleep,
The river's shallow waters oozed out wide,
Inclosing dreary flats of barren sand ;
So merged at last into the lethal waste
That bounds of sea and stream could not be traced.

v.

Long languidly I rowed,
With sick and weary pain,
Between the deepest channel's bitter weeds
Whose rankness salt slime feeds ;
And so out blindly thro' the dismal main,
Now shaken with a long hoarse growling swell.
And soon the Tempest—as a king who had slept
The sleep of worn-out frenzy, while his slaves
Cowered still in stupor till he woke again
Refreshed for carnage—from his torpor leapt
Breathed swarthy pallor through the dense low
sky,

And hurrying swift and fell
Outspeded his own thunder-bearing glooms ;
Then prone and instantaneous from on high
Plunged down in one tremendous blast,
Which crashed into white dust the heaving waves
And left the ocean level when it past. . . .
There was a moment's respite ; silence reigned,—
Such shuddering silence as may once appal
The universe of tombs,
Ere the last trumpet's clangour rend them all :
And I sank down, one frail and helpless man
Alone with desolation on the sea,
To pray while any sense of prayer remained
Amidst the horrors overwhelming me.

VI.

How shall I tell that tempest's thunder-story?—
The soldier plunged into the Battle-stress,
Struggling and gasping in the mighty flood,
Stunned with the roar of cannon, blind with smoke,
'Midst yells and tramlings drunk and mad with
 blood,
What knows he of the Battle's spheric glory?
Of heavenly laws that all its evil bless—
Of sacred rights of justice which invoke
Its sternest pleading—of the tranquil eye
Triumphant o'er its chaos—of the Mind
Commanding all, serene and unsubdued,
Which having first with wisest care designed
Works to the end with vigilant fortitude;
And from that field so drenched with angry
 blood
Shall reap the golden harvest, VICTORY?

VII.

There was a stupor stung with pain and fear,
Amidst the strangling surf flung on and on;
There was bewilderment above all dread,
Delirious calm and desperate joy austere
Of revelling through the tempest lorn and lone.
My boat and I with dizzy swiftness sped,

In strange salvation from the certain doom,
Along the urgent ridges over-reeling
And gathering up their ruins as they fled ;
And down into the depths of scooped-out gloom
Whose crystal walls glowed black in the revealing
Of lightning-kindled foam ; and up again,
Perched on the giddy balance of two waves
Which fiercely countering mingle with the shock,
And rush aloft confused, and tower and rock
Foaming with wild convulsion, till amain
The mass heaves down from struggling, self-
destroyed,
And leaves us shuddering in a gulfy void.
Confused and intermingled, fire, sea, air,
Wrought out their ravage ; for the thunders there
Were echoing in the dreadly stormless caves
And shook the deep foundations of the seas ;
The air was like an ocean, drenched with spray
Whose meteor-flakes outflashed tumultuously
Against the sinking heaven's black incline,
When sudden lightnings seemed to burst their way
Up through the deep to flood and fire its brine,
Ingulfing for each moment all the Night—
The blackness and the howling rage—in light
More lurid and appalling, a World-pyre. . . .
But heart and brain were overwrought ; and soon,
All vision reeling from my powerless eyes,
I lay in quiet mercy-granted swoon

As senseless as the boat in which I lay :
And we two things through all the agonies
 Of night, tornado, sea, and fire,
Were drifted passive on our fearful way.

VIII.

I know not for what time I lay in trance,
Nor in what course the tempest hurled us on.
At length to scarce-believed deliverance
I woke ; and saw a sweet slow silent dawn
Uprgrowing from the far dim grey abyss,—
So slow, it seemed like some celestial flower
Unfolding perfect petals to its prime,
And feeling in its secret soul of bliss
Each leaf a loveliness for many an hour,
With amaranthine queenship over time.
It grew : its purple splendours flecked and starred
With golden fire spread floating up the steep
Until they sole possessed the mighty sweep
Of crystal lucent æther : its regard,
The blessing of a light of peace and love,
Charmed with a gradual spell the sullen mood
Of the sea-giant, until all-subdued
No more his huge bulk livid shook and hove
The meteor-threatenings of his tawny mane,
No more growled lingering wrath and turbulent pain ;
But calm and glad th' unmonstered monster lay
Beneath the royal sun's perfected sway.

IX.

And there was Land. Where seemed a bank of
clouds

Piled in the South, now nobly, one by one,
The pinnacles of lofty mountain-peaks
Flamed keen as stars, enkindled by the sun ;
Emerging as with life from out their shrouds
Of silvern haze far-cleft with roseate streaks :
And far beneath them, down along the shore,
A wave of low round hills gleamed pure and pale.

But soon—like any human life,
The golden promise of whose dawn doth fail
Into the same drear noon of barren strife
Of which our hearts were weary-sick of yore—

The day grew chill and dark ;
And through its sullen hours the wintry gale
Beat restlessly my bark,
Beside that coast-line drifting to and fro
Upon the ocean's vapour-shrouded flow.

X.

I saw grey phantoms, fading as they fled,
Glide hurrying in loose rank
O'er livid backgrounds of the upper sky,
Whose vast and thunderous threat'ning overfrowned
Abysses strangely dread—

Cold, glassy gulfs, each like an evil eye
Of serpent-malice which is dead and blank
To every sight but woe and agony.

The fascination of their wan green glance
Was fixed upon the hills which, at the foot
Of that stern wall of mountain lifted proud
Above the firmament of level cloud,

 Lay stretched out cold and mute,
In leaden bulk, beneath the long expanse
Of dark and desert sky, whose brooding gloom
Was blanched with cruel pallor here and there—
Pallor of wrath or dread, instinct with doom.

There stretched they far, a dark and silent host,
Like monsters stranded from their deep sea-lair

 Benumbed with terror cowering ;
Still unrecovered from the storm whose ire
Had drowned them in wild floods of pitiless
fire,

Or prescient of some deadlier tempest lowering.

XI.

At intervals, opposing the sun's track,
 Circling about the North
 Shone strangely blazoned forth
Wild rainbow-fragments on the sweeping rack,
The gale's rent symbol on rent banners borne.
For ever and anon the sun gazed down

From dizzy summits of the cloud-crag black ;
Or where the wind had torn
Vast jagged rifts athwart their mass
 (Behind whose heavy frown
Faint smiles of soothing like a robe of grass
Had fallen from him on the frozen hills),
He gazed out powerless o'er the rain-grey sea :
 No eye which sorrows fills
 With constant bitter tears,
Drowning all life and lustre, joy and pride,
Can gaze more faint and wan and hopelessly
Into the homeless world, and waste of years
Spread out between it and the grave's sweet sleeping ;
Can let the dark lid sink upon its weeping
 More often, fain to hide
The chilling desolation blurred with strife
Which, seen or unseen, maps its future life.

XII.

Ere sunset came a storm of rain
Ploughing up the barren main
With fierce and vital energy,
While brief bright lightnings flashed incessantly.
And then the South stood up, one solid wall
Of battlemented cloud, in which the mountains
And hills were fused together out of sight :
The sinking sun from his intense fire-fountains

Poured out against its heaven-absorbing might
 Seas of lurid purple light
And fulvous meteors, surging and devouring
 The shattered crests, the crumbling slopes,
 The massive walls, the river copes,
In fortitude of glowing bronze far-towering.

XIII.

From all the secret caverns of the air
Night's gloomy phantoms issuing, gathered dense
To blot and stifle out the pageant there ;
The murmur of their motions breathing wide
Through that new silence thrilled upon the sense ;
When, gazing southward, I became aware
Of some slow movement by the dim sea-side,
As of a wind arousing from its lair
To rend the settled vapours. I descried,
After an interval of rapt suspense,
By what faint gloaming yet was left of day,
Two startling lamps uplifted slowly glide
From out the thick and dun immensity,
Fronting a long dark line like some array
Of men that came in silent mystery,
Across the undulations of the shore
Long-winding coil on coil unbrokenly,
To celebrate weird rites and sorceries hoar,
Shrouded in gloom beside the moaning sea.

XIV.

I knew, but would not know,
I knew too well, but knowledge was despair.

It came on vast and slow,
And dipt those baleful meteors in the brine ;
Whence soon it lifted them with hideous cries
That flung strange horror through the shudder-
ing air.

Haling its length in many a monstrous twine,
It bore on steadfastly those loathsome eyes,
Set in the midst of intertangled hair
Like sea-weed in whose jungle have their lair

All foul and half-lived things :
With such a gleam as haunts the rotting graves
They fixed upon me their malignant stare ;
Shallow and slimy, fiendish, eyes of death.
It neared me soon with fiendish wallowings
Athwart the heaving and repugnant waves ;
Then paused a moment, and with one harsh
roar

Heaved up its whole obscene and ghastly bulk,
To rankle in my memory evermore.

With hissing shrieks and bursts of strangled
breath,

Torn by some agonising pang, it fell,
And lay upon the sea a vast dead hulk ;

But raised yet once the huge and formless head
Whence blood-dark foam was showering ; and
 those eyes
Glared blinking on me with the hate of Hell,
Before it turned reluctantly and fled.
Down, down, convicted by the holy skies,
Away, away, O God ! it hurtled forth ;
To cower in frozen caverns of the deep ;
To haunt—a nightmare in that ghastly sleep—
The death and desolation of the North.

XV.

A man forlorn has wandered, cursed from rest,
Through Time's dead waste, and savage howling
 seas,
Bearing a fateful Horror in his breast,
Formless and dim, but mighty to disease ;
Devouring, poisoning, stifling his pure life.
And suddenly, when Hope can hope no more,
He feels its coils unwinding from his heart,
And rich vitality with glorious strife
Surging through veins all shrunk and numb be-
 fore :
But also sees the Incubus depart,
Coil after coil reluctant dragged away
As were a serpent's from its strangled prey ;
And thus in his first health is clearly shown

What still was hidden from his lunacy,
The full obscene and deadly ghastliness
Of that which held and ruled him to this day :
Abhorrence almost chills him into stone,
And that great blow which struck the prisoner
 free
Hath nearly slain him by its mighty stress.
Such was my agony of joy that hour,
When saved for ever from the monster's power.

XVI.

The sky was spacious warm and bright,
The clouds were pure as morning snow ;
In myriad points of living light
The sea lay laughing to and fro.
Above the hills a depth of sky,
Dim-pale with heat and light intense,
Was overhung by clouds piled high
In mountain-ranges huge and dense ;
Whose rifts and ridges ran aloft
Far to their crests of dazzling snow,
Whence spread a vaporous lustre soft
Veiling the noontide's azure glow.
Through mists of purple glory seen
Those dim and panting hill-waves lay,
Absorbed into the heavens serene,
Dissolving in the perfect day.

But when the sun burned high and bare
In his own realm of solemn blue,
The clouds hung isolated there,
Dark purple grandeurs vast and few ;
Like massive sculptures wrought at large
Upon that dome's immensity,
Like constant isles whose foamlit marge
Rose high from out that sapphire sea.

And all the day my boat sped on
With rapid gliding smooth as rest,
As if by mystic dreamings drawn
To some fair haven in the West ;
Flew onward swift without a gale
As if it were a living thing,
And spread with joy its snow-white sail
As spreads a bird its snow-white wing ;
Flashed on along the lucid deep
Dividing that most perfect sphere,
A vault above it glowing steep,
A vault beneath it no less clear ;
Within whose burning sapphire-round
The clouds, the air, the land, the sea,
Lay thrilled with quivering glory, drowned
In calm as of Eternity.

PART II.

THE CITY.

I.

A near the dying of that royal day
Those amber-vested hills began to swerve ;
And soon a lofty Pharos, gleaming white
Upon its isle set darkly in the light,
Beckoned us onward to the spacious bay
Encompassed broadly by their noble curve.
And so at length we entered it ; and faced
The thin dark lines of countless masts, all traced
Upon the saddest sunset ever seen—
Spread out like an interminable waste
Of red and saffron sand, devoured by slow
Persistent fire ; beneath whose desolate glow
A City lay, thick-zoned with solemn green
Of foliage massed upon the steeps around.
Between those mast-lines flamed the crystal fires
Of multitudinous windows ; and on high
Grand marble palaces and temples, crowned
With golden domes and radiant towers and spires,
Stood all entranced beneath that desert sky,
Based on an awful stillness. Dead or dumb
That mighty City through the breathless air
Thrilled forth no pulse of sound, no faintest hum
Of congregated life in street and square :

Becalmed beyond all calm those galleons lay,
As still and lifeless as their shadows there,
Fixed in the magic mirror of the bay
As in a rose-flushed crystal weirdly fair.
A strange, sad dream : and like a fiery pall,
Blazoned with death, that sky hung over all.

II.

Where, eastward from the town, the shore was
 low,
I drew at length my shallop up the sand,—
The quiet and gloomless twilight gathering slow ;
And took my way across the lonely strand,
And onward to the City, lost in thought.
Who shall his own wild life-course understand ?
From terror through great terrors I am brought
To front my fate in this mysterious land.
In my old common world, well fenced about
With myriad lives that fellowed well my own,
Terror and deadly anguish found me out
And drove me forth to seek the dread Unknown ;
Through all whose terrors I have yet been brought,
Though hopeless, helpless, utterly alone.
May yet my long wild night be blessed with morn ?
Some revelation from the awful Throne
Awaits me surely : if my life, torn free
From dire Egyptian bondage, has been led

In safety through the all-devouring sea ;
If, lost in foodless deserts, it was fed
Though murmuring ever ; hath it truly trod
Such paths for nothing ? Shall it not be brought
To stand awe-stricken 'neath some Mount of God
Wrapt in thick clouds of thunder fire and gloom,
And hear the Law of Heaven by which its doom
To good or evil must be henceforth wrought ?

III.

The moon hung golden, large, and round,
Soothing its beauty up the quiet sky
In swanlike slow pulsations, while I wound
Through dewy meads and gardens of rich flowers,
Whose fragrance like a subtle harmony
Was fascination to the languid hours.
A tender mist of light was interfused
Upon the hills and waters, woods and leas,
Throughout the gloomless gloaming ; and I mused
Dim thoughts deep-floating in delicious dream,
Until the long stern lines of cypress trees,
Amidst whose plumes funereal there did seem
To creep with quivering sobs a moaning breath,
Awed back my heart to life—to life and death.
Far in the mystic moonlight lay outspread,
In trance of solemn beauty still and weird,
That Camp and City of the ancient dead ;

And far around stood up in dense array
Those monumental marbles ever reared
By men still battling with the powers of Life
To those released before them from its sway :
Victors or vanquished in the fearful strife,
What matters?—ah, within our Mother's breast,
From toil and tumult, sin and sorrow free,
Sphered beyond hope and dread, divinely calm,
They lie, all gathered into perfect rest ;
And o'er the trance of their Eternity
The Cypress waves more holy than the palm.

IV.

A funeral train was gathered round a bier :
The reverend priest with lifted hands and face,
Appealing silently to Heaven's grace
For this young soul called early from our sphere ;
And white-robed maidens pale, whose hands scarce
held
What further symbol flowers they had to shed
Upon their sweet lost sister,—awe and dread
Numbing their noisier grief, they stood compelled
To meet Death's eyes which wither youth from Life ;
And leaning sole against a tree apart,
As one might lean just stricken to the heart,
A youth, wrought calm by woe's self-slaying strife—
His head was sunken nerveless on his breast,

He stood a dumb blind statue of Despair.
While all yet moved not, I approached them there,
Murmuring : They bring this maiden to her rest
Beneath the pure sad moon, in thoughtful night,
Rather than in the garish day whose King
Rides through the Heavens for ever triumphing
Throned above ruth in never-darkened light ;
That ere the blank dawn chills them they may gaze,
And see her soul as some white cloud on high
Floating serenely up the star-strewn sky. . . .
My steps were now close near them, when amaze
Convulsed me with a swooning suddenness—
What people dwell within this Silent Land,
Who thus have placed, through day and night to
stand,
This Scene complete in all its images
Of Life in solemn conference with Death,
Amidst the wide and populous solitude
Of Death's own realm ?—a people of strange mood.
For all,—the maidens meek with bated breath
And eyes weighed down by awe and fear and
sorrow,
The priest appealing to the Heavens above,
The youth whose mortal night could hope no
morrow,
The sweet young girl new riven from his love,—
All save the flowers, the withered flowers alone,
Were carven weirdly in unconscious stone.

v.

Beneath my gaze was spread the princely mart.
From out the folded hills came broad the stream
Whose pulse flowed lifefull through the City's
heart—

The City dead in ever-voiceless dream.
From all her stately mansions, reared apart
'Midst lawns and gardens, came no lamplight gleam,
No cheerful glow and smoke of household fire ;
No festal music dying through the night,
Sad in its death as joyous in its birth ;
No serenades intoning soft desire,
To which young hearts in secret throb delight ;
No noise of banded revellers issuing forth
 With shouts and songs and jars,
Who find the pale moon reeling jollily
And twinkling laughters in the high cold stars.
 Between the hills and sea
 Only a dark dead dearth
Of soulless silence yawned in dreadful mystery.

vi.

My limbs were shuddering while my veins ran fire,
 And hounded on by dread
 No less than by desire,
I plunged into the City of the Dead,

And pierced its Mausolean loneliness—
Between the self-sufficing palaces,
Broad fronts of azure, fire and gold, which shone
Spectrally pallid in the moonlight wan ;
A down great streets ; through spacious sylvan squares,
 Whose fountains plashing lone
Fretted the silence with perpetual moan ;
Past range on range of marts which spread their wares
Weirdly unlighted to the eyes of heaven,
Jewels and silks and golden ornaments,
Rich perfumes soul-in-soul of all rare scents,
Viols and timbrels,—O wild mockery !
Where are the living shrines for these adornings ?
Shall love-tormented phantoms hither hie,
Resolvèd that the tomb be no more mute,
And thrill their heart-sick plaints from lyre and lute
To plead against fair phantoms' cruel scorning ;
Wakening dim ghosts of buried melodies
To shiver out beneath the scornful skies,
And wander homeless till they fail of breath
About this desert realm of timeless death ?

VII.

What saw I in the City, which could make
All thought a frenzy and all feeling madness ?
What found I in the City for whose sake
Blank death were welcome as a restful gladness ?

I hold it truth, that what the stars and moon
Can gaze upon with clear and steadfast eyes,
Still soaring as of old to reach their noon,
Serenely regnant in unwithered skies ;
That scene should never fill a human being
With hopelessness of horror in the seeing.
Can souls be blighted where the mere trees grow ?
Can lives be frozen where the dead streams flow ?
Can Man be prostrate where the fleeting moun-
tains
Stand up and fling abroad their joyous fountains ?
Could oceans, hills, stars, heavens, those imageries
And shadows of our sole realities,
Endure but for a moment undestroyed
Were we extinct—Eternity left void ?
O truth beyond our sin and death's concealing !—
The ghastliest den, worst Hell of pain and fear,
In which a spirit can have will, thought, feeling,
Is to that spirit no unnatural sphere ;
Nor justifies that spirit for the death
Of firm self-trust, of love and hope and faith.

VIII.

What found I in the City, then, which turned
My deep and solemn hope to wild despair ?
What mystery of horror lay inurned
Within the royal City great and fair ?

What found I?—Dead stone sentries stony-eyed,
Erect, steel-sworded, brass-defended all,
Guarding the sombrous gateway deep and wide
Hewn like a cavern through the mighty wall ;
Stone statues all throughout the streets and
squares,
Grouped as in social converse or alone ;
Dim stony merchants holding forth rich wares
To catch the choice of purchasers of stone ;
Fair statues leaning over balconies,
Whose bosoms made the bronze and marble
chill ;
Statues about the lawns, beneath the trees ;
Firm sculptured horsemen on stone horses still ;
Statues fixed gazing on the flowing river
Over the bridge's sculptured parapet ;
Statues in boats, amidst its sway and quiver
Immovable as if in ice-waves set :—
The whole vast sea of life about me lay,
The passionate, heaving, restless, sounding life,
With all its tides and billows, foam and spray,
Arrested in full tumult of its strife
Frozen into a nightmare's ghastly death,
Struck silent from its laughter and its moan ;
The vigorous heart and brain and blood and
breath
Stark, strangled, confined in eternal stone.

IX.

Look away there to the right—How the bay lies
broad and bright,

All athrob with murmurous rapture in the glory
of the moon !

See in front the palace stand, halls and columns
nobly planned ;

Marble home for marble dwellers is it not full
fair and boon ?

See the myriads gathered there in that green and
wooded square,

In mysterious congregation,—they are statues
every one :

All are clothed in rich array ; it is some high
festal day ;

The solemnity is perfect with that pallid moon
for sun.

See the theatre ranged high to its dome of deep
blue sky ;

Tier on tier of serried statues glare impassioned
on its stage,

On its background of deep night, on its sculptured
Chorus white,

On its lofty sculptured actors locked in deadly
tragic rage :

Perhaps the drama was *too* great,—Titans, Furies,
eyeless Fate

Brooded in such sulphurous darkness thunder-
swollen o'er its doom,
That the multitude abide overwrought and petrified,
Waiting till satyric sun-bursts rend away the
crushing gloom.
Turn, and o'er the river mark that huge structure
scowling dark :
It is black stone seamed with crimson, hopeless
death with cruel gore :
In it stony jailers guard stony prisoners evil-starred ;
Dungeoned thus within their dungeon, they are
calm and groan no more.
Note the temples every one—How the great gods
are undone !
Not a steer or goat or doveling for their holy
hunger dies :
Cold, long quenched their sacred fires ; dull, long
dumb their flattering quires ;
All the very priesthood staring at rich gifts with
stolid eyes !
Not a maid whose yielding charms can enrich a
god's bold arms ;
Yet perchance they dwell contented though thus
shorn of wealth and state :
Nectar-and-ambrosia-blest, they may bask in perfect
rest,
Since (with marble joints and larynx) Man rests
unimportunate !

Ha ! search eagerly around—every vault beneath
the ground,

Every mansion, every chariot, every galley,
everywhere ;

And for ever, ever find all this blissful human
kind

Lifted up from clay's corruption into marble
firm and fair :

Fear and shame and anguish stilled, every evil
passion killed,

Crooked forms and ugly faces grown transcen-
dent works of art ;

While the grand or lovely mood of the fair and
young and good

Is beatified in beauty that can nevermore
depart. . . .

And the full moon gazeth down on the smokeless
lampless town,

In a solemn trance of triumph, with her choir of
radiant stars ;

For their peace is vext no more by a curse-and-
shriek-swelled roar,

By ferocities, obscenities, inebriate brawls and
jars :

Nay, the very grass and trees, and the disencum-
bered breeze,

And the stainless river-waters, and the broad
bright glittering bay,—

Do they all joy that the strife of our sordid rest-
less life

Is now locked in adamantine bonds of perfect
peace for aye?

Ever-loved and gracious Earth, Mystic Mother of
our birth,

This is cruel, bitter, terrible, this joy in our
dead rest!

Canst Thou still leap forth and run, glory-speeded
round the Sun,

O Thou Niobe of World-stars, with Thy fairest
and Thy best—

With Thy vigorous youthful darling lying stone-
cold on Thy breast!

X.

The Palace gates stand open wide and free ;
The King and Queen and all their company,
Transfigured in full splendour of their pride,
Came flowing forth in one refulgent tide,
While trumpets rang their silver-throated blare
Of jubilation through the sunny air ;
Swept onward slowly 'neath the azure skies
Between the myriads of adoring eyes,
And poured into the Theatre's dense sea
Of many-billowed life triumphantly ;
As some grand river in the sunset shine

May pour its boon of gold and crimson wine,
Brimming the fulness of the purpled ocean
Which heaves and sparkles, murmuring proud
emotion.

Gathered together, all awaited there
Such scenic storms as purify life's air ;
Whose scathless lightnings shimmer wildly grand,
Whose lofty thunders soothe sure peace more bland ;
And now, without a throb, without a breath,
They wait, all frozen into icy death.

XI.

O marble Monarch, far more awful now
Than when thy crown begirt a throbbing brow !
No tyrant ever lived so dire and dread
As He who sways the sceptre in thy stead ;
Never before on earth did any state
Beneath oppression cower thus desolate,
Thus utterly resigned to crushing Fate !
SILENCE broods ghastly on the dead realm's throne :
Whatever life, in prayer, or sigh, or moan,
Would shake the Nightmare of his tyranny,
Shudders with anguish, horror, lunacy,
To feel its scorned and strangled pleadings creep
Like homeless spectres through the vacant deep,
And wither into nothingness at last—
Devoid of refuge, unrelieved, aghast.

XII.

The Palace gates indeed stand open wide :
Perchance the stately sepulchre may hide
Some single life amidst the desolation,
Preserved alone in mystical salvation,
Entranced apart in holy contemplation ?
Pace up the steps, tread through the hall,—and see
In scattered groups all lounging listlessly
Those armoured gallants of the Royal Guard—
Poor fellows ! they have found it sadly hard
To make their stately moments speed along,
Though spurred with wine and gaming, jest and
 song,
Cruelly mulcted of their sumptuous share
In the great festival proceeding there.

XIII.

Haste on, haste on ; awakened from their tomb
The ghostly echoes, swarming through the gloom,
Haunting your footsteps, gathering rank on rank,
Rustling demoniac through the deadly blank ;
Better, far better that the air be rife
With weird deliriums of demoniac life,
Than void with utter idiotic death.
Haste on, with burning blood and breathless
 breath ;—

How clear are all things round the rapid flight !
Shrouded in gloom or washed with pale moon-
light,
The chemistry of terror thus intense
Burns them all lurid on the shrinking sense.—
See the mild maiden letting loose her soul
In tears and blushes o'er the tender scroll
Which plains his anguish since they two were
parted,
And raves that she, poor thing, is stony-hearted.
Hurry from room to room, from hall to hall ;
And mark the effigies on every wall—
Warriors and minstrels, nobles, kings, and priests,
Adoring, conquering, feasting royal feasts ;
Olympian forms, ladies divinely fair
With lily-sceptred hands and flower-crowned hair ;
See each and all ev'n as you hurry past
Burst into sudden life, and swarming fast
Join in the tingling chase through death and night,
While clamorous echoes voice their mad delight.

XIV.

Most sweet young Mother ! thou hadst ample
pleasure
Left quiet alone here with thine infant treasure ;
Which, poised unsurely on its feeble limbs,
Across the sea-strange marble toward thee swims,—

One foot half-lifted, while the arms outplead
For thine extended arms to help its need :
It stands, thou kneelest ; never on thy breast
Shall it fall forward in triumphant rest.

XV.

Far in his lofty turret whence the bay
And half of Heaven's vault were seen alway ;
The bay, the distant ocean, and with these
Broad scope of temples, streets, and palaces,
The theatre, the square ; the moving throngs,
Whose converse-murmurs flashing into songs
And laughters winged with joy were wont to
 rise
And wander bird-like through the sun-tranced
 skies,
Rippling deliciously the languid air ;
Alone, yet not alone, the Sage dwelt there.
Doubtless his individual life required
In seeming solitude to be inspired
By constant intercourse with general life,
And with the universal Spirit rife
In Man and Nature,—One in all their forms,
Alike contented with its worlds and worms,
Through all its countless masks alike resplendent,
The Breath of Life, eternal and transcendent.

XVI.

He sits, the full-length statue of a Sage,
Amid the busts of those of every age
Who handed on the torch of Wisdom, bright
With growing splendour, 'thwart the billowy
 night
Of shoreless Ignorance. Before him lies
The roll which telleth on what mysteries
He shed its lustre till they shone out clear :
I trace its periods by the moonlight here.
It is with swelling reverence dedicate,
“ Unto the King magnificent and great ;
The bounteous Sun by whom we live and move
And flourish ever : Who commands our love
Even more throughly than our perfect awe ;
Swaying His burning Throne by Heavenly law,
While lifted far—by nature as by birth—
Above the petty statutes of our earth :
Who while His warmth createth and sustaineth
Rich life in all, lights all ; and no less deigneth
To feed abundantly with life and light
What humble spheres may strive to temper night
In realms left dark while His imperial sway
Vouchsafeth happier realms their boon of day :
To Him, by Whom our heritage is grown
The flower o' the World ; to Him whose godlike
 throne

Shall ever stand beside its subject sea,
Fulgent with valour, arts and equity,
Based on a princely people's love and bliss :
CHRYSANDROS, TYRANT OF COSMOPOLIS ! ”

XVII.

Follow the problems which he hath resolved
Though heretofore in clouds of doubt involved :
“ Shall this fair World consume in course of time ?
Our Earth is young ? or old ? or in her prime ? ”
Whereto the Theses proud, less said than sung
In liberal phrases of his golden tongue :
“ This glorious Universe shall live for ever ;
By all decay and death diminished never,
Nor added to by constant birth and growth ;
But in the balanced interchange of both,
Ascending slowly by successive stages
Of nobler Good and Beauty through the Ages ;
Until its infinite Æther and the Whole
Of stars and spheres that through it flashing roll
Shall be informed with conscious Life and Soul :
The All, one perfect Sphere, breathing one breath
Of cosmic Life too pure for birth or death. . . .
Our Earth has scarcely ceased to be a child,
Sweet in its grace, but ignorant and wild :
She putteth on about these very years
The bloom of maidenhood, whose smiles and tears

Are all of Love : She openeth out her heart
In throbs of passionate rapture, to impart
The dearest secrets of her treasured beauty
To Man, her Lord ; constrained by yearning duty
Which he shall recompense with wiser love :
How blest are we all previous men above,
Born in this Spring of her millennial Youth !—
O gracious Truth, divine and tranquil Truth,
As I long years have worshipped only Thee,
Thou hast at length unveiled Thy face to me,
That I may ever of Thy priesthood be !”

XVIII.

I trace not further in the tingling scroll
The steps by which he reached this glorious goal.
It is too horrible :—alone, alone.
I make mad dalliance with the empty flesh,
Whose form is whole, whose ghastly bloom is fresh ;
And by my side, that hater of the soul—
The grinning, the accursèd Skeleton !
It is too horrible—O dreadful God,
 Thou know’st—only Thou,
What dismal paths my shuddering feet have trod ;
Yet never knew I agony until now ;
Never,—O Thou who heardst me when I said
Coldly and quietly, with confirming heart,
“ I take thee, Misery, for my faithful Bride :

Despair hath smoothed the secret marriage-bed
Wherein we two, embracing close, may hide,

And wreak our stern unwitnessed vow—

Never in life, nor after death, to part.

I love thee for the love which only Thou

Dost bear me : Thy caresses

Sting my faint heart, Thy kisses on my brow

Are fire and numbing frost, Thy tingling tresses

Like serpents creep about me even now.

O my enamoured Darling, deadly sweet !

Sorcery smitten Sorceress !

Queen of lurid loveliness !

Most tender-hearted Ministrant of Ill !

My life, my soul is lying at your feet ;

Possess me, use me, at your own wild will !”

XIX.

O fool, fool, fool ! cherishing fatal madness !

Mad with self-consciousness of guilt and woe,

Mad with the folly of the world's much gladness

While it was no less sunk in guilt and woe ;

I shut myself up from the lives around me,

Eating my own foul heart—envenomed food ;

And while dark shadows more and more enwound me,

Nourished a dreary pride of solitude ;

The cords of sympathy which should have bound me

In sweet communion with earth's brotherhood,

I drew in tight and tighter still around me,
Strangling my best existence for a mood.
What—Solitude in midst of a great City,
In midst of crowded myriads brimmed with Life!—
When every tear of anguish or of pity,
When every shout of joy and scream of strife,
When every deed and word and glance and
gesture,
Every emotion, impulse, secret thought
Pent in the soul from all material vesture,
Through all those myriads spread and inter-
wrought ;
Inspiring each the air with its own spirit,
Rayed forth as light is from a fount intense ;
The universal Æther forced to bear it,
A certain though mysterious influence
Affecting duly every other creature
That breathed its breath of life ; for good or ill,
For pain or pleasure, acting on each nature,
Beyond the consciousness, despite the will.
Dire Vanity ! to think to break the union
That interweaveth strictly soul with soul
In constant, sane, life-nourishing communion :
The rivers ever to the ocean roll,
The ocean-waters feed the clouds on high
Whose rains descending feed the flowing rivers
All the world's children must how quickly die
Were they not all receivers and all givers !

XX.

But this is Solitude, O dreadful Lord !
 My spirit starves in this abysmal air—
 Of every human word,
 Of sigh and moan, of music and of prayer,
 Of passionate heart-beats felt though never heard,
 So utterly stript bare :
 The awful heavens are tranquil and divine,
 Serene and saintly in their purple deep
 The moon and young stars shine ;
 No living souls beneath their influence leap,
 No other eyes are fixed on them with mine :
 Men said that Death and Sleep
 Are brothers ;—yes, as lurid lightnings may
 Be kindred to the glory of calm day,
 Or darkness of the restful night-tide boon
 To darkness of the sun eclipsed at noon. . . .
 The Soul is murdered ; and her world bereft
 By some dire doom still left,
 A fadeless corpse whose perfect form is rife
 “ With ghastly affectations of true life.”

XXI.

How long, how long, I cowered beside the Sage ;
 Whose head was lifted, fronting full the skies
 In tranquil triumph from his victory lone.
 Beneath that broad brow rough with thought and age,

The pitiless light-beams glittered on his eyes,
Like fatal swords flashed keen against a stone
To sharpen them for piercing to the heart,—
How was his triumph smitten, pierct, and slain !

But cowering there apart,
Upon those swelling eyeballs, that stern head,
I ever gazed ; while in my burning brain

A cold thought soothing spread :
As one who drains a poison-chalice slowly,
In fixed and infinite longing to be dead ;
So let my yearning vision cleave amain
To this grand marble image melancholy,
Till I have drunken in to the last drain
That poisonous Spirit of Death which fills it
wholly. . . .

The flesh that crept like worms is growing numb ;
The raging fire of blood is dying cold ;
The rout of fiendish thoughts are almost dumb :
The heavens fade like a Vision cycles-old,
Where from dead eyes gaze thoughts uncompre-
hended :

Thank God, I soon shall cease to be alone ;
My mad discordant life is nearly blended
With all this realm's unsuffering death of stone.

PART III.

THE JUDGMENTS.

I.

A multitudinous roaring of the ocean !
Voices of sudden and earth-quaking thunder
 From the invisible mountains !
The heavens are broken up and rent asunder
 By curbless lightning-fountains,
Streaming and darting through that black com-
 motion,
In which the moon and stars are swallowed with
 the sky.

Throughout the Mausolean City spread
Drear palpitations, long-drawn moan and sigh ;
And then—an overwhelming whirlwind blast ?
Or else, indeed, the irrepressible cry
Of all its statues waking up aghast !
Doth God in final Judgment come thus heralded ?

II.

I saw Titanic forms dark, solemn, slow,
Like thunderclouds imperious o'er the wind,
Sweep far with haughty trappings to and fro ;
I heard great voices peal and trumpets blow :
Strange fragments of their chanting shook my mind.

“If the owl haunts doleful ruins and lives in the
sombre night,

Could it joy in the cheerful homes of men, could
it love the noonday light?

If the serpent couches in jungles and deserts of
burning sand,

Would it rather cast its slough in the peopled
corn-rich land?

If the great bear prowls alone in desolate wastes
of ice,

Could it joy to range in herded power through
a tropic Paradise?

If the vulture gorges on carrion and all abhorrent
things,

Would it rather slake with fruits and wine the rush
of its obscene wings?

.

“We sought through the archives of Fate, through
all the records of Doom,

Records of noontide refulgence, records of light-
ning-seared gloom :

And lo, we have never found while the highth and
the depth we explored,

We have never yet traced out Punishment or Reward.

.

“Peace may be happy and sweet; bitter and
heart-rending Strife;

Sin is corruption and death, Virtue is health and life:

But every being is placed in that sphere, in that
crisis, that spot,

Which alone its own nature demands and asserts
for its lot :

As itself from itself its web the spider spins out,
Doth each all the net of relations which weave it about :
The sun shines the sun by the lustre he lavishes forth ;
For his might and his life and his light circles
round him the earth :

All the World—this infinite azure robe sphere-
spangled sublime,

In which God walks forth revealed and veiled to
the creatures of Space and Time,

Is all interwoven in one (each atom, each star, as
each soul,

Evolving so duly the threads of its work for its
part in the Whole) :

With a woof and warp of might and light and
mysteries all is wrought,

For the many-figured, many-hued being and passion
and thought.

.

“ Here hath a spirit full bliss to breathe ever-bland
golden air ;

Here hath a spirit wild hurrying storms of doubt,
dread, anguish, despair :

For the world-realms are swept on their path for
ever, through day and night ;

And their course is advanced no less, no more, in
the gloom than in the light :
And the journey is infinite truly,—through every
various clime
Do the countless myriads wander on, through every
season of time ;
Cool water for him in the desert-blaze, red fire for
him in the frost,
Languor for him in the summer-peace, fierce heart
for the tempest-tost :
While all whence they know not whither they know
not wend ;
Who appraiseth the means and progress, who con-
ceiveth the end ?
But we swear by the Life Eternal, we swear by
Eternal Death,
We swear by the Fate supreme which rules in every
pulse and breath ;
That strong or weak, simple or wise, polluted or
most holy,
Each each day is fed with the food befitting him fully
and solely.”

III.

Again deep peace, again the stars and moon :
I stood between the theatre and square,
Beholding as before the statues there
Unstirred and silent in the lethal swoon.

Lo ! in the empyréan grew a light—

A great and awful Splendour, through its shroud
Of fold on fold of massy thundercloud
Intensely burning down with steadfast might.

Wherefrom a Voice descended vast and lone ;
Of thunder-dreadfulness, of sea-fierce anger,
Yet in its lofty silver-volumed clangour
Chanting an unimpassioned monotone :

“WHEN ALL THE WINE IS POISONED IT MUST BE
DESTROYÈD UTTERLY ;
THE VESSELS ALSO WHICH CONTAINED IT MUST
BE BURNED AND GROUND TO DUST.”

Instantly shudderings shook the stony crowd ;
Some rigid arms with writhing spasms were lifted,
Some dungeon-throats with frenzy-spasms rifted
By hideous strangled voices shrieking loud :

“Abominable Fate,
We hurl thee back thy hate !
The poison and the wine—
Our sins and souls are thine !
Ah ! pangs of utter death
Stifle our breath—
Hear us ; we plead ; hear us ; oh, wait !”

No answer came save trumpet-voices blaring
Death and destruction as in furious fray ;
And while those forms gasped out their cry
 despairing

They sank down crumbling into dusty spray.
Then, as the trumpet clamours died away,
Did crash on crash in clear succession sound,
Like lingering peals of thunder ; each the
 knell

Of house or column falling to the ground
In sudden ruin, as those statues fell.

And next, as if the solid hills were all
Disseated now to glide tremendously
Over the town and plunge athwart the sea,
A mass of gloom enveloped in its pall
Temple and palace, basement, dome and spire ;
Then o'er the marble crowd submerging came :
Its black oppression burned throughout my
 frame,

A torture of intolerable fire.

Yet when at length its ponderous bulk was
 rolled

Over the shrinking waters out of sight,
The City and the steadfast statues white
Stood all unchanged about me ; but, behold,
The uttered condemnation had been wrought
Upon the ruined fragments,—they were naught.

IV.

That cloud-consuming fire still held the sky,
Blotting its worlds out wholly; while the
sphere
Seemed listening breathless in an awful fear,
Till that great Voice again rang forth on high:

“WHEN NOW THE SAPLESS TREE BEARS BLOOM
NOR FRUIT,
WHY LINGER TRUNK AND ROOT?
LET IT BE HEWN AWAY AND FIRE-DESTROYED;
AND IN ITS PLACE LEFT VOID
A LIVING TREE BE SET TO SPREAD AND RISE,
RESPONSIVE TO THE BOUNTY OF THE SKIES.”

The sentence smote some statues like a sword;
With nerveless gestures pitiful to see
They moaned their helpless hopeless litany,
“We lived, we lived, O great and dreadful Lord!”

Then as they crumbled into dust away,
The Answer speeded from the hills behind,—
A noise of rushing like a mighty wind:
The ashen fire-flood in a tempest grey
Hissed through the City and the wan array;

And hurrying o'er the sea, as if its might
With grim joy hasted to fulfil such trust,
Swept all the human and palatial dust
To irretrievable Chaos, Death and Night.

And when that deadly storm of fire was past,
A Voice came roaring like its final blast :

“WHOSE VIRTUE CANNOT PAY THEIR LIFE'S
EXPENSE,
WHOSE SOULS ARE LOST IN SENSE,
THEY ARE NO MORE ; THEMSELVES WITH GOD
HAVE WILLED,—
THEIR ÆON IS FULFILLED.”

v.

Once more that fire possessing sole the sky,
Once more deep silence o'er the lessened throng
Of waiting statues ; and it lasted long
Ere that great Voice again pealed forth on high :

“WHEN HE WHO HAD A PALACE AND ITS POWER,
WELL-FAVoured FOR HIS DOWER,
HAS PROVED UNJUST AND PROUD, HAS SPENT
ITS TREASURES
ON SELFISH POMPS AND PLEASURES ;

HE MUST DESCEND FROM HIS EXALTED PLACE :

YET, IF IN DEEP DISGRACE

HE DO NOT SINK STILL DEEPER, TILL HIS BREATH

BE WHOLLY QUENCHED IN DEATH ;

BUT LEARN TO BUILD AGAIN HIS KINGLY HEART,

THE THRONE AWAITS HIM AND THE KINGLY PART."

Ah ! what a multitude of statues then

Were shaken by the thunder of this doom !—

“ O Lord ! all perish if Thou wilt consume
In justice ! Lord have mercy on frail men ! ”

Ev'n as the crash of smitten structures roared
The answering Judgment-terrors filled the sky :
Inexorably swift it streamed and poured
A red-fire deluge from that cloud on high,
Which drowned the City and the multitude,
Devouring all the space from hills to sea,
Hissing and roaring the resistless flood
Plunged through the trembling earth, in haste to flee
With its vast ravage ; and the earth gaped wide
To swallow in that cup of wrath amain,
Then gnashed her seared and riven jaws to hide
What shook her yet with shuddering throbs of pain
How many had become the torrent's prey,
Swept down abrupt into some lower sphere !
But of the rest—can vision cheat me here ?
What forms are these amidst the wan array

Of human marble? Strange new stony forms—
 These serpents, panthers, wolves, these apes and
 swine,
 Vultures and hawks and owls, with sheep and kine,
 And many others, brutes and birds and worms,
 Couched in unutterably piteous rest,
 The sorcery of that Judgment-fire attest.

VI.

No more wild agonies shook the steadfast Earth ;
 That night of cloud, unable to sustain
 Its soul of fire, was withering ; when again
 Upon the silence that great Voice flowed forth :

“WHEN HE WHO SHOULD HAVE TRAVELLED ALL
 THE DAY,
 HAS LINGERED ON HIS WAY
 TO SPORT WITH IDLERS ; OR IN COMMON FEAR
 OF LONE PATHS STEEP AND DREAR,
 HAS TURNED ASIDE TO PACE DOWN CROWDED
 ROADS
 OF RICH AND GAY ABODES ;
 HE MUST PLOD THIS DAY’S JOURNEY ON THE MORROW
 WITH WEARY RUE AND SORROW,
 ERE HE CAN WIN HIS HAPPY HOME, AND GREET
 THE DEAR FRIENDS WAITING FOR HIS LAGGARD
 FEET.”

Whereunto statue-voices low implored :
“ Free human fellowship is very sweet ;
Bitter with our own kind as foes to meet—
Heavy the load of unaccompanied life !
Alas, we are so weary-sick of strife !
Grant us awhile Thy perfect peace, O Lord ! ”

The humble plaining of that saddest prayer,
Relapsing into stony silentness,
So filled my heart that I was unaware
Until surrounded by its sway and stress,
How the deep Ocean rushing from its lair
Bellowed against the hillslopes planted broad ;
Whilst fierce from sea-vast cloudglooms in the
 air,
Blazoned with dreadful sentences of God
In writhed and quivering lightnings wrought, the
 rain
Intense of swerveless thunderbolts streamed down,
Crashing amidst the ruins of the town,
And shrieking through the loud inundent main.

VII.

The flood below, the flood above ebbed soon
Completely ; fair and still the green earth lay,
Beneath a heaven surcharged with tenfold day,
More holy-sweet of lustre than the moon.

I gazed : the statues stood there as before,
Like dateless boulders by the old sea-shore :
But of the City's vast palatial pride
Of all the works of Man on every side—
The theatre's stupendous cirque of tiers,
The pharos and the galleons and the piers,
Remained no vestige ; save that here and there,
Bathed in the sea of crystal-lucent air,
Some fragment wall, some column cleft stood dim,
More like stranger rocks than structures reared by Him.
Had that swift deluge been the stream of Time,
And every billow some vast age sublime,
Over the vacant City flowing ever
Until a mind should swoon in the endeavour
Such infinite cycles of its course to mete,
ERASURE had been scarcely more complete.

VIII.

The cloud was vanished from the perfect sky ;
Heaven earth and sea all floated from my sight,
Bathed in a dimness of exceeding light
Too pure, intense, and calm for mortal eye.

And yet I saw as we may see in trance,—
Saw how a gradual change beatified
The statues who had never yet replied
When those dread Judgments took dread utterance.

As Memnon woke to music with the dawn,
 They in the solemn splendour seemed to rouse
 From death to life, with glory on their brows ;
 A calm grand life, eyes shut and breath undrawn.

The crystal sea of sky then streamed away,
 The inmost Heavens revealed themselves abroad:
 A Throne . . . the Vision of the Living God . . .
 Ravished and blind upon the earth I lay.

Once more a Voice descended vast and lone,
 The Voice of Infinite Love Omnipotent ;
 Sweeter than life or death, it swelled and blent
 The Universe all tuned into one tone :

“THE SOLDIER WHO HAS FOUGHT THE NOBLE FIGHT,
 PERSISTENT FOR THE RIGHT,
 ENDURING ALL AND DARING ALL TO PROVE
 HIS GLAD UNPURCHASED LOVE
 AND FAITHFULNESS, IN TRIUMPH AND DEFEAT :
 WHAT DOOM FOR HIM IS MEET ?

THE BATTLE, WITH THE DAY IT FILLED, IS DONE ;
 THE FIELD IS LOST OR WON :
 LET NIGHT THEN GREET HIM WELL WITH JOY AND
 REST
 BY HOLY VISIONS BLEST ;
 THAT ON THE MORROW HE MAY RISE UP STRONG
 HOPEFUL AND FRESH AND YOUNG,

HIS SHARP WOUNDS HEALED, TO DO AND DARE
ONCE MORE

HEROIC AS BEFORE,—

BUT WITH A LOFTIER RANK, WITH NOBLER POWER,
WITH FAR MORE GENEROUS DOWER.

AND SO FOR EVER THROUGH THE NIGHTS AND
DAYS

WHILE HE REMAINETH LORD OF HIS OWN PRAISE,
HE MAY GO ON, EXALTED MORE AND MORE,
TILL FINAL TRIUMPH CROWN THE FATEFUL WAR ;
TILL LOVE AND LIFE AND BLISS (WHICH ONCE
WAS FAITH)

HAVE VANQUISHED WHOLLY EVIL, FALSEHOOD,
DEATH ;

THE LOFTIEST STATION THAT HIS SOUL CAN FILL,
THE UTMOST SWAY COMMENSURATE WITH HIS WILL,
THE ALL OF WISDOM THAT HE CAN BELIEVE,
OF LOVE AND GOODNESS THAT HE CAN RECEIVE,
ARE THEN HIS DOWER FROM THE REACHLESS
THRONE

AND HIM WHO REIGNS ETERNALLY THEREON.”

IX.

I heard it all,—there prostrate on the ground ;
I floated in the Voice as in a sea,
Or as a cloud may float dissolvingly
Within the sapphire noontide's burning bound.

And when it ebbed it left my shrinking soul
To shudder back into its cave of clay,
Blind, hopeless, one dead atom fallen astray
From vital union in and with the Whole.

After a time, from such fierce consciousness
Of personal being as is lunacy—
As not to know is perfectly to be—
I was withdrawn by human utterances :

“O Lord ! let us be hidden, let us die !
Thy love and wisdom are too infinite !
We throb unpeaceful in Thy perfect light,
Star-specks of gloom no Sun can glorify.

“Were we less dark than our old midnight
sphere,
Transplant us not into Thy blinding day.
Lord, we adore Thee, Perfect, Sole, for aye—
Our sins and weakness crush our spirits here !”

x.

No answer sounded. I arose and stood.
The gates of Heaven were shut, the Vision gone :
But still undimmed miraculously shone
That tenfold noon of glareless sanctitude.

They stood—the Spirits who had conquered life ;
 Erect, yet pleading, hands uplifted, there ;
 Glorious—yet wan with that divine despair :
 Was *this* the crowning issue of the strife ?

The noble faces slowly turned to where
 The dim hills floated, exquisitely drawn
 Or interfused, like breathless streaks of dawn,
 Upon the breathless ocean of wide air.

Thereon uplifted stood a lofty band ;
 Some burning with the glory of their wings ;
 Some golden-crowned and purple-robed like
 Kings ;
 Some clad in white, a palm-branch in the hand ;

Some like stern warriors armed with shield and
 sword ;
 Some swaying crystal cups in which the fire
 Of red wine quivered ; while a radiant quire
 Striking their harps sang loud with sweet accord.

XI.

“ Dear Friends, come ! we wait for you ;
 Strong and wise and pure and true.
 Why, alas, ascend so few ?

“Where are the myriads that should now be
here ?

How have they wasted all the lavish dower
With which God fitted them to rule their sphere—

The Passion and the Vision and the Power ?
For ever hoping, disappointed ever,

We know too well the constant tragic doom :
Vision hath seen, with scarce a work-endeavour,
Then closed its eyes for more voluptuous gloom ;
Passion hath disenshrined the awful soul,
Its large heart tempting fatal fleshly lusts ;
And Power hath shaken off divine control,
To gorge itself with universal trusts.

“For the undone Many, ruth,
Ye have conquered, true to truth ;
Dare our wine of Joy and Youth.

“The tree whose trunk and branches dark and
bare

Withstood the storms of Winter, planted strong ;
Doth glorify itself in summer’s air

With leaf and fruit and nested bird’s blithe song :
The earth-realm labouring blind and dumb and
cheerless,

Yet ever onward, through the reign of night ;
Leaps forth with joy majestically fearless
Into the pure new heaven of morning light.

Again stern Winter with its storms shall come,
 But find the tree grown stronger 'gainst its
 wrath ;
 Again the night-gloom, weary, blind and dumb,
 But find the realm far forward on its path.

“Then, dear Friends, come, come away !
 Now is Summer, now is Day ;
 Joy assumes imperial sway !”

XII.

As when the warm spring-breezes overblow
 Some silent, frozen, melancholy main,
 Its waters heave and throb and rend their chain,
 And singing in the sunbeams flash and flow :

So with the breathing of that gracious song
 Those Spirits burst their trance of silent sad-
 ness ;
 Their bosoms heaved with glorious life and
 gladness ;
 Clear-eyed, erect, full-voiced, advanced their throng :

“O Brothers of this Heaven supreme and glorious !
 O Sisters of this greeting full of love !
 Into what a dawn of perfect day victorious,
 Do ye usher us, and welcome us above !

The World o'erflows with life serene and tender ;
The air, the light is all celestial wine ;
Our inmost soul is interfused with splendour
And harmony divine !

“As birds the boundless azure sky-deep winging,
As breezes flowing round and round the earth,
As flowers into the vernal welcome springing,
As fountains leaping seaward bright with mirth ;
Our thoughts throughout Infinity float chainless,
Our souls encompass spheres of life sublime,
Our beings thrill and glow with new life stainless,
Our swift joy laughs at Time !

“The worlds go wheeling far their cycled courses,—
From the fathomless Unbirth of the Abyss,
By golden laws attuning counter-forces
Built up into the noonday Heaven of Bliss :
And pervading all, sustaining all, enwreathing
With its infinite embrace beneath, above,
The Æther—the Divine eternal breathing
Of Life and Light and Love !”

XIII.

So singing they advanced with measured pace ;
And like a silver morning-mist were drawn
Slow floating up the hillside wood and lawn,
Unto that high seraphical embrace.

All stood triumphant, beautiful, divine,
Between the heaven and earth ; all stood there
bright ;
Informed, transfigured with the holy light
As crystal cups with sacramental wine.

I would have stood there evermore and gazed
Entranced in adoration, consciousness,
Upon that beauty of all holiness
In human forms embodied and upraised.

Alas ! the universal light too soon
Was fading, flowing backward to its fount,
Until they stood upon that sombre mount
Sole-shining o'er the dark earth as a moon.

And still the glory-stream flowed back to God ;
And they with it were floated up the sky ;
Whose gates shut blank against my straining
eye,
And left the earth a dark and soulless clod—

Left all the earth like some most desolate shore
Wherefrom has ebbed the free and living tide ;
And left me stranded on its dark waste wide,
A wreck to be recovered nevermore.

O Life! this is thy deepest woe of all—
That as a soul regains its heaven of birth,
The body drags it swooning back to earth,
Stunned, hopeless, blind with its tremendous fall.

XIV.

When I arose the ever ancient Night
Filled with his sombre pomp the earth and sky :
No memories of that doom of dire affright
Perturbed the calm ; and undismayed on high
The moon and stars where they had shone before
Shone on in cold and stern sublimity.
The hills loomed dark upon the silent shore,
Round which the waves in thoughtful monotone
Rolled their old voice of *Ever—evermore*.
A royal City dwelt upon this throne,—
And what now left of all its wealth and pride?
A few strange groups of pallid-gleaming stone !
But Nature cares not for the ruin wide,
Her dreaming beauty glows in perfect bloom :
Most cold, imperial, unlamenting Bride,
Her Lord and Bridegroom scarcely in the tomb. . .
The moon sank slowly down from heaven's
crest ;
Pale radiance lined and flecked the eastern gloom ;
A stir, a breathing thrilled the world's deep rest ;
No wakening bird, half-wakened, here and there

Uttered uncertain warning from its nest ;
But spread a cold and fresh and fragrant air,
That seemed with lifeful breath to cleanse
away

The grosser shades and vapours everywhere,
And all memorials of the night's dismay,
That pure and odorous the earth might greet
The first divine embraces of the Day,
Now hurrying up the heavens with fiery feet,
The crown of burning gold upon his head,
Cloud-robed with gold and purple, light and heat. . . .

Ages on ages in their course have shed
Ruin of fire and tempest on the earth,
Uncounted æons of her sons are dead ;
Yet she exults with aboriginal mirth,
Nor feels her frame grow weak, her blood grow
cold,

But pure and strong and young as at her birth
When first God's hand her glorious path out-
rolled :

For day by day He seals her with His sign—
Night's tomb is rent, the gates of heaven unfold
To let the ever-youngest Dawn divine,

Bathe her in balms of sempiternal youth.
I think no human soul which here doth pine
In personal anguish and with general ruth,

Without these Dawn-evangels fresh from God
Could feel its immortality a truth.

Dear are all dawns ; but this that coming trod

The eastern heavens to kiss the earth's pale brow
With heavenly benedictions, when the rod
Of the Avenging Justice was but now

Withdrawn from penal smitings dire!—what
speech

That mortals use, what words of lofty vow

Or soaring chant can emulate and reach

The awe, the bliss, the gratitude, the love,

That saving dawn brought with it from above ?

xv.

What a dawn ascendeth fair through the pure and
silent air,

Fain to greet with holy rapture what a glorious
virgin Earth !

From her sins and fears and woes, from her
memories, by the throes

Of a fierce regeneration born anew in perfect birth !
But what forms, what forms are they, there between
the sea-loved bay

And the spiritual hills with the woods that clothe
their feet ;

Human forms erect in power, beasts that crouch
and birds that cower,

But all wrought in fadeless marble, white and
shining, pure and sweet ?

Lo! as ever more and more broadening out the
dawn doth soar,

Kindling emerald purple golden quivering splen-
dours round her way ;

What a flush—as if of Life kindling with triumphant
strife

Through the torpid marble—fires them, though
they all so steadfast stay !

Lo! as ever more and more music with the dawn
doth soar,

Breezes whisper, leaflets murmur, waters warble
joy for day ;

What a thrill—as if of Life stirring with triumphant
strife

Through the rigid marble—heaves them, though
they all so silent stay !

These are forms that couch and stand, still as marble
fountains grand,

Still in meek victorious patience, till the Sea of
Life arise ;

Till the World-sustaining Sea, Soul of all Eter-
nity,

Once more fill them with Its waters of the Life
that never dies.

When the Royal Sun shall leap glorious on yon
eastern steep,

Gazing grand athwart this province of his
measureless domains ;

Straightway at that conquering sign, straightway
at that glance divine,

Soul shall fill them, stone incarnate, life-blood
gush through all their veins.

And this Nature which doth dream in Titanic sloth
supreme,

Hill and river, wood and meadow, heaven of
azure, careless sea,

Shall have all its want fulfilled, strength employed
and bosom thrilled

By a lordly domination—soul and thought and
passion free.

Oh, that these who in this hour shall attain such
solemn dower,

Consecrated Lords and Bridegrooms wedding
this fair virgin Earth,

Have such holy strength of will, love, faith, truth
unquenchable,

Wisdom, justice, making concord of inheritance
and worth,

As shall give a nobler being from the blissful mar-
riage birth !

XVI.

As one who in the morning-shine

Reels homeward, shameful, wan, adust,

From orgies wild with fiery wine

And reckless sin and brutish lust :

And sees a doorway open wide,
And then the grand Cathedral space ;
And hurries in to crouch and hide
His trembling frame, his branded face.

The organ-thunders surge and roll
And thrill the heights of branching stone ;
They shake his mind, they crush his soul,
His heart knells to them with a moan :
He hears the voice of holy prayer,
The chanting of the fervent hymn ;
They pierce his depths of sick despair,
He trembles more, his eyes are dim.

He sees the world-wide morning flame
Through windows where in glory shine
The saints who fought and overcame,
The martyrs who made death divine :
He sees pure women bent in prayer,
Communing low with God above :—
Too pure ! what right has *he* to share
Their silent feast of sacred love ?

How can he join the songs of praise ?
His throat is parched, his brain is wild :
How dare he seek the Father's gaze,
Thus hopeless, loveless, and defiled ?

How taint the pureness—though he yearn
 To join such fellowship for aye? . . .
He creeps out pale—May he return
 Some time when he shall dare to stay !

As he within that holy fane,
 Was I upon that solemn shore ;
One murky cloud, one spoiling stain,
 One jarring note,—all these and more :
A Spectre from the wicked Past,
 Familiar with the buried years ;
The joys that fade, the griefs that last,
 The baffled hopes, the constant fears ;

The fair, fair dawn of many a day
 That sinks in storm-clouds red and wild ;
The souls that in their huts of clay
 Are crushed and buried, all defiled ;
The Lusts that rage like savage steeds,
 While Will with reinless hand sleeps on,
And drunken Thought but goads their speeds,—
 Then one mad plunge, and all is gone ;

The Moods that strew palm-branches now
 And with Hosannas fill the sky,
Then shortly crown with thorns the brow
 And mock and scourge and crucify ;

The error, guile and infamy,
The waste of foul and bloody strife,
The unforeseen catastrophe,
That make the doleful drama, Life.

Ah, what had I to do with these
Young lovely souls serene and clear,
Awaking up by fine degrees
To life unsullied as its sphere?
The Spectre that has roamed forlorn,
Sin-restless, through the sombre night,
Must creep to its old grave at morn,
Nor blot the world of life and light.

XVII.

Where I had left it, on the lonely strand,
Uninjured lay my boat, and lovely ; seeming
Some fair sea-creature, of the midsea dreaming
To light foam-whispers on the yellow sand.

While yet we skimmed the wavelets of the
bay,
Methought there rose, ev'n as the sun arose,
A vehement Chorus hurrying to its close—
Fresh as the breath of the awakened day.

With vital fires the morning seemed to glow
While it rang onward like a trumpet-blast
Of keen reveillé crying : NIGHT IS PAST !
AROUSE YE DREAMERS, TO THE DAY AND FOE !

The stars for ever sweep through space, surrounding
Their sun-kings and God's central hidden Throne
With splendour and deep music far-resounding,
Though heard by pure celestial ears alone :
Their music chants His lofty praise for ever,
Their splendours burn to Him the Light Divine ;
In their grand uneager motions pausing never,
They live and sing and shine.

Eternally they sweep on their vast courses,
With solemn joy fulfilling His behest ;
While the balance of stupendous counter-forces
Buildeth up a stable Infinite of rest.
And the Æther, breathing life through vast pulsa-
tions,
Thrills with rapture to their God-supported flight ;
And its waves against the rushing constellations
Break in the foam of light.

Each world-sphere groweth grandly through the ages
From its lifeless weltering unsubstantial birth,
Through unnumbered fiery throes and cyclic stages
Till it shines in heaven a life-abounding earth ;

Till its vapours are green fields and glorious
oceans,

Till with countless living beings it is rife :
By harmony constraining dread commotions
It is crowned and thronged with life.

Until conscious, doubting, worshipping Immortals,
As they journey on their infinite Life-way,
Passing through its Birth and Death mysterious
portals

Inform with spirit-fire the clothing clay :
And the dead, spectral, consciousless Material
Is a dwelling-place for essences divine ;
Throbs with thought and passion deathlessly
ethereal,
A Heaven-honoured shrine.

All spirits from their infancy's bland sleeping
Must struggle to a strong and noble prime
Through sins, dangers, anguish, terrors,—ever
reaping

Costly fruits in every season of swift Time :
From their fountain in its deepest dark founda-
tion,

Glory-shrouded in the shadow of God's Throne,
Through all worlds to their highest-soaring station
By unrest all have grown.

Life *is* only by perpetual on-flowing ;

Torpid rest is the true life-devouring death ;
Through stern struggles all things ever are up-
growing ;

Sighs and moanings prove a vital-throbbing breath.
One alone—Eternal, Infinite, All-holy,

Is in changeless rest ; the Perfect grows nor grew :
Finite souls and all things live by progress solely,
All *are* but what they *do*.

PART IV.

THE RETURN.

I.

Long tranquil days one more than seven
The beamless sun from out the main
Went burning through the vault of Heaven,
And circled to the deep again :
While day by day in dreamful ease
We glided o'er the glistening seas.

Long calm autumnal nights just seven
The moon with all her starry train
Went shining through the vault of Heaven,
And circled to the deep again :
While night by night in dreamful ease
We glided o'er the glimmering seas.

Long days so rich in rest, so still ;
 As warm as love, as calm as truth ;
Long nights which did those days fulfil,
 As some sweet girl a fervent youth :
While day and night in dreamful ease
We floated o'er the silent seas.

Time set within his circled sky
 A topaz sun, a diamond moon,
And thick star-pearls, and made thereby
 A marriage-ring of blissful boon ;
With which in ever-dreamful ease
We floated o'er the happy seas.

Did Nature sleep, and dream in sleep
 Of all the Spring and Summer toil
Her children were about to reap,—
 The wealth of corn and wine and oil :
As day and night in dreamful ease
We floated o'er the sleeping seas ?

Or was it her deep-thoughted mood ;
 A little sad, such loss had been ;
And grieved, the dear Past seemed so good ;
 Yet proud, triumphant and serene :
As day and night in dreamful ease
We floated o'er the solemn seas ?

I lay in one long trance of rest
 And contemplation,—free from thought
 Of Future issue, worst or best
 To be from Past and Present wrought :
 While day and night in dreamful ease
 We glided o'er the trancèd seas.

II.

Before me, in the drowsy night outspread,
 The City whence in anguish I had fled
 A vast dark Shadow loomed :
 So still, so black, it gloomed,
 It seemed the darkness of a great abyss
 Gulfed in a desert bare ;
 Around whose precipice
 Dim lamps burnt yellow in the vacant air,
 Lifted on high portentous. Yet to me
 Its dark suggestions were of Life, not Death ;
 Its awful mass of life oppressed my soul :
 The very air appeared no longer free,
 But dense and sultry in the close control
 Of such a mighty cloud of human breath.
 The shapeless houses and the monstrous ships
 Were brooding thunderclouds that could eclipse
 The burning sun of day ;
 Surcharged with storms of such electric life,
 Keen as the lightning to its chosen prey,
 Curbless and dreadful when aroused to strife. . .

Who once has gazed upon the face of Death
Confounds no more its calm with calmest Sleep ;
The terror of that beauty shadoweth
His spirit with an influence too deep.

III.

And while I gazed upon the sleeping City,
And pondered its unnumbered destinies,
A flood of awe and fear and love and pity
Swelled in my heart and overflowed my eyes
 With unexpected tears.

The burden of the message I had brought
From that great City far across the sea
Lay heavy on my soul ; as if for years
And years I had been wandering wearily
In travail with it : now the time was spent ;
Now, as a cloud with fire and thunder fraught,
I must give birth with throes of agony,
And perish in the bearing. So I leant
Back in the boat, all desolate and distraught,
Pangs shuddering through the faintness of cold fears :
Death passed his hand across my brow ; but went
To lay its plenary pressure on some heart
That throbbed true life—"for this poor pulse,"
 thought he,
"Is not worth quelling"—I watched him depart
Bearing all peace with him ; when suddenly

That Spirit which will never be withstood
Came down and shook and seized and lifted me,—
As men uplift a passive instrument
Through which to breathe whatever fits their
mood,
Stately triumphal march or war-note dread,
Anthem, gay dance, or requiem for the dead ;
And through my lips with irrepressible might
Poured forth its own stern language on the night.

IV.

“Haughty and wealthy and great, mighty, magni-
ficent, free,
Empress in thine own right of the earth-surround-
ing sea !
Broad and deep flows the river that feedeth thy
mighty heart,
Bringing from all the zones to crowd thine imperial
mart
Of all their produce the best—their silks, their
gems, their gold,
Their fruits and corn and wine, their luxuries
thousand-fold :
Thy merchants are palaced princes, thy nobles
scorn great kings,
Thy meanest children swell with pride beneath
thy shadowing wings ;

And thy voice throughout the world, complacently
serene,

Proclaims 'Of all my Sisters, I am the rightful
Queen !

This one is blind, this deaf, and that other is but
a mute ;

This one is fair indeed, but drunken and dissolute ;

This is a very slave, dishonourèd long ago ;

This one is dying of age, that other of want and woe ;

This one is proud and great, but a heathen in her soul,

And subject to fatal frenzies, raging beyond control :

But I, I am rich and strong, I am wise and good
and free ;

Thronèd above them, Empress sole of the earth-
surrounding Sea !'

"Yes, indeed thy power is great, but thy evil is
great no less,

And thy wealth is poor to pay the debt of thy
guiltiness ;

And the world is judged with justice, and thou
must pass through that fire

Which hath tested so sternly the glitter of Venice
and Carthage and Tyre :

For no wealth can bribe away the doom of the
Living God,

No haughtiest strength confront the sway of His
chastening rod.

Repent, reform, or perish! the Ages cry unto thee:

Listen, oh listen, ere yet it be late, thou swarthy
Queen of the Sea!

“Thy heritage vast and rich is ample to clothe and
feed

The whole of thy millions of children beyond all
real need;

One of the two main wheels whereon thy Faith
doth move

Is that each as he loves himself so shall he his
neighbour love:

But thy chief social laws seem strictly framed to
secure

That one be corruptingly rich, another bitterly
poor,

And another just starving to death: thy fanes and
mansions proud

Are beleaguered with filthy hovels wherein poor
wretches crowd,

Pining in body and soul; untaught, unfed by those
Who are good if they merely dribble bland alms
upon fatal woes—

Resigning scarcely aught of their pleasure and
pride and content,

Nor dreaming that all their life is one huge em-
bezzlement.

“The sumptuous web of thy trade encompassing
all the globe
Is fretted by gambling greed like a moth-eaten robe,
Is slimed by creeping fraud, is poisoned by false-
hood’s breath,
Is less a garment of life than a shroud of rotting death.

“The mass of thy rulers live with scarcely one
noble aim,
Scarcely one clear desire for a not inglorious fame ;
Slaves to a prudence base, idolaters unto Might,
Jailors of lofty zeal, infidels to pure Right,
Deaf to the holy voice of the Conscience of the
World,
Blind to the banner of God when it floats in the
storm unfurled ;
They, and with them the array of thine actual
Priesthood, thy proud
And numberless Father-confessors—ineffable crowd
Of scribes who by day and by night, unceasingly
blatant, dictate
Thine every move in the contest with Time the
Servant of Fate.

“Thy flaring streets each night affront the patient
skies
With an holocaust of woes, sins, lusts and blas-
phemies ;

When thy thousands of harlots abroad with the
other thousand are met
Of those who made them first and who keep them
harlots yet :
So dreadful, that thou thyself must sometimes
look for the fire
That rained from heaven on Sodom to make thee
one funeral pyre.

“Thy Church has long been becoming the Fossil
of a Faith ;
The Form of dry bones thou hast, but where are
the blood and breath ?
Dry bones, that seem a whole, with dead sinews
binding the parts,
Inert save when bejuggled to ghastly galvanic starts :
Though thou swearest to thy people, ‘The King is
but sick, not dead’—
Gaining the time while you choose you another in
His stead ;
Though thy scribes and thy placemen all ; most of
whom know the fact,
Vouchsafe in His name to write, pretend by His
will to act :
Where are the signs of His life?—While living
He never ceased
To thrill with the breath of His being thy realm
from the West to the East ;

While He lived He fought with sin, with fleshly
lust and pride ;
While He lived His poor and mean were wealthy
and dignified ;
While He lived His reign was freedom, faith,
chastity, peace and love ;
And the symbol borne on his banner was not the
raven but dove ;
While He lived there yawned a Hell with a Devil
for His foes,
And a God-ruled Heaven of triumph before His
followers rose ;
While He lived the noblest of men were wholly
devoted to Him,
The saints, the bards, the heroes, in soul and
mind and limb,—
Who now without a Leader, mournful in silence
wait,
Girding each one himself to his lonely fight with
Fate.

“ But thou, O Queen, art false : a liar, if He is
dead
And becoming a mammoth fossil whose æon is
wholly sped ;
A traitor if still He lives and shall for ever reign,
For thou spurnest the laws most sacred of all He
doth ordain,

Should Christ come now from Heaven, to reap the
harvest sown

When He buried Himself in the earth, watered
with blood of His own,

How many Christians indeed could He gather
with strictest care

From thy two hundred myriads who claim in Him
a share ?

He agonised to save thee and thy children all ;

And He saveth scarcely enough to delay thy
deadly fall.

“For fall thou wilt, thou must—so proud as thy
state is now,

Thou and thy sisters all, scarce better or worse
than thou,

If ye do not all repent, and cleanse each one her
heart

From the foulness circling with its blood to poison
every part.

Woe to thy pampered rich in their arrogant selfish-
ness ;

Woe to thy brutelike poor who feel but their bread-
distress ;

Woe to thy people who dare not live without hope
of wealth,

Who look but to fruits of the earth for their life
and saving health ;

Woe to thy rulers who rule for the good of themselves alone,
Fathers who give their children crying for bread a stone ;
Woe to thy mighty men whose strength is unused or sold ;
Thy sages who shut their eyes when Truth is stern to behold ;
Woe to thy prophets who smile Peace, Peace, when it is a sword ;
Thy poets who sing their own lusts instead of hymns of the Lord ;
Thy preachers who preach the life of what they feel to be death ;
Thy sophists who sail wild seas without the compass of faith ;
Thy traders trading in lies and in human bodies and souls ;
Thy good men cursing those better who strive on to loftier goals :—
The final Doom evolveth, burdened with woe on woe,
Sure as the justice of God while yet by His patience slow ;
For the earth is pervaded wholly, through densest stone and clod,
With the burning fire of the law of the Truth of the Living God ;

Consuming the falsehood, the evil, the pride, the
 lust, the shame,
With ever-burning, unrelenting, irresistible flame ;
Until all save the purest spirit, eternal, of truth
 and love,
Be altogether consumed away, beneath as well as
 above.”

1857.

RONALD AND HELEN

PART I.

MOST bright and genial noon of Christmas Day !
The pale blue sky is cloudless, and the sun
A white intensity of light whose ray
Is gladness unto all it shines upon :
Blue-green and foamless swells the tide-filled bay ;
The remnant morning-mist still hovers dun
 Above St. Aubin's shore, and through its veil
 The white-walled houses gleam now tawny-pale.

High on a brig's foremast a boy is singing
In proud supremacy o'er dread and care,
His arms in time with his free music swinging :
How through the ocean of crystalline air
That young and swift and joyous voice comes
 ringing,
Like birdnotes through the summer greenwoods
 fair !

What is his Christmas Carol ?—The refrain
Is " Gra machree ma cruiskeen ;" noble strain !

I lay abed this morning half-asleep
And half-awake, in drowsy warmth and rest ;
While tender memories, such as smile and weep
Over Life's faded flowers in every breast,
And visionary thoughts, that sometimes steep
(As sunset-glories steep the greying west)
Life's mournful hours in lucent heavenly balm,
Came floating at their pleasure through my calm.

And thus at length, amidst the shadowy train,
A little poem, like a song-bird sweet,
First nestled in my heart, then in my brain,
And now exultant with the genial heat
Lets loose upon the air its simple strain :
Perchance some gentle hearts whose pulses beat
With Love's full symphonies in tremulous chime,
Will welcome his least minion's rustic rhyme.

It is not cold bleak winter any more ;
It is the noon of summer ; and the isle
Of Cæsaræan Jersey to its core
Is drunken with the Sun's unclouded smile :
The sea is steadfast as the glittering shore ;
We think such water never can beguile
Fair boats, rich barques, brave men, to wreck and
death,
As now it lies unwrinkled by a breath.

She sitteth at the window, lone, alone ;
Outgazing far across the lustrous bay,
And through the heavens beneath the sun's high
 throne ;
For all her thoughts are wandering far away
About the regions of some Southern zone,
As they have wandered many and many a day,
 Like poor, forlorn, tired, faithful carrier-doves
 With urgent messages for him she loves.

Alas, they cannot come upon his track,
They know not where he wanders or reclines.
O India, if you hold him send him back,
More precious than all jewels of your mines !
O dreadful Sea, if he has gone to wrack
Amidst thy wrath, vouchsafe a few sad lines
 To give her such assurance of his doom
 That she may go unlingering to the tomb !

Never a single note of him to speak,
Never a single word by any ship !
A hectic fire surmounts her pallid cheek,
A peevish trouble agitates her lip ;
Through her impatient fingers wan and weak
The torn-off petals of the white rose slip ;
 Lividly set, her eyes burn large and bright,
 But with a painful sleepless desolate light.

She often mutters to her own sick heart ;
She often mutters to herself alone,
She often turns her with a sudden start,
To find herself too surely all alone :
Anon for weary sighs her pale lips part,
Anon she singeth in a dreamy moan

A song whose burden plains throughout the air
The heavy burden of a life's despair :—

“ Adieu, adieu, my ain true Love,
We must for ever part :
Though I am not of Douglas sib,
I bear the bleeding heart,
My dear,
I bear the bleeding heart ! ”

“ From all the farthest quarters of the world
The level snowdrifts of white letters come ;
With all the steam-cars o'er the safe land hurled,
With all the ships athwart the wild sea-foam,
Till every happy wreath at length unfurled
Melts in the warmth of loving hearts at home :

And never one white flake to me address,
To cool the burning fever of my breast !

“ O Sun, thou large and lidless eye of fire,
My soul is withered in thy steadfast gaze ;
O hot and heavy air I must respire,
No secret spring this fever-thirst allays ;

O cruel Sea, enmasking thy fierce ire
With rippling smiles carest by golden rays :
I would that I were buried cool and deep
From this world-furnace in unwaking sleep !

“I dreamed a dream of superhuman bliss,
And it has vanished in the day’s broad glare ;
I breathed my soul forth in one rapturous kiss,
And it has died out in the vacant air ;
I stretched unheedful o’er a precipice
To pluck Life’s crowning Love-rose,—Oh, how
fair !—
And, all its fragrant beauty unenjoyed,
I plunge down shuddering through the gulfy
void.

“O Ronald, Ronald, wheresoe’er you be :
Whether lone-sleeping in an alien tomb,
Or overswept by the remorseless sea,
Or languid in the richest Orient’s bloom
Breathing delicious life ; I summon thee !
In body or in soul, whate’er your doom,
Come hither ; but one moment ; so that I
With consecration of your love may die !

“Perchance some Indian witch hath snared your
heart
With fiery philtres and enwoven wiles

Some swarthy Cleopatra, with the art
To melt strong manhood in her tears and smiles : *
I see you there, all powerless to depart,
The more her slave the more you learn her guiles ;
 Draining the wine of that voluptuous sin
 Which Heaven and Earth seem both well lost
 to win.

“ Break through her spells, my beautiful, my brave !
Shake off thy swoon, stand up, and come away !
Submit no more to be her doting slave,
Embruted while you grovel in her sway !—
Alas, alas, how misery will rave !
Thou art my own true love ; thou art the prey
 Of no fierce lusts, thou, pure and strong and free,
 But of the wild waste all-devouring sea.

“ The fair white signal-pennon droopeth down
Against its flagstaff on the fortress high ;
The solid serpent-smoke is trailing brown
A lazy bulk between the sea and sky :
How many hearts throughout the busy town
Foresee dear friends or friendly greetings nigh !
 The flag of truce stills none of all my pains,
 The serpent’s venom burns through all my veins.

* The one priceless pearl Cleopatra dissolved and drank in the wine of her love was the noble manhood of Antony.

“Yet it is hard, O God, to die so soon,
To feel my life decay before its prime ;
To perish in May-frosts when sumptuous June
Is bringing Eden-airs to bless the clime ;
To have my day eclipsed before its noon ;
To sleep a widow ere the wedding-time,
Down in the cold dark Earth—there truly wed,
For Death the Skeleton will share my bed.”

Then all the memories of her happy hours,
Her girlish hours of hope and health and glee,
And love a-budding like the other flowers
When April whispers of the June to be ;
Of moonlit waters and of sunny bowers
Ere one went forth upon the desert sea ;
Swelled in her heart and filled her eyes, and bore
Out through her lips their passionate *Never-*
more! :—

“O thou happy, happy Island-home,
So rich and green and fair,
Which I and my true-love used to roam
Without a thought of care.

O thou many-peopled busy town
Upon the broad bay's marge ;
Into whose full life we went down
And felt our life as large.

O the ringing of the hammers on the building ships,
And the bustle of the pier,
With the gleaming eyes and the trembling lips
And the last embraces dear.

O the mile-long sweep of the full tide swell
Far up the soft white sand ;
O the flashing of the foam when it scales so well
The rocks of the Castle grand.

O the flutter of the flakes in the broad bay mouth,
Like myriads of sea-birds white ;
O the gliding of the sails in the hazy south,
Like spirits calm and bright.

O the wondrous mists that enchant the whole,
And make it what they please,—
A faërie realm for the dreaming soul,
Or a wreck beneath dull seas.

O the banks of the golden gorse and broom,
And the lanes that wind like a burn,
With the soft snowflakes of the apple-bloom
Shed thick on their hedgerow fern.

O the slant-stemmed orchards, ripe and old,
When the rich fruits everywhere,
Like flames of ruby and globes of gold,
Burn in the quivering air.

O the sleek and tethered kine that graze
The valley-bottoms sweet,
And look up with such long, slow, patient gaze
As you pass with lingering feet.

O the singing of the larks in the fields of air
Above the fields of grain,
When the sky is blue and the clouds are rare,
And the hedges laugh with rain.

Can it indeed, then, can it be,
That I so young in years
Must fade from the land and the air and the sea
And the heaven of shining spheres?

Must fade away to a joyless ghost,
Or moulder in the earth,
While all the world and the starry host
Live on in their glorious mirth?

From all the life and the beauty part
Without one loving tear
Of those eyes that lit the flame in my heart,
That burns my life out here?

O Father, Father, I beseech
Before I go but this,—
To see his face, to hear his speech,
To feel his fervent kiss!

When he again has sworn the vow
Which long ago he swore—
'My Love, I loved you, love you now,
And must love evermore!':

Then I can breathe my latest breath,
And feel Thy will be done!
Assured that in the after-death
We ever shall be one."

PART II.

The same hushed vault of dim blue marble sky,
All over-wandered with its thin white veins;
The same fixed marble sea whose blue-green
dye
Brown sunken rocks enrich with purple stains:
For still the same despotic sun on high
In haughty splendour bare and beamless reigns;
The earth beneath his too impassioned love
Is Semele embraced with fire by Jove.

What royal vision issues calm and free,
Making the isle at once her beauty's throne?—
For all the sphere of earth and sky and sea
Pavilions not too grandly her alone.

Can this erect and glorious woman be
The pining girl whose weary heartsick moan
 Fretted the long still hours of yesterday?
Can that rich life have ever known decay?

With what pure bloom and firm elastic grace
She glides among the flowers, a flower more fair ;
With what undazzled eyes and dew-fresh face
She fronts the South in all its quivering glare ;
Her arms stretched forth as if to the embrace
Of some Olympian lover burning there ;
 Her lips just parted, and her bosom's breath
 Suspended in the bliss as calm as death.

Her mother follows her, a matron mild,
Now panting with astonishment and fear :
“ My poor, poor Helen ! my unhappy child !
What change is this, what madness brings you
 here? . . .

She heeds me not . . . her look is fixed and wild . . .
It is your mother speaking to you, dear !

 O God ! what terrors hast Thou still in store?—
 She does not know her anguish any more ! ”

The cry has troubled her serenest trance ;
She turns, and with reluctant effort slow
Draws back her spirit from the bright expanse
To comprehend her mother's clamorous woe ;

And then with such a strange, calm, pitying glance
As angels on our sufferings may bestow,

Bends down to kiss her: "Mother, sweet and
kind,

God has at length restored me my right mind.

Last night I laid a wild, wild burning head
Upon the pillow whence this morn arose
A sweet cool shrine of happy thoughts instead :

If I had slept death's slumber from my woes,
A shroud my sheet, a narrow grave my bed
(How often have I yearned for such repose !),

And risen to the Heavenly Life, the change
Could scarcely be more glorious and strange.

Whether in sleep or not I cannot tell—

Ah, life was all one restless dream insane !—
A casual thought like some wind-seedling fell,
And struck firm root within my infirm brain,
And drew up all my soul as by a spell

To feed its strength (and all my soul was fain),
And grew up an oracular vast tree

Whose leaves all murmured, *Oh, the sea! the sea!*

Till I felt stifled in my little room

And could not rest for irresistible yearning ;

But like a ghost that leaves its midnight tomb,

Went forth and hurried forward without turning

Over the hill-paths chequered gleam and gloom,
And down the snow-white sand, to bathe my burning
Tumultuous forehead deep in the divine,
Calm cool refreshment of the deep-sea-brine.

The sands late flooded by the sounding tide
Wore luminous silver spoil of its retreat ;
But till I felt the glassy waters slide
With thin spent whispers round my naked feet
(The gathering volume of the next wave wide
Nearing me fast with murmur full and sweet),
I could not raise my eyes to see indeed
Being intent alone on my great need.

I looked, I stood : there never was a night
Of such heart-breaking beauty for despair !
Our world's one darling and supreme delight,
Golden Beatitude ! the moon couched there
'Midst golden-tissued cloudlets ; and her bright
Serene regard entranced the breathless air,
And dazzled her old slave, the fawning sea :
Oh, how the cruel splendour maddened me !

Why linger here, where tireless ripples run
Enraptured in the glory of her gaze ?
All lightsome creatures my dark sorrow shun,
No fiery wine a fiery thirst allays.

But I must reach those low rock-ridges dun,
Where wrinkled shadows bar the silver rays ;
 There shall I find some deep dark silent pool,
 Dark as oblivion, deep as death, grave-cool.

So I walked forth along the pathway paved
With tremulous lustre ; and no thought of fear
Or wonder told me of the peril braved :
And though the light transfixed me like a spear,
Yet o'er that sea of crystal, many-waved,
To walk right on into the magic sphere
 Of that low gorgeous moon, was such a dream
 As made the pang a too sharp rapture seem.

I reached the ridge ; and as by instinct went,
Eyeless with dreaming, to the dear old place ;—
A pebbled floor with small bright shells besprent,
A pool at lowest ebb when not a trace
Of moisture in hot noons is elsewhere lent
To those black calcined rocks that need the grace
 Of living waters round them, and instead
 Have white sand-powder thick with worm coils
 spread.

Here on this sloping ledge we sat alone
That last sad day, and let the long hours swim
Unheeded over us ; and like a moan
From far away each voice gasped strange and dim ;

His eyes were blank, his face was set like stone.

What now is left me of the place and him ?

A book of lovely, delicate, sanguine weeds,

A heart of thoughts whose every fibre bleeds.

‘ Here let me lie ; the shadow is so deep,

‘ The little water is so cold and pure—

A font baptizing me to blessèd sleep ;

To slumber which for ever shall endure,

Being o’ershrouded by the refluent sweep

Of the great tide ; or else whose balm will cure

My soul to fitness for this world of life :

Mysterious prescience soothes my inward strife !

So first I knelt to dip my weary head,

And then lay down as if the hollow were

My natural resting-place, my nightly bed ;

And weedlike on the water streamed my hair.

Then a strange peace was on my spirit shed ;

Beyond inert unconsciousness of care :

I felt the world’s smooth, silent, solemn wheeling ;

A mystic, restful, and triumphant feeling.

‘ The burning golden Rose of the Day

Droops down to the Western Sea ;

And the amber and purple flush of the sky,

And the crimson glow of the sea,

Ebb, ebb away ; fade, fade and die ;
While the Earth all mantled in shadowy grey
Washes her brow with a restful sigh
 In the cool sweet dewes of the gloaming.

‘ Then the shining silver Lily of the Night
 Opens broad her leaves divine,
 Afloat on the azure hyaline
Of the heavenly sea ; and her purest light
Kisses the Earth that dreaming lies
 In a still enchanted sleeping ;
While the heavens with their countless starry eyes
 Still watch are keeping.

‘ The Earth loves the golden Rose of the Day
 From which she distils the fiery wine
 Of immortal youth and magnificent might ;
But the Sea loves the silver Lily of the Night,
For her beams are as wands of a holier sway
 Whose spell brings the trance divine :
The Rose for Life’s feast and the festal array,
 The Lily for Death’s shrine.’

Who was the singer, singing thus alone
Amidst the tidal rocks, beneath the moon ?
What gave his voice that mighty murmurous tone ?
Where had he learned that preternatural tune ?—

Melting all melody into a moan
Of infinite yearning, then from music's swoon
 Striding to marshal armies of proud sound
 Whose trampling shook the earth and filled the
 air around.

I rose, but gently, gently, not to spill
A single drop of that enchanted wine
Brimming my soul ; and crept to where a sill,
Backed by dark rock from all the gleam and shine,
Served as a window ; and there settled still,
And gazed—if one indeed can gaze whose eyne
 Are fixed in blank dilation, while her ears
 Drink in oracular rhythms from all the spheres.

Yet in my round of vision, very near
He sat, and merged in my unconscious sight
To union with his music in the clear
Tropical splendour of the liquid light :
An old, old man, reverend yet not austere,
Who on a lower rock-ledge sat upright
 Fronting the moon, and chanting for her grace,
 While all his soul shone steadfast in his face.

'The Earth lay breathless in a fever-swoon
 Beneath the burning noon,
Sun-stricken, dazed with light and sick with heat ;

Then came the waters from the cool mid-sea
Trooping up blithe and free,
And fanned her brow with airs so fresh and sweet ;
And crept about her gently and caressed
Her broad unheaving breast
With the white cincture of a magic zone ;
Bathing and swathing her faint limbs, that were
In the fierce sunfire bare,
With lucid liquid folds of rich green purple-strown.

‘ Then as the sun went floating to his rest
Down the enamoured West,
The waves were leaving the calm earth to dreams ;
Bearing the smirch of her long day’s turmoil,
The sweat of her fierce toil,
The sultry breaths and feverous steams,—
Bearing all far away, and as they went
Whispering with blithe content,
To drown and cleanse them in the pure midsea ;
The while the Earth all dewy sweet and clean,
And drowsily serene,
Beneath the star-dewed heavens might slumber
safe and free.’

His foam-white hair and beard fell floating down
In flowing curves like tendril-plants sea-swayed,
Over his sea-like green-blue silken gown,
Ample, of ever-shifting gleam and shade.

Upon his knees the mighty hands dark-brown
Grasped a great chorded shell, whose sleek lips played
Wild freaks of rainbow lightnings to illumine
The gorgeous thunders of its hollow womb.

Why speak of hair, harp, hands, when in his eyes
The wonder dwelt? A small intense lone mere,
Which under thick tree-shadows airless lies,
As deep and blackly splendid may appear
As if the whole night gloom beneath the skies
Were concentrated in its narrow sphere :

Such were those orbs, those well-shafts of black
splendour,
Through which a soul gazed, solemn, powerful,
tender.

Deep wells lead down to all-mysterious death,
Deep eyes lead down to a mysterious soul,
And both thrill fascination ; but who saith
What lures us on to plunge for either goal?
I dared not stir or speak, and yet my breath
Hysterically bursting from control
Cried through his chanting in a plaint forlorn,
Learnt by the sea-beach one drear winter morn :

‘ Leafless and brown are the trees,
And the wild waste rocks are brown
Which the wan green sea so stealthily
Comes creeping up to drown ;

And the north-west breeze blows chill,
And the sky is cold and pale ;
And nevermore from this desolate shore
Shall I watch my true-love's sail.'

As if indeed, omnisciently aware,
He had been calmly waiting all the while
My own announcement of my presence there,
He turned his glance with an assuring smile,
And said, 'So young, and singing of despair!—
What tyranny of fate, what human guile,
Or what mere folly of your own weak heart,
Makes you bewail an ever-cureless smart?

'My poor Child! come and tell me all your woe ;
And I perchance may find some healing balm :
Howe'er the billows rage and tempests blow,
The sea's deep heart lies brooding ever calm :
Wild waste above may have pure peace below.' . . .
I knelt there at his feet and felt his palm—
Palm of a mighty hand—caress my hair,
As erst the harpstrings, with fine tender care.

And I could tell him all my woe and pain,
As scarcely I could tell you, mother dear ;
All the wild dreams that haunted my vexed brain,
All the sharp agonies of doubt and fear,

All the despair of longings ever vain :
And as I poured them forth into his ear
I felt they never could return to me,
But were as torrents drowned in the great sea.

His hand was a strong blessing on my head ;
His eyes drew out the fever from my soul,
And filled it all with cool sweet light instead,
And held me calm in their supreme control
By some high magic free from awe and dread,
A spiritual charm ; and when the whole
Of my sad tale was sobbed forth, I felt sure,
Before he named a remedy, of cure.

Thoughtfully, father-tenderly he smiled,
And held a moonlike jewel out to me :
'This crystal-clear and hollow gem, my Child,
Contains one pure drop from the deep midsea ;
And all the ocean-volumes calm or wild
In all their depth and power and mystery,
Clothing the round world with a living robe,
Are represented in its little globe.

'Take it, and seek in it with trustful care,
Turning it slowly ; and if He you mourn,
Lord of your life and death, is anywhere
Within the sea's dominions—whether borne

Upon its bosom breathing happy air,
Or buried in its depth a corpse forlorn—
The blank will stir and breathe until you find
His image in its magic sphere enshrined.'

I took it, full of faith ; but could not see
At first,—my hand so trembled, and my eyes
Were clouded with such rushing mystery
From my heart's fiery throbbing. But his wise
Serene regard, steadfastly holding me,
Soothed and restored ; as tender moonlight lies
In beautiful calm upon the ocean's breast,
Enchanting into peace its great unrest.

Upon my open palm the jewel gleamed,
Faint, semi-lucid, almost colourless :
I gazed, gazed, turning slowly, till it seemed
Expanding by soft pulses in the stress
Of my persistent gaze, whose full light streamed
Triumphant with prophetic consciousness ;
Pulse after pulse, wave after wave, poured still
From eyes protending with imperious will.

A golden star is kindled at its core,
The spherelet fills with the dissolving light ;
Gather and shift and vanish shadows hoar :
It is pervaded with miraculous might,

Swelling in musical triumph more and more :
Behold ! within and yet beyond our night
 Another heaven, another sea unfurled,
 Another vast horizon of our world !

A vault of sky ; the wan moon near its crest
Fades from those fiery armies of the dawn,
Whose van is up with golden spears in rest :
A plane of sea as level as a lawn,
But sapphire-blue ; upon the far north-west
A low grey land-cloud delicately drawn ;
 And in the centre of the faërie sphere
 A single ship : all steadfast, solemn, clear !

A lonely ship ; through the crystalline air
I see it as beneath a microscope
We see an insect, every scale and hair ;
I hear its panting, and the splash aslope
Its prow of languid wavelets green :—and there !—
Oh, heart be firm, or this fierce shock of Hope
 Leaping up Bliss, will slay us !—Who is *He*
 Yearning across the ocean-leagues to me !

Hush, hush ; he murmurs . . . How dark-bronzed
 and brown
The face that was so ruddy ! Noble face,
With lordly lion-locks for golden crown !—
As pious Moslems in whatever place

Turn always Meccaward when kneeling down
For adoration of the Throne of Grace,
He has turned hither, praying steadfast-eyed,
Leaning impassioned o'er the vessel's side.

Listen! 'O Helen, this mysterious chain
Which links us heart to heart, gives mine no rest,
Dragging with such persistent cruel strain
As if to tear it bleeding from my breast.
From utmost India, over land and main,
It draws me wild with longing to the West:
What crushing grief, what bitter worldly strife,
Or inward agony, exhausts your life?

'I come, I come, Belovèd! tender heart
Swooning transfixed! no wonder mine must bleed,
Pierced by our sympathy with the same dart.
I come, I come, to stay you in your need,
And nevermore in life shall we two part! . . .
Lo, with what beautiful and tranquil speed
The morning drowns the gloom and fires the
grey,
And breathes triumphantly night's fears away!'

Oh, murmur sweeter than the sweetest psalm
On Sabbath eve in Summer, through the air
Floating with outspread wings that rain pure balm
On who may through some quiet valley fare!—

How picture-motionless, how crystal-calm
And crystal-lucid, sea and sky spread there,
 Ringed by the far horizon's perfect ring ;
 That lonely ship the only human thing !

I could not dare to break the magic peace
By crying ev'n to him, my Love so near ;
But gazed and listened : then a milk-white fleece
Fell in vast volumes through the æther clear,
And surged in violent growth and swift decrease ;
Whereon the suddenly thus-muffled sphere
 Span round, all ruining in with hollow roar.
 I cannot, though I try, remember more.

Something there was : that old Sea-god benign,
Glaucus the wonderful, to whom I raise
Within my heart a rich and secret shrine
For floral gratitude and incense-praise ;
Glaucus, and Ronald, and dear mother mine
Yourself, seen flitting all before my gaze
 In glimmering dusk ; strange music stirs sweet
 bowers :
 The rest has fled with the swift-flying hours.

With the swift flying hours that bring to me
My Love, my Own, my Beautiful, my Brave !
Swift may their flight sweep over the broad sea,
Soft fall their shadow on the halcyon wave !

The hours are Seraphs bright with holy glee,
 Whom I thought sombre bearers to the grave !
 There is no grave, no death, no gloom of night ;
 The World all overflows with God's pure light."

PART III.

Nature had roused herself from that still trance,
 Her long siesta in the noon o' the year ;
 Vast clouds had gathered in the dim expanse,
 High gales had swept the brooding atmosphere,
 With thunders and broad lightnings, with the dance
 Of joyous rain upon the meadows sere,
 And trees tumultuous as a roaring tide,
 And wan green bay and livid offing wide.

And now a morning of delicious breath,
 A clear-skied morning full of hope, whose life
 Has no remembrance of past gloom and death,
 Whose peace abjures its birth in stormy strife,
 Welcomes the Wanderer as he entereth
 That noble bay-mouth which for him is rife
 With all the golden treasures of rich youth
 And perfect love, safesealed by perfect truth.

The pathos of dear Memory's best delight
 Had filled his eyes with tender tears before,
 As they came pulsing in the early light,
 Sole on the waves, aslant the happy shore ;

And all the sister islets full in sight
Unshrouding from their mist-veils thin and hoar
Gleamed faintly blue: but now his soul was
thrilled
With fearless triumph of life's end fulfilled.

“O fair green Isle, my Love's delightful nest,
Deep in this silver branch of the great sea!
Watched by the royal Lion of the West,
Safe from the Eagle, 'oure sweeteemie':
Look,—as a Lion couched in haughty rest,
Slumbrous but watchful for emergency,
Guarding a monarch's threshold night and day,
Thy Castle lies out massive in thy bay.

“Nest of my Love! the cradles of our birth
Were rocked to mightier airs than thou hast known;
Wild winds that raved round hills of gloomy dearth,
And overswept vast heathery moorlands lone,
And swayed deep solemn lochs as if old earth
Were yawning into ruin: every tone
Of those sublimest anthems swells once more
Within me, O our stern dear Mother-shore!

“But youth and youth's Love-Eden, rich and fair
As that first Eden which the Lord God planted;
Wherein we wandered sole as the first pair,
And with the same divine new bliss enchanted;

Are linked with thee for ever, everywhere,
 Sweet islet of the West, whose cool gleams haunted
 The burning splendours of the oldest East
 Shaming the wine of its voluptuous feast.

“Wine of the East! not wine, but poison, call
 That flood of fire which through the parched frame
 rolls;

*‘Thou art the wine whose drunkenness is all
 We can desire, O Love! and happy souls,
 Ere from thy vine the leaves of Autumn fall,
 Catch thee and feed from their o’erflowing bowls
 Thousands who thirst for thy ambrosial dew:’*
 The thousands thirst; the happy souls how few!

“Thus chants the glorious Seraph?—And this wine
 Brimming a golden cup was at my lips;
 Yet I could put away the draught divine
 After the first short, trembling, rapturous sips,
 And leave the great Olympian revel-shine
 And downward fare into the earth-eclipse:
 And after long long years when I return,
 Still my wine waits me, still the star-lamps burn!

“Because the Banquet of the Gods doth last
 For ever and for ever, day and night!
 Because their wine when years on years have passed
 Is fresh as at that instant when its light

Streamed like a ruby chainlet holding fast
The golden cup to Hebe's wrist curved white ;
 Because his place who once hath sat there blest
 Is never taken by another guest.

“ And I did well, and I did well O Love,
To love yet leave ; do well to now return !
How should a boy with great gods feast, and
 prove
The nectar's inmost potency, discern
Its subtlest fragrance, feel its ardours move
Thrilling in slow rich growth until they burn
 Through all the being in a still desire
 And pure white flame of unconsuming fire ?

“ The boy was all too weak : one full-breathed draught
Had been intoxication ; then dull swoon
Had drowned remembrance of the nectar quaffed,
Or left him sated who had dared too soon ;
While all the ever-glad Immortals laughed
To see so misapplied their crowning boon :
 But I come back from years of toil and strife
 Strong and mature to claim my Feast of Life.”

Whereon he shook himself erect, to feel
The rich blood mantling through his stalwart frame,
A fervent wine of life from brow to heel ;
And all his spirit like a pointed flame

Burned out intensely pereceant as the steel
Flashed from its scabbard at a hero's name,—
 Burned glittering from his eyes, and darted keen
 Swift herald fire-thrills to his Love unseen.

He stamped, "But, O my steamer, how you crawl!
I would your horse-power were a horse indeed,
Thin-flanked and spur-able! Good hap befall
This cautious steering, friends; but where's the need
When thick surf escalades the pier-head wall?
High tide—the sun mounts high—Oh speed, speed,
 speed!"

Half hummed half sang he mellowly and low,
A bathing snatch of mornings long ago.

"O sun, lay down thy golden bridge,
 Across the waters clear!
O foam flash round each rock and ridge
 That soon shall disappear!
O tide, swell up a full spring-tide
 Upon the shingly shore!
For, oh, I love thy surge-sweep wide
 And long-resounding roar!"

Early she sat; not restless, but in awe
Trembling at intervals with rhythms of fear;
As from the leafy window-seat she saw
The vessel freighted with life's bliss appear,

And slowly to the hidden harbour draw
Over the joyous waters blue and clear :
 When still the ship was but a shapeless speck
 Her true eye fixed Him lordly on the deck.

The mist dissolving in the morning glow
Still faintly streaked the blue abyss of air,
And left a purple tinge on all below :
The well-loved scene looked strange and still and fair,
As some grand picture painted long-ago,
Now for the first time brought before her there ;
 Or some dear dream of childhood now once more
 Come back as wonderful as heretofore.

If ever she relaxed her vision strong
Which thus had drawn him from the unknown
 climes,
It was to read again with kisses long
A letter she had read a hundred times,
And still found always new,—like some old song,
Some old sweet song of simple passionate rhymes,
 And more than mortal tenderness—a lay
 Fit for a wedding and a dying day.

“Has the old writing startled you, my dear?—
Old schemes expanding, new ones striking root,
Threatened to keep me tending year by year ;
Still as I gathered in one crop of fruit

Finding another ripe,—with long arrear
Of fresh plantations blossoming to boot :

So wealth grew great, and great wealth's care
and toil ;

But what became of love in all the coil ?

“ Stunned, snared, deep-smitten !—so my heart
cried out,

With passionate scorn, imperative demands,
And blood-dark proofs convicting murderous
doubt.

My lonely hours became as desert lands
When hot simoon glares purple through the rout
Where whirl the columns of the billowy sands :

I felt that I must leave ; yet how arrange
That work should live and grow despite the
change ?

“ One night the glowing stars and golden moon,
The perfect fruit of heaven, hung down so bright
In their unwasting beauty, that a swoon
Of pure love-longing and divine delight
Melted me wholly—‘ Thou consummate boon,
Crown of the fruitage of the Tree of Night,

Fringing cloud-leaves with splendid spray, and
through

The quiet air distilling nectar-dew :

“Some swift hours hence my Love’s own islet
green

Comes floating under the enormous shade ;
Oh, when she looks to thee, thou heavenly queen,
Do thou shed blessings down on her !’ I prayed ;
‘ Fill her with shining hope and joy serene,
Tell her,—He cometh now, no more delayed !
This message bear, thou white and golden dove,
Thou light of lovers whom all lovers love !’

“ I heard you then cry, *Ronald, come to me !*
As plainly as I ever heard you speak
When we together sat, and I might see
The glorious eyeglow pale the flushing cheek,
The curved lips falter into utterance free,
And feel the moist hand quiver strongly weak ;
I heard your clear voice ringing through the air,
I felt you straining at my heart-strings there.

“ Whereon I forthwith registered a vow,—
There was such anguish in the bell-sweet tone—
To write no single line more, to allow
My throbbing heart no language of its own,
Till I could date from—where I date from now,
Here, on our England’s ever-green sea-throne :
This vow made short sharp work of all that stood
Between me and departure, bad or good.

“I started, I am here : what voyage was mine,
All my long Odyssey (without the zest
Of lotus, or Calypso more divine),
Until I passed the Pillars of the West,
Spare now from scripture’s ink for speech’s wine :
When one has reached the Islands of the Blest,
The perils and the storms he came through seem
Dim fragments of an interrupted dream.

“Two days for London, or at longest three ;
I dare not come to you first, knowing well
That when you once have laid soft hands on me
I shall be impotent to break your spell :
Meanwhile for some few hours more I am free,
And ere they ring my this life’s passing-bell
Would wind up business with the world in
peace ;
We make our wills just as our wills must cease.

“But lest you wonder how I dare assume
That my mad silence pregnant with dismay
Has not already scared you to the tomb,
Read this : you tortured me the whole sad way
To Malta, pallid phantoms stern as Doom ;
But in the dawning of the perfect day
That brought us to Valetta, you came forth
An Angel of glad tidings from the North.”

A telegraphic note had followed this,
“ I come on by the next Southampton mail : ”
Therefore she read and dreamed in solemn bliss,
Watching the slow hours through, from when the
 veil
Of misty darkness on the deep abyss
Trembled and opened to the dawnlight pale :
 And now and then throughout the vigil long
She murmured dreamily a little song :—

“ A fuchsia lay on the sodden mould ;
 I stooped, and held it up
To the morning sun, and a wine of gold
 Seethed in its purple cup :
A lucid, lucid golden wine—
 The dewy bloom of the flower
By the joyous beams of the morning shine
 Transfused with mystic power.

“ My heart was lying on a grave ;
 I dared to hold it up
To the Sun of Heaven, and a glorious wave
 Swelled in its purple cup :
A glowing golden wine of love,—
 My heart's best blood in the kiss
Of the living light of the Sun above
 Burning to perfect bliss.”

PART IV.

The quiet evening of that day of days
Held the two lovers walking side by side,
As slowly as a summer cloudlet strays
From noon to eve across the heavens wide,
Or distant barque whereat full long we gaze
Ere sure its snowy pinions really glide :
They paused and loitered in such indolence
Of perfect Joy's eternal present tense.

For perfect Joy would hardly care to baulk
Poor perfect Sadness in her logical fit :
“ Better to walk than run, to stand than walk,
To sit than stand, to lie down than to sit ;
And better than to lie awake and talk
Or think, to lie in dreamless sleep ; and it
Is better to lie dead than lie asleep ;
Which better is the best we mortals reap.”

Three hours of this world's time—such hours as make
A heavenly life-time each—they lingered through
The valley winding out to Grève de Lecq,
Before the placid waters met their view ;
And much they spoke, yet speech would often slake
To let the grander harmonies ensue
Of Silence—great dumb Poet, overfraught
With utterless passion and ineffable thought.

As they turned up the highway, to ascend
A narrow path amidst the golden gorse,
A soldier brought his cane down on his friend
With hearty comradeship's most heavy force,
" Hammer my eyes, Bill ! why don't you attend ?
There is a chest for the Victorier Crosss !
That pair's the finest pair I ever see
In this 'ere isle of poisoned ho-devee."

The speaker spoke more loudly than he meant
(Enough of drink will make a whisper shout,
As too much makes a shout of bold intent
Huskily whisper) ; those he pointed out
Thus heard quite well the sudden compliment.
She drew herself up with a pretty pout,
Arching her neck with grace superbly free ;
While his strong eyes laughed with a world of
glee.

" Your soldier is a judge ; he knows a man,
And eke a woman, tho' he loves his beer ;
I've fought a little in my time, and can
Be proud to bend thus an old ramrod, dear :
Old ladies, too, with awesome sharpness scan :
And even as I leapt upon the pier,
A jolly dame with marvellous cap snow-white
Burst out *Quel homme !* in very frank delight.

“ Learn what a peerless prize you come to gain,
 Know what a god is prostrate at your feet ! ”

“ You big bad boy, come back to me as vain
 As ever ! If some giant would but beat
 The boasting out of you !—I’ll shear this mane
 Flung haughtily to every wind we meet,
 All the thick lionlocks of tawny hair
 Wherein your turbulent strength may have its
 lair ! ”

“ And who, of all men in the whole world wide,
 Crowned with the consecration of *your* kiss,
 Would not exult and overflow with pride
 Unmeasured as the ocean of his bliss ?
 What dullest Apis ever deified ?
 What Bottom in rare metamorphosis,
 Titania’s flower-sweet hands like soft white doves
 Hovering round Donkey-head with delicate
 loves ?

“ Yes, I am vain, all-happy and all-vain ;
 As peacock when full noon lights up the eyes
 Emerald and amethyst that star his train,
 Dazzling the sober splendour of the skies ;
 As whidah-bird in his new love’s first gain,
 When he would front an eagle for the prize,
 And all his rapturous vanity unrepent
 Leaps like a fountain in the monstrous crest.

“If I can bring my Love great store of wealth,
Good—tho’ all gold is dross beside my Love ;
If I can bring her beauty, vigour, health,
Good—tho’ her worth is all world’s grace above :
And shall I bring her these good things by stealth,
As if ashamed my worship thus to prove ?

Not so ; my life’s best incense shall aspire
Upon the hilltop in a flaming fire.”

They sat them down where they could look abroad
Through the sweet gloaming o’er the dim sea-
space ;

And long they sat in silence hushed and awed,
The while she nestled close in his embrace.

Surely they felt the very breath of God
Leaning down softly from the Heavenly place,
Even as a mother leans with yearnings deep
To watch her infant sink in happy sleep.

At length she whispers in soft little gasps
Of slender tremulous shadowy distant sound ;
Fearing to break the silence that enclasps
With infinite love and peace the world around ;
Yet fearing more the silence, through which grasps
Too powerfully her soul all tranced and bound
His conquering soul imperious : and her will
Spends its last free pulsation in the thrill.

(All silently the lily's globe of dew
 Is drunk up by the great sun's hot desire ;
 The burning cloudlet in the burning blue
 Is still as death, and overfraught with fire
 Dissolveth ever upward through and through
 Successive heavens, and would aspire—expire :
 It has condensed to cold and dark again
 Ere it showers earthward in wide-whispering
 rain.)

“Are we in Heaven ? or are we still on earth ?
 Is this indeed Eternity or Time ? . . .
 Oh, Love, the foretaste of another birth,
 Another life from blossoming to prime,
 That showed our richest foison arid dearth,
 Our tropic summer a dark polar clime,
 Was given me in an ecstasy of fear ;
 How deep our roots cling to the Now and
 Here !

“And this *is* Earth ; and in the glass run by
 The sands that surely then for ages stood,
 As all the stars stood steadfast in the sky—
 The burning ranks, the golden multitude
 Of chariots wherein unweariedly
 The Lords of Time have evermore pursued
 The flying Future through the realms of Space :
 Sands run, and stars renew their solemn chase.

“And shall we wish to hurry to the End?
To sleep—to lose the rush, the stress, the glow,
The rapture of the chase, because we bend
At whiles faint bruised and dusty? Ah, no! no!
Let all the seasons in the good fruit blend!
And yet it was but three short months ago
I sat as now we sit above the sea
And this was all the thought that dwelt in me:—

“The stars came gliding out of the sea
To gaze on the sleeping City,
With a tremulous light in their glances bright
Of wonderful love and pity.

“The breeze was breathing its olden song
In a drowsy murmurous chanting;
While the noble bay with its moonlight spray,
Kept time in a slumbrous panting.

“The City couched in a deep repose,
All toil, all care suspended;
The roar and the strife of its turbid life
In the calm of Nature blended.

“‘Alas!’ I sighed with a weary sigh,
‘That all the sin and sorrow,
Now dreaming there, so calm and fair,
Must wake afresh to-morrow!’

““ Would that the whole might still rest on,
Entranced, for ever sleeping ;
The sea and the sky, and the stars on high,
And those myriads born for weeping !’”

“ What pansy’s most imperial purple dye,
What rapturous flush of redness in the rose,
What lily’s perfect moon-white purity,
From that dark rain of weeping gleams or glows !
For as the sun shines ever in the sky,
And ever round our earth the free wind blows,
So evermore the tears of heaven distil
Beauty and good with sorrow for our ill.

“ But I waste costly hours : for this fair Isle
Is Ithaca ; and poor Penelope,
Who has been constant all the dreary while,
Weaving wan hopes of vain embroidery,
Clasps her Ulysses, young, withouten guile,
And famishes to hear his Odyssey.

When he has told what wonders him befell,
She has a little tale of home to tell.”

“ And she shall be cross-questioned to and fro,
Backwards and forwards, sideways, up and down,
Anent the tale of suitors who we know
Were victims to a starry-bright renown,—

Rash moths that plunged into the burning glow,
Lovely, but crueller than tempest's frown.—

No outward chances gave that voyage a story ;
But from within came all the gloom and glory.

“ My soul was like a jewel-amulet,*
Pale, troubled, day by day more dim and wan ;
The fatal shadow of a vast regret,
The pallor of an awful fear, were on
And in its lustre, that seemed always wet
As with dull tears of hope for ever gone :
If fitfully it gleamed again, the light
Was such as oozes up from graves by night.

“ Life wasting out by saddest slow degrees ;
Life's heart-blood, love, a thin warm crimson thread,
Trickling so long that scarce the bitter lees
Kept the pale corse half-living and half-dead :
Indian, Arabian, and Egyptian seas
Gave me this vision of too-dreadful dread,
Blurring their splendour ; as the storm took shape
To Gama in the Phantom of the Cape.

* Under favour of Göthe, who (having mentioned talismans) sings—

“ Amulete sind dergleichen
Auf *Papier* geschriebne zeichen.”

—*West-östlicher Divan*.

The term, however, has been commonly used in the wider sense.

“The City of the Greek, whose uproar jars
The silence of sad Sphinx and pyramid,
Affronts the desert’s solitude, and mars
The solemn mystery of millenniums hid
In unknown mountains under other stars,
Scared not the Spectre ; pale and cold amid
 The rainbow throngs, the hum, the savage cries,
 It held me with its deep accusing eyes.

“We crept upon the smooth Mid Sea ; the air
Was feverous with Sirocco ; the red sun
Burned fiercer for the haze that dimmed his
 glare ;
All life drooped sick : yet in that hour begun
A fiery change for me,—the dull despair,
The pallor and the stagnant tarnish dun,
 Fermented with keen flames and flashes bright ;
 New battle opened with a burst of light.

“The amulet, that had been dim and pale
As ghostly moon in northern night forlorn,
Dead-still and shrouded in a wan mist-veil,
Grew then blood-crimson as that high sun shorn
Of beams—that red hot cannon-ball ; a wail,
A long keen passionate terrible cry was borne
 Rending the lethal dumbness ; pierced, I sprang
 As if to grasp a foe who dealt the pang.

“Quivering with agony as blind as doom,
And rage as impotent as nightmare-sleep ;
Restless as one who even in the tomb
Finds that malignant Memory will not steep
Her burning heart in the oblivious gloom ;
I paced the deck ; I glared athwart the deep,
 As if intense volition could enslave
 Your anchored isle to float across the wave.

“The day burned out sublimely in the West,
My soul was burning till the night was gone,—
Until the moon sank withering from heaven’s
 crest
Before the fiery armies of the dawn,
Whose van was up with golden spears in rest ;
And my sea calenture became a lawn—
 An English lawn, that loveliest lakelet green
 Guarding an English home of life serene.

“Ruthlessly brilliant as the crowded eyes
Of Roman ladies glittering down intent
On some barbarian’s mortal agonies,
The stars thick-gathered in the firmament—
That amphitheatre of solemn skies
Round earth’s arena dark with hot blood spent
 In so much barren and ignoble strife—
 Had gazed upon the Passion of my Life.

“ The beautiful alien stars were pitiless
As bland white statues of the gods could be
To suppliants leaguered with the direst stress
Of earthquake, fire, or flood, or storm-swelled sea ;
Gods unperturbed in their high happiness :
But the pure infant Dawn compassioned me ;
 The day-spring bathed my fever in its balm,
 Divinely sweet and cool, divinely calm.

“ And even as I felt its first sweet rest,
And knew myself once more alive and sane,
And yearned toward peaceful English homesteads
 blest
In looking out upon the waveless main ;
Even in that instant from the far north-west,
Where like a pearl-grey cloudlet with no stain
 Malta grew visible, a swelling psalm
 Floated you on its rapture through the calm.

“ Clad all in white, you Angel ; crystal-bare
The feet that did not touch the sapphire sea ;
Your head clothed only with its own rich hair,
Flowing dishevelled even to the knee ;
God's dove athwart the deluge of despair
Bringing the blessing of the olive-tree :
 For you were radiant, and your brow's moon-
 splendour
 Shed on your glowing cheeks a veil most tender.

“ You rested floating upright, when so near
That my stretched arm had almost reached the
place ;
Your vision swept the lonely hemisphere
As if with triumph in the ample space,
Then fixed on me, so that I felt you hear
My mute emotion ; then, with glorious grace
Leaning, you whispered : ‘ *It is well, well, well !* ’
And vanished as my bosom’s first breath fell.

“ And from that moment it was well indeed
With me, and well grows better evermore ;
Well on the white waves whitened by our speed,
Well in the gloaming on this lovely shore ;
And ever well it must be now decreed,
Whatever yet the Future holds in store ;
Our love is fixed ; therefore erect, elate,
With awe, but with no fear, we welcome Fate.”

When thus his tale was done, to him she told
What she had told her Mother on the morrow
Of that same night, whose wonders manifold
Transfigured two sick lives of fear and sorrow
Into twin raptures, rich with all the gold
That Earth could ever from Heaven’s pathways
borrow ;
The nights were one, the solemn dawns were one,
Both triumphs mounted with the selfsame sun.

All she had told before she told to him,
And more that could be told to him alone ;
And while the moon ventured its faery rim,
Then floated up the vague, he drank the tone
Of her low voice and marked her pure eyes swim
As on the vast vague sea of the Unknown,
Which floods and ebbs with infinite longing awe ;
And kissed them back to earth's most tender law.

“Some night,” she whispered, “when the moon
shall be
As then a little later than to-night,
And self-withdrawn as then the quiet sea
Has left the sands to glitter in clear light ;
And all the rock-strown shore around is free
From human presence and all else that might
The dread charm break, the secret spirit scare,
We two alone, my dearest, will go there.

“And we may hear a music, full of power
As the great sea with all its waves in storm,
Yet lovely as the purest lily-flower,
And mystic as the moonlight soft and warm ;
And when the singing has entranced the hour
We may discover an immortal form,—
Glaucus, our sea-god reverend and benign,
Among the rocks that seem his ruined shrine

“ And we will kneel as one before him there ;
And you shall utter all the gratitude
And reverence of both our hearts, which were
Too great for me to utter. If he should
But lay his hands with the old tender care
Upon our heads and bless us,—Oh that would
 Make holier to us evermore the place
 With antique pieties and natural grace ! ”

“ Heathen of heathens ! I am all unmanned ;
Wicked as is your will, it must be done.
Good hap for me that this old sea-god bland,
And not the radiant Monarch of the Sun,
Met you and charmed you : think ! I come to land,
And ask for Helen ; they my asking shun ;
 What strange sad sunflower haunts the garden’s
 mouth ?
 A modern Clytie yearning toward the South ! ”

These lovers have arisen, and have left,
Together gone into the night away ;
And I seem standing on the shore, bereft,
Watching the weaving of the waves and spray,
But cannot weave into my halfspun weft
Another flower, or golden from the day
 Or purple from the night ; for, day and night,
 In that moondusk they have vanished quite.

'The lots are huddled in the fatal urn ;
 The fairest souls may draw the darkest doom,
 And so long years their innate splendour burn
 Struggling disastrously with stormy gloom :
 Yet some fair souls find Fate and Chance not stern,
 Their light has but to shine and not consume ;
 God's vestals feeding the eternal flame
 In beautiful temples hallowed by His name.

The doom of these whom I have ever lost
 I know not—whether calm as temple air,
 Or wild as mountain-beacon tempest-tost ;
 Nor need we search it with an anxious care . . .
 But one thread more the dusky loom has crossed,
 Some lines in her own writing firm and fair ;
 No date, no place ; these pretty words above
 “ Two petals of our Fadeless Rose of Love.”—

I.

“ I went of late amid the dancing throng,
 To dance with *Him*—my Love who loveth me ;
 His whisper caught me up, ‘ How long, how long,
 Have I been seeking, desolate, for thee !
 And now—Oh well a man might seek and trace
 For twenty lives, in hope at last to see
 The perfect vision of this fairest face
 Of all fair faces in the world that be !

II.

“ ‘Such joy as our dark world has when the moon
Comes floating sole and regnant in her skies ;
Such joy to me, such glorifying boon,
When one sole Presence floateth in my eyes.
More beautiful to-night than ever, Sweet,
And yet most beautiful at every time :
How do you make perfection more complete ?
How leave like infancy the queenliest prime ?

III.

“ ‘Upon my hopeless night your dawn arose ;
I said, The World can never be more bright :
Yet ever, more and more, the splendour grows,
And leaves that dawn confused with ancient night.
I cry, This moment must be full-crowned noon !
The moment brings new bursts of life and light !
No more ! no more ! my heart and spirit swoon
In thine infinity of heavenly might !

IV.

“ ‘A dawn ?—Your brow itself is what a dawn !
Emerging from that Indian dusk of hair,
With all its poor pale pearl-stars backwithdrawn,
The archèd Promise shines so proudly fair.

I find you out at last : you stir one tress,
You let some young smile dream, you change a
flower ;
And straight you are transformed ! O Sorceress
And Queen of Spells, I tremble at your power !’

v.

“ I went last night amid the dancing throng,
To dance with *Him*—my Love who loveth me :
He sprang a-flush, ‘How long, how long, how long !
The twenty lives I waited here for thee !’
My dark-brown hair, the string of pearls, I wore,
As when his praises flowed so royally :
‘ I bring the self-same spell that charmed before ;
To prove, indeed, your own inconstancy !’

vi.

“ We stood together in the far recess :
His noble eyes dilated full and bright,
With love triumphant throbbing happiness ;
He bent down o’er me from his stately height—
‘ How can our Queen, whose spirit sways the sun,
Deign to enchant so mean a youth as this ?
Of all her countless spells the weakest one
Would trance him evermore in perfect bliss.

VII.

“ ‘ Dear twilight mystery of hair, that now
Art starred with pearls, I bid all night farewell ;
Pure archèd Promise of the dawn-bright brow,
The full noon neareth, grand as you foretell ! ’
He placed a kiss upon my brow and hair,
His kiss of Love enthroned and glorified ;
I felt it burning like a ruby there,
The pallid pearl-gleams in its fulgence died :

VIII.

“ I felt it flushing all my neck and face,
What time we danced among the dancers free ;
To all the youths and maidens in the place
It signalled proudly of my Love and me :
It lights and warms me in my chamber now,
It lights the world, the years, all things that be ;
A royal jewel sacred to my brow,
A Splendour lamping all Eternity.”

JERSEY, *Xmas* 1861.

LONDON, *July* 1864.

S H E L L E Y

UPON a grassy slope of shore I lay

Hour after hour, from sunset into night,
Outgazing tranquil o'er the tranquil bay,
And dreaming in a mood of rare delight.

Yes, for some hours, sky-pure sea-calm star-bright
My spirit was in tune with heaven and earth,
Nor felt the discords of its mortal birth.

The round moon floated half-way up the sky,
Beneath an arch of clouds serenely fair

As if upfurled where never breeze could fly :
So that it seemed a lamp suspended there
To light the sea-floored theatre of air ;

Whose curtain raised, whose hush of expectation
Foretold a solemn drama's celebration.

My dream grew deeper, deeper evermore ;

A sleepless dream, a seeing trance, no swoon.
I floated with the throb of sea and shore,
And felt the earth swift-wheeling with the moon,
And saw the worlds as they indeed are,—strewn

Above, below, as fish through ocean roam,
Not gliding round an even-surfaced dome.

Until the Drama which that hush foretold
Did come indeed as at a monarch's call ;
Although its pregnant scenes were not unrolled
Upon that sea-stage, nor within that wall
Of circling crystal, nor were lamped at all
By that serenest moon,—they claimed a stage
Of ampler scope and grander equipage.

The stars are speeding in their companies ;
God's chariots in divine array, they roll
Circling the sphere of three infinities,
Our symbol of His thought-confounding Whole,
As Plato saw them with his clear-eyed soul : *
He saw, we see ; and each one tries to tell
The Vision each one knows ineffable.

And every silver-burning chariot-sphere
Whose wheels churn Æther to the foam of Light
Is guided by its seraph-charioteer,
Serenely regnant o'er its fulgent flight,
Sceptred and crowned and clothed with awful
might :
The infinite armies of the Lord, whose pinions
Flash fire throughout His infinite dominions.

* See the *Phædrus*.

And yet, as every dreamer seems to be
 The centre of the action of his dream,
 Our speck of this poor earth-sphere was to me
 The single central fountain whence did stream
 The growing river of that drama's theme ;
 Which rolled so far and broadened out so wide
 That all the worlds were floated on its tide.

A voice fell past me like a plummet cast
 To fathom that unfathomable sea,
 A voice austerely sad,—“ At last, at last
 The measure of the earth's iniquity
 Brims God's great urn ; at last it all must be
 Poured out upon the earth in blood and tears
 And raging fire, for years and years and years.

“ The Churches are polluted,—let them fall
 And crush old errors underneath their weight ;
 The royal purples are a bloody pall
 To stifle Freedom,—rend them ere too late ;
 The laws are silken meshes for the great
 But iron nets to hold the poor and mean,—
 Let them too perish. . . . But what next is seen ?

“ Because the priests were false, the shrines impure,
 Mankind in God Himself all faith have lost ;
 Because blood dyed old purples, they endure
 To walk all naked in the sun and frost ;
 Because old laws the law of justice crost,

They would live henceforth without any law :
No loyal service, no revering awe !

“ Who will go down amidst these desolations
Of fire and blood and lunacies and woe,
To chant aloud to all the wildered nations
Those heavenly truths no earth can overthrow,
The changeless truths Eternal ? Who will go
To preach the Gospel of our Lord above,
Chanting perpetually the law of Love ? ”

Throughout the whole sphere-throbbing vastitude
Deep silence followed when that great voice
ended ;
Even the music of the multitude
Of all their rhythmic revolutions blended,
The ever-rolling music, seemed suspended :
And I then dared to lift my awe-shut eyes
And search for him who spoke throughout the
skies.

Search for the moon of night, the sun of day !—
In centre of the universal round
A broad and steadfast disc of splendour lay ;
Fit field for him who stood upon its ground,
The solemn angel with pure glory crowned,—
His right hand raised, his countenance divine
Intently listening through the hyaline.

From far, far, far, far even in that vast,
 A voice came trembling ravishingly sweet—
 “O Raphael beloved of God! the last
 And meanest of the spirits who repeat
 Eternal praises round the Judgment-Seat
 Implores that he, if none of greater worth,
 May sing the self-same praises on that earth.”

A pure joy lighted up great Raphael's face
 As then he gestured “Hither!”; and there came
 A star-like speck from out the bounds of space
 With swift and swerveless flight to reach its aim,
 Developing into a tongue of flame,
 Until it stood upon that field of light
 A fervent Seraph beautiful and bright.

Most beautiful in the eternal youth
 Of those who ever breathe the heavenly air
 Of perfect holiness and love and truth;
 Most bright in full-flusht fervour, standing there
 With half-spread wings and backward-streaming
 hair,
 As if alit for but a moment's rest
 While speeding forward on his single quest.

Then Raphael laid a benedictive hand
 On that pure brow, and spake in gentle tone—
 “Thou dear, dear Child of God, than whom doth stand

No purer humbler spirit near His throne,
And none more ardent to speed forth alone
On any errand from the bliss above
In single-hearted and unbounded love ;

“Thy service is accepted : thou shalt pall
In mortal flesh thy seraphood sublime ;
A witness of the one true Lord of all
Amidst a world gone mad with sin and crime,
A prophet of the glorious Future time,
And of Eternity when Time is past
Amidst the Present of a world aghast.

“I see the storm’s commencing clouds of gloom,
I see the storm’s first lightnings fiercely flash,
I hear the storm’s first thunders roll and boom,
I hear the storm’s first ruins quake and crash,—
O Man, thy judgment-wrath is wild and rash! . . .
Go down, dear Child ; and may God give thee power
To serve Him loyally thro’ this stern hour.”

Then most elastic Time, as oft in dream,
Stretched out until five lustrums came and went,
Swaying my soul upon their stormy stream,
The earth was shaken, the great deeps were rent ;
From all the quarters of the firmament
A desolating deluge seemed to pour
Of fire and blood and tears and frantic war.

Amidst whose terrors one stern human form,
Above the mad crowds throned in haughty state,
Appeared to wield the thunders of the storm
And hurl its dreadful lightnings, and dilate—
The Captain-Executioner of Fate ;
Until dragged down, and with a galling chain
Bound to a lonely rock amidst the main.

And then another lustrum came and went,
Of peaceful years compared with those before ;
Wherein I heard that Voice whose ravishment
I had not heard amid the crash and roar
And shriekings of the earth-confusing war.
Through all the lustrum till the chained Chief died
That glorious Voice the air beatified.

A voice of right amidst a world's foul wrong,
A voice of hope amidst a world's despair,
A voice instinct with such melodious song
As hardly until then had thrilled the air
Of this gross underworld wherein we fare :
With heavenly inspirations, too divine
For souls besotted with earth's sensual wine.

All powers and virtues that ennoble men—
The hero's courage and the martyr's truth,
The saint's white purity, the prophet's ken,
The high unworldliness of ardent youth,
The poet's rapture, the apostle's ruth,

Informed the Song; whose theme all themes
above

Was still the sole supremacy of Love.

The peals of thunder echoing through the sky,

The moaning and the surging roar of seas,

The rushing of the storm's stern harmony,

The subtlest whispers of the summer breeze,

The notes of singing birds, the hum of bees,

All sounds of nature, sweet and wild and strong

Commingled in the flowing of the song;

Which flowing mirrored all the Universe,—

With sunsets flushing down the golden lines,

And mountains towering in the lofty verse,

And landscapes with their olives and their
vines

Spread out beneath a sun which ever shines,

With moonlit seas and pure star-spangled skies,

The World a Poem, and Earth Paradise.

But ever and anon in its swift sweetness

The voice was heard to lisp and hesitate,

Or quiver absently from its completeness,

As one in foreign realms who must translate

Old thoughts into new language—Ah, how great

The difference between our rugged tongue

And that in which its hymns before were sung!

A glorious voice of glorious inspiration ;
A voice of rapid rapture so intense
That in its musical intoxication
The Truth arrayed with such an affluence
Of Beauty half-escaped the ravished sense,—
A sun scarce visible in its own shine,
A god forgotten in his gorgeous shrine.

A voice divinely sweet, a voice no less
Divinely sad ; for all the maddening jar
Of all the wide world's sin and wretchedness
Swelled round its music, as when round a star
Black storm-clouds gather and its white light mar :
Pure music is pure bliss in heaven alone ;
Earth's air transmutes it to melodious moan.

The lustrum passed. The vultures of despair
And fierce ambition ceased not to consume
The heart of him rock-bound, who failed to bear
With Titan-patience his Promethean doom—
Lacking the Titan's conscience. When the tomb
Had held him but a little while in peace,
I heard the singing voice for ever cease.

And then once more the Vision filled my soul
Of universal Æther, and the spheres
Whose marshalled myriads through its silence roll
With life and light and music ; while the years,
Heavy with anguish, blind with blood and tears,

Pant after them, exhausted one by one
Till the last heir of Time shall sink foredone.

Upon his central field of burning gold
Great Raphael stood ; and there with meek head
bowed
And drooping wings and suppliant hands, be-
hold,
The Seraph knelt, whom still the sullen cloud
Of mortal life enveloped like a shroud,
Through which his native glorious beauty shown
Star-sad, star-pure, star-tremulous, star-wan.

And Raphael said "How faint and sad and pale
You now return to us, Belovèd One,
From that far Earth of stormy guilt and bale
Wherein thy errand now is wholly done !
Hath ever God deserted a dear Son ?"
While bending down, his princely hand carest
The saintly brow so pallid and deprest.

What voice of quivering anguish made reply !—
"I am unworthy of thy ruthless love,
Thou pure Archangel ! Never more may I
Rejoin in bliss the stainless quires above,
Who singing in their circles ever move
Around the footstool of the Throne of Grace ;
Ah, never, nevermore behold His face !

“I dared—weak worm unconscious of my weakness!—

To claim a service to our Lord and King ;
And I have failed;—in hope and faith and meekness,
In wisdom, knowledge, patient suffering,
In prudence, calmness, power, in everything !
The awful eyes of all Thy stars, O Lord,
Transfix me with rebukes, each glance a sword !

“Breathing for ever Heaven’s inviolate calm,
I knew not how on Earth the wild winds blow ;
Singing for ever Heaven’s ecstatic psalm,
I knew not how on earth the wails of woe
And shrieks of rage to maddening discord grow ;
Circling for ever in the Sun’s full light,
I knew not Earth’s black clouds and sphereless night.

“I could not understand men ; all their hearts
Had secrets which I could not even guess.
Their greed for dross upon the daily marts,
Their pride and fawning in the palaces,
Their solemn church-attending worldliness,
Their servile fear of Custom’s lawless law,
Filled me with sad perplexity and awe.

“Their gods seemed hideous monsters only great
In power and malice, or such phantoms vain
As self-bewildered thought might evocate

To mock the yearning heart and weary brain.
 I strove to teach them the true God, Whose
 reign
 Is infinite love for all things that exist ;
 And I was branded as an Atheist.

“ I pitied both the tyrant and the slave ;
 The one so cursed with pride and heartless mood,
 The other from the cradle to the grave
 With soul and body famishing for food.
 I charged them by their common brotherhood
 To fling their mutual bonds off and be free :
 They paused in their old strife to spurn at me.

“ I who was sent to charm their souls to love,
 Could only vex them to worse hate and scorn ;
 And yet I swear, O Raphael, that I strove
 With all my power to mend their state forlorn :
 By every pang *they* felt *my* heart was torn,*
 And wounded worse by their unkindly spurning :
 I loved them with a love of infinite yearning.

“ Lo, I have failed : but God, *He* cannot fail.
 He speeds a shaft against Hell’s Dragon-King,
 And it falls shivered from the iron mail ;—

* “ Me, who am as a nerve o’er which do creep
 The else-unfelt oppressions of the earth.”

“ *Julian and Maddalo.*”

There let it rot, the weak and worthless thing !
 I dare to triumph in my perishing :
 His quiver lacks not many a nobler dart
 Equal to pierce the Monster to the heart !”

But Raphael raised the Seraph from his kneeling,
 And prest him heart to heart in long embrace ;
 Then stood erect, to all the heights revealing
 The fulgent beauty of his solemn face ;
 And flung abroad his voice to swell through space
 And thrill on all the ever-rolling spheres
 Triumphant music for celestial ears.

“ I call to witness all the angel-quires
 Sphering the heavens with their eternal hymn,
 I call to witness all the orbèd fires
 Bearing the light of life through Æther dim ;
 The saints, the Cherubim, the Seraphim,
 All armies of the Servants of our Lord,
 I call to witness to my just award.

“ Thou hast *not* failed ; where holy love and truth
 Contend with Evil failure cannot be :
 Their sorest scars claim reverence not ruth,
 Their worst repulse is still a victory.
 Thou, well-belovèd, who didst bend the knee
 In pure self-sacrifice to meet God’s frown,
 Kneeling wert circled with the martyr’s crown.

“ Music is sweet, whatever madmen’s ears
 Be startled and tormented by the strain ;
 Sunshine is glorious, whatever spheres
 Cloud themselves from it in dark storm and rain :
 Your spirit is as pure from worldly stain
 As is a moonbeam on a shore of slime ;
 You sank not your Eternity in Time.

“ O wretched Earth ! God sends thee age by age,
 In pity of thy wild perpetual moan,
 The saint, the bard, the hero, and the sage :
 But still the lofty life is led alone,
 The singer sings as in a tongue unknown,
 The sage’s wisdom lamps his single urn ;
 Thou wilt not heed or imitate or learn.

“ The blood of prophets thou hast loved to shed
 Still keepeth green thy fields, whose costly soil
 Is of the dust of nameless heroes dead ;*
 The only music in the vast turmoil
 Of all thy complicated strife and toil
 Was breathed from poets whom you starved with
 scorn : †
 O ever-unregenerate world forlorn ! ”

* Carlyle.

† “ Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.”
 —*Shelley*, “ Defence of Poetry.”

Lo, while the great Archangel's voice rang on,
The spirit by that tearful earth-cloud shaded
In ever clear and clearer beauty shone
To full transfiguration ; for it faded
As mists of night whose meshes are unbraided
By the swift beams of morning, so that they
Evanish wholly in the perfect day.

And there, amidst the wheeling constellations,
Upon the central disc of burning gold
That throbbed harmonious with their palpitations,
He stood with Raphael glorious to behold. . . .
Then all the Vision from my brain was rolled ;
For that broad disc of palpitating fire,
Consuming far through heaven the dead night's pyre,

And bridging the deep bay with golden splendour,
Was our own Sun. . . . The sky was clear and calm,
The morning air most fragrant, fresh and tender,
The green earth glittered with its dewy balm,
The flashing waters sang a joyous psalm :
All was as beautiful and pure that morn
As if a sinless world had just been born.

THE DEAD YEAR

I.

AT midnight, in the heart of that great wood,
Whose trunks towered dark and spectral, crowned
 with snow,
Alone amidst the chill north wind I stood ;
And saw, whenas some fiercer gust would blow,
White fragments plunge upon the white below ;
 And from the rigid branches heard the blast
 Wring long wild clamours as its fury passed.

II.

There saw I, at that time, the weak old Year
Descend in silence from his chariot-throne ;
A weary wight, whose rest-joy dreamed some fear.
But in the face of Him who climbed thereon
Youth's vigorous hope and self-assurance shone ;
 Though stern and clouded with the gloomy
 thought—
 Must this beginning with that end be fraught ?

III.

The thronèd King went proudly on his path :
 The other turned, and with mysterious sighs
 Fled onward with the tempest's gathering wrath.
 Beneath the scornful brilliance of the skies,
 Crowded with stars like cold un pitying eyes,
 My soul pursued the thin grey quivering form
 That like a cloud was hurried down the storm.

IV.

'Thwart homeless mountains, dead and shrouded
 plains,
 'Thwart roaring woods and billowy wastes of moor,
 'Thwart the Mid-sea and Afric's wild domains
 Of desert-fire and haunted realm obscure,
 His flight as swerveless as a new colure
 Swept down the savage ocean to its goal—
 The icy heart of death, the Southern Pole.

V.

The broad cold joyless glare thrust into sight
 A ghastly nakedness of ice, which lay
 In livid bulks with grinning points of light ;
 Sublime though terrible. But from the day
 Winding a strange and labyrinthic way
 Through hollows and ravines of frozen gloom,
 The realmless shadow sought and found his tomb,

VI.

And, still advancing, cried in feeble tone,
I come to join my buried Sires in death.
Whereto I heard a congregated moan,
A quavering sigh and moan of feeble breath,
Respond, "Is yet another born for death?"

He cried, A Youth now sways the pauseless car.
They moaned, "Alas! the End, how far—how
far?"

VII.

I saw the secret Spectre-peopled tomb;—
A mighty Cavern vaulted like a sky,
Filled with a dreary mitigated gloom;
For out of its dark-frowning canopy,
And out of all its vague immensity,
Cold sparkles glittering keen as naked blades
Wrought constant twilight of inconstant shades.

VIII.

And while yet died away the piteous moans,
The moaning multitude therein I found:
Dim regal shadows, throned on icy thrones
Ranged pace by pace about the vast wall-round,
And stretching still beyond the utmost bound
To which the disinterring light could pierce,
They sat—the Phantoms of the Buried Years.

IX.

Their crowned brows were hoar and shrunk with
age,
Their sceptred hands with nerveless tremors shook,
Their lightless eyes seemed spell-bound to the page
Spread open of a knee-supported book,
So overcharged with writings that my look
Brought nothing to my mind except a waste
Of blots and reckless scratches interlaced.

X.

And every robe was foul, and fiercely rent,
And stiff and dark with heavy clots of gore ;
And every crown and sceptre cloven and shent.
They all with finished age were weak and hoar,
Yet in their ages there was less and more ;
By slight degrees ascending to an Eld
Whose contemplation mind and spirit quell'd.

XI.

From off his soul-confusing Chronicle
Each drew at length reluctant eyes away,
And quavered to the Shadow standing still,
“ You come but now from that fair realm of day ;
We long have pined, to this dark tomb a prey :
Ere yet thou take thy throne of silent pain
Inform us, we desire thee, of thy reign.

XII.

“ How tends the bitter fate-deciding war,
Constant between the Evil and the Good?
Mankind—have they grown better than of yore,
Less steeped and brutalised in lust and blood,
Less fatally inconsequent of mood,
More valiant, faithful, loving, and sincere?
Is any hope that now the End draws near?”

XIII.

He said, Could you but see me, O my Sires,
Your eyes had read ere this what you would hear ;
For I am stained with blood and scarred with fires,
And rent and wounded and amazed with fear.
And they responded with their plainings drear,
“ Ah ! blood and fire for ever, as of old !
Yet let thy voice thy story now unfold.”

XIV.

He sighed, Ev'n as of old ; nor is there hope
That yet it neareth to the final doom :
For broad and deep as ever yawns the scope—
An almost unattempted gulf of gloom
Thronged thick with monsters savage to consume,
Taloned and scaled with force and dread for
strife—
Between what is and that which should be Life.

XV.

The old deep-founded Temples far renowned,
The vast and lofty Temples quake and split :
A column here reels prostrate to the ground ;
A roof-tree there sinks crumbling after it,
Leaving free vision of the Infinite ;
 Some sudden storm lays flat blank breadths of wall :
 Entire destruction seems to threaten all.

XVI.

Their rich adornment of all gems and gold,
Their marbles pure and massy stones displaced,
Their forms of lofty sculpture manifold,
Are left exposed to incoherent waste ;
The splendour soiled, the lineaments defaced :
 No Architect appeareth, to assign
 Them saving service in a nobler Shrine.

XVII.

The worshippers abandon them in fear,
And with them God and God's restraining law ;
Or, used so long to love and to revere,
Tread down new reason underneath old awe,
And cling with eyes shut blind to every flaw.
 More loud, more proud, the priests declaim their
 parts,
 To drown the murmurs swelling in their hearts.

XVIII.

Exiled from God and His paternal love,
Far—far from home, men languish desolate ;
A dungeon-roof, instead of Heaven, above ;
And constant vision through the iron grate
Of one stern Jailor, blind and stony Fate—
 The stony heart unthrilled by wail or prayer,
 The stony eyes that blench at no despair.

XIX.

The noblest given over to his hand
Have no trust left, but to confront his pride
With such endurance, wisdom, self-command,
That they become his peers—are petrified
Against his shafts—erect, though unallied :
 Their sole religion and their comfort sole,
 To love and help their fellows in this dole.

XX.

There ceased he for a while ; and all the throng
Of trembling phantoms, till my heart was sore
With their so piteous moaning, moaned “How
 long ?
So was it in the long, long days of yore ;
Must it be so for ever, evermore ?
 How long, dread Lord, thus weary and opprest,
 Must we await the End of perfect rest ? ”

XXI.

They moaned : but One arose, of solemn mien
And lofty stature, on whose features grand
Wisdom and love and sorrow dwelt serene ;
And swayed a Cross for sceptre in his hand ;
And spoke in tranquil accents of command,
 “The mighty tree’s slow life doth tower and spread,
 Although the branch whence this was formed be
 dead.”

XXII.

And then Another, on whose turban-crown
A Crescent keenly flamed with blood-red light,
Arose, and flung the gorgeous jewel down,
And cried, “ That infant Splendour shone out bright
Between the clouds one dark and stormy night.
 All things of earth succumb to Time and Fate :
 The moons are fuller now ; the month grows late.”

XXIII.

When all was still the throneless Shade went on :
Blood has been shed, my robe is foul with gore :
Amidst the heights of sacred Lebanon,
In China, in Morocco, on the shore
From Capua to Palermo, war—war—war :
 And these are but a wound’s first drops of blood,
 Ere yet the veins bring up their gushing flood.

XXIV.

The war of classes, which has raged so long,
Still groweth more intense, till it attain
The crisis fatal to the deadlier wrong.
Imperial liars, thronèd Kings insane,
Statesmen and placemen selfish, blind and vain,
The Peoples' inward rottenness avow ;
And Europe's Cæsars are her Aztecs now.

XXV.

Around her churches of the cross and spire,
Around her palaces so rich and haught,
Around her castles of volcanic fire,
Around her polities so subtly wrought,
Rages a wild waste flood of restless thought.
Sapping the old foundations : those must be
Full firmly fixed that long defy the sea.

XXVI.

Long gathering foulness stifled all the air :
The storm began in France ; then, desolating,
Swept Europe with its lightnings everywhere ;
Through fierce destructions ever re-creating.
One woe is past, another woe is waiting :
The air is still with sullen foulness rife,
And men still breathe, not life, but death-in-life.

XXVII.

The mass of traders full of lies and fraud,
The mass of rulers cowardly and blind,
The mass of people without faith or God,
The mass of teachers barren as the wind,
The mass of laws unsuited to mankind :
 What doom do these imperiously require,
 But blood and death, and ordeal as by fire ?

XXVIII.

He paused again ; and straightway all the throng
Of spectral Struldrugs * thrilled the icy gloom,
Moaning in chorus drear, " How long, how long,
How long are we within our living tomb
Condemned to hateful consciousness of Doom ?
 When will the ocean of eternity
 Engulf us, quenching all our misery ? "

XXIX.

But one vast Shade (by whom a couchant form,
Monstrous, loomed dim) rose, threatful, far away,
And cried, " This pigmy Man—this evil swarm
Of restless, lawless, greedy imps, that prey
On Earth our Mother—shall he last for aye ?
 He dream to last, who gathereth bone by bone
 All that is left now of the Mastodon ? "

* See Swift's " Gulliver's Travels."

XXX.

Then all exclaimed, "Thou, youngest in this hell ;
Much of the tale thou tellest, each one here
Of many thousands had before to tell :
One thread of crimson wrath or sombre fear
In Fate's wide loom still runs through many a year.
Hast thou no star in night, no gleam of good
To mark thee out amidst our brotherhood?"

XXXI.

O venerable Fathers, he replied :
If summer boasteth of her full-blown flowers,
They yet were fostered to their perfect pride,
Through germ and bud, by many previous hours
Of wintry snows, of vernal suns and showers.
I wear, indeed, upon my brow one star,
By which I may be singled out afar.

XXXII.

A nation long was trodden in the dust
'Neath various and discordant tyrannies,
Until it seemed embruted to the lust
Of its base despots,—mortgaging for these
The priceless fame of olden centuries ;
And, like the wretchedness of Circe's swine,
Drugging its all-sick soul with sensual wine.

XXXIII.

This nation is aroused from shore to shore ;
The drunken lethargy is past away,
The drunken frenzies vex its brain no more.
The night is gone ; the sullen lingering grey
Consumes in fires of the advancing day,
Whose crimson dawn shall have an azure noon
This people rise, to labour for its boon.

XXXIV.

The dreamer graspeth firmly Action's sword ;
The coward plunges smiling down the grave,
To drag down with him tyranny abhorred ;
The meanest miser and self-seeking knave
Give all up for their country ; the poor slave
Of superstition dares to see the truth ;
The long-oppressed is full of gentle ruth.

XXXV.

The Niobe * of nations, petrified,
With all her children prostrate at her feet,
Each with a barbed arrow in its side,

* Byron, in "Childe Harold."

Hath started into sudden life to greet
With yearning love and wonder rapture-sweet
Her darlings waking from their trance of death ;
Though two lie still, ev'n they breathe prescient
breath.

XXXVI.

Whence hath been poured this great electric thrill,
Of God-like power to quicken very stone
With life and soul, with hope and strength and
will?—

Throughout that air, long filled with hopeless moan,
A living Voice was heard supreme and lone,
Calm as the heavens and mighty as the sea,
Arise ! arise, Italia ! one and free !

XXXVII.

A Shade * stood up with interruption keen—
A woe-worn countenance, sad earnest eyes,
Brow-crowned with bitter bays, exalted mien—
“O slow-come triumph of my prophecies !
For this I never ceased to agonise,
In banishment, in pain, in want—or fed
As menials are with strangers' bitter bread.”

* Dante. See the “Divine Comedy” throughout.

XXXVIII.

Another Shadow *—surely not of man,
 But Seraph beautiful—above whose throne,
 For motto, these two words “Cor Cordium” ran
 In letters throbbing fire, stood next alone ;
 And chanted in a clear and solemn tone,
 “Since now hope, truth, and justice, *do* avail,
 O Naples and Italia, hail, all hail !”

XXXIX.

The youngest looked up proud to that dim dome :
 Florence and Milan, Naples, Sicily,
 Are crying out to Venice and to Rome,
 “Ye soon shall rise to join our family,
 And make us one inviolate Italy :
 With fear-stung rage the Austrian frets, past
 bound ;
 The Papal thunders are innocuous sound.”

XL.

How has such fruit by such a tree been borne ?
 How has this Italy, in sheer despite
 Of foes whose legions laughed her arms to scorn,

* Shelley. See the “Ode to Naples” (1820). Upon his tomb at Rome are inscribed the words “Cor Cordium.”

Of friends as false in heart as great in might,
 Of statesmen plotting wrongs to help the right,
 Of Europe selfish, of herself distract,
 Wrought out her grand idea into fact ?

XLI.

She has two noble sons ; by these she *is*.
 The Thinker ; who, inspired from earliest youth,
 In want and pain, in exile's miseries,
 'Mid alien scorn, 'mid foes that knew not ruth,
 Has ever preached his spirit's inmost truth ;
 Though friends waxed cold or turned their love
 to hate,
 Though even now his country is ingrate.

XLII.

The Doer, whose high fame as purely shines
 As His,* who heretofore Sicilia won
 With victories flowing free as Homer's lines.
 Sublime in action when the strife is on,
 Sublime in pity when the strife is done ;
 A pure and lofty spirit, blessed from sight
 Of meaner nature's selfishness, and spite.

* Timoleon's. See Plutarch's Lives ; whence the simile in the following line.

XLIII.

Therefore, O fathers, my best symbol see,
 Noble in meanness, rent, and stained with gore :
 To future Romans this Red Shirt shall be,
 As was that Leathern Apron * borne of yore
 To all the glittering pomp of Persian war.

If any hope despite the Past may be ;
 Italia shall be one, great, glorious, free !

XLIV.

He finished ; and deep silence followed. Then
 The congregated Shades in doubtful chime
 Maundered all querulous ;—like senile men,
 Who, stranded helpless on the present time,
 See nought before them but a waste of slime
 Left by that ebbing flood of life, which rolled
 So strong and deep in *their* young days of old.

XLV.

“Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome—
 How many a lofty creed and glorious state !—
 Have flourished under Heaven’s eternal dome,

* The famous Drefsh-e-Gavaneh, or Apron of Gavah the Smith, which Feridoon adopted for the banner of Iran : adorning it with jewels, to which each successive Monarch added until it blazed like a meteor in the front of battle.

With vigour emulous to last *its* date.
Go, seek them now : they moulder desolate,
Or languish ignominiously effete ;
Thus mortal things with Time and Doom compete !

XLVI.

“ The pure, the wise, the beautiful, the brave,
The darlings of Earth’s golden youth, are—
where ?
Deep-trampled, rotted in the formless grave ;
Though still, wan ghosts, they haunt the upper
air.
Are wiser, purer, braver, breathing there ?
Plato’s broad brow frowns homilies forlorn ;
Nay, Helen’s lips smile all your hopes to scorn.

XLVII.

“ Then vex not us, nor vex thyself, we pray,
With hopes whose vanity we proved of yore.
One hope is fixed ; when earth has passed away,
And sin has perished, *Time shall be no more* ;—
Oh, that the grand catastrophe were o’er ! * * *
Behold, awaiteth thee that penal throne,
Which while thou reignedst there down here hath
grown,

XLVIII.

“As by its side another now doth grow
For him who reigneth now so young and proud.”
He shuddered to his seat of wordless woe ;
The palsied heads to their old pages bowed.
My spirit was withdrawn, amazed and cowed,
 From those cadaverous servitors of Doom ;
 Dim, silent, ghastly, in their living tomb.

1860.

THE DELIVERER *

I WAS a captive. Massive walls sevenfold
 Encompassed all the prison high and bare ;
The stone, the brass, the iron, the triple gold,
 And yet another which we knew not there.

Year after year I wasted there alone ;—
 Now quiet, crushed beneath that woe immense ;
Now moaning with a weary changeless moan ;
 Now frantic with still-baffled impotence :

And heard at times through all that stony gloom
 The idiotic laugh, the piercing cry
Of others ; each within his living tomb
 Chained, wretched, helpless, impotent as I.

Until one eve, when I felt sick to death,
 I found a love-prayer cowering in my heart :
And clothed it with strong wings of passionate breath,
 And sent it thro' the heavens to plead our part.

* Reprinted by permission from the *Fortnightly Review*.

“O dreadful Lord, O gracious God, I know
That I and all the other captives here
Have wrought, each for himself, this doom of
woe :

Yet Thou, All-merciful, bend down Thine ear !

“Alas, alas ! what have we for a plea ?

We are most wretched ; wretched most in this,
That, tho’ we strive, we cannot burn to Thee
In love as Thou to us and all that is.”

In that same night, when I was fallen asleep
After such agony of yearning prayer,
A voice came gliding through my slumber deep,
A voice, a glow, a waft of vital air.

I woke ; and, raising gloom-attempered eyes,
They blinked at lustre, but no form could see.
The Voice rang singing sweet, “Awake, arise !
And come out hither, and be ever free !”

I stood—the fetters kept no longer hold ;
I walked straight forward through the dungeon-
wall,
And through the others—brass and iron and
gold ;
And passing thro’ them felt them not at all.

And all the while that Voice sang full and sweet,
 "Come forth, come forth, poor captives everyone!
Oh, shut not fast your ears when I entreat!
 Come forth, and breathe the air and see the sun!"

I thought myself quite free, when, lo! I found
 An adamant barrier foil me there:
I could not see, could scarcely feel its bound,—
 A wall, a curtain woven of pure air.

What poignant anguish pierced my blissful trance,
 Thus baffled at the very verge of Heaven!—
"Dear Angel of divine deliverance,
 Assist me here, for I in vain have striven!"

Louder and sweeter rang the glorious Voice,
 "Has one, then, wakened up to feel my breath?
All holy spirits in your choirs rejoice;
 Another soul is saved from bonds and death!"

The Spirit was beside me dazzling bright;
 It burned the way before me through that wall;
And I was free beneath the heaven of night,
 Nor felt the barrier I passed thro' at all:

But looking back could see a wall-veil then,
 As smooth as glass, opaquely black as jet,
Towering on high beyond my farthest ken;
 But know not by what name to call it yet.

As one who almost swooning drinks of wine,
I drank in deep the universal air
And glorious freedom of the world divine ;
Then fell down worshipping the Splendour there.

It raised me gently as a wounded dove,—
“Revere, but worship not, a fellow soul :
Adore the Infinite Wisdom, Truth, and Love,
The life and breath and being of the Whole.”

It was compact of such intense pure flame,
That still mine eyes were shut to It, in sooth ;
The ardour from It thrilled through all my frame
Like new and purer blood, new life, new youth.

It kissed my brow with such a ravishment
Of burning bliss that half I swooned away,
And felt my spirit soaring forth unpent
From its dissolving funeral urn of clay.

“Henceforward re-assume thy primal dower !
I bless thee unto perfect liberty
Of holiest faith and love : 'tis in thy power
As thou art now, in heart to ever be.

“On earth's most miry ways shall slip thy feet,
This brow itself may catch the evil stain ;
But faith and love can burn thee pure and sweet :
—Farewell, until we may unite again !”

How did these gracious words beneficent
Fill me with dread and agony!—I cried,
“Great Spirit, if it be Thy blest intent
To save me truly, leave not yet my side!

“Stay with me yet awhile, Deliverer, Thou!—
I am too weak with chains, too blind with gloom,
For unassisted life; left lonely now,
I must relapse into that hideous tomb.

“Or at the least, disrobe awhile Thy form
Of its too much effulgence, that my sight
May meet Thy face; and so thro’ every storm
Preserve one Guiding-star, one Beacon-light.”

“Because I burn in my pure nakedness,
Thou canst not meet me with thy mortal gaze . . .
Thy prayer is granted: a material dress,
A form of shadowing gloom my soul arrays.”

Oh bliss! I saw Her thro’ the sevenfold veil;—
A mighty Seraph shining ruby-clear,
Clothed in majestic wings of golden mail;
A sun within the midnight atmosphere.

But still her countenance I scarce could scan,
For living glories of the golden hair,
And rapture of the eyes cerulean
As solemn summer heavens burning bare.

Around her head a crystal circlet shone,
Fore-crested with a pure white flying dove :
In emeralds and in sapphires writ thereon,
Athwart the brow, one word was flaming,—Love.

And when she spoke her voice was now so sweet
In soft low music, tremulous with sighs,
That one might dreaming hear his Mother greet
With such a voice his soul to Paradise.

“ He is so weak, so weak who should be strong,
Weak as a babe, faint-hearted, almost blind ;
The curse of previous bondage clingeth long :
He must not lapse into that den behind.

“ The sun indeed shines ever in the sky :
But when the realm is turned from him to night,
When moon and stars gleam faint and cold on high
Or else are veiled by stormy clouds from sight ;

“ The traveller then through field and sombre wood
Finds his own poor dim lamp best guide his feet ;
The man at home his household taper good
For useful light, his household fire for heat.

“ Celestial flowers are set in earthly clay :
However small the circle of a life,
If it be whole it shall expand for aye ;
And all the Heavens are furled in Man and Wife.

“ So thou, the man, the circle incomplete,
Shalt find thy other segment and be whole ;
Thy manhood with her womanhood shall meet
And form one perfect self-involving soul.

“ Thy love shall grow by feeling day by day
Celestial love, thro’ human, blessing thee ;
Thy faith wax firm by witnessing alway
Triumphant faith for ever glad and free.

“ By her obedience thy soul shall learn
How far humility transcendeth pride ;
By her pure intuitions shall discern
The fatal flaws of reason unallied.

“ Thou shalt see strength in weakness conquering,
The bravest action with the tenderest heart,
Self-sacrifice unconscious hallowing
The lightest playing of the meanest part.

“ Chastity, purity, and holiness
Shall shame thy virile grossness ; and the power
Of beauty in the spirit and its dress
Reveal all virtue lovely as a flower.

“ Till love for her shall teach thee love for all ;
Till perfect reverence for her shall grow
To faith in God which nothing can appal,
Tho’ His green world be dark with sin and woe.

“Children, by all they are to glad and grieve,
Shall teach thee what a loving Father is,
And how to give is better than receive :—
I bless thee with all household charities.

“A priceless boon ! and, like such boons to men,
A glorious blessing or a fatal curse :
Thou canst not sink back into yon vile den ;
Sinking at all, thou sinkest to a worse.”

When thus her words were ended, it might seem
That I was lapsing from a heavenly trance
Into some scarce less blissful earthly dream,
So wonderfully did a change advance.

Her supernatural beauty grew less bright,
Tho' scarce less beautiful ; the fiery name
Died out like fire ; the wings of flashing light
Were slowly back-withdrawn into her frame.

The Spirit of the empyréan Heaven
Was incarnated into human birth,
The purest Seraph of the loftiest Seven
Became a maiden of this lower earth.

Yet still she was the same, thus different :
The pinions there, tho' not put forth in power ;
The glory there, tho' in the body pent ;—
Both sheathed thus safely till the fitting hour :

And in her mien, and on her face and brow,
And in her violet eyes, as clear the sign
Of Love supreme and infinite shone now
As when it blazed in jewel fires divine.

.

I woke. A tender hand all silently
Had drawn the curtain and dispersed the gloom ;
The whole triumphant morning in a sea
Of warmth and splendour dazzled thro' the room.

The dearest face, the best-belovèd eyes,
Were shining down upon me where I lay ;—
Aglow with love and rapturous surprise,
Seeing my fever was all passed away.

November 1859.

A FESTIVAL OF LIFE

“ The One remains, the many change and pass ;
Heaven’s light for ever shines, Earth’s shadows fly ;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments. . . .”

SHELLEY’S *Adonais*.

THE wind, in long gusts roaring,
Over the sea-waste hurled with passionate might
The torrent-rush of ponderous rain down-pouring
Through that unbounded darkness of wild night. . . .
I gazed into the tumult ; seeing naught ;
But mastered by it into solemn thought,
Such as can seldom brood in garish day,—
 Whose myriad sounds and forms and hues
 Their sparkling sensual wine infuse,
Till the soul drowns in its drunken clay.
Night scorns to pamper fleshly ears and eyes
With earth’s poor store of fleeting luxuries,
 Appealing to the Soul alone
 In its stupendous Monotone,
Austerely murmuring spells of timeless mysteries.

Long sightlessly outgazing
I stood, when through the cloven dark, behold,
A dome of purest crystal lifted, blazing
With living splendours—purple, jasper, gold,
And crowning all, serenely arched on high,
A solemn depth of sapphire like a sky.
Far-piercing tremulous lines of watery light
 And sheeted lustres wild and riven,
 Like sunset glories tempest-driven,
It pours against the streaming gloom of night.
Sustaining this aërial canopy
White marble columns gleam unsteadfastly ;
 Yet by its hovering poise in air,
 It seems self-borne to revel there,
Surmounting furious blasts over the lurid sea.

I stand by it envaulted. . . .
The palace thrills throughout from dome to floor
In swells of jubilant harmony, exalted
By the storm's intermittent clash and roar :
How the full volumes of orchestral sound
Outsurge continuously and sweep around !
As clouds by winds, see, swayed by their sweet
 measure,
 All floating, gliding, sinking, heaving,
 The countless Masquers interweaving
An Iris-coloured maze of dizzy pleasure

About the sea-like floor of marble green,
All waved with multitudinous waves, whose sheen
 And restless shades the vision cheats ;
 They seem to flow beneath the feet
Which thrid that graceful dance of festive life
 serene.

 Around the shorelike border,
Opening to arched recess and far aisle dim,
The feast-spread tables range in stately order.
What golden bowls, a-tremble to the brim,
Beneath the lamps in constellations shine
With jewels and the jewel-gleams of wine !
What fruits are clustered into glorious piles
 Throughout the feast's magnificence,
 On whose uncumbered affluence
Flowers shed the grace of their ethereal smiles !
Round the broad tables sumptuous couches flow,
Soft as June clouds, suffused with many a glow,
 Of crimson, amber, violet dark :
 Deep-dyed from each recess's arc
The massy curtains fall, down-sweeping full and
 low.

 And children sport there tameless. . . .
O happy, happy children ! happier far,
Possessed by unsought joyance free and aimless,
Than those tall masks with laboured pleasures are.

Through feast and dance they flit with shining faces,
Wreathing, unwreathing, in capricious chases,
With ringing laughters at their own swift wiles.

And yet a few, of strange grave mood,
Pace in shadowy solitude

Those many-columned labyrinthine aisles,
Which, opening through the oriels, link to zone
The gem-bright feast with dark grey caverned stone :

Though scarcely man or woman dares
That dusk instinct with lightning-glaires,

Down whose far desert vistas waves and tempest
moan.

The dome's broad-soaring lustres
Are poised upon one massive coil of gold ;
A ruby-crested serpent, starred with clusters
Of flashing gems ; its mighty bulk outrolled
In cyclic rest for ever ; while, consumed,
The End in the Beginning lies entombed :
Gorgeous the symbol of Eternity !

The grand pilastered sweep of wall
Lives and glows around the hall,
Divinely pictured ; earth and sea and sky
Have yielded the best grandeurs and delights
Of all their rolling seasons, days and nights,
To make these fields of space expand
Into an infinite Wonder-land

By their infinitude of dream-surpassing sights.

Sculptures serenely gracious
 From out the flowing draperies' regal dyes,
 Around the banquet-circle cool and spacious,
 Gleam half-revealed to my enchanted eyes.
 How can the festival flow undelayed
 Amidst the heavenly visions here displayed?
 How is it not rapt still, in breathless trance?—
 What scenes of rock, field, sky and sea,
 Flung round in infinite harmony!—
 That wood where uncouth creatures sport and dance
 In the weird dimness streaked with silvern rays:
 That Eden quivering in the noontide blaze,
 Nymphs languid in its fountain-bowers:
 That sea-built City's domes and towers
 Consuming in the Sunset's slow-breathed fiery haze!

"Evohe! our high Palace!
 We dance, we dance, with dance-exulting feet!
 We grow immortal, draining bowl and chalice
 Of this life-burning wine-blood nectar-sweet,
 And banqueting on this ambrosial food!
 While ever and anon, in rapturous mood
 Outstealing from the revel, pair by pair
 Hide far within some dim recess,
 And, faint with fervid eagerness,
 Unlock the wildering wealth of love they share!
 What though black Night inspheres us,—storm
 and rain

Assaulting this fair Heaven with fury vain ?
Our-music-storm poured strong and fast
Can balance well the outer blast,
And yon resplendent dome for evermore sustain !”

With clash of wine-cups ringing,
So rose from flower-crowned feasters swaying
there

The fervent Pæan, swelled with choral singing
By many a gallant Knight and lady fair.
What strength of wisdom and sure self-reliance
Could make *these* bold to fling such gay defiance
To all the dreadful Powers of ancient Night?—

These—pigmyes swarming in the deep
Beneath their own dome’s burning sweep ;
These—motes invisible beneath Heaven’s height !
But ere was ended the impetuous song,
A tremor ran electric through the throng :
With pallid cheek and restless eye,
With urgent voices loud and high,
Fear made them more and more the vauntful
strains prolong.

“Ha ! what a burst of thunder !
How the swift lightnings blanched our splendours
pale !
Reweave the links of dance, too long asunder !
Let loose again the music’s lifeful gale ! . . .

But who are these, this never-bidden Pair,
 Unnoticed while our joy-song dimmed the air?
 Who are these masked in such mysterious wise?

What twain of all our company
 Are missing from the revelry?—

They have assumed this melancholy guise
 To shed fantastic wildness on our sport.

All here!—then who are Ye, not of our court?

Whence come ye? wherefore thus invade

Our blissful brightness with the shade
 Of sombre masks and robes, and joy-contemning
 port?"

Silent and dark and solemn,—

While the mixed tumult of amazement died
 In deep hushed awe,—firm-planted as the column
 Of dusky-splendid porphyry at their side,
 The Strangers stood, absorbing all the scene
 With slow calm eyes and wonder-baffling mien;
 Two awful Spirits of the outer Night!

For age-like moments that ensued

The Saturnalian multitude

Was frozen into marble undelight;
 Continued numb with terror,—lost and drowned
 In that weird breathless agony profound,

Like a Nightmare's stifling pain

Crushing, maddening heart and brain,

When utter, monstrous Silence yawns like death
 around,

Till life, resurgent, tingled
In burning blood through every shrunken vein ;
And one deep panting from all breasts commingled
To mark remission of that deadly strain
And over tension of the subtle strings
Whose music is the life of living things. . . .
Again with joy and power from secret caves
 The full dance-harmonies outstreaming
 Woke the Masquers from their dreaming,
Again they floated on the buoyant waves.
And all, it seemed, with fiercer yearning thirst,
Triumphant o'er the pallid swoon now burst,
 Seized the fiery cup of bliss
 Mantling high to greet their kiss ;
And in delirious draughts awe doubt, and fear
immerst.

The dim voluptuous languor
Of clouds surcharged with perfumes, slow and dense,
Uprolled from precious burnings, veiled the clan-
gour,
The harmonised confusion grown intense,
Reckless, and surging with a wild desire
Most keenly hungered when most fed, like fire ;
—Veiled the vast revel, even from their seeing,
 Whose Bacchic frenzy broken loose
 Was now the element profuse
That breathed it into such portentous being.

And few of all involved in this rich screen
 Saw now the Strangers of mysterious mien ;
 Whose dark intolerable eyes
 Burned through the tumult and disguise,
 Commanding like Omniscience all the wildered
 scene.

 But power to me was given
 To see, to pierce the gloomy robes austere,
 Which (as our world's gross night hides Hell and
 Heaven,
 From mortals sick with longing, wild with fear)
 Concealed these Two in undistinguished shade.
 I saw the Vision of a Queen, arrayed
 In midnight purple laced with snowy cloud,
 Which as her bosom heaved shone far
 With purest jewels, star on star. . . .
 Grand Queen ; dread Pythoness : hertallform bowed :
 Transcendent beauty lost in desolate grace :
 Her long dark hair thrown down about a face
 So pale with awful mysteries
 Of perfect love and woe and bliss,
 That my own heart grew wild panting for her embrace.

 But, Heaven be our protection
 Against the Demon standing at Her side !—
 By what dread lunacies of blind affection,
 Or monstrous Destiny to Her allied !

Infernal Horror!—His rent forehead crowned
With hideous snakes writhing and interwound,
A many crested coil distinguishless ;

While through black cloud with red fire seared
His vast and fleshless frame appeared
Momently shuddering into Nothingness.

On His disfeatured face was stamped a grin
Of unimagined foulness, hate and sin,

Anguish, greed, and rage and scorn,
And fiendish triumph most forlorn. . . .

Thus stood They side by side amidst the festal din.

Wilder and ever wilder

The revel surged beneath its glowing dome ;
And still the outside rage grew ever wilder,
As if all powers that have in Night their home,
Lightning and thunder, rain and stormy blast,
Held *their* wild revel in its sightless vast. . . .

Then those Two Shapes were moved from stony rest ;

And, keeping still their sable shroud,

Moved forward mingling with the crowd ;

Each with a strange keen eagerness repress.

He seized an aged yet carousing Knight ;

She kissed a young girl's forehead drooping white ;

These dancing linked in languid grace,

Those hurrying forth with swerveless pace,

Soon through a curtained portal passed from out
our sight.

There rose shrill lamentation
From revellers fixed awaiting their return ;
Inexplicable grief and consternation
Possessed them,—dread yet keen desire to learn
The fate of those led forth so suddenly ;
And tremulous murmurings spread. . . . Then all
 might see
Those Shapes mysterious coming back alone. . . .
 The Silence gave one reckless shout,
 “The Knight was old and wearied out,
The Maid was sick and faint some hours agoe :
These have but ushered them to rest and peace,
In sooth full kindly—But why therefore cease
 The banquet and the dance? Away!
 Every moment of delay
Is squandered from our joy’s brief unreturning
 lease.”

The rude spell fearless-hearted
Swayed back the riant feast-joy’s ebbing flood :
But one—the Lover of the girl departed—
Approached the Woman desperately, and sued
With passion such as will not be denied
For reunion with his promised bride.
She led him forth in Her divine embrace ;
 And then returned without the boy,
 Inspired by some exalted joy,
Which shone with holy splendour in Her face,

And bounded in Her port and heaved Her
breast. . . .

But of the remnant every one repress
 In silence of uneasy thought
 The wonder that within him wrought :
The mystery had power to awe down open quest.

 Thenceforth a voice of wailing,
Of grief that spurned all comfort, still increast,
For dear ones lost for ever, countervailing
The shouted songs and laughters of the feast ;
Whose wine ran like a mountain rill, which grows
In strong and swift abundance as it flows.
For the dread Strangers thinned the joyous rout ;
 With stern and Fateful ministry
 Removing almost momentarily
Man, woman, child, youth, maid,—selected out
By some inscrutable and lawless law.
Many to Her went willingly, I saw ;
 And fascinated by the bliss
 Of Her tender, holy kiss,
Welcomed with solemn joy their doom's mysterious
awe.

 But it was shameful, fearful,
To mark of those He gestured to His side
How many shrank, with ravings wildly tearful
Of idiot pleas ; while stalwart feastmen cried

“Grant us but one more hour of wine-fired glee !
Others may fail ; but we, Iacchus ! we
Could mount high revels with the mounting sun.”

A few with high-wrought calmness grand
Took His stretched imperious hand,
And seemed, though then all powerless and undone,
To cope with His Omnipotence of Fate,
Yielding at once with undissembled hate.

But trembling wretches clustered near,
Already summoned forth by Fear
To time-destroying pangs no doom could aggravate.

O infinite tempest raging !

O awful Visitants from Heaven and Hell !

These mortals scorn and mock your dark presaging,
And wreak high feast-strains on their own deep knell.
See, through the clouds of incense wildly glancing,
What Moenads with wild cries are wildly dancing !
All masks off-torn, their white limbs flash and shine,

Flung out tossing through the whirls ;

Dishevelled tresses, wanton curls,

A-flame with flowers and dripping crimson wine,

Brush naked bosoms with their fiery trace, —

White, perfect breasts, full-swelled to the embrace

Which those wild eyes of humid light

Fiercely passionate now invite :—

The Palace, through their whirlwind, seems to reel
in space.

Alas, how sad and dreary
Waned the whole scene there as the Night grew
late!

When many of the Masquers, sick and weary,
Lay longing that those Ministers of Fate
Would choose them for removal: when of all
Whom They had taken from the festival
No one returned; though mourners fiercely craved

The never answering Shapes of Black
To bring them, but a moment, back,
And on the threshold of the Night-storm waved
Their feeble torches, quenched as soon as lit,
Seeking lost darlings through the Infinite:

And when at times some dreadful ghost,
Imaging the loved and lost,
Would through the startled feast with bodeful ges-
tures flit. . . .

The lamps were quickly failing;
The pictures were weird shadows on the wall;
In the grey stone-cold dawn-gleams unprevailing
The draperies seemed a vast funereal pall
Flapping about the corpselike sculptures wan:
The floor, the cupola which glimmering shone,
The rain-dark marbles, in the tempest thrilled:

Where late the noble feast was spread
Lay scattered flower-blooms dim and dead,
'Mid stains of sullen-oozing wine outspilled

From urns and goblets shattered and o'erthrown,
And fragments in a sick confusion strown ;
 And lost in all the ghastly waste,
 On couches tottering and displaced,
Flushed victims of the orgy, helpless, senseless,
prone.

 Yet evermore those Strangers
Went gathering in their harvest ; and no less,
As men who face to face with deadly dangers
Inebriate their terror and distress,
A few kept up the revel with a madness
Of reeling, shrieking glee which was not glad-
ness.

Till—portents of the near approaching Doom—
 Wailings, laughters, wild and fierce,
 Through the storm-swung darkness pierce,
And spectres people the dull flickering gloom. . . .
A deep foreboding hush pervades the place :
To that dis-covered Twain in one wild race
 All reel along the quaking floor :
 There grows a mighty booming roar,
As I am rapt away into the outer space.

 With storm and fire and thunder
These rearward billows of Night's Ocean dash
Against the Palace : it is rent asunder,
Rent, shattered, with an instantaneous crash.

On, undelayed, exultingly they sweep,
Whirling its fragments through their wild waste
deep :

Precipitant in their stupendous sway

The glowing fragments crystalline,

Gold, jewels, precious marbles, shine

Like showering meteors ; high and far away,

Portentous, the Snake's blazing wheel is borne,

In dalliance with the lightnings whose fierce scorn

Smites into view wan wailing shades . . .

The whole Night-Chaos hurrying fades

Over the livid sea, before the dismal morn.

“ O utter desolation !

O blighted beauty, splendour, triumph, bliss !

Alas, the gay and thoughtless congregation

Flung out unsheltered to the dark Abyss !

Bright Vision faded ! never more can shine

A joy-insphering Palace so divine.”

Lamenting thus, I sank in sleep or swoon. . . .

I wake—The isle and ocean spread

Level and bare : but overhead

The solemn Heaven of sapphire-burning noon

Has bent its dome's immeasurable height ;

A few calm clouds o'erfraught with living light

Melt in the quivering crystalline ;

Beneath the Eternal Sun divine,

Insphering half the world in glory and delight.

This is the Vision solely,
Trancing all aspiration with content !
Beauty all-perfect, blessedness all-holy,
Are veiled beyond that crystal firmament.
The breathless concave yearneth to the Hymn
Of all the Hosts of Stars and Seraphim ;
The Hallelujah's raptured Monotone,
 To whose vast swell the world-strown Sea
 Of Æther throbs eternally,
Circling the footstool of that nameless Throne
Whose veil's far shadow floods this noon with
light. . . .
—O self-sequestered Earth ! O gross, weak sight !
 For which beneath such heavenly day
 Yawneth fathomless for aye
A spectre-haunted gulf of Sphere-completing Night.

February 1857.

TASSO TO LEONORA

FROM HIS DUNGEON ; IN MISERY AND DISTRACTION.

“ Ha ! thy frozen pulses flutter
With a love thou dar’st not utter. . . .
Lady, whose imperial brow
Is endiademed with woe !

.
All the wide world beside us
Show like multitudinous
Puppets passing from a scene ;
What but mockery can they mean ? ”

SHELLEY—*Misery ; a Fragment.*

NOBLEST Lady, throned above
All my soaring hopes of love ;
Could you read my fate’s dark truth,
You would give me scornless ruth.

Dawn by dawn I wake to say,—
I *will* drive all thought away
Of Her I cannot hope to win ;
Vain regret is coward sin.

Yet each night I yearn to be
Wandering far alone with thee,
Through still Dreamland’s dimmest grove
Moonlit by thy heavenly love.

Ah, the long days dark and cold !
Life, bereft of thee, unsouled—
Save for Memory!—crawls on slow,
One sick swoon of barren woe.

Ah, the long nights dreadly still !
When sleep flies my frantic will ;
When through filmy dreams its sting
Consciousness darts quivering.

But when rich Sleep's nectared balm
Bathes my weary heart in calm ;
Life, Strength, Joy are all re-found,
With thy pure love glory-crowned.

Thus thou hast my soul unsphered ;
Waking life is dead and weird ;
Deathlike trance is life :—ah me !
All our being seems to be
Interfused with mockery.

Yes—as Love is truer far
Than all other things ; so are
Life and Death, the World and Time,
Mere false shows in some great Mime,
By dreadful mystery sublime.

Do not scorn me, Sweet, I crave ;
Perhaps this woe may somewhat rave :
Yet how should It?—I can feel
Truth itself at times less real.

Do not scorn me,—for behold !
Near and nearer swiftly rolled
Solemn glooms of that great Night
No false Day shall dawn to blight.

Then the everlasting sleep,
Shall our souls in rapture steep,
Then in tranced Eternity
Thou shalt be made One with me !

Play our parts out in this Mime !—
Spectres mocking spectral Time,
Whose grim mockery keeps us hurled
Reeling through our spectral World.

What a Theatre expands !
For its Stage all seas and lands ;
By the moon and high stars lit ;
Vaulted by the Infinite.

Heavens ! and I must bear a part,
With my restless passionate heart
Coffined in this foul dead den
From the surging seas of men.

Well . . . we all must act our time
On the unreal Stage sublime ;
None of us is what he seems,
Dramatising frenzy-dreams.

By such monsters fleered, stung, tost,
In such wildering mazes lost ;
How superbly serious all
Threads the restless, senseless brawl
Of our rabid Carnival !

Noble, beautiful, serene,
Thou must play the part of Queen ;
Crowned with unreal gems and gold,
Phantom purples round thee rolled.

Sweep with stately step the stage ;
Act great passions, love and rage,
With yon crowd of half-souled things
Masked as nobles, princes, kings.

I must act a wretch forlorn,
Wealthless, rankless, lowly born ;
Cursed more with a soul and sense
Bounteous, regal, too intense :

Ay, a woeful Wretch indeed ;
Say a starved incarnate Need,
Ever with consummate art
In his strange half-tragic part
Living on an empty heart !

Well, Dear, brief must be our task ;
Little matters in what mask
We may rant our mimic rage
On our unsubstantial Stage.

So, Sweet Love, sustain your rôle,
Freeze the pulses of your soul ;
Fair, grand, queenly dignified,
Case yourself in marble pride.

I—the while,—by evidence
Of my purest love intense,
Sure that when the Play is o'er
You are mine for evermore—

I will madly waste and moan,
Pouring out against thy throne
All my life of love,—flung back
In wild foam o'er gulfs of black.

Let some hollow princely mask,
In thine Alpine sunshine bask ;
Blight me with well-feignèd scorn
Let me pine and rage forlorn :

Have it counted lunacy,
My audacious love for Thee !
In a lazar-dungeon thrust,
Make me mad to prove you just.

Brava, Dearest ! noble, grand !
Played with wondrous self-command !
O great Theatre world-filled,
Whom her spell holds rapt and thrilled,
Shout the plaudits too long stilled !

I, too,—do not I act well
All the horrors of this Hell ?
Act so well, Love, that I feel
Sometimes as if all were real !

What a sickly, foolish fear !
Love soon re-assures me, Dear :
I must ape such anguish vile
With an inward settled smile.

Do I seem to writhe with pain
Under thy assumed disdain?
Do I seem, indeed, to be
Far too mean for hope of thee?

Do I really seem to brood
In this dark den's solitude,
Frenzied by the foetid gloom
Of such hideous living tomb?

Do I seem to cringe, and crave
Mercy from the poor dull slave,
Who, disguised in sceptered power,
Acts thy brother for the hour?

Yet I scorn him : and serene,
Far above this mimic scene
With its shows of Space and Time,
Dwell with thee in love sublime.

Ah ! your part so grand and fine
Must be harder yet than mine ;
Bitter, but to *seem*, in sooth,
False to love's eternal truth :
Ah ! you have my saddest ruth.

Still, our parts are so forth writ
In this Mime whose venom'd wit
Our poor wits so far transcends.
On its acting life depends,
Wild it is, but soon it ends.

Joy! the Play must soon be done!
Then the lamps called Stars and Sun
Shall be quenched in perfect gloom
By the grand foreclosing Doom;

Then the Stage of land and sea
Shall down-vanish utterly;
Then the fretted azure roof
Roll off like a burning woof;

Then the serried multitude
Surge out in a vast dim flood;—
All, all fade and vanish quite,
Leaving void and silent Night.

Then, once more alone, my Sweet,
We shall in the strange dark meet:
You will doff your tinsel'd pride,
I shall throw my rags aside.

Then in silent darkness deep
Comes the everlasting sleep,
Comes the inexpressive bliss
Of our union's perfectness !

Time's loud turbid stream shall flow,
With its perils, strife and woe,
Far from where our Soul then lies
Tranced in still Eternities :

Tho', soft breathed from far away,
Its dim soothing murmurs may
Lull us to profounder rest,
Swaying with the Ocean's breast.

For we seek home after this ;
Clinging with a fonder kiss
For the parting which so pained,
For the cold neglect you feigned.

We two only,—Woman, Man,
Wedded ere the Mime began,
Heaven-created Man and Wife
For our whole true timeless life :

Soul of soul and heart of heart ;
Each alone a wretched part,
Lifeless, useless, maimed, unright,
Ever yearning to unite

In the perfect spheral Whole,
Living, self-sufficient Soul,
Swayed through Æther crystalline
Circling restful in the shine
Of the central Sun Divine. . . .

What, although this trance at times
Must be broken by such mimes?
What, though we must earn by these
Our reposeful ecstasies?

Dearest, all the false cold days,
With their bitter mocking Plays,
Swiftly die to glorious Night
When we meet in new delight.

So two actors, Man and Wife,
Mimic freely rage and strife,
Suffering, terror, madness, death
Whatsoe'er the fable saith:

Earning thus wherewith to feed
That which is their life indeed,—
Long, calm, rich with love intense,
Secret from the shallow sense
Of the blatant audience.

Ah, my weak bewildered heart !
Do I act my monstrous part
With too earnest lifelike truth ?—
Darling, bless me with thy ruth.

Yes, at times my heart is torn
By thy well-pretended scorn :
Soothe this foolish heart of mine
With some secret loving sign.

Perhaps it feeleth Love to be
Of such sacred verity,
That thy merely feigned untruth
Frets it like a serpent-tooth.

Grant it some dear secret sign
Which no other can divine,—
But a word, a flower, to prove
That you are my own, own Love.

Act thy strange part not so well ;—
Even now, with pangs of Hell,
I dread that your neglect is true,
Doubting you, my Soul's Soul, *you* !

But I strangle such base doubt. . . .
How the drear plot lingers out !
What a Chaos, baffling thought ;
Real with spectral interwrought ! . . .

Lo, the wondrous Universe !
Hear its mystic powers rehearse
Sweet and subtle melodies,
Vast and solemn harmonies.

Glorious shifting sceneries, see ;
And the dome's infinity,
Lamp'd by all the rhythmic quires
Of those unconsuming fires !

Mark the stony Fate that broods,
Mark the angel multitudes,
Watching for the tragic range
Of impassioned strife and change.

O sublimest Theatre !
Vexed with the insensate stir
Of this doleful Mime distraught,
By such pigmy puppets wrought.

Pigmies : and they feel it well,
While their hollow vauntings swell :
How uneasily they roam
Through its grandeurs, not at home !—

Restless in its crystal calms,
Trembling at its thunder-psalms,
Cowering from its noon-poured light,
Shuddering through its scenic night.

How their poor rants quail and die
Far beneath its solemn sky !
How their clouds of passion all,
Tumid grandeurs, burst and fall
From its deep-based mountain-wall !

Blood and filth defile the Stage,
Filth of lust and blood of rage ;
Which they will not understand
Are but self-pollution, and
Suicide at second-hand.

Every one there, bad or good,
Is by all misunderstood,
Knowing not himself,—yet strives
To scheme the law for countless lives.

Each is different from each,
None hears right another's speech :
Yet all fume and fight for aye,
With anguish, hatred, death, dismay,
To make others be as they.

Every step they take perplex
Taints the freedom of the next ;
Every thought and word and deed
Curbeth all that shall succeed :

Yet they still must move, nor pause,
By the Drama's rigorous laws ;
Yet no true Life can there be
Save in thoughts and deeds quite free.

There work foolish Hate and Ill,
Eager, subtle, fierce of will ;
Good and Love, alas, behold,
Flagging, wavering, languish cold.—

Love !—O Seraphs looking down,
Who of all that wear the crown,
That have won the sacred kiss
Which should symbol Love's pure bliss,
Even dream what true Love is ?

Sternly real the galling pain
Of the vanquished bondman's chain ;
But the Victor's diadem
Ever lacks its crowning gem.

Nearly all the noblest parts
Ruined by bad heads or hearts ;
Those in whom redemption lies
Chained, with cankering energies,
From sublime activities.

Each aspiring burst, swayed back,
Soon plods round the old drear track ;
Hope dies,—strangled in the knot
Of such ever-ravelled plot.

Did no sequent acts extend
On unto a perfect End
Far beyond these brief life-days,
What a hopeless, ghastly maze !

Yes ! did'st Thou not light the scene,
Leonora, O my Queen !
One deep sigh would rend my heart,
“Oh, that I had had no part !” . . .

As it is,—to keep, perchance,
Sane amid the dizzy dance—
Muse I this fixed truth sublime,
All is but a mocking Mime.

Yet foul demons in my ear
Hiss most wordless hints of fear,—
That this hideous dream's wild strife
Is our soul's substantial life !

How the moment's thought appals!—
That these stifling dungeon-walls
Are of real during stone ;
That I fester here alone ;
That you cannot be my own !

No ; it is a fiendish lie.
God our Father reigns on high :
You are truer than my faith. . . .
Oh, were life untwined from death !

But, you cannot scorn me, Dear,
Though I sink in doubt and fear?
You too know, this mad Mime done,
We shall evermore be one ?

Cling, cling fast to this dear faith,
Rock of life in sea of death :
Our mazed web of doom is wrought
Under God's directing thought.

For were life no flitting dream,
Were things truly what they seem,
Were not all this World-scene vast
But a shade in Time's stream glass'd ;

Were the moods we now display
Less phantasmal than the clay,
In which our poor spirits clad
Act this Vision, wild and sad,
I must be mad, mad,—how mad!

November 1856.

A HAPPY POET

DRIVEN by mysterious care and restless pain
The World rolls round me full of noise and strife,
Racking what is not loss to dubious gain :
I live apart my self-fulfilling life
Serenely happy, breathing golden air
Unvext by these dark storms of pain and care.

The tumult whirls for ever to and fro :
I see it all in vision ; strangely wild
And incoherent, yet by some rich glow
Of vigour, thought and passion reconciled ;
Its mystery also, wherein dreams Delight,
Brings dear old friends, tho' dimly, back to sight.

O happy-dowered Soul ! whom God doth call
To life's imperial Banquet as a guest
Greeted with gladness in its lofty Hall ;
Bathed clean and cool, sprinkled with odours, drest
In fair white folds of free and flowing grace,
The festal raiment of the splendid place ;

Who then is couched 'midst wise and valiant friends,
In place of honour near the glorious Throne
Wherefrom the Host such kingly welcome sends
That all may feel His treasures all their own ;
And who is further gifted to divine
The subtlest savours of the fruit and wine.

Is it not strange ? I could more amply tell
Such woes of men as I discern or dream,
Than this great happiness I know so well,
Which is in truth profounder than they seem ;
And which abides for ever pure and deep,
Beneath all dreams of wakefulness or sleep.

For this whole world so vast and complicate,
With every being nourished on its breast,
With all its mighty workings-out of Fate,
With that one Soul in all its life exprest,
Must surely all be mine, and mine alone ;
Its power and joy are so indeed my own.

Spring, summer, autumn, winter, float for aye,
Weaving continually their wondrous robe,
Of purple Night inwrought with golden Day
About our earth, whose calm and mighty globe
Through all the World-strown æther crystalline
Floats ever circling round the sun divine.

The faint voluptuous trance of summer noon,
 Young spring's blithe tenderness so green and fair,
The golden wealth of quiet autumn boon,
 The star-keen life of winter glittering bare,
Carol harmonious beauty and delight,
And proffer all their treasures as my right.

The birds rejoice in singing for my joy,
 And shaking sunshine thro' the clustered leaves :
A brain that never plotteth them annoy,
 A heart that loves them and their injury grieves
Swift bird and beast and jewelled insect free
Full well can trust ; one brotherhood are we.

The flowers all love me, and the trees befriend ;
 Lily and rose are eager to impart
By fragrance, colour, or some perfect bend,
 Delicious secrets that surprise my heart ;
I muse beneath the forests, and they are
With all their countless tongues oracular.

Snow-vested mountains mighty and austere
 Persuade me : Climb us from thy lowly home,
And we will be thine Altars ; offer here
 From our pure silence to yon naked dome
Thy sacrificial thoughts, in breathless awe
And adoration of Eternal Law.

And evermore old Ocean murmurs me :

 Come forth, and love our heritage, my Child ;
Safe-cherished on my bosom shalt thou be

 In death-sweet calms, in tempests dark and wild ;
Cadence of moonlit waves and mid-sea moan
Shall dower thy Voice with many a mystic tone.

O vaulted sky, O bounteous land and sea,

 O perfect World, the Palace and the Shrine
Of infinite beauty, truth and mystery,

 That flood the soul with yearning bliss divine
Till it dissolves in their exuberant might,
As some frail cloud surcharged with noon's full light.

The banquet-hall is noble, and its wine

 A nectar worthy of Olympian lyres ;
Solemn and sacred is the infinite shrine,
 With stars immortal for its altar-fires ;

Yet shrine and palace are scarce noticed things
When all the guests and worshippers are kings :

Imperial all ; each freer than the sun

 Doth live and move, supreme, self-centred, sole ;
And yet they are my people, every one ;

 My life of heart and brain is in the whole ;
Their hopes, fears, woes, joys, virtues, sins, despairs,
Their full-orbed lives are mine no less than theirs.

The stern exultance of the thoughtful youth
 Enrolled against the tyrants of his land ;
The noblest victor's self-contemning ruth
 When fireless eye must gaze on bloody hand ;
The greed of power, the sateless lust of pride,
Whence kingly robes in blood are purple-dyed ;

The deep complacency of subtle skill
 In ravelled games, though winning wins a loss ;
The drear perversity with which one's will
 With wretched consciousness persists to cross
His own best good, his dearest friends' best prayers,
Devouring sullenly their generous cares ;

The fogs of fear in which their fellows loom
 Like threatening monsters, and the firm earth
 yields ;

The mists of hope and love-joy which illumine
 With golden strangeness their poor homes and
 fields ;

The sophistries of passion-moulded thought
By which they use to make "I would," "I ought :"

Free childhood's life, so rich it need not ask
 Poor thought to justify its flower-fresh grace ;
Youth's yearning tumult when the constant mask
 Seems falling first from Nature's glorious face,
The infinite joy and sadness of its strife
To probe the awful secrets of our life ;

The firm deliberate strength of manhood's prime,
 Appraising well the World, its smiles and frowns,—
 Yet for the spoils and triumphs of this Time
 Ceding the heirship of eternal crowns ;
 Old age with Heaven's first rays upon its brow,
 Yet clinging feebly to the worn-out Now :

His nature who from action will refrain
 In plenitude of spiritual thought,
 And his who keepeth every nerve a-strain
 In constant labour, hope and fear distraught ;
 (In thought's pure æther float all worlds of life ;
 The cold eye sees, warm being lives through strife) :

Those eagle spirits native to the skies
 Who drink the Sun's bare splendour, and con-
 temn

Such painted screens as unanointed eyes
 Must interpose between His shine and them,—
 The veils and imageries through which their sense
 Alone can bear the formless light intense ;

(But Suns shine spheric to the eagle-eye,
 Though formless to the owlet-sight, when bare) :
 The soul opprest with its humanity,
 Which must have God's most personal love and
 care ;

The self-ruled souls, that need not supplicate,
 Feeling themselves divine and peers of Fate :

All, all are mine, are Me. How vast the Stage !
 Imperious Doom, unvanquishable Will,
 Throughout the Drama constant battle wage ;
 The Plot evolves with tangled good and ill ;
 The passions overflow the shores of Time ;
 With God the full Solution waits sublime.

If I so much contemplate all the scene
 As if to pleasure me the whole were wrought,
 I gaze upon the actors great and mean
 With reverent love, with unaccusing thought ;
 Their wails and curses are mine own no less
 Than their most tranquil strains of nobleness.

And yet, how ever-gracious is my dower,
 Whose noon-tide bliss consumes its first alloy
 Whose midnight woe by some celestial power
 Enkindles purest stars of solemn joy :
 My lover glows, the world is all-June bowers ;
 My widower weeps, the tears rain April-showers.

For I must sing of all I feel and know ;
 Waiting with Memnon passive near the palms,
 Until the heavenly light doth dawn and grow
 And thrill my silence into mystic psalms ;
 From unknown realms the wind streams sad or
 gay,
 The trees give voice responsive to its sway.

For I must sing ; of mountains, deserts, seas,
Of rivers ever flowing, ever flowing ;
Of beasts and birds, of grass and flowers and trees
For ever fading and for ever growing ;
Of calm and storm, of night and eve and noon,
Of boundless space, and sun and stars and moon :

And of the secret sympathies that bind
All beings to their wondrous dwelling-place ;
And of the perfect Unity enshrined
In omnipresence throughout time and space,
Alike informing with its full control
The dust, the stars, the worm, the human soul :

And most supremely of my human kin ;
Their thoughts and deeds, their valours and their
fears,
Their griefs and joys, their virtue and their sin,
Their feasts and wars, their cradles and their biers,
Their temples, prisons, homes and ships and marts,
The subtlest windings of their brains and hearts.

In all their faiths and sacraments I see
Celestial features through the earthly veil,
In all their dreams some deep reality,
In all their structures beams that cannot fail,
In all their thoughts some truth which doth inspire,
In all their passions sparks of quenchless fire.

For singing, in all thoughts I glimpse the law
 Ineffable, eternal, veiled behind,
And robe it in full verse-folds dark with awe ;
 And singing, in all passions I must find
New secrets more impassioned, crowning them
With golden words, a fulgent diadem.

So heartless gibes of infidel mistrust,
 And quibblings spun by some poor wretch to snare
His conscience into sanction of his lust,
 Or bind it into cowardly despair,
Come forth from me the universal Nay
That limits all our life's triumphant Yea.

So softest sighings of a maiden's heart
 When first Love's fingers touch the trembling
 chords,
Thrill through my soul with their delicious smart,
 And fly abroad from me new-winged with words
So bright and beautiful and swift to soar
That all must love them now and evermore.

I sing, I sing, rejoicing in the singing,
 And men all love me for my songs so sweet,
Even as they love the rapturous lark upspringing
 And singing loud his joy the sun to greet ;
O happiest lot, to win all love and blessing
For that whose own delight is past expressing !

Are men in truth not joyous strong and whole,
But lofty strains thro' broken lyres expressed?
My frame is all attuned to my soul,
My limbs are glad to do my mind's behest ;
To wander through the wide realm many a day
As free as thoughts that wander every way :

To climb the mountain brow thro' moonlit gloom,
With vigorous breathing of its lonely air,
And watch the tranced dawn from out her tomb
To perfect resurrection waking there :
To revel through the storm when fire and rain
And thunder make a man all heart and brain :

To pierce the inmost heart of solemn woods,
Where our great Mother coucheth grand and
dim,
And baring her full breast in solitudes,
Suckles each child as if she had but him,
With that same milk magnificent and bold
Whence Gods and Titans drew their strength of old ;

To plunge away from earth on lonely shores
And breast the green sea-surges foaming strong,
Free as an eagle when it sways and soars
The billows of the tempest-sea among ;
To sail alone the deep, past rocks and caves,
From isle to isle upon the heaving waves :

To row adown great rivers from their rills,
 Gliding thro' dawn and eve and noon and night,
Winding between the patient woods and hills,
 The broad green meadows, fields and gardens
 bright ;

Past homesteads each sole-sacred as a star
Gleaming thro' clustered foliage near and far ;

Past peaceful hamlets loosely gathered round
 Their spires still pointing from the graves to God ;—
Past rich and mighty cities far-renowned,
 So overcharged with life the soul is awed
To think but of such massed intensity ;
And so into the earth-surrounding sea.

How the rich days of life and joy and light,
 The unregretful, unforeboding days,
Usher me softly into solemn night ;
 Then sleep her spell divine upon me lays,
And I am tranced and fed with perfect rest,
Or wander far through dreamland, fancy-blest.

Then, when the night's dusk curtains are withdrawn,
 And sleep dissolves her spell of mysteries,
With what eternal freshness each new dawn
 Greets me with fair and golden promises !
While born anew and young with day's new birth
I hear the lark out-trill my infinite mirth.

So rich and sweet is Life. And what is death?

The tranquil slumbers dear and strange and boon
That feed at whiles our waking being's breath;

The solemn midnight of this glorious noon,
With countless distant stars, and each a sun,
Revealed harmonious with our daily one.

1857: 1859.

THE LORD OF THE CASTLE OF INDOLENCE

NOR did we lack our own right royal king,
The glory of our peaceful realm and race.
By no long years of restless travailing,
By no fierce wars or intrigues bland and base,
Did he attain his superlofty place ;
But one fair day he lounging to the throne
Reclined thereon with such possessing grace
That all could see it was in sooth his own,
That it for him was fit and he for it alone.

He there reclined as lilies on a river,
All cool in sunfire, float in buoyant rest ;
He stirred as flowers that in the sweet south quiver ;
He moved as swans move on a lake's calm breast,
Or clouds slow gliding in the golden west ;
He thought as birds may think when 'mid the trees
Their joy showers music o'er the brood-filled nest ;
He swayed us all with ever placid ease
As sways the thronèd moon her world-wide wan-
dering seas.

Look, as within some fair and princely hall

The marble statue of a god may rest,

Admired in silent reverence by all ;

Soothing the weary brain and anguished breast,

By life's sore burthens all-too-much oppressed,

With visions of tranquillity supreme ;

So, self-sufficing, grand and bland and blest,

He dwelt enthroned, and whoso gazed did seem

Endowed with death-calm life in long unwistful
dream.

While others fumed and schemed and toiled in
vain

To mould the world according to their mood,

He did by might of perfect faith refrain

From any part in such disturbance rude.

The world, he said, indeed is very good,

Its Maker surely wiser far than we ;

Feed soul and flesh upon its bounteous food,

Nor fret because of ill ; All-good is He,

And worketh not in years but in Eternity.

How men will strain to row against the tide,

Which yet must sweep them down in its career !

Or if some win their way and crown their pride,

What do they win? the desert wild and drear,

The savage rocks, the icy wastes austere,

Wherefrom the river's turbid rills downflow :

But he upon the waters broad and clear,
 In harmony with all the winds that blow,
 'Mid cities, fields and farms, went drifting to
 and fro.

The king with constant heed must rule his realm,

The soldier faint and starve in marches long,
 The sailor guide with sleepless care his helm,
 The poet from sick languors soar in song :
 But he alone amidst the troubled throng
 In restful ease diffused beneficence ;

Most like a mid-year noontide rich and strong,
 That fills the earth with fruitful life intense,
 And yet doth trance it all in sweetest indolence.

When summer reigns the joyous leaves and flowers

Steal imperceptibly upon the tree ;
 So stole upon him all his bounteous hours,
 So passive to their influence seemed he,
 So clothed they him with joy and majesty ;
 Basking in ripest summer all his time,
 We blessed his shade and sang him songs of
 glee ;

The dew and sunbeams fed his perfect prime,
 And rooted broad and deep he broadly towered
 sublime.

Thus could he laugh those great and generous laughs
 Which made us love ourselves, the world, and him ;
 And while they rang we felt as one who quaffs
 Some potent wine-cup dowered to the brim,
 And straightway all things seem to reel and swim,—
 Suns, moons, earth, stars sweep through the vast
 profound,
 Wrapt in a golden mist-light warm and dim,
 Rolled in a volume of triumphant sound ;
 So in that laughter's joy the whole world carolled
 round.

The sea, the sky, wood, mountain, stream and plain,
 Our whole fair world did serve him and adorn,
 Most like some casual robe which he might deign
 To use when kinglier vesture was not worn.
 Was all its being by his soul upborne,
 That it should render homage so complete ?
 The day and night, the even and the morn,
 Seemed ever circling grateful round his feet,
 "With Thee, through Thee we live this rich life
 pure and sweet !"

For while he loved our broad world beautiful,
 His placid wisdom penetrated it,
 And found the lovely words but poor and dull
 Beside the secret splendours they transmit,
 The heavenly things in earthly symbols writ :

He knew the blood-red sweetness of the vine,
 Yet did not therefore at the revel sit ;
 But straining out the very wine of wine,
 Lived calm and pure and glad in drunkenness
 divine.

Without an effort the imperial sun
 With ever ample life of light doth feed
 The spheres revolving round it every one :
 So all his heart and soul and thought and deed
 Flowed freely forth for every brother's need ;
 He knew no difference between good and ill,
 But as the sun doth nourish flower and weed
 With self-same bounty, he too ever still
 Lived blessing all alike with equal loving will.

The all-bestowing sun is clothed with splendour,
 The all-supporting sun doth reign supreme ;
 So must eternal justice ever render
 Each unsought payment to its last extreme :
 Thus he most rich in others' joy did seem,
 And reigned by servitude all-effortless ;
 For heaven and earth must vanish like a dream
 Ere such a soul divine can know distress,
 Whom all the laws of Life conspire to love and
 bless.

BERTRAM TO THE MOST NOBLE AND
BEAUTIFUL LADY GERALDINE

I.

LADY! this night for the first time my eyes,
My bodily eyes, drank in with sateless thirst
Thy noblest beauty; as when desert skies
By the full moon late-risen are immerst
In pure and solemn splendour. Not surprise
But breathless awe filled all my soul when first
You floated vision-strange before its sight;
O long-lost Star! O well-known unknown Light!

II.

Amid the murmurous hum and dusty glare,
With which those restless throngs confused the
room,
I moved and gazed, with little thought or care,
So that the hours slipt smoothly through Life's loom,
Weaving gay vesture for an old despair;
When the unearthly sense of some great doom
Approaching near possessed me, and I thrilled
With tremors too mysterious to be stilled.

III.

Rapt by that revelation from the crowd,
 My eyes were lifted,—to behold your face !
 While, like a silver-burning summer-cloud,
 Slow-soothed by dreamful air through azure space,
 You floated past me, glorious, tranquil, proud ;
 Borne gliding on with such serenest grace
 By slow sweet music, that it seemed to be
 Voicing thine own soul's inward harmony.

IV.

Forthwith I knew Thee, whom I had not sought
 Since Youth high-hoping found no outward meed,
 And, ignorant that high hope its own bliss wrought,
 Left Faith to die, and nursed the bitter weed
 Which blooms in poisonous gauds of heartless
 thought.

O sole fulfilment of my heart's great need !
 Vision revealing how and whence it pined !
 Blessed redeemer of my sinking mind !

V.

Thy Presence was its own most adequate
 Proclaimer, full-credentialed, to my soul :
 An instant, and I recognized my Fate,
 Yielding with solemn joy to its control.

I have been wandering in this intricate
 And gloomy maze of Life, without a goal,
 Baffled and hopeless ; but my future way
 Lies straight and clear through life and death for aye.

VI.

And more :—as moonlight up some sombre stream
 May flow in silence, a refulgent river,
 Enchanting the dull line with gracious beam
 Till far back toward its fount outleaps the
 quiver
 Of free waves joyous, living in the gleam ;
 Even so your Apparition did deliver
 My long-dead years from blank Lethean night,
 And all lived forth in your celestial light.

VII.

All glorious dreams that beautified and blest
 My fervent youth were realised in Thee ;
 Young longings, nobler far in their unrest
 Than later moods of scornful stagnancy,
 Again could heave and agitate my breast ;
 My mind, long world-filled, was empowered
 to see
 That Life has sacred mysteries unrevealed,
 And grander trusts than Earth and Time can yield.

VIII.

And all this Past was thus redeemed from death,
 Through its pure prescience of Thyself alone ;
 Shining in splendours of unclouded faith,
 Breathing in pants of love. Yes, I had known
 Thee well in hours long faded ; when your breath
 Thrilled all my frame, and when your dark eyes
 shone
 With holy passion and exalted bliss,
 Throughout my spirit tranced in ecstasies.

IX.

Yet it was not the eyes, large, solemn, deep—
 The several features of the noble face ;
 Nor wealth of hair, flung down in long-curved sweep,
 Flashing like rippling sunbeams, whose embrace
 Doth in so warm a glow of beauty steep
 That harmony severe of stately grace
 Which moulds thy form ; nor was it that full form
 In its serene perfection breathing warm :—

X.

Not in all these can I find all the spell
 Which thrilled such instant recognition, wild
 Yet doubtless as an holy oracle,
 Throughout my being torpid and defiled.

Why should I fear this joyous truth to tell,
 Which Love has murmured to his last-born
 child?—

Unaided by the mean of bodily sense,
 Souls can reciprocate deep influence.

XI.

O music, flow for ever soft and sweet
 Through subtler mazes, that in timeless dream
 I may for ever watch her dove-quick feet
 Circling in light adown thy shadowy stream,
 And calm-robed form float, swaying to the beat
 Of the long languid pulses ; while outgleam
 Her face and round arms radiant through the whirls,
 Grand neck, white shoulders, queenly golden curls.

XII.

Desire, by its own wild intensity,
 Was baffled,—I stood trembling, panting, pale ;
 And every eager step approaching Thee
 Sank back : how spirits nearing Heaven must
 quail !
 Till some strong inspiration carried me,
 Half-dumb, to gasp my pleading,—and prevail ;
 To sue, and stand dance-ready at thy side,
 Intoxicate with love and bliss and pride.

XIII.

Oh, glory of the dance sublimed to this !

Oh pure white arm electric that embraced
Ethereal-lightly my unbounded bliss !

Oh, let me die on but another taste
Of that warm breath ambrosial, and the kiss
Of those whirl-wanton ringlets ; interlaced,
Quick frame with frame borne on ; my lips the while
Within a neck-bend of that heavenly smile !

XIV.

Did music measure that delirious dancing ?

I heard it not ; I know not what strange sway
Kept us among those spectral figures, glancing
As its poor harmonies might rule their way.

I was o'erfilled with music more entrancing,
But wild, how wild ! I could have fled astray,
Footing the buoyant æther's moonlight sea,
For ever and for ever linked with Thee.

XV.

Most pure and beautiful ! what stayed my lips,

When parched with thirsting near such ænomel,
From clinging unto thine for bee-like sips ?

From pasturing o'er thy brow's white asphodel ?

Sealing thine eyes in passion's dear eclipse,
 With pressure on the full blue-veinèd swell,
 And thrillings o'er the silken lashes fine,
 Mid interdraughts of their deep violet wine?

XVI.

Yet, O Belovèd, though thus love-distraught,
 Blame not my spirit ; for I felt You there
 So holy-pure, that self-condemning thought
 Blighted my passionate worship with despair :
 Half shrank I from each touch, although it brought
 Such rapture with it as I scarce could bear,
 As if from harp strings ready tuned above,
 To vibrate forth seraphic bliss and love.

XVII.

I felt You as a flower, my hand I knew
 With touch the lightest-tender still must harm ;
 Or gem so lucenter than morning dew,
 That my least breath must sully its pure charm :
 The cold white moon cresting night's cloudless
 blue
 Above dark moorland, far from town and farm,
 Or few wan stars dim-steadfast in dim skies,
 Are not so dowered with awe-fraught sanctities.

XVIII.

Ay, while I thought : Could I seize one caress
 But one grand grape from this full-fruited vine ;
 Grasp the rich ripeness, press and press and press,
 Till drunk with its last drain of glorious wine ;
 Staking the Future's infinite barrenness
 'Gainst onetranscendent moment's bliss divine!—
 Even then, my wildered spirit knelt subdued
 Beneath thy pure calm noble maidenhood.

XIX.

Subdued by Thee,—and yet exalted more !
 Calmed by perfection of resolve and pride !
 The future *was* drear-barren as a shore
 Wave-wasted by an ever wintry tide :
 But *now* ! Shall he, whose sanest hopes may soar
 To win the empire's Empress for his bride,
 Purloin a jewel from her crownèd brow ?
 Be kingly, heart ! the throne awaits us now.

XX.

Thou wert the farther from me, as so near ;
 Veiled awful, at a distance dim and great,
 In that supernal spiritual sphere
 To which Love lifts, that he may isolate

The truest lovers from their union here :
 Hence their eternal Bridal, consecrate
 By perfect reverence ; for the Loved must be
 An ever-new Delight and Mystery.

XXI.

Did aught of these tempestuous agitations
 In irrepressible gust or lightning-burst
 Perturb thy heaven of starry contemplations
 In depths of moonlit quietude immerst ?
 I long for answer ; but no meditations
 Can realise those memories, all disperst
 In such wild seething mists of joy, hope, fear :—
 Oh, that the question now could reach thine ear !

XXII.

But when I saw the end must come indeed,
 When laggard pairs were failing from the dance,
 Surely my curbless thoughts found words to
 plead :—
 “Forgive, sweet Maiden !—Time and Circum-
 stance
 Are lightning-swift, and I must match their speed.
 Believe me, that I speak in heavenly trance
 Diviner truth than souls can reach or prove
 When uninspired by seraph-sighted Love.

XXIII.

The Vision sways me ; I must speak or die :
 Life of my life ! I see, I know, I feel ;
 The inspiration cannot err or lie ;
 Passion doth its own truth with pure fire seal ;—
 God from the depths of all Eternity
 Created us One Soul, in woe or weal,
 In life and death, in union or apart :
 Whisper but ‘ Yea,’ assuring my sure heart !

XXIV.

“ You tremble pallid, with the same new birth
 Of Love, the pure eternal Seraph-child !
 Flooding with fulness all our deadly dearth,
 Is it not strange and fierce and rapture-wild ?
 I have dim memory that in yon poor earth
 Where late I grovelled hopeless and defiled
 A mortal thing called Love with doubt and pain
 Is reared : scarce one his sole true Bride can gain.

XXV.

“ But time is very brief :—Shall we away
 Into the great calm Night besprinkled o’er
 With silver throbbing stars ? My Dearest, say !
 And yet, so rich in years is Evermore

That hurry were mean thrift : we well can stay,
 Who long have stayed, some few brief time-lives
 more ;
 Being so certain from this hour sublime
 Of coming Union, perfect, beyond Time."

XXVI.

Were such words borne exultant on my breath?
 Memory, which cannot oversoar the deep
 That yawns between two lives in sombre death,
 Nor even that 'twixt wakefulness and sleep,
 Brings no sure tidings : yet, unmoved in faith,
 Though sick with failing from that glorious
 steep
 Whence all the Promised Land was seen so clear,
 I plod Time's desert with more hope than fear.

XXVII.

Yes, though I now feel faint and spiritless,—
 For when such fire of rapture burns down low
 We shivering cower, unmanned by chill distress,
 Over the embers while the bleak winds blow ;
 With dismal dread that such rich blessedness
 Will never more within our cold hearts glow ;
 Till in the bitter dark we almost deem
 That vanished glory a delusive dream :—

XXVIII.

Yet have I even now deep confidence
 In those great oracles of solemn bliss
 Uttered so clearly to my spirit's sense
 By heavenly Love who pure and perfect is ;
 Yet must I cherish them with reverence
 Though scornful voices from our world-abyss
 Proclaim the madness of both Him and them :
 This staff sustains,—may fruit yet crown its stem !

XXIX.

Perchance we never more till death shall meet :
 You dwell on far high places of the earth,
 'Midst well-befitting pomp ; beneath your feet
 I labour humbly, not assured from dearth,—
 The hard-won bread itself most bitter-sweet.
 Were I your peer in wealth and worldly birth
 You still might justly scorn my love and me ;
 Yet none the less must I live loving Thee.

XXX.

It is my fate ; your soul hath conquered mine ;
 And I must be your slave and glory in
 The bondage whether cruel or benign.
 Still let me cherish hopes even here to win

By strenuous toil the far-off Prize divine ;

And feed on visions, not so shadowy-thin,
Of gaining You beneath a nobler sun
Should I in this life's battle be undone.

XXXI.

And with my passionate love for evermore

Is blended pure and reverent gratitude ;
Nor can I this full sacrifice deplore

Though You should scorn me whom You have
subdued,

Or know not what devotion I outpour.

Ah, from this timeless night what boundless good
Your Presence hath bestowed on me !—no less
That I am stung with my unworthiness.

XXXII.

Dark winter ruled a desert of drear frost ;

Spring's breath stole softly o'er its ice and snow ;
All life revives which had so long been lost,

Trees green, flowers bloom, birds sing, and
fountains flow ;

The realm is laughing wide from coast to coast.

Dear May of its redemption ! while we know
It seemed unworthy of thy Spring-love tender,
That love yet fits it for full Summer splendour.

XXXIII.

Henceforth my life shall not unearnest prove ;
 It hath an ardent aim, a glorious goal :
 Numb Faith re-lives ; You from your sphere above
 Have planted and must nourish in my soul
 That priceless blessing, pure and fervent love,
 O'er which no thought of self can have control.
 If with these boons come ever-longing pain,
 It shall be welcomed for the infinite gain.

XXXIV.

Be pain unnoticed in a doom like this !
 I see eyes gazing on my weary night
 Like cold strange stars from out the world-abyss ;
 They gaze with scorn or pity : but their sight
 Is banished from my inward golden bliss,
 Floating divinely in the noonday light
 Of Thee round whom I circle—O far Sun,
 Through mirk and shine alike the earth's true
 course is run !

January 1857.

AN OLD DREAM

THE maiden lay in a perfect trance,
As sweet, as sad as Love ;
Embowered deep from the night's expanse,
As a forest-nested dove ;
Through the leaves came never a single glance,
For the stars were quenched above.

The world seemed doomstruck, almost dead,
Nor dared to breathe aloud ;
A wannish mist of grave-light spread
From the moon within her shroud ;
No sky,—but the mute woods overhead
Hung like a thunder-cloud.

In a pure white robe lay the maiden there,
A shroud or a bridal white ;
Her pale face set in her long rich hair,
Golden and dimly bright ;
Free from joy and woe and care,
Entranced within the night.

At length that night was rolled away
 With its buried stars and moon ;
Advanced the pomp of a royal day
 In a dawn of glorious boon ;
But consciousness the maiden lay
 Till the crowning hour of noon.

And then she opened her large wild eyes
 In the universal glow :
Their late trance blent with their new surprise,
 They gazed ; and drank in slow
Grand gleams of the solemn azure skies
 And the clouds of dazzling snow.

The noontide reigned in perfect power,
 Full-sphered with heat and sheen ;
The soft blue haze of the secret bower
 Was lit with golden green ;
Feeling their rich life fruit and flower
 Basked languidly serene.

Sumptuous rose-leaves flushing red,
 And lilies white as snow
Made for her limbs an ample bed,
 Lying still and low ;
But pansies pillowed her solemn head
 With their deepest purple glow

And the bower's roof and wall and crown
Was all one mighty vine,
That linked and clothed the tree-stems brown
With an endless leafy twine,
Which the sultry clustered grapes weighed down,
Heavy with wealth of wine.

Thus richly couched she lay alone,
Without one cry or start,
Although her face was set like stone
Against some cruel smart ;
Until her anguish found a moan,
Complaining to her heart—

“Oh, this is sad, sad, sad !” it sighed,
“Oh, this is a cruel doom !
What glorious life fills the whole world wide,
What fruit and flower and bloom !
Yet none for me—who must abide
In this ever-lonely tomb.

“The sky is all a-daze with light,
The air one murmurous chime ;
The joyous sea sways blue and bright,
The earth laughs green with prime ;—
For me no love and no delight
In this fair world of Time !”

She moaned—and raised a sculptured arm
To where the great grapes hung ;
Her cold hand drew them dusk and warm
To moisten her languid tongue,—
To kindle some life through her wasted form
With the summer's rich blood young.

The whole green-woven umbrage bent
And swayed to her light stress ;
The sun-steeped grapes to her wan lips leant
In an unreserved caress ;
How could she 'plain of famishment
Amid such grand excess ?

The sunlight's fervent golden wine
Came streaming through the bower,
The clouds of the firmamental vine
Burst in a crimson shower ;
She loomed in the midst like a maid divine
Veiled, glorious, by her dower.

Over the roses and lilies white,
Over the mossy ground,
The rills of the vine blood revelled in light,
Dancing around and around ;
With a multitudinous laughter bright
And a song of murmurous sound.

But look on her pallid brow and face,
Look on her white robe fair, —
There riot hath left what a bloody trace,
What a ghastly vestige there !
What a wild weird purple drowns the grace
Of her shining golden hair !

The blood of the lusty summer prime
Could pour no life through her,
The noon of the gorgeous summer time
No health, no strength confer :
She sank back cold from the boons sublime
To the trance that could not stir.

And who had seen her when the grey
Was fading into gloom,
Had thought a sculptured lady lay
Upon a white stone tomb,
Besprent with blood, to mark for aye
Some awful tragic doom.

Throughout calm depths of heaven were strewn
The pure stars throbbing bright,
The golden lustre of the moon
Was spreading through the night,
When next from out that mystic swoon
Her spirit rose to light.

She woke—" Ah, once I lived, it seems,
Through ever mournful years ;
But now I wake from heavenly dreams
That fill my eyes with tears ;—
From floating far down Eden-streams
With a band of glorious feres.

" And all my heart a throbbing gush
Of life and love and bliss ;
And all my face a dawn-bright flush
From some enraptured kiss ;
And all our Heaven the breathless hush
Of crowning ecstasies ! "

While thus she murmured soft and low,
And still half-trancedly,
What calm bright forms came sinking slow
Adown the moonlight sea ?
What strange sweet music 'gan to grow
Throughout night's mystery ?

In the deep heart of all the wood
Came down the seraphs bright ;
Around the maiden's couch they stood,
All shining with the light
Of the beauty of pure sanctitude
Upon her ravished sight.

They clasped her in a dear embrace
Of high and holy love ;
Their voices thrilled the lonely place—
“ Meek sister ! stricken dove !
Come soar with us, and see the face
Of Him who reigns above ! ”

So sang they sweet ; and all around
The music swelled on high
To an ocean of triumphant sound,
That mingled gloriously
With the moonlight, filling up the bound
Of all the night-wide sky.

As if rapt heavenwards by the might
Of that harmonious wind,
The seraph-wings flashed broad and bright
And left the earth behind ;
And dim within their fulgent flight
The maiden's form reclined.

And up the music-moonlight sea
They floated calm and slow—
So that it rather seemed to be
The earth was sinking low
Than that they soared, so steadfastly
Ascending they did go.

They bore the maiden, still and dim,
When first they rose from earth ;
But ere the splendour and the hymn
Left all our sphere a dearth,
A seraph with the seraphim
She soared in her new birth.

Friday, September 23, 1859.

THE FADELESS BOWER

ATHWART the gloom of haunted years,
Whose phantoms mock my lonely woe,
I gaze, and see through glimmering tears
A Vision of the Long-ago :
From out the waste verge dim and far
How purely gleams that single star !

Shine forth, sole star !—The dear old bower
And I therein alone with Her,
In that rich summer's crowning hour,
Whose quiet breathings scarcely stir
The woof of leaves and tendrils thin
Through which faint moonlight ripples in.

I have this moment told my love ;
Kneeling, I clasp her hands in mine :
She does not speak, she does not move ;
The silent answer is divine.
The flood of rapture swells till breath
Is almost tranced in deathless death.

Had He whom, 'midst the whirlwind's roar,
That fiery chariot's living light
Far through the Heaven of Heavens upbore,
Consuming space with meteor-flight,
God's glory dazzling on his gaze,—
Had *he* then breath for prayer or praise?

The bower is very dim and still ;
But clustering in the copses near
Sweet nightingales impassioned thrill
The night with utterance full and clear
Of love and love's harmonious jars,
As glorious as the shining stars.

My lips still lie upon her hand,
Quivering and faint beyond the kiss ;
The heavens before my soul expand
Athrob with dazzling light and bliss ;
He in his fiery car sublime
Soared not more swiftly out of Time.

Behold her as she standeth there,
Breathless, with fixed awe-shadowed eyes
Beneath her moon-touched golden hair !
Her spirit's pure humilities
Are trembling, half would disavow
The crown I bring to crown her brow.

Unworthy crown ; and yet her life
Was set on gaining it alone :
And now in triumph without strife
Led upward to the queenly throne,
She falters from the sceptre's weight,
While flushed with high-wrought pride elate.

The simple folds of white invest
Her noble form, as purest snow
Some far and lovely mountain-crest
Faint-flushed with all the dawn's first glow ;
Alone, resplendent, lifted high
Into the clear vast breathless sky.

The bower is hushed and still as death ;
The moonlight melting through its gloom
Is mingled with the languid breath
Of roses steeped in liquid bloom,
That bare their inmost hearts this night
To drink in deep the dew and light.

So Thou, my Rose, my perfect Queen
Of Beauty, float and breathe, nor move,
In this enchanted air serene,
Unfolding all thy heart to love ;
Drink in this dew of heavenly wine,
This light which is a soul divine.

The Vision fades . . . ah, woe, woe, woe!—

While dreamed that summer's sun-tranced hours
The ghastly Hand was creeping slow
Through all their maze of leaves and flowers,
And tore my Rose off when her breath
Was sweetest : O remorseless Death!—

Could that one hour have been drawn out
Until the end of Time's whole range !
We rapt away, so sphered about,
And made eternal, free from change ;
In heart and mind, in soul and frame
Preserved for evermore the same !

The life of that great town afar
Would breathe its murmur vast and dim,
With all the multitudinous jar
Sublimed into a solemn hymn,
Mysterious, soothing, evermore,
As heaven may hear our harsh Life-roar :

The overtrailing passion-flower
Gaze ever on the starry sky
With all its constellated bower
Of large and starlike blooms, which lie
Amidst their golden fruit beset
With leaves and tendrils dark-dew-wet :

And I for ever kneel there still,
With lifted eyes whose yearning sight
Could never drink its perfect fill
From those dear eyes of love and light,
In which to me thy thoughts shine clear
As yon high stars in yon blue sphere :

Entranced above the worded Yes,
All flushed and pale with rapturous shame,
In that dim moonlit quietness
You stand for evermore the same,
Fairer than heaven, the Queen who now
Is trembling as I crown her brow.

Some ardent Seraph from above,
Some Angel ever growing young,
Would find this Eden of our love,
Sequestered all the worlds among ;
With silent pinions gliding bright
Into our calm enchanted night.

And, ushered by the chant divine
Of yonder deathless nightingales,
Through all the tree-shades reach our shrine ;
And softly drawing back the veils
Of foliage let some fuller stream
Of moonlight bathe thy beauty's dream.

And gazing long, until his form
Might seem as fixed in trance as we,
Serenely perfect breathing warm,
Would sigh a sigh of mystery,
Half vague regrets, half longings sweet ;
Then slow with lingering plumes retreat :

Murmuring, " It is a goddess born,
But left with mortals from her birth,
None knew that she was thus forlorn ;
Till this one youth of all the earth,
Inspired to see her as divine,
Knelt down in reverence at her shrine.

" Her native instincts roused to life
Leap up to claim the worship due,
Are breaking with imperial strife
The bonds of earthly custom through ;
Yet still remains some sweet half-fear
At entrance to the unknown sphere.

" But, oh, what glory, triumph, bliss,
The sudden revelation wrought !
What power had that young mortal's kiss
To thrill her thus beyond all thought ?
She shares with him the Heavenly throne
Which he hath made indeed her own.

“ And hence while every other earth
Rolls circling through the vast abyss
With interchange of death and birth,
And night and day, and woe and bliss,
One sphere is kept for these alway
Above all growth and all decay.

“ And here she blooms, a budded rose,
Whose crimson fire of life new-lit
Is ever fervent to uncloset
The many-petalled wealth of it,
Embalmed from reaching to that prime
Which fades so soon in sultry Time.

“ New dawn, far fairer than the noon ;
Hope, kinglier than thy crowning day ;
Young spring’s green promise fresh and boon,
No wealthiest summer’s fruit can pay ;
Dreamland, so rich beyond life’s bounds ;
Silence, more sweet than all sweet sounds !

“ While he who once was mean and poor
Is climbing strenuous toward the throne,
He breathes a loftier joy be sure
Than when the prize is made his own,
When reft of hope and valiant strife
He paces lordly-level life.

“O happy bud, for ever young,
For ever just about to blow !
O happy love, upon whose tongue
The Yes doth ever trembling grow !
O happiest Twain, whose deathless bower
Embalms you in life’s crowning hour !” . . .

The Seraph-murmurs die out low,
As fades the Vision, fades the Bower.
The bower *has* faded long ago ;
The roses and the passion-flower
Have rotted in the sodden mould ;
The new place quite forgets the old.

Ah, Alice, if I dream and dream,
What else is left me in this life ?
New faces all about me teem,
New hopes and woes and loves are rife :
I overlived my own self, Dear,
In lingering when you left me here.

And so my heart must soar away
To where alone its treasure is :
Despite my dream that we should stay
Entranced in unfulfilling bliss,
What fiery longings burn my breast
To reach, to gain, to be possessed !

Then fade, dim dream! and Sorrow, cease!

While I can trust, where'er you be,
That you are waiting my release
To live out to its depth with me,
In bowers or dens through noble spheres
The love suspended all these years.

1858.

SUGGESTED

BY

MATTHEW ARNOLD'S

"STANZAS FROM THE GRANDE CHARTREUSE."

THAT one long dirge-moan sad and deep,
 Low, muffled by the solemn stress
Of such emotion as doth steep
 The soul in brooding quietness,
Befits our anguished time too well,
Whose Life-march is a funeral knell.

Dirge for a mighty Creed outworn—
 Its spirit fading from the earth,
Its mouldering body left forlorn :
 Weak idol ! feeding scornful mirth
In shallow hearts ; divine no more
Save to some ignorant pagan poor ;

And some who know how by Its light
 The past world well did walk and live,
And feel It even now more bright
 Than any lamp mere men can give ;
So cling to It with yearning faith,
Yet own It almost quenched in death :

While many who win wealth and power
 And honours serving at Its shrine,
 Rather than lose their worldly dower
 Proclaim their dead thing "Life divine;"
 And sacrifice to coward lust
 Their own souls' truth, a people's trust.

And will none mourn the mighty Dead,—
 Pillar of heavenly fire and cloud,
 Which through this life's wild desert led
 For whole millenniums each grand crowd
 Of sages, bards, saints, heroes, all
 Whose names we glory to recall?

None mourn Him, dead, with deep-moved soul,
 Whom, living, all our sires adored?
 None feel the heavy darkness roll
 Stifling about us, when the Lord
 Leaves us to walk by our own light,
 That one pale speck in boundless Night?—

That earthly lamp when sun and star,
 When all the heavenly lights are lost:
 Does it shed radiance round afar?
 Our pathway is by deep gulfs cross'd:
 It fathoms none. We lift it high:
 It casts not one beam on the sky.

If He thus died as no more fit
 To lead the modern march of thought,
 Supreme,—commanding, guiding it,
 With noblest love and wisdom fraught ;
 He was at least Divine ; and none
 Of human souls can lead it on.

We pine in our dark living tomb,
 Waiting the God-illuminated One
 Who, only, can disperse the gloom ;
 Completing what the Dead begun,
 Or farther leading us some space
 Toward our eternal resting-place.

But Israel wanders shepherdless,
 Or gloom-involved unmoving lies,
 And in despair's stark sinfulness
 Reviles the promised Paradise
 It cannot reach—Father divine !
 Let us not long thus hopeless pine.

Still the deep dirge-notes long and low
 Breathe forth strange anguish to recall—
 Could we forget—our direst woe :
 A proud strong Age fast losing all
 Earth has of heaven ; bereft of faith ;
 And living in Eternal Death.

And loudly boastful of such life :
 Blinded by our material might,
 Absorbed in frantic worldly strife,
 Unconscious of the utter Night
 Whose palpable and monstrous gloom
 Is gathering for our spirits' tomb.

We feel as gods in our own hearts ;
 Seeming to conquer Time and Space ;
 Wealth gorging our imperial marts ;
 Earth pregnant, from the fierce embrace
 Our matter-lusting spirits press,
 With unexampled fruitfulness.

God, answering well our worldly prayer,
 Our hearts' chief prayer through all the hours
 Of selfish joy and sordid care,
 Comes down to us in golden showers :
 God turns to Mammon at our cry ;
 Our souls wealth-crushed, dross-stifled lie.

Those few, how rich ! while this great mass,
 Myriads with equal greed for gold,
 Sink in such want and woe, alas !
 As never can on earth be told :
 These starve, and those yet wealthier rise ;
 Meanwhile in both the spirit dies.

Hear now the thrilling dirge-notes peal
 The anguished cry in thunder rolls :—
 The few yet left who think and feel,
 Who yearn with strenuous soaring souls
 For more than earth or time can grant ;
 Where, where shall they appease their want ?

Black disbelief, substantial doubt
 Wreath—blent into one louring cloud
 Through which Heaven's light can scarce shine
 out—

Round all the Faiths : all in such shroud
 Fade ghostlike to th' entombing Past :
 Our Heaven is wildly overcast.

Yet each Creed, senile, sick, half-dead,
 With bitter spite and doting rage
 Reviles all others. Whoso, led
 By thirst of love to pilgrimage,
 Seeks now old God-given Wells of Life,
 Finds drought-dry centres of vain strife ;

And turns away in blank despair,
 To scoff or weep as fits his mood.
 O God in Heaven, hear our prayer !
 We know Thou art, Allwise, Allgood,
 Yet sink in godless misery :
 Oh, teach us how to worship Thee !

PART II.

The great Form lies there nerveless still:

But as we fix our longing gaze
It grows in grandest beauty, till
We worship in entranced amaze ;
Such holy love and wisdom seem
To be there rapt in heavenly dream.

Oh, if He may once more awake !

Oh, if it be not death, but sleep !—
And He from that dread slumber break
Refreshed and strong, full-powered to sweep
The darkness from our path again ;
Once more the Guiding Star of men !

Yet—though it be death—view It well.

The brow, how nobly high and broad !
What love on those shut lips might well !

This Form sublimely templed God :
And, if not perfect, is a shrine
Approaching well the most Divine.

Do not turn hastily away

From mighty death to petty life ;
Gaze in deep reverence on the clay
With such a soul's expression rife :
Read here, read long, the features worn
By One incarnate Heavenly-born.

So may we hope to recognise
 That Greater One who shall succeed
 This death-bound Monarch, who now lies
 In mute appealing for our need :
 God cannot long desert His earth ;
 In the Old's death the New has birth.

What say we?—we know well this truth,
 There is no death for the Divine ;
 Which lives in ever-perfect youth :
 The Form alone—its earthly shrine—
 Is subject to earth's mortal sway ;
 Sickens, and dies, and rots away.

Thus each Form in its turn expires,
 No more with all revealed Truth rife,—
 Which even at that time inspires
 Some new and nobler form with life,
 Grandeur and vaster to express
 More of Its infinite heavenliness.

Thus has it been since Time's first birth,
 Thus must it be for evermore :
 Still lie, moth-eaten, on the earth
 Old garments which this Spirit wore ;
 Till, soiled and rent, they were off-thrown,
 And wider-flowing robes put on.

They could not grow with His great growth,
 Pauseless though slow throughout the years ;
 And vainly worshippers—so loath
 To leave what lengthened use endears—
 May still the empty robes adore ;
 Their virtue was from Him who wore.

Let none say the Divine is dead,
 Although this Form be soul-less quite :
 The Heavenly Sun doth ever shed
 His lifeful heat, His saving light ;
 Never our earth doth lose His ray,
 Save when she turns herself away.

Let none say the Divine is dumb,
 Although His voice no more we hear :
 It is that we are deaf become.
 For measured to each eye and ear
 His glory shines, His voice outspeaks ;
 To each He gives the most it seeks.

Our spirits may for ever grow ;
 And He will fill them as before,
 And still their measure overflow
 With His unlesened infinite More :
 He gives us all we can receive ;
 He teaches all we can believe.

The pure can see Him perfect-pure ;
 The strong feel Him, Omnipotence ;
 The wise, All-wise ; He is obscure
 But to the gross and earth-bound sense :
 Alas for us with blinded sight
 Who dare to cry, There is no light !

PART III.

Nay, ask us not to rise and leave
 Him from whom power and life seem gone ;
 Say not that it is weak to grieve ;
 Duty does *not, now*, urge us on :
 In vain *ye* urge ; too well we know
 We cannot by our own strength go.

Vainly ye choose you Saviours now
 Of men,—however good and wise
 Be those your mean faith would endow
 With power to which no man can rise :
 No best men living lure our faith
 From the Divine though veiled in death.

Vainly ye wander every way
 Throughout the earth in search of Heaven,
 Changing your useless path each day
 With each new transient impulse given
 By human guides, who still agree
 In naught but fallibility.

We should know better from the lore
 Of worldly wisdom—keen mistrust—
 On which our minds so love to pore ;
 Nor leave for any child of dust
 This One Divine : to Him adhere
 Till the diviner One appear.

My brothers, let us own the truth,
 Bitter and mournful though it be,—
 That we, who spent our dreary youth
 In foul and sensual slavery,
 Are all too slavish, too unmanned,
 For Conquerors of the Promised Land.

In unprogressive wanderings
 We plod the desert to and fro ;
 And fiery serpents' mortal stings,
 Earthquake and sword and weary woe
 And pestilence deal fearful death
 Amongst us for our want of faith.

Far-scattered o'er the Waste forlorn
 Our bones shall whiten through the years,
 And startle pilgrims yet unborn ;
 Our noblest captains, priests and seers,
 Dark death shall one by one remove,
 For lack of wisdom, faith, or love.

Yet be we patient, meek and pure,
 Unselfishly resigned to God's
 Mysterious judgments ; and endure
 Our sore scarce-intermitted loads
 Of grief and weary pain, imbued
 With sternly passive fortitude :

And pray that those who shall succeed
 Prove worthy of a happier life
 Than we dare ask for as our meed ;
 That they a constant noble strife
 Victorious against Ill may wage,
 And gain the glorious heritage.

Cease now to cry and storm, and move,
 By such tumultuous toil opprest
 As, without guidance, vain must prove :
 When God keeps still can ye not rest ?
 When He sends night so dark and deep,
 Why shrink from renovating sleep ?

Sleep, to His care resigned, a space ;
 That when He rises in His might
 To lead our hosts from this dire place,
 We may have strength and heart to fight
 All evils that would bar our way,
 And march unfaltering all the day.

Yes, let us stay in loving grief,
 Which patient hope and trust yet cheer,
 Silent beside our silent Chief,
 Till His Successor shall appear ;
 Till death's veil fall from off His face,
 Or One anointed take His place.

Nay,—our adoring love should have
 More faith than to believe that He,
 Before Another comes to save,
 Can leave us in blind misery
 Without a Guide : God never can
 So utterly depart from man.

We will move onward !—let us trust
 That there is life and saving power
 In this dear Form which seems but dust.
 Arise, arise ! though darkness lower,
 Earnest, bold-hearted, cease to mourn ;
 It shall before our hosts be borne.

Triumphantly He ever led
 Our faithful armies while alive ;
 What though His form be cold and dead,
 His Spirit doth that death survive :
 We conquer by that Soul this Form
 Enshrined, not ill, while free and warm.

Thus men have honoured fellow men,
 Who dying left a lofty fame ;
 And won most glorious victories then
 By inspiration of a Name :
 If in men's names such life abode,
 Shall there not in *His*,—Son of God.

A dawn-light creeps throughout the gloom,
 Sullenly sinks the storm of wrath ;
 Life blossoms in our desert tomb ;
 Mysteriously we find a path
 Which leadeth on to Paradise.
 Thus to our love's faith He replies !

But, while the dirge still rolls away
 In passionate thunders wildly blent
 With mournful moanings, let us pray—
 Still on our Holy War intent—
 "O God, revive the seeming Dead ;
 Or send Another in His stead !

"The wintry midnight drear is past,
 But still the dawn gleams grey and cold ;
 Dread phantoms haunt each restless blast,
 Our stumblings still are manifold :
 Oh, let Thy cloudless Sun rise soon,
 And flood us with His summer noon !"

FOUR POINTS IN A LIFE

I.

LOVE'S DAWN.

STILL thine eyes haunt me ; in the darkness now,
The dreamtime, the hushed stillness of the night,
I see them shining, pure and earnest light ;
And here, all lonely, may I now avow
The thrill with which I ever meet their glance ?
At first they gazed a calm abstracted gaze,
The while thy soul was floating through some maze
Of beautiful divinely-peopled trance ;
But now I shrink from them in shame and fear,
For they are gathering all their beams of light
Into an arrow, keen, intense, and bright,
Swerveless and star-like from its deep blue sphere,
Piercing the cavernous darkness of my soul,
Burning its foul recesses into view ;
Transfixing with sharp agony through and through
Whatever is not brave, and clean, and whole.
And yet I will not shrink, although thou piercest
Into the inmost depth of all my being :

I will not shrink, although thou now art seeing
 My heart's caged lusts the wildest and the fiercest ;
 The cynic thoughts that fret my homeless mind,
 My unbelief, my selfishness, my weakness,
 My dismal lack of charity and meekness ;
 For, amidst all the evil, thou wilt find
 Pervading, cleansing, and transmuting me,
 A fervent and most holy love for Thee.

1852.

II.

MARRIAGE.

COME to me, oh, come to me !
 Time is long since we were parted ;
 I am sad and weary-hearted,
 Foiled and almost overthrown,
 Fighting with the world alone ;
 What am I when thou art gone ?
 Come, darling, soon !

Come to me, oh, come to me !
 Let my failing head find rest, Love,
 On thy pure and tender breast, Love ;
 Calm my overweared brain,
 Soothe away my heart's chill pain,
 Bring me hope and strength again ;
 Come, darling, soon !

Come to me, oh, come to me !
Evermore the memory lingers,
How your gentle "flower-soft" fingers,
With a touch, when I lay ill,
Through my fevered frame would thrill
Cool rich life, divinely still :
Come, darling, soon !

Come to me, oh, come to me !
Dearest heart of love and meekness,
Is not this unmanly weakness ?
But with thee such pure sweet calm
Heals my wounds with heavenly balm,
I, fighting, feel my spear a palm :
Come, darling, soon !

Come to me, oh, come to me !
Though its perils gloomed more fearful
I could fight undaunted, cheerful,
This stern agony, called Life,
Were the pauses of the strife
Blest by thee, my noble wife :
Come, darling, soon !

Come to me, oh, come to me !
Strength, and hope, and faith are waning
With this fierce and pauseless straining :

Ere my soul be conquered quite,
Ere I fail from Truth and Right,
Come, my Life, my Joy, my Light,
Come, Darling, soon !

1857.

III.

PARTING.

WEEP not, dearest, weep not so ;
Soon again we two shall meet
Who now part in deadly woe :
After pain shall bliss be sweet.

Few more years of numb despair
Must we wander far apart
Through the desert dead and bare ;
Love is courage in the heart.

Few more years of bitter moan
O'er the rugged mountain height,
Must we toil on, each alone ;
Love can make all burthens light.

Few more years of stricken woe,
Erring on an alien shore,
Lone and friendless each must go :
We will love then more and more.

Few short hours of doubt and dread,
 Trembling on the brink of Night,
 Spectre-haunted, each must tread :
 Love can burn all darkness bright.

All the long lone years must die ;
 Then shall we together come,
 Where beneath a calm bright sky,
 Bright waves bear us to our home.

Weep not, Dearest, weep not so ;
 Soon again we two *must* meet
 Where the calm deep waters flow,
 Soothing surely care and woe,
 With their mystic murmur sweet.

1854.

IV.

AT DEATH'S DOOR.

Is this the second childhood's feeble sadness ?
 My eyes are dim now and my hair is white ;
 Yet never did the sunshine give more gladness,
 Never young Spring burst forth in green delight
 More freshly ; never was the earth more fair,
 Never more rapture in the common air.

Still, as I near great Death, it seems his portal
Glides gently backward, that I may gaze through
And catch far glories of the realm immortal ;
The world becomes transparent to my view,
Diviner Heavens expand beyond the skies ;
The stars grow thoughtful with eternal eyes.

How all the grass and every flower seem yearning
To hint more clearly some high loveliness,
Whose mystic soul within their forms is burning ;
How strives the sea for ever to express,
With infinite heavings, murmurings manifold,
Some secret grandeur that will not be told.

The life of day is lulled to dreamful musing,
And true life waketh in the world of dream ;
While with the Present, strangely interfusing,
The Future and the Past together stream,
As if the long-drawn waves of Time should be
Settling and mingling in Eternity.

With every golden dawn awakened lightly,
It seems I must have slept through Death's calm
night ;
For lo !—how purely, silently, and brightly,
The Heavens unfold their gates before my sight ;
The trancèd sea of crystal spreadeth slowly,
The burning Throne shines out with splendours holy.

Whereon I look to see Thee come, swift greeting,
 From where thou waitest for my lingering feet ;
 Assured beyond impatience for the meeting,
 Crowned with triumphant love and faith complete :
 I look in vain as yet ; but any hour,
 So summer-rich, may make the bud a flower.

How well, my Love, the thoughtful Heavens
 endeavour
 To make this world and life and time all bear
 Dream-lightly on the soul, ere it for ever
 Be parted from them !—Did I once despair
 Through years of lonely anguish unassuaged ?
 This calm can scarce believe that storms have raged.

Here is the blessing : I now muse enchanted
 In this sweet dawn-like sunset ; night comes then
 Of restful sleep by gracious visions haunted ;
 So with new morning I shall rise again,
 Full of young life, and find my Love for aye—
 My Love whom I have lost this long sad day.

MATER TENEBRARUM

I.

IN the endless nights, from my bed, where sleepless
in anguish I lie,
I startle the stillness and gloom with a bitter and
strong cry :
O Love! O Belovèd long lost! come down from
thy Heaven above,
For my heart is wasting and dying in uttermost
famine for love !
Come down for a moment! oh, come! Come
serious and mild
And pale, as thou wert on this earth, thou adorable
Child !
Or come as thou art, with thy sanctitude, triumph
and bliss,
For a garment of glory about thee ; and give me
one kiss,
One tender and pitying look of thy tenderest
eyes,
One word of solemn assurance and truth that the
soul with its love never dies !

II.

In the endless nights, from my bed, where sleepless
in frenzy I lie,
I cleave through the crushing gloom with a bitter
and deadly cry :
Oh ! where have they taken my Love from our
Eden of bliss on this earth,
Which now is a frozen waste of sepulchral and
horrible dearth ?
Have they killed her indeed ? is her soul as her
body, which long
Has mouldered away in the dust where the foul
worms throng ?
O'er what abhorrent Lethes, to what remotest star,
Is she rapt away from my pursuit through cycles
and systems far ?
She is dead, she is utterly dead ; for her life would
hear and speed
To the wild imploring cry of my heart that cries in
its dreadful need.

III.

In the endless nights, on my bed, where sleeplessly
brooding I lie,
I burden the heavy gloom with a bitter and weary
sigh :

No hope in this worn-out world, no hope beyond
the tomb ;

No living and loving God, but blind and stony
Doom.

Anguish and grief and sin, terror, disease and
despair :

Why throw not off this life, this garment of torture
I wear,

And go down to sleep in the grave in everlasting
rest ?

What keeps me yet in this life, what spark in my
frozen breast ?

A fire of dread, a light of hope, kindled, O Love,
by thee ;

For thy pure and gentle and beautiful soul, it must
immortal be.

A REAL VISION OF SIN

[At the head of the original MS. is the following remark, by the author, in pencil:—"Written in disgust at Tennyson's, which is very pretty and clever and silly and truthless."]

LIKE a soaking blanket overhead
Spongy and lax the sky was spread,
Opaque as the eye of a fish long dead.

Like trees in a drawing gummed together
Some trees stood dim in the drizzling weather ;
Sweating mere blood-flowers gloomed the heather.

Like a festering gash left gaping wide
That foul canal, long swooned from tide,
The marshy moorland did divide.

In a slushy hollow near its bank,
Where noisome weeds grew thick and dank,
And the very soil like an old corpse stank,

They cowered together, the man and crone,
Two old bags of carious bone ;
They at a mangy cur alone :

Ragged raggard, filthy, both ;
Viewing each the other loath ;
Growling now and then an oath.

She at length with a spasm raised
Her strong grey eyes, still strong tho' glazed ;
And thus her meditations phrased :

" No mite left of all our treasure ;
Sin itself has no more pleasure :
Drained out, drained out our full measure ! "

He quavered back : " It does seem so :
The sun 'e died out long ago ;
The earth and the sky are a-rottin' slow. "

She writhed her thick brows, dirty grey :
" Then take at once my easy way
Of swamping misery from our clay.

" No trembling, dear red-rat-eyes ! Come !
We slip together through that green scum,
And then with the world here rot on dumb. "

He sat still, nipping spiteful blows
On the snarling cur's amorphous nose ;
Relishing faintly her propose.

“ Well *you* look lovely, so you do,
To call *me* names : a-drowndin' you
Would go to spoil this pleasant view !

“ This 'ere damned life is bad enough ;
But, say we smother in that stuff,
Our next life's only worse, you muff ! ”

The woman thereto coldly sneered :
“ Of course, as usual all afeared,
Old slaver-dewy stubble-beard.

“ Idiot and coward ! hell-flames feed
On certain fuel ; but, indeed,
A used-up soul won't sate their greed.

“ When Earth once gets us cold and stark
She'll keep us safely in the dark :
No fear of rousing with the lark !

“ Full long ago in grim despair,
She growled, *How those two witch-fires flare !*
They'll get no second chance I swear ! ”

She laught this truth out 'gainst the man ;
Who shuffling, ill at ease, began :
“ You can be devilish sore, you can.

“ Suppose you're right ; this life's a one
That's cursèd bad, but better than none. . . .
I wish they'd light another Sun.

“ We used to spree and we don't spree now ;
A screw is loose in the world allow,
We didn't make it, anyhow.

“ Say Life's hard-up, No-life's more glum :
Just think—a lashing lot of rum,
And a night with you and a cool old chum ! ”

She fingered a toad from its love-work sweet,
And flung to the cur with a “ mangy, eat ;
They say there's poison in the meat ;

“ And so the next time you bite this dear
He'll die off mad ; for else I fear
He'd fester for ever and ever here.”

Its loose fangs squashed the nectarous lump ;
Then it went and crouched on a doddered stump,
With an evil eye on the Male Sin's hump.

He blinked and shuffled and swore and groaned :
Rasping the bristly beard she owned,
She thought drear thoughts until she moaned.

“ I see the truth,” with a scornful laugh,
“ I have starved abroad on the swine-fouled draff,
While sleek at home sucked the fatt’ning calf.

“ Too late, too late ! Yet it’s good to see,
If only damnation, thoroughly ;
My Life has never met with me.

“ And *you*, you never loved me, *you* !
A heart that never once beat true,
How could it love ? I loved for two.

“ This dirty crumpled rag of a breast
Was globed with milk once ; I possess
The means of being grandly blest !

“ Did the babe of mine suck luscious sips,
Soothing the nipple with rose-soft lips
While her eyes dropped mild in a dear eclipse ?

“ A babe !—could I now squeeze out three drops
Between that poor cur’s ulcerous chaps,
He’d die as livid as yon tree-tops.

“ You know where it rests, that child-dream gone?
Come, grope in this charming water-lawn,
Through ooze and slime and filth and spawn :

“ Perhaps we shall find a shudderous feel,
Neither of eft nor toad nor eel ;
May hear a long long stifled squeal.

“ Touch the rotten bones of a murdered brat
Whose flesh was daint to the water-rat,—
If it *does* gnaw flesh it would relish that !”

He ventured, “ Curse all memory !
It’s more than thirty years ”—but she
Continued fierce unheedingly—

“ Come, and this loathsome life out-smother,
No fear that we’ll ever have another :
The rain may beat and the wind may wuther,

“ But we shall rot with the rotting soil,
Safe in sleep from the whole sad coil ;
Sleep’s better than corn and wine and oil.

“ Here’s a kiss ; now at once !” effused the witch,
And dragged the wildered male to the ditch,
And plunged there prone by a bladdery bitch.

Drowned dead, stone dead, and still her grasp
Clawed *him* : but with a frenzied gasp
He shuddered off the scranny clasp.

Up the soddened bank in a fury of funk
He sprawled : “She’s awful ! but she’s sunk ;
I daren’t die except dead drunk.”

He managed at length the hollow to win ;
And was gulping down with a pang-writhed grin
The black bottle’s last of vitriol gin,

When his gorge was choked by a sudden blight :
The cur growled mad with venom and fright,
And its blotches of hair all bristled upright.

Its frenzy burst out in a wolfish yell ;
It leaped at his throat like an imp of hell ;
In a spasm of horror the bottle fell :

It griped up his flaccid throat with a force
That made his terrorment gurgle hoarse,
While he turned as blue as a cholera-corse.

It haled him into the festering dike ;
So all sank dead in its clam alike,—
The Man, the Woman, the virtuous Tyke.

And the dense rain crooned in its sullen flow
From the sodden sky-stretch drooping low
To the sodden earth ; and to and fro

Crept a maundering wind too weak to blow ;
And the dim world murmured dismal woe :
For the earth and the sky *were* a-rotting slow.

Friday, March 4, 1859.

ARCH ARCHERY

You ask me, darling, why I smile,
And at what pleasant thing?
My thoughts go back a few months' while
To the fairest day in spring;

The fairest day, in the end of March;
The sun shone warm and bright;
All blue and bland was the heaven's arch
With its calm clouds soft and white.

And some one said, "I should like to go,
And shoot in this pleasant breeze."
And I humbly prayed, "Let me be your bow,
You can bend me as you please."

And the saucy girl said, "A bow of yew!
O a bow of yew must be good:
They say it is tough and strong and true,
Though a grave-devoted wood."

Over the rolling waves of sward
We lightly skimmed along ;
While the larks from the cloud and the azure
poured
Freely their first full song :

Then leaf-like came a-dropping down,
When their joy thro' heaven was told,
To the short sweet grass, to the gorse half brown,
Half lit with shining gold.

And I said or thought : Not Dian queen
With her quiver and her bow,
A statelier form, a purer mien,
A lighter step could show.

Till we came to a long lone quiet glen,
Much loved of the thoughtful sheep :
Before the Flood—or, who knows when?—
It perhaps was a river deep.

There were the targets ready placed,
Right gorgeous to behold ;
With their red rings, blue rings, white rings
graced,
Around the central gold.

And there our mighty match we shot,
Like eager Volunteers.
Hit we the mark, or hit we not,
What merry laughs and jeers !

Gaily we tripped along the glen
Between the targets two,
With riant races now and then
For arrows in the dew.

O arch was she with her jest and smile,
And arch was I, I ween ;
But the Archer archest all the while
Was shooting there unseen.

Swift, swift and keen his arrows flew,
Well aimed at either heart ;
And pierced the poor things thro' and thro',
With a strange delicious smart.

Well—when the match was fairly done,
Who triumphed, she or I ?
We both had lost, we both had won ;
It ended in a tie.

For that third Archer, we agreed,
Alone should judge the case ;
And thus he solemnly decreed,
With wisdom in his face—

“ You—maiden of the witching eyes,
 You—happiest of men ;
Must share the honour and the prize,
 Nor ever strive again.

“ For thus on either I bestow
 The meed that fitteth well—
She is the mistress of the beau,
 He bears away the belle.”

Curragh, 1860.

THE DREAMER

SING the old song while the dear child is sleeping,
Sing it most sweetly and tenderly low ;

Not to awake her again to her weeping ;

Let the soft notes through her dream gently flow.
What, though the passionate tears were down-
streaming

From eye-balls long parched, when she lay down
to rest :

Poor thing, she now is most tranquilly dreaming ;

Her life is again with His dear presence blest.

See, o'er her wan face what joy brightly flushes ;

Beneath the dark lids how her eyes swell and
gleam !

The sweet smile is drowned in the glow of love-
blushes !

Yes ! he companions her now in the dream.

Darling ! her lips murmur softly and slowly,—

What sacred vows and confessions of love ?

Is not this Dream-life most blessèd and holy

Less of the earth than of Heaven above ?

No, do not draw down the white lawny curtain :

The moonlight sleeps still on her hair, on her face ;
Mystical blending of shadow uncertain

With lustre as holy as Heaven's blessèd grace.
It stirs not her slumber, but chastened and tender—

Our musical murmur half-thrilling its breast—
Pervades with a blissful entrancement of splendour
That dim world of dreams where her soul findeth
rest.

Sing the old song still with low-voicèd sweetness,

To harmonise well with her brief dream of bliss,
Blending therewith to ecstatic completeness :—

The poor pallid lips, are they trembling a kiss !
So may the words and the scenes of her vision

To her tranced spirit more exquisite grow ;
With beauty and glory and rapture Elysian
Subtly attuned to our soft music's flow :

And she may, alas, when she wakes with the morrow

To bitter reality, hopeless and lone,
Remember far more to sooth anguish and sorrow
Of the dream and the dream-words of him who
is gone :

And so, when we sing the old song in her hearing,
May she with wonder and secret joy find

The dear words, the bliss of her dream re-appearing
With the loved music that flows through her mind.

Perhaps she now hears him an old love-lay singing ;

Does it not thrill in her eager, fixed face ?

Or hears the old Church-bells in golden chimes
ringing

The union that cannot in this world take place.

But sleep, darling, sleep ; oh, dwell long in that
heaven,

The strange, solemn dream-land so holy and calm,
Which God hath in mercy to such as thee given ;

Where all stricken hearts may find wound-healing
balm.

ROBERT BURNS

HE felt scant need
Of church or creed,
He took small share
In saintly prayer,

His eyes found food for his love ;
He could pity poor devils condemned to hell,
But sadly neglected endeavours to dwell

With the angels in luck above :
To save one's precious peculiar soul
He never could understand is the whole

Of a mortal's business in life,
While all about him his human kin
With loving and hating and virtue and sin
Reel overmatched in the strife.

“ The heavens for the heavens, and the earth for
the earth !

I am a Man—I'll be true to my birth—
Man in my joys, in my pains.”

So fearless, stalwart, erect and free,
He gave to his fellows right royally
 His strength, his heart, his brains ;
For proud and fiery and swift and bold—
Wine of life from heart of gold,
The blood of his heathen manhood rolled
 Full-billowed through his veins.

THE PURPLE FLOWER OF THE HEATHER

I.

ON the grey lone keep stood the Lady fair,
With the lonely stream beneath ;
New-numbered with horror, moaning there,
Her eye-balls fixed in a death-like stare
Across the darkening heath.

II.

They leapt from their boat in the grim grey air,
They strode on stern and slow ;
By the wrinkled waters cold and bare,
Under the great clouds rolling there,
All ruggedly rimmed with a fierce red glare
From the stormy sunset low.

III.

They stood foot to foot on the lone dark heath,
Eye fixed on eye :
A pause—and each blade has left its sheath
To clash and to flash its keen cold death
Under the turbid sky.

IV.

A down the long straight fir-tree aisles
The long gusts sing and roar ;
The reeds all sigh through their shivering files
To the sad stream creeping weary miles
Across the barren moor.

V.

The gale sweeps down through southern lands ;
Some stars peer faint and grey,
On two stern shadows—weary hands
Of tireless rage—with sullen brands
Still urging deadly fray.

VI.

For they fight on still, though they bleed and gasp,
With sweep and ward and pierce ;
And the long glaives quiver in their clasp,
As tree-boughs quiver in a tempest's grasp
Because the grasp is fierce.

VII.

The moon came slowly up the sky
To see a mournful sight :
The one the other kneeleth by

To tear his heart forth ere he die—
“Great God hath judged your life’s deep lie!
Confess, now, recreant knight!”

VIII.

Some faint words thrilled the waiting air—
“I speak—to pardon you.
Sealed lips must ope for their own last prayer;
Your outrage now is washed out, fair—
Though with my blood not yours—I swear
Both she and I were true.”

IX.

Slow, slow, the moon moved through the sky
All night above that plain;
Still gazing down with her cold wan eye
On one all wild with agony
Beside another slain.

X.

“His form is cold as the earth beside,
His blood is cold as the dew.
O cursèd, cursèd jealous pride!
O, lost for ever, noblest bride!
O, dear, dear friend, that I had died
Ere death had come to you!”

XI.

Slow, slow, the moon moved through the sky,
About that turret's gloom ;
Staring mad with her lidless eye
The Lady, who with groan nor sigh,
But pale and stark and stonily,
Leant staring for her doom.

1857.

A WINTER'S NIGHT

I.

O MOURNFUL, mournful wind !
Sobbing and moaning over moor and height ;
Fleeing the dawn, and plunging anguish-blind
Deeper and deeper into doleful night.

II.

O Moon, so faint and wan !
Sinking away from gloomy cloud to cloud,
Whence sleet and snow are shaken ; and the
dawn
Shall find the earth laid out in one blank shroud.

III.

The noontide breeze may blow
With lifeful pleasure o'er the throngs of men,
Freed from their darkest lusts and bitterest woe,
Earning the bread of healthful labours then.

IV.

Throned in eternal day
The Sun may smile—all joy when joys the King ;
Diffusing light and life and wealth for aye,
How should he dream to pity anything ?

V.

But thou—pale Priestess born !
Driven for ever through the shoreless sea
Of spectral night ; thy pure heart pierced and torn
With sight of our worst sin and misery :

VI.

And thou—O homeless wind !
Flung forth wild-moaning through night's wilderness,
Burdened with all worst agonies of our kind,
To sink far off beneath the fatal stress :

VII.

Well may you sob and cry,
Breathing this night our voice of guilt and pain !
Well may you gaze down sadly, O wan Eye,
To which our wretched lives this night are plain !

SIREN'S SONG

REALM of the sea ! Listen to me,
Rising up softly to sing you to rest ;
Your queen and your love, your lily, your dove,
Soothing with music your broad-heaving breast ;
Guarding your isles from bad spirits' wiles,
When the weary sun closes his lids in the west.
What shall I sing you to-night ?
Listen and listen, the waters all glisten
A-gaze on the ever-sweet moon :
She gives you beauty of light,
I give you the bountiful boon
Of slumber-sweet singing so lovely and free,
Delicious for glee.

All the sun-perfect day I dive and I play
Adown through the azure and soft-yielding
streams,
To the golden-green waves and the coralline
caves
And the pale purple bowers lit with clear crystal
gleams ;

Or I float swayed in rest, embraced and caressed
In the mid-sea's entrancement of noon-languid
dreams :

Then in the night I may roam,
Singing so sweetly, and chasing so feately
The stars all a-dance in the deep ;
Or, like a beautiful foam,
Ride up the shore on the sweep
Of the long-sounding waves, and with wild laughs
of glee
Melt back to the sea.

Realm of the sea ! Mighty and free !—

None else can hear now—list to my sigh ;
With a sweet love and dear do I charm you down
here,

As the moon with her love from on high ;
And I reign all alone on my pearlèd throne
As the moon in her star-gemmed sky :

I ever-sole like the Moon !

This is the sadness that fretteth my gladness—

Oh ! for a lover so dear !

Oh ! for love's bountiful boon !

Ah ! there is no one to hear :

How I would love him, how happy were we,
My realm of the sea !

GARIBALDI REVISITING ENGLAND

THIS day all the eyes of our millions
Are fixed on the south, where the light
Of the waves of the Channel laughs fearless
Round the thunder-clouds stored with our might ;
This day the great heart of the people
Is throbbing expectant, upstirred
By a pride and a joy and a sorrow
The voice of those thunders should word.

For what is this mighty heart glowing ?
For what do these earnest eyes scan ?
It glows for a hero and martyr,
They look for a patriot, a Man ;
For a hero supreme in the battle,
A martyr no griefs could subdue,
A patriot the soul of his country,
A man to the people all-true :

For him who as grandly defended
As grandly MAZZINI ruled Rome ;
For him who gave Sicily, Naples,
To those who had bartered his home ;

For him who on sad Aspromonte
 Was pierced by a countryman's ball,—
Tu Brute! this Cæsar worst-wounded
 In soul yet forgiveth it all.

Oh, let us, we people of England,
 We millions the worst and the best,
 Give welcome true, solemn, and thoughtful,
 Befitting the worth of our guest.
 All titles and wealth which the monarch
 Could proffer this man is above ;
 The people alone can reward him
 In his own golden coin, loyal love.

Nor let us forget in the shoutings
 And feasts of the triumph they plan,
 That he comes not alone in his glory ;
 The Nation is here in the Man :
 Enceladus Italy, risen
 With earthquake, but pausing distress ;
 The left arm still brutally fettered,
 And Peter's rock crushing the breast.

Evviva a te, magnanimo
 Ribelle! A la tua fronte
 Più sacri lauri crebbero
 Le selve d' Aspromonte.

Chi vinse te? Deh, cessino
 I vanti disonesti :
 Te vinse amor di patria,
 E nel cader vincesti.

Evviva a te, magnanimo
 Ribelle e precursore !
 Il culto a te de' posterì,
 Con te d' Italia è il cuore !

Io bevo a 'l dì che fausto
 L' eterna Roma schiuda
 Non a' Seidni ignobili
 A i Tigellini a i Giuda,

Si a libertà che vindice
 Dell' umano pensiero
 Spezzi la falsa cattedra
 Del successor di Piero.

Sii maledetto :—e d' odio
 Con inesauste brame
 I fratricidi il premano
 Onde Aspromonte è infame.

Odio di dei Prometeo,
 Arridi a' figli tuoi :
 Solcati anche dal fulmine,
 Pur l' avvenir siam noi.

GIOSUÈ CARDUCCI : *Dopo Aspromonte.*

WITHERED LEAVES

I.

LET the roses lie, dear,
Let them lie ;
They are all thrown by, dear,
All thrown by :
What should they do now but quickly die ?

II.

Yester morn they flourished
Fresh and fair ;
Dew and sunlight nourished,
Bloomed they there,
Blushing as their sweetness felt the air.

III.

Yester eve he tore them
From the tree ;
Stars that glimmered o'er them,
Two or three,
Set not ere they perished, woe is me !

IV.

Scarcely seem they dead yet—
 Death is new ;
See the petals red yet,
 Scent and dew,
All as when in life they blushing grew.

V.

Touch them yet I dare not
 While they show
As if dead they were not ;
 Ah ! I know
Dreams of life in death but madden woe.

VI.

Let them lie and wither,
 As is right ;
I may then steal hither
 In the night ;
Find them wan and shrivelled in death's blight ;

VII.

Gather each leaf slowly
 From its nook ;
Hoard them up as holy
 In the Book
Wherein Memory now for Hope must look.

THE CYPRESS AND THE ROSES

ROSES and roses year by year
Do I plant and cherish here,
With many a wistful sigh and tear,
Cradling new in the self-same bier
 Where the dead be.

Hope and care and love betrayed !
Blighted buds, they all, all fade
In the constant deadly shade
 Of this cypress tree.

One black cypress shade will blight
Myriads of roses of delight ;
One stern cypress will outlast
Ages of roses withering fast,
 Too well I see.

What is left me now to do ?
What, but sink at the dark root too ;
Let the baleful gloom and rue
 Kill also me.

MEETING AGAIN

YOUR eyes were burning with wild love and woe ;
They seared my inmost heart :
We knew, we knew too well that I must go,
Yet could not bear to part.

We did not blame each other ; that worst gall
Of common sin was spared ;
Nor vindicate ourselves : confessing all,
In silence each despaired.

One yearning overwhelmed all strength and hope,—
That then and there we might
Sink down, embracing, under heaven's cope,
Engulfed in death's deep night.

And now again, after long bitter years,
We are allowed to meet,
And mingle henceforth all our sighs and tears
While these two hearts shall beat :

I from that fearful world where I was cast
 Among the multitude,
To expiate the inexpiable Past
 By constant doing good :

You from the sterner solitary life,
 By woe and sin possessed,
And waging with them constant deadly strife
 Within thine own poor breast.

Ah ! can you really love me, whom you know
 So weak and foul of yore ?
Dear heart ! *I* feel that evil long-ago
 But makes me love you more.

Yet still that longing almost swayeth me,—
 That we should sink down deep,
And side by side, from life's sore burthen free,
 Sleep death's eternal sleep.

“ALLACE! THAT SAMYN
SWEIT FACE!”*

I.

“ALLACE! that samyn sweit face!”
Bitter tears have drowned the shine
Wont to laugh in azure eyne;
Fear hath blanched the laughing lips,
And they tremble trying to speak;
Pain hath cast a wan eclipse
On the round and rosy cheek;
Grief hath greyed the locks; and how
Care hath wrinkled that smooth brow!
“Allace! that samyn sweit face!”
Sweet then, yet sweeter now!

* “In 1549 was printed at St. Andrews a curious work entitled ‘Vedderburn’s Complaite of Scotlande,’ in which are preserved the titles of no less than thirty-seven songs.”—*The Book of Scottish Song*, by Alex. Whitelaw: Preface, p. v. Among the thirty-seven titles is this most pathetic one, “Allace! that samyn sweit face.”

II.

“ Allace ! that samyn sweit face ! ”
Eyes have lost the light of youth,
But have kept their loving truth ;
Lips that tremble while they speak
 Speak the words that ravish me ;
And the forpined hollow cheek,
 Oh, it breaks my heart to see !
Hair yet witnesseth a vow ;
Loyalty is on the brow :
“ Allace ! that samyn sweit face ! ”
Sweet then, yet sweetest now !

III.

“ Allace ! that samyn sweit face ! ”
Could one kindle up those eyes,
Think you, with a love-surprise ?
Could a rain of kisses turn
 Those poor lips to bloom once more ?
Would those wan cheeks swell and burn
 Fed with joys of heretofore ?
Would caressing hands allow
Not a furrow on that brow ?
“ Allace ! that samyn sweit face ! ”
Dear then, yet dearest now !

A REQUIEM

THOU hast lived in pain and woe,
Thou hast lived in grief and fear ;
Now thine heart can dread no blow,
Now thine eyes can shed no tear :
 Storms round us shall beat and rave ;
 Thou are sheltered in the grave.

Thou for long, long years hast borne,
Bleeding through Life's wilderness,
Heavy loss and wounding scorn ;
Now thine heart is burdenless :
 Vainly rest for ours we crave ;
 Thine is quiet in the grave.

We must toil with pain and care,
We must front tremendous Fate,
We must fight with dark Despair :
Thou dost dwell in solemn state,
 Couched triumphant, calm and brave,
 In the ever-holy grave.

THE JOLLY VETERANS

COME rest, come rest, my leal old friends,
Loll at ease round the old round table ;
Now the sun descends and our duty ends,
We'll have mirth as long as we're able.

CHORUS.

Then for all the rich blood we have ever outpoured
Let us pour in the red wine fairly ;
Though our hands have warred till weak for the sword,
They can wield round the wine-cup rarely.

We have marched, we have fought, in the sweltry sun
All the day since reveillé's blaring ;
Now the march is done and the field is won
We've a right to rest and good faring.

Then for all, &c.

See a rich warm light in the west still glows
Though the sun has sunk before us,
Though the grey shades close on the earth's repose,
And the black night gathers o'er us.

Then for all, &c.

Though our voices break as our songs we trol,
 Though our eyes and our limbs fail weary,
Let each trusty soul have his pipe and his bowl,
 And the last few hours shall be cheery.

Then for all, &c.

Till the thick night wraps both the vale and the
 steep
 Where through bad luck and good we fought
 fair, boys ;

Till we sink in the deep, in the long still sleep,
 Which shall drown all troubles and care, boys.

Then for all, &c.

And what reck we, when that sleep is out,
 What may come with the dawn of the morrow ?
We shall rise fresh and stout, with the old hearts,
 no doubt,
 To confront toil and danger and sorrow.

Then for all, &c.

A CAPSTAN CHORUS

ROLLING along, bowling along,
Over the seas we go ;
And we heave up our anchor singing our song,
With a Yeo, cheery men, yeo !
Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

The wind and the waves they will beat us about,
And the rocks lie a-waiting below ;
But our yards they are trim and our timbers are
stout ;
Sing a Yeo, cheery men, yeo !
Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

Monstrous and terrible growls the old sea
When storms make his white rage grow ;
Grim death lurks then in his heart for we ;
But Yeo, cheery men, yeo !
Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

For well are we nursed on his broad boon breast

When his rage shall overblow,

Fed full of the free bold life which is best ;

Sing a Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

How he swings him along 'neath his ocean of air

In his great heart's careless flow !

How we win his love when his wrath we dare !

Sing a Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

Rolling along, bowling along,

Over the seas we go ;

And we heave up our anchor singing our song,

With a yeo, cheery men, yeo !

Yeo, cheery men, yeo !

TO A PIANISTE

I SAW thee once, I see thee now ;
Thy pure young face, thy noble mien,
Thy truthful eyes, thy radiant brow ;
All childlike, lovely, and serene ;
Rapt in harmonious visions proud,
Scarce conscious of the audient crowd.

I heard thee when the instrument,
Possessed and quickened by thy soul,
Impassioned and intelligent,
Responded to thy full control
With all the treasures of its dower,
Its sweetest and its grandest power.

I saw and heard with such delight
As rarely charms our lower sphere :
Blind Händel would not miss his sight,
Thy beauty voiced thus in his ear ;
Beethoven in that face would see
His glorious unheard harmony.

A RECUSANT

THE Church stands there beyond the orchard-
blooms :

How yearningly I gaze upon its spire !
Lifted mysterious through the twilight glooms,
Dissolving in the sunset's golden fire,
Or dim as slender incense morn by morn
Ascending to the blue and open sky.
For ever when my heart feels most forlorn
It murmurs to me with a weary sigh,
How sweet to enter in, to kneel and pray
With all the others whom we love so well !
All disbelief and doubt might pass away,
All peace float to us with its Sabbath bell.
Conscience replies, There is but one good rest,
Whose head is pillowed upon Truth's pure breast

1858.

A SERGEANT'S MESS SONG

WITH our arms round the waists of the charming
girls,
Through the galop-sweeps and the swift waltz-whirls,
While our beards are brushed by their dancing curls,
Dance, boys, dance !

With the old black pipe and the steaming glass,
And a toast to the health of each sonsie lass,
And a right jolly set the toast to pass,
Drink, boys, drink !

For we have our hold of the world to-day,
And must snatch our share of it while we may,
Before they bury us out of the way :
Dance, boys, dance !

So we'll smoke our pipe, and we'll drink our glass,
And we'll play our game, and we'll hug our lass ;
And as for the rest—why the devil's an ass :
Drink, boys, drink !

SONNET *

THROUGH foulest fogs of my own sluggish soul,
Through midnight glooms of all the wide world's
guilt,
Through sulphurous cannon-clouds that surge and
roll
Above the steam of blood in anger spilt ;
Through all the sombre earth-oppressing piles
Of old cathedral temples which expand
Sepulchral vaults and monumental aisles,
Hopeless and freezing in the lifeless land ;
I gaze and seek with ever-longing eyes
For God, the Love-Supreme, all-wise, all-good :
Alas ! in vain ; for over all the skies
A dark and awful shadow seems to brood,
A numbing, infinite, eternal gloom :
I tremble in the consciousness of Doom.

* [Undated ; probably written in the sixties.]

A CHANT

WHILE the trees grow,
While the streams flow,
While the winds blow,
 We will be free !
Free as trees growing,
Free as streams flowing,
Free as winds blowing,
 Evermore free !

1857.

ON GEORGE HERBERT'S
POEMS

What are these leaves dark-spotted and acerb?

“A very holy *herb* :”

To what good use may I this herb convert?

“Press it on thy soul's *hurt* :”

When *herb* unto the *hurt* I thus apply?

“*Herb-ert* is sanctity.”

ON A BROKEN PIPE

NEGLECTED now it lies a cold clay form,
So late with living inspirations warm :
Type of all other creatures formed of clay—
What more than it for Epitaph have they ?

A PROEM

“Carouse in the Past.”

ROBERT BROWNING'S *Saul*.

WE will drink anew of old pleasures ;
 In the golden chalice of song
We will pour out the wine-like treasures
 Of memories hidden long.

Old memories, hidden but cherished,
 In a heart-nook deep and calm ;
They have not faded and perished
 Like the old friends they embalm.

We will call them forth from their darkness
 As we call forth a rare old wine
Which the long rich years have mellowed
 Till the flavour is divine.

In a glorious intoxication
 Will we revel while such drink may last ;
And dead to the leaden-houred Present,
 Live in golden hours of the Past.

NOTES

NOTES

THOUGH it must be confessed that the present volume cannot compare with vol. i. (except as regards the section headed "Last Poems") in merit, yet I trust that few readers will neglect it on that account. Inferiority is a relative term, and though Thomson in the greater part of this volume is inferior to himself at his best, yet his work, even here, will compare favourably with that of many authors of established reputation. Everything printed here bears the stamp of the author's peculiar individuality; and I believe that there are very few of the pieces contained in this volume which those who really care for Thomson's work would be willing to lose. The volume will also be found to testify to what has sometimes been denied, viz., the versatility and variety of Thomson's poetical powers. I listen, I must confess, with a good deal of impatience to those critics, who assure us that Thomson's only title to remembrance is "The City of Dreadful Night." I trust that after the publication of these volumes we shall hear no more of such mistaken judgments.

"Good night! good night! how truly hath been sung"—p. 28.

The allusion here is to Shelley's "Good Night"—

"Good night?" No, love! the night is ill
Which severs those it should unite;
Let us remain together still,—
That it will be *good* night."

The Poet and his Muse, p. 64.

To the original MS. of this poem the following note was appended: "Not true now, but true of seven songless years."

At Belvoir, p. 79.

This poem is a poetical record of a visit to Belvoir Castle, near Leicester, made by the poet in July 1881, in the company of hospitable friends. "Of the singular beauty of the poem," says Mr. Salt, "from a literary standpoint there can be little question; nothing more fresh and tender has been given us since Wordsworth's famous stanzas on 'Yarrow,' to which these seem to be poetically and spiritually akin."

The Doom of a City, p. 109.

When this poem was first published, the first part, describing "The Voyage," was omitted. My reason for this omission was that I feared that too many readers would be repelled by the somewhat uninteresting beginning, and would leave the remainder of the poem unread. Thomson himself was sensible that the first part was somewhat uninviting to the reader, and it was his intention to alter and condense it. However, it seems to be the right course now to print it in its entirety, for it contains some very characteristic touches, and is by no means destitute of fine lines and passages. The remainder of the poem will recompense the reader for any tedium he may have felt in reading Part I.

In a manuscript copy of this poem which the author presented to his friend, Mr. John Grant, there is an explanatory note appended to it, which must be quoted:—

"I call it a Fantasia, because (lacking the knowledge and power to deal with the theme in its epical integrity) I have made it but an episode in a human life, instead of a

chapter in the history of Fate. Thus it is throughout alloyed with the feelings and thoughts, the fantasies of the supposed narrator; and the verse has all the variableness and abrupt transitions of a man's moods, instead of the solemn uniformity of the laws of Fate.

“The City of the Statues is from the tale of Zobeide in the History of the Three Ladies of Bagdad and the Three Calenders. This episode and the account of the Kingdoms of the Sea in ‘Prince Beder and ——,’ impressed my boyhood more powerfully than anything else in the ‘Arabian Nights.’

“The ‘Voyage’ is certainly tiresome: but a penny steamboat will not carry one to a City where the people are all petrified,—not simply in soul and mind, but also in flesh and blood and bone.”

In the copy of the poem which contains the above explanatory note, there are also a few notes written in pencil which seem to be worth preserving, and which I therefore print below—

“ ‘ The chemistry of terror thus intense
Burns them all lurid on the shrinking sense ’—p. 139.

“ De Quincey has a like simile in the ‘Opium-Eater’:—
‘The fierce chemistry of his dreams burns daily objects into insufferable splendour.’

“ ‘ It is with swelling reverence dedicate ’—p. 141.

“ The dedication suggested by that of Bacon’s ‘Advancement of Learning.’

“ ‘ I take thee, Misery, for my faithful Bride ’—p. 143.

“ See Shelley’s ‘Misery, a Fragment.’

“ ‘ Their Æon is fulfilled ’—p. 155.

“ This is, I conceive, the true meaning of Æon, as de-

veloped in one of De Quincey's papers, 'On the Scriptural expression Eternity.'

“ ‘The stars for ever sweep through space, surrounding’—p. 176.

“ [This chorus was] written in 1855: adopted here because something of the kind was wanted, and its existence hindered me from writing a new Chorus specially for this piece. It does not fit in precisely, and is the only bit of thus-adopted work.”

Ronald and Helen, p. 191.

This poem is now printed for the first time. Though the story is not very interesting and not very well told (being in these respects a remarkable contrast to “Weddah and Om-el-Bonain”), I hope the reader will not pass it over without perusal. It contains many fine and well-wrought passages, and also some lyrics of much beauty. Moreover, those who are acquainted with the scenery of Jersey will derive much pleasure from the vivid descriptions of the island with which the poem abounds.

A Festival of Life, p. 286.

At the end of a copy of this poem which the author presented to Mr. Grant, I find the following note:—“I fear that you will find the above very turgid throughout (‘The wreck of matter in the crash of words,’ to improve Addison’s notorious line); but the conception was so dithyrambic, and the stanza so long and elaborate, that I have not been able to tone down the diction.”

A Happy Poet, p. 320.

This poem was connected in the author’s mind, like the

piece which follows it, with "The Castle of Indolence." One of the MS. copies is headed thus:—

THE HAPPY POET:

FROM

The Castle hight of Indolence,
 And all the rich domain
 Which to that Castle and its Lord
 Doth ever appertain.

Four Points in a Life, p. 381.

The first of the four poems grouped under this title bears the date, it will be observed, of 1852. It is the earliest of Thomson's poems which has been preserved. Considering that it was written when the author was but eighteen years of age, it is a highly characteristic production. Few youths are afflicted, at that age, with a sense of their own unworthiness; generally speaking most of them have only too good an opinion of their own merits.

A Real Vision of Sin, p. 391.

From the title and the author's note one would suppose that this gruesome satire was a parody on Tennyson's "Vision of Sin." This is not so, however, the piece really burlesqued being "The Two Voices," which is written in the same metre as the parody, and the subject of which is much the same. Though Thomson was not insensible to the excellence of Tennyson's poetic art, he had little or no respect for him as a thinker or ethical teacher.

Robert Burns, p. 406.

These lines are extracted from the article on Burns which I have mentioned in the Memoir. The verses are there

stated to be part of "a queer ode dedicated to him:" and after giving them the author adds: "The somewhat inebriate dithyrambist is perhaps right in seizing as the essential characteristics of Burns his vigorous strength and intense human or earthly sympathies."

Siren's Song, p. 414.

This lyric forms a portion of a romantic story called "Sarpalus of Mardon," which Thomson began but left uncompleted.

To a Pianiste, p. 431.

This poem was originally entitled "To Arabella Goddard," who was the artiste who inspired the verses.

THE END.

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