



*THE AUGUSTAN BOOKS OF  
MODERN POETRY*

AUSTIN  
DOBSON

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## HENRY AUSTIN DOBSON

Born Plymouth, January 18, 1840; educated Beaumaris Grammar School and Gymnase, Strasbourg; entered Board of Trade 1856; retired 1901; Hon. LL.D. Edinburgh, 1902; died September 2, 1921.

Both as poet and essayist, Austin Dobson was without rival in his own field; and in acknowledging the courtesy of the Oxford University Press and of Mr. Alban Dobson (acting for the executors), who have allowed this selection to be printed, the editor wishes to draw attention to the author's "Complete Poetical Works" which the Oxford University Press publish at the absurdly low price of 3s. 6d. That volume contains five hundred closely but well printed pages, out of which it would have been easy to make several selections of the present extent and of equal merit. Limitations of space have necessitated the passing over of the poet's well-known "Ballad of 'Beau Brocade'" and most of his other longer pieces.

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## *A Gentleman of the Old School*

HE lived in that past Georgian day,  
When men were less inclined to say  
That "Time is Gold," and overlay  
    With toil their pleasure;  
He held some land, and dwelt thereon,—  
Where, I forget,—the house is gone;  
His Christian name, I think, was John,—  
    His surname, Leisure.

Reynolds has painted him,—a face  
Filled with a fine, old-fashioned grace,  
Fresh-coloured, frank, with ne'er a trace  
    Of trouble shaded;  
The eyes are blue, the hair is drest  
In plainest way,—one hand is prest  
Deep in a flapped canary vest,  
    With buds brocaded.

He wears a brown old Brunswick coat,  
With silver buttons,—round his throat,  
A soft cravat;—in all you note  
    An elder fashion,—  
A strangeness, which, to us who shine  
In shapely hats,—whose coats combine  
All harmonies of hue and line,—  
    Inspires compassion.

He lived so long ago, you see!  
Men were untravelled then, but we,  
Like Ariel, post o'er land and sea  
    With careless parting;  
He found it quite enough for him  
To smoke his pipe in "garden trim,"  
And watch, about the fish-tank's brim,  
    The swallows darting.

He liked the well-wheel's creaking tongue,—  
He liked the thrush that fed her young,—  
He liked the drone of flies among  
    His netted peaches;  
He liked to watch the sunlight fall  
Athwart his ivied orchard wall;  
Or pause to catch the cuckoo's call  
    Beyond the beeches.

His were the times of Paint and Patch,  
And yet no Ranelagh could match  
The sober doves that round his thatch  
    Spread tails and sidled;  
He liked their ruffling, puffed content,—  
For him their drowsy wheelings meant  
More than a Mall of Beaux that bent,  
    Or Belles that bridled.

Not that, in truth, when life began,  
He shunned the flutter of the fan;  
He too had maybe "pinked his man"  
    In Beauty's quarrel;  
But now his "fervent youth" had flown  
Where lost things go; and he was grown  
As staid and slow-paced as his own  
    Old hunter, Sorrel.

Yet still he loved the chase, and held  
That no composer's score excelled  
The merry horn, when Sweetlip swelled  
    Its jovial riot;  
But most his measured words of praise  
Caressed the angler's easy ways,—  
His idly meditative days,—  
    His rustic diet.

Not that his "meditating" rose  
Beyond a sunny summer doze;  
He never troubled his repose  
    With fruitless prying;  
But held, as law for high and low,  
What God withholds no man can know,  
And smiled away inquiry so,  
    Without replying.

We read—alas, how much we read!  
The jumbled strifes of creed and creed  
With endless controversies feed  
    Our groaning tables;  
His books—and they sufficed him—were  
Cotton's "Montaigne," "The Grave" of Blair,  
A "Walton"—much the worse for wear—  
    And "Æsop's Fables."

One more,—“The Bible.” Not that he  
Had searched its page as deep as we;  
No sophistries could make him see  
    Its slender credit;  
It may be that he could not count  
The sires and sons to Jesse's fount,—  
He liked the "Sermon on the Mount,"—  
    And more, he read it.

Once he had loved, but failed to wed,  
A red-cheeked lass who long was dead;  
His ways were far too slow, he said,  
    To quite forget her;  
And still when time had turned him gray  
The earliest hawthorn buds in May  
Would find his lingering feet astray,  
    Where first he met her.

"*In Coelo Quies*" heads the stone  
On Leisure's grave,—now little known,  
A tangle of wild-rose has grown  
So thick across it;  
The "Benefactions" still declare  
He left the clerk an elbow-chair,  
And "12 Pence Yearly to Prepare  
A Christmas Posset."

Lie softly, Leisure! Doubtless you  
With too serene a conscience drew  
Your easy breath, and slumbered through  
The gravest issue;  
But we, to whom our age allows  
Scarce space to wipe our weary brows,  
Look down upon your narrow house,  
Old friend, and miss you!

1870.

"*Good-night, Babette!*"

"*Si vieillesse pouvait!*—"

SCENE.—*A small neat Room. In a high Voltaire  
Chair sits a white-haired old Gentleman.*

MONSIEUR VIEUXBOIS.

BABETTE.

M. VIEUXBOIS (*turning querulously*).

DAY of my life! Where *can* she get?

BABETTE! I say! BABETTE!—BABETTE!

BABETTE (*entering hurriedly*).

Coming, M'sieu'! If M'sieu' speaks  
So loud he won't be well for weeks!

M. VIEUXBOIS.

Where have you been?



BABETTE.

Why, M'sieu' knows:—  
April! . . . Ville d'Avray! . . . Ma'am'selle ROSE!

M. VIEUXBOIS.

Ah! I am old,—and I forget.  
Was the place growing green, BABETTE?

BABETTE.

But of a greenness!—yes, M'sieu'!  
And then the sky so blue!—so blue!  
And when I dropped my *immortelle*,  
How the birds sang!

(*Lifting her apron to her eyes.*)

This poor Ma'am'selle!

M. VIEUXBOIS.

You're a good girl, BABETTE, but she,—  
She was an Angel, verily.  
Sometimes I think I see her yet  
Stand smiling by the cabinet;  
And once, I know, she peeped and laughed  
Betwixt the curtains . . .

Where's the draught?

(*She gives him a cup.*)

Now I shall sleep, I think, BABETTE;—  
Sing me your Norman *chansonnette*.

BABETTE (*sings*).

“Once at the *Angelus*  
(*Ere I was dead*),  
*Angels all glorious*  
*Came to my Bed;*  
*Angels in blue and white*  
*Crowned on the Head.”*

M. VIEUXBOIS (*drowsily*).

“She was an Angel” . . . “Once she laughed” . . .  
What, was I dreaming?

Where’s the draught?

BABETTE (*showing the empty cup*).

The draught, M’sieu’?

M. VIEUXBOIS.

How I forget!

I am so old! But sing, BABETTE!

BABETTE (*sings*).

“One was the Friend I left  
Stark in the Snow;

One was the Wife that died  
Long,—long ago;

One was the Love I lost . . .  
How could she know?”

M. VIEUXBOIS (*murmuring*).

Ah, PAUL! . . . old PAUL! . . . EULALIE too!  
And ROSE . . . And O! “the sky so blue!”

BABETTE (*sings*).

“One had my Mother’s eyes,  
Wistful and mild;

One had my Father’s face;  
One was a Child:

All of them bent to me,—  
Bent down and smiled!”

(He is asleep!)

M. VIEUXBOIS (*almost inaudibly*).

“How I forget!”

“I am so old!” . . . “Good-night, BABETTE!”

1876.

## Cupid's Alley

A MORALITY

*O, Love's but a dance,  
Where Time plays the fiddle!  
See the couples advance,—  
O, Love's but a dance!  
A whisper, a glance,—  
"Shall we twirl down the middle?"  
O, Love's but a dance,  
Where Time plays the fiddle!*

**I**T runs (so saith my Chronicler)  
Across a smoky City;—  
A Babel filed with buzz and whirr,  
Huge, gloomy, black and gritty;  
Dark-louring looks the hill-side near,  
Dark-yawning looks the valley,—  
But here 'tis always fresh and clear,  
For here—is "Cupid's Alley."

And, from an Arbour cool and green  
With aspect down the middle,  
An ancient Fiddler, gray and lean,  
Scrapes on an ancient fiddle;  
Alert he seems, but aged enow  
To punt the Stygian galley;—  
With wisp of forelock on his brow,  
He plays—in "Cupid's Alley."

All day he plays,—a single tune!—  
But, by the oddest chances,  
Gavotte, or Brawl, or Rigadoon,  
It suits all kinds of dances;  
My Lord may walk a *pas de Cour*  
To Jenny's *pas de Chalet*;—  
The folks who ne'er have danced before  
Can dance—in "Cupid's Alley."

And here, for ages yet untold,  
Long, long before my ditty,  
Came high and low, and young and old,  
From out the crowded City;  
And still to-day they come, they go,  
And just as fancies tally,  
They foot it quick, they foot it slow,  
All day—in "Cupid's Alley."

Strange Dance! 'Tis free to Rank and Rags;  
Here no distinction flatters,  
Here Riches shakes its money-bags,  
And Poverty its tatters;  
Church, Army, Navy, Physic, Law;—  
Maid, Mistress, Master, Valet;  
Long locks, gray hairs, bald heads, and a',—  
They bob—in "Cupid's Alley."

Strange pairs! To laughing, light Fifteen  
Here capers Prudence thrifty;  
Here Prodigal leads down the green  
A blushing Maid of fifty;  
Some treat it as a serious thing,  
And some but shilly-shally;  
And some have danced without the ring  
(Ah me!)—in "Cupid's Alley."

And sometimes one to one will dance,  
And think of one behind her;  
And one by one will stand, perchance,  
Yet look all ways to find her;  
Some seek a partner with a sigh,  
Some win him with a sally;  
And some, they know not how nor why,  
Strange fate!—of "Cupid's Alley."

And some will dance an age or so  
Who came for half a minute;  
And some, who like the game, will go  
Before they well begin it;  
And some will vow they're "danced to death,"  
Who (somehow) always rally;  
Strange cures are wrought (mine Author saith),  
Strange cures!—in "Cupid's Alley."

It may be one will dance to-day,  
And dance no more to-morrow;  
It may be one will steal away  
And nurse a life-long sorrow;  
What then? The rest advance, evade,  
Unite, dispart, and dally,  
Re-set, coquet, and gallopade,  
Not less—in "Cupid's Alley."

For till that City's wheel-work vast  
And shuddering beams shall crumble;—  
And till that Fiddler lean at last  
From off his seat shall tumble;—  
Till then (the Civic records say),  
This quaint, fantastic *ballet*  
Of Go and Stay, of Yea and Nay,  
Must last—in "Cupid's Alley."

1876.

## *The Cradle*

HOW steadfastly she'd worked at it!  
How lovingly had drest  
With all her would-be-mother's wit  
That little rosy nest!

How longingly she'd hung on it!—  
It sometimes seemed, she said,  
There lay beneath its coverlet  
A little sleeping head.

He came at last, the tiny guest,  
Ere bleak December fled;  
That rosy nest he never prest . . .  
Her coffin was his bed.

1877.

## *Before Sedan*

"The dead hand clasped a letter."—SPECIAL CORRESPONDENCE.

HERE in this leafy place  
Quiet he lies,  
Cold, with his sightless face  
Turned to the skies.  
'Tis but another dead;  
All you can say is said.

Carry his body hence,—  
Kings must have slaves;  
Kings climb to eminence  
Over men's graves:  
So this man's eye is dim;—  
Throw the earth over him.

What was the white you touched,  
    There, at his side?  
Paper his hand had clutched  
    Tight ere he died;—  
Message or wish, may be;—  
Smooth the folds out and see.

Hardly the worst of us  
    Here could have smiled!—  
Only the tremulous  
    Words of a child;  
Prattle, that has for stops  
Just a few ruddy drops.

Look. She is sad to miss,  
    Morning and night,  
His—her dead father's—kiss;  
    Tries to be bright,  
Good to mamma, and sweet.  
That is all. “Marguerite.”

Ah, if beside the dead  
    Slumbered the pain!  
Ah, if the hearts that bled  
    Slept with the slain!  
If the grief died;—But no;—  
Death will not have it so.

1870.

## To a Greek Girl

WITH breath of thyme and bees that hum,  
Across the years you seem to come,—  
Across the years with nymph-like head,  
And wind-blown brows unfilleted;  
A girlish shape that slips the bud  
In lines of unspoiled symmetry;  
A girlish shape that stirs the blood  
With pulse of Spring, Autonoë!

Where'er you pass,—where'er you go,  
I hear the pebbly rillet flow;  
Where'er you go,—where'er you pass,  
There comes a gladness on the grass;  
You bring blithe airs where'er you tread,—  
Blithe airs that blow from down and sea;  
You wake in me a Pan not dead,—  
Not wholly dead!—Autonoë!

How sweet with you on some green sod  
To wreathe the rustic garden-god;  
How sweet beneath the chestnut's shade  
With you to weave a basket-braid;  
To watch across the stricken chords  
Your rosy-twinkling fingers flee;  
To woo you in soft woodland words,  
With woodland pipe, Autonoë!

In vain,—in vain! The years divide:  
Where Thamias rolls a murky tide,  
I sit and fill my painful reams,  
And see you only in my dreams;—  
A vision, like Alcestis, brought  
From under-lands of Memory,—  
A dream of Form in days of Thought,—  
A dream,—a dream, Autonoë!

1875.



## *The Dying of Tanneguy du Bois*

*En los nidos de antaño  
No hay pájaros hogaño.*—SPANISH PROVERB.

YEA, I am passed away, I think, from this;  
Nor helps me herb, nor any leechcraft here,  
But lift me hither the sweet cross to kiss,  
And witness ye, I go without a fear.  
Yea, I am sped, and never more shall see,  
As once I dreamed, the show of shield and crest,  
Gone southward to the fighting by the sea;—  
*There is no bird in any last year's nest!*

Yea, with me now all dreams are done, I ween,  
Grown faint and unremembered; voices call  
High up, like misty warders dimly seen  
Moving at morn on some Burgundian wall;  
And all things swim—as when the charger stands  
Quivering between the knees, and East and West  
Are filled with flash of scarves and waving hands;—  
*There is no bird in any last year's nest!*

Is she a dream I left in Aquitaine?—  
My wife Giselle,—who never spoke a word,  
Although I knew her mouth was drawn with pain,  
Her eyelids hung with tears; and though I heard  
The strong sob shake her throat, and saw the cord  
Her necklace made about it;—she that prest  
To watch me trotting till I reached the ford;—  
*There is no bird in any last year's nest!*

Ah! I had hoped, God wot,—had longed that she  
Should watch me from the little-lit tourelle,  
Me, coming riding by the windy lea—  
Me, coming back again to her, Giselle;

Yea, I had hoped once more to hear him call,  
The curly-pate, who, rushen lance in rest,  
Stormed at the lilies by the orchard wall;—  
*There is no bird in any last year's nest!*

But how, my Masters, ye are wrapt in gloom!  
This Death will come, and whom he loves he cleaves  
Sheer through the steel and leather; hating whom  
He smites in shameful wise behind the greaves.  
'Tis a fair time with Dennis and the Saints,  
And weary work to age, and want for rest,  
When harness groweth heavy, and one faints,  
*With no bird left in any last year's nest!*

Give ye good hap, then, all. For me, I lie  
Broken in Christ's sweet hand, with whom shall rest  
To keep me living, now that I must die;—  
*There is no bird in any last year's nest!*  
1869.

### *The Ladies of St. James's*

A PROPER NEW BALLAD OF THE COUNTRY AND THE TOWN

*"Phyllida amo ante alias."*—VIRG.

**T**HE ladies of St. James's  
Go swinging to the play;  
Their footmen run before them,  
With a "Stand by! Clear the way!"  
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!  
She takes her buckled shoon,  
When we go out a-courting  
Beneath the harvest moon.

The ladies of St. James's  
Wear satin on their backs;  
They sit all night at *Ombre*,  
With candles all of wax :  
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!  
She dons her russet gown,  
And hastes to gather May dew  
Before the world is down.

The ladies of St. James's!  
They are so fine and fair,  
You'd think a box of essences  
Was broken in the air :  
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!  
The breath of heath and furze,  
When breezes blow at morning,  
Is not so fresh as hers.

The ladies of St. James's!  
They're painted to the eyes,  
Their white it stays for ever,  
Their red it never dies :  
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!  
Her colour comes and goes;  
It trembles to a lily,—  
It wavers to a rose.

The ladies of St. James's!  
You scarce can understand  
The half of all their speeches,  
Their phrases are so grand :  
But Phyllida, my Phyllida!  
Her shy and simple words  
Are clear as after rain-drops  
The music of the birds.

The ladies of St. James's!  
 They have their fits and freaks;  
 They smile on you—for seconds;  
 They frown on you—for weeks:  
 But Phyllida, my Phyllida!  
 Come either storm or shine,  
 From Shrove-tide unto Shrove-tide,  
 Is always true—and mine.

My Phyllida! my Phyllida!  
 I care not though they heap  
 The hearts of all St. James's,  
 And give me all to keep;  
 I care not whose the beauties  
 Of all the world may be,  
 For Phyllida—for Phyllida  
 Is all the world to me!

1883.

### *To an Intrusive Butterfly*

*"Kill not—for Pity's sake—and lest ye slay  
 The meanest thing upon its upward way."*

—FIVE RULES OF BUDDHA.

**I** WATCH you through the garden walks,  
 I watch you float between  
 The avenues of dahlia stalks,  
 And flicker on the green;  
 You hover round the garden seat,  
 You mount, you waver. Why,—  
 Why storm us in our still retreat,  
 O saffron Butterfly!

Across the room in loops of flight  
I watch you wayward go;  
Dance down a shaft of glancing light,  
Review my books a-row;  
Before the bust you flaunt and flit  
Of "blind Mæonides"—  
Ah, trifler, on his lips there lit  
Not butterflies, but bees!

You pause, you poise, you circle up  
Among my old Japan;  
You find a comrade on a cup,  
A friend upon a fan;  
You wind anon, a breathing-while,  
Around AMANDA'S brow;—  
Dost dream her then, O Volatile!  
E'en such an one as thou?

Away! Her thoughts are not as thine.  
A sterner purpose fills  
Her steadfast soul with deep design  
Of baby bows and frills;  
What care hath she for worlds without,  
What heed for yellow sun,  
Whose endless hopes revolve about  
A planet, *ætat* One!

Away! Tempt not the best of wives;  
Let not thy garish wing  
Come fluttering our Autumn lives  
With truant dreams of Spring!  
Away! Reseek thy "Flowery Land";  
Be Buddha's law obeyed;  
Lest Betty's undiscerning hand  
Should slay . . . a future PRAED!

1882.

## *A Garden Song*

(To *W. E. H.*)

**H**ERE, in this sequestered close,  
Bloom the hyacinth and rose;  
Here beside the modest stock  
Flaunts the flaring hollyhock;  
Here, without a pang, one sees  
Ranks, conditions, and degrees.

All the seasons run their race  
In this quiet resting place;  
Peach, and apricot, and fig  
Here will ripen, and grow big;  
Here is store and overplus,—  
More had not Alcinoüs!

Here, in alleys cool and green,  
Far ahead the thrush is seen;  
Here along the southern wall  
Keeps the bee his festival;  
All is quiet else—afar  
Sounds of toil and turmoil are.

Here be shadows large and long;  
Here be spaces meet for song;  
Grant, O garden-god, that I,  
Now that none profane is nigh,—  
Now that mood and moment please,—  
Find the fair Pierides!

1885.

## *A Fancy from Fontenelle*

*"De mémoires de Roses on n'a point vu mourir le Jardinier."*

THE Rose in the garden slipped her bud,  
And she laughed in the pride of her youthful blood,  
As she thought of the Gardener standing by—  
"He is old,—so old! And he soon must die!"

The full Rose waxed in the warm June air,  
And she spread and spread till her heart lay bare;  
And she laughed once more as she heard his tread—  
"He is older now! He will soon be dead!"

But the breeze of the morning blew, and found  
That the leaves of the blown Rose strewed the ground;  
And he came at noon, that Gardener old,  
And he raked them gently under the mould.

*And I wove the thing to a random rhyme,  
For the Rose is Beauty, the Gardener, Time.*  
1885.

## *Rose-Leaves*

*"Sans peser.—Sans rester."*

A KISS.

ROSE kissed me to-day.  
Will she kiss me to-morrow?  
Let it be as it may,  
Rose kissed me to-day,  
But the pleasure gives way  
To a savour of sorrow;—  
Rose kissed me to-day,—  
Will she kiss me to-morrow?

CIRCE.

IN the School of Coquettes  
Madam Rose is a scholar:—  
O, they fish with all nets  
In the School of Coquettes!  
When her brooch she forgets  
'Tis to show her new collar;  
In the School of Coquettes  
Madam Rose is a scholar!

A TEAR.

THERE'S a tear in her eye,—  
Such a clear little jewel!  
What *can* make her cry?  
There's a tear in her eye.  
“Puck has killed a big fly,—  
And it's *horribly* cruel”;  
There's a tear in her eye,—  
Such a clear little jewel!

A GREEK GIFT.

HERE'S a present for Rose,  
How pleased she is looking!  
Is it verse?—is it prose?  
Here's a present for Rose!  
“Plats,” “Entrées,” and “Rôts,”—  
Why, it's “Gouffé on Cooking.”  
Here's a present for Rose,  
How *pleased* she is looking!

“URCEUS EXIT.”

I INTENDED an Ode,  
And it turned to a Sonnet.  
It began *à la mode*,  
I intended an Ode;



But Rose crossed the road  
In her latest new bonnet;  
I intended an Ode;  
And it turned to a Sonnet.

1874.

*A Ballad to Queen Elizabeth*  
*of the Spanish Armada*

**K**ING PHILIP had vaunted his claims;  
He had sworn for a year he would sack us;  
With an army of heathenish names  
He was coming to fagot and stack us;  
Like the thieves of the sea he would track us,  
And shatter our ships on the main;  
But we had bold Neptune to back us,—  
And where are the galleons of Spain?

His carackes were christened of dames  
To the kirtles whereof he would tack us;  
With his saints and his gilded stern-frames,  
He had thought like an egg-shell to crack us;  
Now Howard may get to his Flaccus,  
And Drake to his Devon again,  
And Hawkins bowl rubbers to Bacchus,—  
For where are the galleons of Spain?

Let his Majesty hang to St. James  
The axe that he whetted to hack us;  
He must play at some lustier games  
Or at sea he can hope to out-thwack us;  
To his mines of Peru he would pack us  
To tug at his bullet and chain;  
Alas! that his Greatness should lack us!—  
But where are the galleons of Spain?

ENVOY.

GLORIANA! the Don may attack us  
Whenever his stomach be fain;  
He must reach us before he can rack us—  
And where are the galleons of Spain?

1877.

*For a Charity Annual*

I N Angel-Court the sunless air  
Grows faint and sick; to left and right  
The cowering houses shrink from sight,  
Huddled and hopeless, eyeless, bare.

Misnamed, you say? For surely rare  
Must be the angel-shapes that light  
In Angel-Court!

Nay! the Eternities are there.  
Death at the doorway stands to smite;  
Life in its garrets leaps to flight;  
And Love has climbed that crumbling stair  
In Angel-Court.

1901.

*A Song of the Greenaway Child*

AS I went a-walking on *Lavender Hill*,  
O, I met a Darling in frock and frill;  
And she looked at me shyly, with eyes of blue,  
"Are you going a-walking? Then take me too!"

So we strolled to the field where the cowslips grow,  
And we played—and we played for an hour or so;  
Then we climbed to the top of the old park wall,  
And the Darling she threaded a cowslip ball.

Then we played again, till I said—"My Dear,  
This pain in my side, it has grown severe;  
I ought to have told you I'm past three score,  
And I fear that I scarcely can play any more!"

But the Darling she answered,—“O no! O no!  
You must play—you must play.—I shan't let you go!”  
—And I woke with a start and a sigh of despair  
And I found myself safe in my Grandfather's-chair!  
1908.

“*Sat est Scripsisse*”

(To E. G., with a Collection of Essays)

WHEN You and I have wandered beyond the reach  
of call,  
And all our Works immortal lie scattered on the Stall,  
It may be some new Reader, in that remoter age,  
Will find the present Volume and listless turn the page.

For him I speak these verses. And, Sir (I say to him),  
This Book you see before you,—this masterpiece of Whim,  
Of Wisdom, Learning, Fancy, (if you will, please,  
attend),—  
Was written by its Author, who gave it to his Friend.

For they had worked together,—been Comrades of the Pen;  
They had their points at issue, they differed now and then;  
But both loved Song and Letters, and each had close at heart  
The hopes, the aspirations, the “dear delays” of Art.

And much they talked of Measures, and more they talked  
of Style,

Of Form and "lucid Order," of "labour of the File";  
And he who wrote the writing, as sheet by sheet was penned  
(This all was long ago, Sir!), would read it to his Friend.

They knew not, nor cared greatly, if they were spark or  
star;

They knew to move is somewhat, although the goal be far;  
And larger light or lesser, this thing at least is clear,  
They served the Muses truly,—their service was sincere.

This tattered page you see, Sir, this page alone remains  
(Yes,—fourpence is the lowest!) of all those pleasant pains;  
And as for him that read it, and as for him that wrote,  
No Golden Book enrolls them among its "Names of Note."

And yet they had their office. Though they to-day are  
passed,

They marched in that procession where is no first or last;  
Though cold is now their hoping, though they no more  
aspire,

They too had once their ardour—they handed on the fire.  
1892.

### *For a Closing Page*

*"Never a palinode!"—"O."*

**L**IFE, like a page unpenned,  
Spreads out its whiteness;  
Nothing, from end to end,  
Marring its brightness.

Surely a field to claim  
Steadfast endeavour?  
Where one might win a name  
Sounding for ever?

Now—to review it all—  
What a prosaic,  
Forced, ineffectual,  
Paltry mosaic!

Plans that ne'er found a base;  
Wingless upyearning;  
Speed that ne'er won the race;  
Fire without burning;

Doubt never set at rest  
Stifle or falter it;  
Good that was not the best . . .  
Yet—would you alter it?

Yet—would you tread again  
All the road over?  
Face the old joy and pain—  
Hemlock and clover?

Yes. For it still was good,  
Good to be living;  
Buoyant of heart and blood;  
Fighting, forgiving;

Glad for the earth and sky;  
Glad—for mere gladness;  
Grateful, one knew not why,  
Even for sadness;

Finding the ray of hope  
Gleam through distresses;  
Building a larger scope  
Out from successes;

Blithe to the close, and still  
Tendering ever,  
Both for the Good and Ill,  
Thanks to the GIVER.

So, though the script is slow,  
Blurred though the line is,  
Let the poor record go  
Onward to Finis.

1913.

### *In After Days*

*I*N after days when grasses high  
O'er-top the stone where I shall lie,  
Though ill or well the world adjust  
My slender claim to honoured dust,  
I shall not question or reply.

*I shall not see the morning sky;  
I shall not hear the night-wind sigh;  
I shall be mute, as all men must  
In after days!*

*But yet, now living, fain were I  
That some one then should testify,  
Saying—"He held his pen in trust  
To Art, not serving shame or lust."  
Will none?—Then let my memory die  
In after days!*

1884.

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