

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Mrs. Browning's Poems



B.P.—L. "Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her."

Page 247.

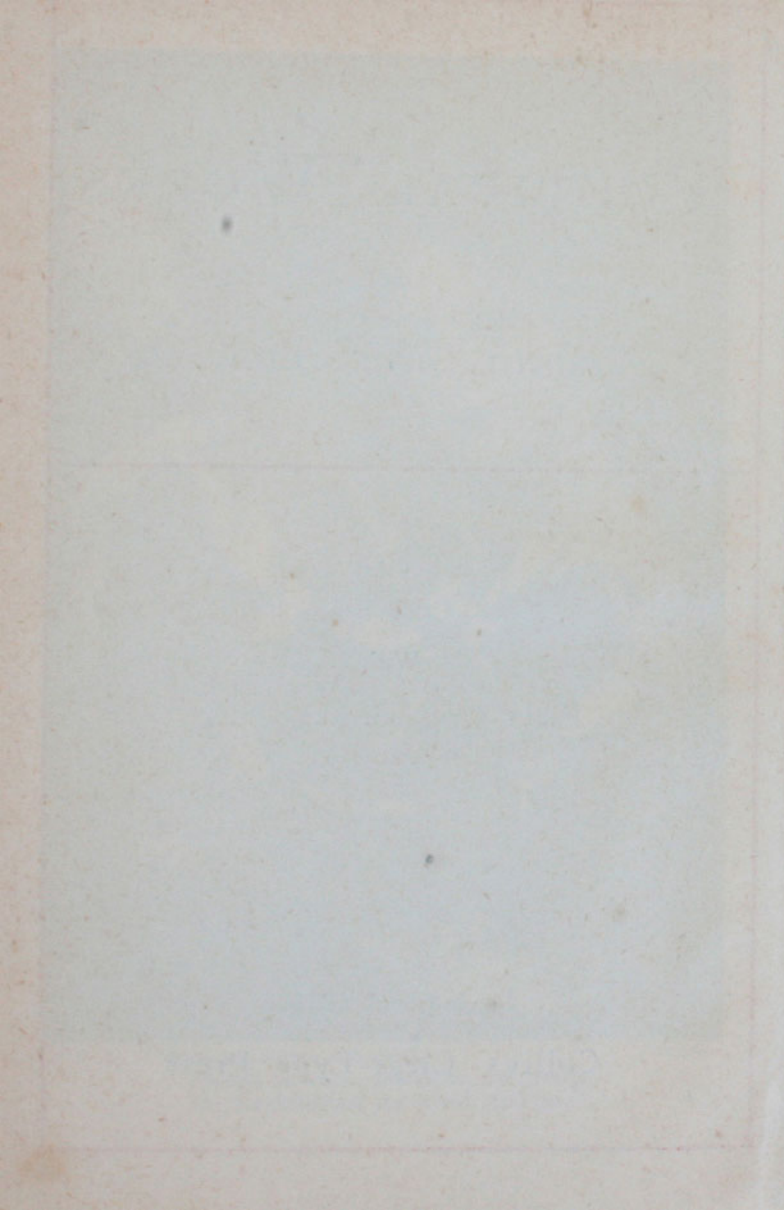
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THE
POETICAL WORKS

OF
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

With
Eight Original Engravings

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Mrs. Browning's Poems.

THE TEMPEST.

A FRAGMENT.

"Mors erat ante oculos."—LUCAN, lib. ix.

THE forest made my home—the voiceful streams
My minstrel throng: the everlasting hills,—
Which marry with the firmament, and cry
Unto the brazen thunder, "Come away,
Come from thy secret place, and try our strength,"—
Enwrapp'd me with their solemn arms. Here, light
Grew pale as darkness, scared by the shade
O' the forest Titans. Here, in piney state,
Reign'd Night, the Æthiopian queen, and crown'd
The charm'd brow of Solitude, her spouse.

A sign was on creation. You beheld
All things encolour'd in a sulph'rous hue,
As day were sick with fear. The haggard clouds
O'erhung the utter lifelessness of air;
The top boughs of the forest, all aghast,
Stared in the face of Heav'n; the deep-mouth'd wind,
That hath a voice to bay the arm'd sea,
Fled with a low cry like a beaten hound;
And only that askance the shadows, flew
Some open-beak'd birds in wilderment,
Naught stirred abroad. All dumb did Nature seem,
In expectation of the coming storm.

It came in power. You soon might hear afar
The footsteps of the martial thunder sound
Over the mountain battlements; the sky
Being deep-stain'd with hues fantastical,

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

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

All hail unto the lightning ! hurriedly
 His lurid arms are glaring through the air,
 Making the face of Heav'n to show like hell !
 Let him go breathe his sulphur stench about,
 And, pale with death's own mission, lord the storm !
 Again the gleam—the glare : I turn'd to hail
 Death's mission : at my feet there lay the dead !
 The dead—the dead lay there ! I could not view
 (For Night espoused the storm, and made all dark)
 Its features, but the lightning in his course
 Shiver'd above a white and corpse-like heap,
 Stretch'd in the path, as if to show its prey,
 And have a triumph ere he pass'd. Then I
 Crouch'd down upon the ground, and groped about
 Until I touch'd that thing of flesh, rain-drench'd,
 And chill, and soft. Nathless, I did refrain
 My soul from natural horror ! I did lift

The heavy head, half-bedded in the clay,
 Unto my knee ; and pass'd my fingers o'er
 The wet face, touching every lineament,
 Until I found the brow ; and chafed its chill,
 To know if life yet lingered in its pulse.
 And while I was so busied, there did leap,
 From out the entrails of the firmament,
 The lightning, who his white unblenching breath
 Blew in the dead man's face, discov'ring it
 As by a staring day. I knew that face—
 His, who did hate me—his, whom I did hate !

I shrunk not—spake not—sprang not from the ground !
 But felt my lips shake without cry or breath,
 And mine heart wrestle in my breast to still
 The tossing of its pulses ; and a cold,
 Instead of living blood, o'ercreep my brow.
 Albeit such darkness brooded all around,
 I had dread knowledge that the open eyes
 Of that dead man were glaring up at mine,
 With their unwinking, unexpressive stare ;
 And mine I could not shut nor turn away.
 The man was my familiar. I had borne
 Those eyes to scowl on me their living hate,
 Better than I could bear their deadliness :
 I had endured the curses of those lips,
 Far better than their silence. Oh, constrain'd
 And awful silence !—awful peace of death !
There is an answering to all questioning,
 That one word—*death*. Our bitterness can throw
 No look upon the face of death, and live.
 The burning thoughts that erst my soul illumed,
 Were quench'd at once ; as tapers in a pit
 Wherein the vapour-witches weirdly reign
 In charge of darkness. Farewell all the past !
 It was out-blotted from my memory's eyes,
 When clay's cold silence pleaded for its sin.

Farewell the elemental war ! farewell
 The clashing of the shielded clouds—the cry
 Of scathèd echoes ! I no longer knew
 Silence from sound, but wandered far away
 Into the deep Eleusis of mine heart,
 To learn its secret things. When armèd foes

Meet on one deck with impulse violent,
 The vessel quakes thro' all her oaken ribs,
 And shivers in the sea ; so with mine heart :
 For there had battled in her solitudes,
 Contrary spirits ; sympathy with power,
 And stooping unto power ;—the energy
 And passiveness,—the thunder and the death !

Within me was a nameless thought : it closed
 The Janus of my soul on echoing hinge,
 And said " Peace ! " with a voice like War's. I bow'd,
 And trembled at its voice : it gave a key,
 Empower'd to open out all mysteries
 Of soul and flesh ; of man, who doth begin,
 But endeth not ; of life, and *after life*.

.

Day came at last : her light show'd gray and sad,
 As hatch'd by tempest, and could scarce prevail
 Over the shaggy forest to imprint
 Its outline on the sky—expressionless,
 Almost sans shadow as sans radiance :
 An idiocy of light. I waken'd from
 My deep unslumb'ring dream, but utter'd naught.
 My living I uncoupled from the dead,
 And look'd out, 'mid the swart and sluggish air,
 For place to make a grave. A mighty tree
 Above me, his gigantic arms outstretch'd,
 Poising the clouds. A thousand mutter'd spells
 Of every ancient wind and thund'rous storm,
 Had been off-shaken from his scathless bark.
 He had heard distant years sweet concord yield,
 And go to silence ; having firmly kept
 Majestical companionship with Time.
 Anon his strength wax'd proud : his tusky roots
 Forced for themselves a path on every side,
 Riving the earth ; and, in their savage scorn,
 Casting it from them like a thing unclean,
 Which might impede his naked clambering
 Unto the heavens. Now blasted, peel'd, he stood,
 By the gone night, whose lightning had come in
 And rent him, even as it rent the man
 Beneath his shade : and there the strong and weak
 Communion join'd in deathly agony.

There, underneath, I lent my feverish strength,
 To scoop a lodgment for the traveller's corse.
 I gave it to the silence and the pit,
 And strew'd the heavy earth on all: and then—
 I—I, whose hands had form'd that silent house,—
 I could not look thereon, but turn'd and wept!

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

My heart is armèd not in panoply
 Of the old Roman iron, nor assumes
 The Stoic valour,—has a human heart,
 And so confesses, with a human fear;—

A SEA-SIDE MEDITATION.

That only for the hope the cross inspires,
 That only for the MAN who died and lives,
 'Twould crouch beneath thy sceptre's royalty,
 With faintness of the pulse, and backward cling
 To life. But knowing what I soothly know,
 High-seeming Death, I dare thee! and have hope,
 In God's good time, of showing to thy face
 An unsuccumbing spirit, which sublime
 May cast away the low anxieties
 That wait upon the flesh—the reptile moods;
 And enter that eternity to come,
 Where live the dead, and only Death shall die.

A SEA-SIDE MEDITATION.

"Ut per aquas quæ nunc rerum simulacra videmus."—LUCRETIVS.

Go, travel 'mid the hills! The summer's hand
 Hath shaken pleasant freshness o'er them all.
 Go, travel 'mid the hills! There, tuneful streams
 Are touching myriad stops, invisible;
 And winds, and leaves, and birds, and your own thoughts
 (Not the least glad) in wordless chorus, crowd
 Around the thymele* of Nature.

Go,
 And travel onward. Soon shall leaf and bird,
 Wind, stream, no longer sound. Thou shalt behold
 Only the pathless sky, and houseless sward;
 O'er which anon are spied innumerable sails
 Of fisher vessels like the wings o' the hill,
 And white as gulls above them, and as fast.—
 But sink they—sink they out of sight. And now
 The wind is springing upward in your face;
 And, with its fresh-toned gushings, you may hear
 Continuous sound which is not of the wind,
 Nor of the thunder, nor o' the cataract's
 Deep passion, nor o' the earthquake's wilder pulse;
 But which rolls on in stern tranquillity,
 As memories of evil o'er the soul;

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



B.P.—L.

“Thou shalt behold
Only the pathless sky, and houseless sward ;
O'er which anon are spied innumerable sails
Of fisher vessels.”

Page 12.

Boweth the bare broad Heav'n.—What view you? sea—
and sea!

The sea—the glorious sea! from side to side,
Swinging the grandeur of his foamy strength,
And undersweeping the horizon,—on—
On—with his life and voice inscrutable.
Pause: sit you down in silence! I have read
Of that Athenian, who, when ocean raged,
Unchain'd the prison'd music of his lips,
By shouting to the billows, sound for sound.
I marvel how his mind would let his tongue
Affront thereby the ocean's solemnness.
Are we not mute, or speak restrainedly,
When overhead the trampling tempests go,
Dashing their lightning from their hoofs? and when
We stand beside the bier? and when we see
The strong bow down to weep—and stray among
Places which dust or mind hath sanctified?
Yea! for such sights and acts do tear apart
The close and subtle clasping of a chain,
Form'd not of gold, but of corroded brass,
Whose links are furnish'd from the common mine
Of every day's event, and want, and wish;
From work-times, diet-times, and sleeping-times;
And thence constructed, mean and heavy links,
Within the pandemonic walls of sense,
Enchain our deathless part, constrain our strength,
And waste the goodly stature of our soul.

Howbeit, we love this bondage; we do cleave
Unto the sordid and unholy thing,
Fearing the sudden wrench required to break
Those clasp'd links. Behold! all sights and sounds
In air, and sea, and earth, and under earth,
All flesh, all life, all ends, are mysteries;
And all that is mysterious dreadful seems,
And all we cannot understand we fear.
Ourselves do scare ourselves: we hide our sight
In artificial nature from the true,
And throw sensation's veil associative
On God's creation, man's intelligence:
Bowling our high imaginings to eat
Dust, like the serpent, once erect as they;
Binding conspicuous on our reason's brow

Phylacteries of shame ; learning to feel
 By rote, and act by rule (man's rule, not God's !)
 Until our words grow echoes, and our thoughts
 A mechanism of spirit.

Can this last ?

No ! not for aye. We cannot subject aye
 The heav'n-born spirit to the earth-born flesh.
 Tame lions *will* scent blood, and appetite
 Carnivorous glare from out their restless eyes.
 Passions, emotions, sudden changes, throw
 Our nature back upon us till we burn.
 What warm'd Cyrene's fount ? As poets sing,
 The *change* from light to dark, from dark to light.

All that doth force this nature back on us,
 All that doth force the mind to view the mind,
 Engend'reth what is named by men, *sublime*.
 Thus when, our wonted valley left, we gain
 The mountain's horrent brow, and mark from thence
 The sweep of lands extending with the sky ;
 Or view the spanless plain ; or turn our sight
 Upon yon deep immensity ;—we breathe
 As if our breath were marble : to and fro
 Do reel our pulses, and our words are mute.
 We cannot mete by parts, but grapple all ;
 We cannot measure with our eye, but soul ;
 And fear is on us. The extent unused,
 Our spirit, sends, to spirit's element,
 To seize upon abstractions : first on space,
 The which *eternity in place*, I deem ;
 And then upon eternity ; till thought
 Hath form'd a mirror from their secret sense,
 Wherein we view ourselves, and back recoil
 At our own awful likeness ; ne'ertheless,
 Cling to that likeness with a wonder wild,
 And while we tremble, glory—proud in fear.

So ends the prose of life : and so shall be
 Unlock'd her poetry's magnificent store.
 And so, thou pathless and perpetual sea,
 So, o'er thy deeps, I brooded and must brood,
 Whether I view thee in thy dreadful peace,
 Like a spent warrior hanging in the sun

His glittering arms, and meditating death ;
 Or whether thy wild visage gath'rst shades,
 What time thou marshall'st forth thy waves who hold
 A covenant of storms, then roar and wind
 Under the rocking rocks ; as martyrs lie
 Wheel-bound ; and, dying, utter lofty words !
 Whether the strength of day is young and high,
 Or whether, weary of the watch, he sits
 Pale on thy wave, and weeps himself to death ;—
 In storm and calm, at morn and eventide,
 Still have I stood beside thee, and out-thrown
 My spirit onward on thine element—
 Beyond thine element—to tremble low
 Before those feet which trod thee as they trod
 Earth—to the holy, happy peopled place,
 Where there is no more sea. Yea, and my soul,
 Having put on thy vast similitude,
 Hath wildly moanèd at her proper depth,
 Echoed her proper musings, veil'd in shade
 Her secrets of decay, and exercised
 An elemental strength, in casting up
 Rare gems and things of death on fancy's shore,
 Till Nature said, "Enough."

Who longest dreams,
 Dreams not for ever ; seeing day and night
 And corporal feebleness divide his dreams,
 And, on his elevate creations weigh
 With hunger, cold, heat, darkness, weariness :
 Else should we be like gods ; else would the course
 Of thought's free wheels, increased in speed and might,
 By an eterne volution, oversweep
 The heights of wisdom, and invade her depths :
 So, knowing all things, should we have all power ;
 For is not Knowledge power ? But mighty spells
 Our operation sear ; the Babel must,
 Or ere it touch the sky, fall down to earth ;
 The web, half form'd, must tumble from our hands,
 And, ere they can resume it, lie decay'd.
 Mind struggles vainly from the flesh. E'en so,
 Hell's angel (saith a scroll apocryphal)
 Shall, when the latter days of earth have shrunk
 Before the blast of God, affect his heav'n ;
 Lift his scarr'd brow, confirm his rebel heart,
 Shoot his strong wings, and darken pole and pole—

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

EARTH.

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

Hush !

Meseemeth through the leafy trees to ring
 A chime of bells to falling waters tuned ;
 Whereat comes heathen Zephyrus, out of breath
 With running up the hills, and shakes his hair
 From off his gleesome forehead, bold and glad
 With keeping blythe Dan Phœbus company—
 And throws him on the grass, though half afraid ;
 First glancing round, lest tempests should be nigh ;
 And lays close to the ground his ruddy lips,
 And shapes their beauty into sound, and calls
 On all the petall'd flowers that sit beneath
 In hiding-places from the rain and snow,
 To loosen the hard soil, and leave their cold
 Sad idlesse, and betake them up to him.
 They straightway hear his voice—

A thought did come,

And press from out my soul the heathen dream.
 Mine eyes were purgèd. Straightway did I bind
 Round me the garment of my strength, and heard
 Nature's death-shrieking—the hereafter cry,
 When he o' the lion voice, the rainbow-crown'd,
 Shall stand upon the mountains and the sea,
 And swear by earth, by Heaven's throne, and Him
 Who sitteth on the throne, there shall be time
 No more, no more ! Then, veil'd Eternity
 Shall straight unveil her awful countenance

Unto the reeling worlds, and take the place
 Of seasons, years, and ages. Aye and aye
 Shall be the time of day. The wrinkled heav'n
 Shall yield her silent sun, made blind and white
 With an exterminating light: the wind,
 Unchainèd from the poles, nor having charge
 Of cloud or ocean, with a sobbing wail
 Shall rush among the stars, and swoon to death.
 Yea, the shrunk earth, appearing livid pale
 Beneath the red-tongued flame, shall shudder by
 From out her ancient place, and leave—a void.
 Yet haply by that void the saints redeem'd
 May sometimes stray; when memory of sin
 Ghost-like shall rise upon their holy souls;
 And on their lips shall lie the name of earth
 In paleness and in silentness; until
 Each looking on his brother, face to face,
 And bursting into sudden happy tears
 (The only tears undried) shall murmur—"Christ!"

THE AUTUMN.

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

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

Oh! like that wind, is all the mirth
 That flesh and dust impart;
 We cannot bear its visitings,
 When change is on the heart.

THE APPEAL.

Gay words and jests may make us smile,
 When Sorrow is asleep ;
 But other things must make us smile,
 When Sorrow bids us *weep!*

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

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

THE APPEAL.

CHILDREN of our England! stand
 On the shores that girt our land ;
 The ægis of whose cloud-white rock
 Braveth Time's own battle shock.
 Look above the wide, wide world ;
 Where the northern blasts have furl'd
 Their numbèd wings amid the snows,
 Mutt'ring in a forced repose—
 Or where the madden'd sun on high
 Shakes his torch athwart the sky,
 Till within their prison sere,
 Chainèd earthquakes groan for fear ?
 Look above the wide, wide world,
 Where a gauntlet Sin hath hurl'd
 To astonied Life ; and where
 Death's gladiatorial smile doth glare
 On making the arena bare.

Shout aloud the words that show
 Jesus in the sands and snow ;—
 Shout aloud the words that free,
 Over the perpetual sea.

Speak ye. As a breath will sweep
 Avalanche from Alpine steep,
 So the spoken word shall roll
 Fear and darkness from the soul.
 Are ye men, and love not man ?
 Love ye, and permit his ban ?
 Can ye, dare ye, rend the chain
 Wrought of common joy and pain,
 Claspings with its links of gold,
 Man to man in one strong hold ?
 Lo ! if the golden links ye sever,
 Ye shall make your heart's flesh quiver ;
 And wheresoe'er the links are rest,
 There, shall be a blood-stain left.
 To earth's remotest rock repair,
 Ye shall find a vulture there :
 Though for others sorrowing not,
 Your own tears shall still be hot :
 Though ye play a lonely part ;
 Though ye bear an iron heart ;—
 Woe, like Echetus, still must
 Grind your iron into dust.

But, children of our Britain, ye
 Rend not man's chain of sympathy ;
 To those who sit in woe and night,
 Denying tears and hiding light.
 Ye have stretch'd your hands abroad
 With the Spirit's sheathless sword :
 Ye have spoken—and the tone
 To earth's extremest verge hath gone :
 East and west sublime it rolls,
 Echoed by a million souls !
 The wheels of rapid circling years,
 Erst hot with crime, are quench'd in tears.
 Rocky hearts wild waters pour,
 That were chain'd in stone before :
 Bloody hands, that only bare
 Hilted sword, are clasp'd in prayer :

WEARINESS.

Savage tongues, that wont to fling
 Shout of war in deathly ring,
 Speak the name which angels sing.
 Dying lips are lit the while
 With a most undying smile,
 Which reposing there, instead
 Of language, when the lips are dead,
 Saith—"No sound of grief or pain
 Shall haunt us when we move again."

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

WEARINESS.

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

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

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

THE SERAPHIM.

"I look for Angels' songs, and hear Him cry."

GILES FLETCHER.

PART THE FIRST.

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

Ador. O SERAPH, pause no more.

Beside this gate of heaven we stand alone.

Zerah. Of heaven!

Ador. Our brother hosts are gone—

Zerah. Are gone before.

Ador. And the golden harps the angels bore

To help the songs of their desire,

Still burning from their hands of fire,

Lie without touch or tone

Upon the glass-sea shore.

Zerah. Silent upon the glass-sea shore!

Ador. There the Shadow from the throne

Formless with infinity

Hovers o'er the crystal sea.

Awfuller than light derived,

And red with those primæval heats

Whereby all life has lived.

Zerah. Our visible God, our heavenly seats!

Ador. Beneath us sinks the pomp angelical,

Cherub and seraph, powers and virtues, all,—

The roar of whose descent has died

To a still sound, as thunder into rain.

Immeasurable space spreads magnified

With that thick life, along the plane

The worlds slid out on. What a fall

And eddy of wings innumerable, crossed

By trailing curls that have not lost

The glitter of the God-smile shed

On every prostrate angel's head!

What gleaming up of hands that fling

Their homage in retorted rays,

From high instinct of worshipping,

And habitude of praise!

Zerah. Rapidly they drop below us,
 Pointed palm and wing and hair,
 Indistinguishable, show us
 Only pulses in the air
 Throbbing with a fiery beat,
 As if a new creation heard
 Some divine and plastic word,
 And trembling at its new-found being,
 Awakened at our feet.

Ador. *Zerah*, do not wait for seeing.
 His voice, His, that thrills us so
 As we our harpstrings, uttered *Go*,
Behold the Holy in His woe,
 And all are gone, save thee and—

Zerah. Thee!

Ador. I stood the nearest to the throne
 In hierarchical degree,
 What time the Voice said *Go*.
 And whether I was moved alone
 By the storm-pathos of the tone
 Which swept through heaven the alien name of *woe*,
 Or whether the subtle glory broke
 Through my strong and shielding wings,
 Bearing to my finite essence
 Incapacious of their presence,
 Infinite imaginings,
 None knoweth save the Throned who spoke ;
 But I who at creation stood upright
 And heard the God-breath move
 Shaping the words that lightened, "Be there light,"
 Nor trembled but with love ;
 Now fell down shudderingly,
 My face upon the pavement whence I had towered,
 As if in mine immortal overpowered
 By God's eternity.

Zerah. Let me wait!—let me wait!—

Ador. Nay, gaze not backward through the gate.
 God fills our heaven with God's own solitude
 Till all the pavements glow.
 His Godhead being no more subdued
 By itself, to glories low
 Which seraphs can sustain,
 What if thou, in gazing so,
 Shouldst behold but only one

Attribute, the veil undone—
 Even that to which we dare to press
 Nearest, for its gentleness—
 Ay, His love!
 How the deep ecstatic pain
 Thy being's strength would capture!
 Without language for the rapture,
 Without music strong to come
 And set the adoration free,
 For ever, ever, wouldst thou be
 Amid the general chorus dumb,
 God-stricken to seraphic agony.
 Or, brother, what if on thine eyes
 In vision bare should rise
 The life-fount whence His hand did gather
 With solitary force
 Our immortalities!
 Straightway how thine own would wither,
 Falter like a human breath,
 And shrink into a point like death,
 By gazing on its source!—
 My words have imaged dread.
 Meekly hast thou bent thine head,
 And dropt thy wings in languishment
 Overclouding foot and face,
 As if God's throne were eminent
 Before thee, in the place.
 Yet not—not so,
 O loving spirit and meek, dost thou fulfil
 The supreme Will.
 Not for obeisance, but obedience,
 Give motion to thy wings. Depart from hence.
 The voice said "Go."
Zerah. Belovèd, I depart.
 His will is as a spirit within my spirit,
 A portion of the being I inherit.
 His will is mine obedience. I resemble
 A flame all undefilèd though it tremble;
 I go and tremble. Love me, O beloved!
 O thou, who stronger art,
 And standest ever near the Infinite,
 Pale with the light of Light,
 Love me, beloved! me, more newly made
 More feeble, more afraid;

And let me hear with mine thy pinions moved,
 As close and gentle as the loving are,
 That love being near, heaven may not seem so far.

Ador. I am near thee and I love thee.

Were I loveless, from thee gone,
 Love is round, beneath, above thee—
 God, the omnipresent One.

Spread the wing, and lift the brow.

Well-beloved, what fearest thou?

Zerah. I fear, I fear—

Ador. What fear?

Zerah. The fear of earth.

Ador. Of earth, the God-created and God-praised
 In the hour of birth?

Where every night the moon in light
 Doth lead the waters silver-faced?

Where every day the sun doth lay
 A rapture to the heart of all

The leafy and reeded pastoral,
 As if the joyous shout which burst
 From angel lips to see him first,
 Had left a silent echo in his ray?

Zerah. Of earth—the God-created and God-curst,
 Where man is, and the thorn.

Where sun and moon have borne
 No light to souls forlorn.

Where Eden's tree of life no more uprears
 Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but instead
 The yew-tree bows its melancholy head
 And all the undergrasses kills and seres.

Ador. Of earth the weak,
 Made and unmade?

Where men that faint, do strive for crowns that fade?
 Where, having won the profit which they seek,
 They lie beside the sceptre and the gold
 With fleshless hands that cannot wield or hold,
 And the stars shine in their unwinking eyes?

Zerah. Of earth the bold,
 Where the blind matter wrings
 An awful potency out of impotence,
 Bowing the spiritual things
 To the things of sense.

Where the human will replies
 With ay and no,

In visionary pomp to sweep
 O'er Judæa's grassy places,
 O'er the shepherds and the sheep,
 Though thou art so tender?—dimming
 All the stars except one star
 With their brighter, kinder faces,
 And using heaven's own tune in hymning,
 While deep response from earth's own mountains ran,
 "Peace upon earth, goodwill to man."

Zerah. "Glory to God." I said amen afar.
 And those who from that earthly mission are,
 Within mine ears have told

That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold
 With such a sweet and prodigal constraint
 The meaning yet the mystery of the song
 What time they sang it, on their natures strong,
 That, gazing down on earth's dark steadfastness
 And speaking the new peace in promises,
 The love and pity made their voices faint
 Into the low and tender music, keeping
 The place in heaven of what on earth is weeping.

Ador. Peace upon earth. Come down to it.

Zerah. Ah me!

I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.
 Peace where the tempest, where the sighing is,
 And worship of the idol, 'stead of His?

Ador. Yea, peace, where He is.

Zerah. He!

Say it again.

Ador. Where He is.

Zerah. Can it be

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

Ador. There is a tree!—it hath no leaf nor root;
 Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit:

Its shadow on His head is laid.
 For He, the crownèd Son,
 Has left his crown and throne,
 Walks earth in Adam's clay,
 Eve's snake to bruise and slay—

Zerah. Walks earth in clay?

Ador. And walking in the clay which He created,
 He through it shall touch death.

What do I utter? what conceive? did breath
 Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?
 Or was it mine own voice, informed, dilated
 By the seven confluent Spirits?—Speak—answer me!
Who said man's victim was his Deity?

Zerah. Beloved, beloved, the word came forth from thee.
 Thine eyes are rolling a tempestuous light
 Above, below, around,
 As putting thunder-questions without cloud,
 Reverberate without sound,
 To universal nature's depth and height.
 The tremor of an inexpressive thought
 Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud,
 O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips;
 And while thine hands are stretched above,
 As newly they had caught
 Some lightning from the Throne, or showed the Lord
 Some retributive sword,
 Thy brows do alternate with wild eclipse
 And radiance, with contrasted wrath and love,
 As God had called thee to a seraph's part,
 With a man's quailing heart.

Ador. O heart—O heart of man!
 O ta'en from human clay
 To be no seraph's but Jehovah's own!
 Made holy in the taking,
 And yet unseparate
 From death's perpetual ban,
 And human feelings sad and passionate:
 Still subject to the treacherous forsaking
 Of other hearts, and its own steadfast pain.
 O heart of man—of God! which God has ta'en
 From out the dust, with its humanity
 Mournful and weak yet innocent around it,
 And bade its many pulses beating lie
 Beside that incommunicable stir
 Of Deity wherewith He interwound it.
 O man! and is thy nature so defiled
 That all that holy Heart's devout law-keeping,
 And low pathetic beat in deserts wild,
 And gushings pitiful of tender weeping
 For traitors who consigned it to such woe—
 That all could cleanse thee not, without the flow
 Of blood, the life-blood—*His*—and streaming so?

O earth, the thundercleft, windshaken!—where
The louder voice of "blood and blood" doth rise—
Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice?

O heaven! O vacant throne!

O crownèd hierarchies that wear your crown
When His is put away!

Are ye unshamèd that ye cannot dim
Your alien brightness to be liker Him—
Assume a human passion, and down-lay
Your sweet secureness for congenial fears,
And teach your cloudless ever-burning eyes
The mystery of His tears?

Zerah. I am strong, I am strong!

Were I never to see my heaven again,
I would wheel to earth like the tempest rain
Which sweeps there with an exultant sound
To lose its life as it reaches the ground.

I am strong, I am strong!

Away from mine inward vision swim
The shining seats of my heavenly birth—
I see but His, I see but Him—
The Maker's steps on His cruel earth.
Will the bitter herbs of earth grow sweet
To me, as trodden by His feet?

Will the vexed, accurst humanity,
As worn by Him, begin to be
A blessèd, yea, a sacred thing
For love and awe and ministering?

I am strong, I am strong!

By our angel ken shall we survey
His loving smile through His woeful clay?

I am swift, I am strong—

The love is bearing me along.

Ador. One love is bearing us along.

PART THE SECOND.

[*Mid-air, above Judæa. ADOR and ZERAH are a little apart from the visible angelic hosts.*]

Ador. BELOVED ! dost thou see ?—

Zerah. Thee,—thee.

Thy burning eyes already are
Grown wild and mournful as a star
Whose occupation is for aye
To look upon the place of clay
Whereon thou lookest now.

The crown is fainting on thy brow
To the likeness of a cloud—

The forehead's self, a little bowed
From its aspect high and holy—
As it would in meekness meet

Some seraphic melancholy :

Thy very wings that lately flung
An outline clear, do flicker here

And wear to each a shadow hung,
Dropped across thy feet.

In these strange contrasting glooms
Stagnant with the scent of tombs,

Seraph faces, O my brother,
Show awfully to one another.

Ador. Dost thou see ?

Zerah. Even so ; I see

Our empyreal company,

Alone the memory of their brightness
Left in them, as in thee.

The circle upon circle, tier on tier,

Piling earth's hemisphere

With heavenly infiniteness,

Above us and around,

Straining the whole horizon like a bow :

Their songful lips divorcèd from all sound ;

A darkness gliding down their silvery glances,—

Bowing their steadfast solemn countenances

As if they heard God speak, and could not glow.

Ador. Look downward ! dost thou see ?

Zerah. And wouldst thou press *that* vision on my
words ?

Doth not Earth speak enough
 Of change and of undoing,
 Without a seraph's witness? Oceans rough
 With tempest, pastoral swards
 Displaced by fiery deserts, mountains ruing
 The bolt fallen yesterday,
 That shake their piney heads, as who would say
 "We are too beautiful for our decay"—
 Shall seraphs speak of these things? Let alone
 Earth to her earthly moan.

Voice of all things. Is there no moan but hers?

Ador. Hearest thou the attestation

Of the rousèd Universe

Like a desert lion shaking

Dews of silence from its mane?

With an irrepressive passion

Uprising at once,

Rising up and forsaking

Its solemn state in the circle of suns,

To attest the pain

Of Him who stands (O patience sweet!)

In His own hand-prints of creation,

With human feet?

Voice of all things. Is there no moan but ours?

Zerah. Forms, Spaces, Motions wide,

O meek, insensate things,

O congregated matters! who inherit,

Instead of vital powers,

Impulsions God-supplied;

Instead of influent spirit,

A clear informing beauty;

Instead of creature-duty,

Submission calm as rest.

Lights, without feet or wings,

In golden courses sliding!

Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,

Whose lustrous heart away was prest

Into the argent stars!

Ye crystal, firmamental bars,

That hold the skyey waters free

From tide or tempest's ecstasy!

Airs universal! thunders lorn

That wait your lightnings in cloud-cave

Hewn out by the winds! O brave

And subtle elements ! the Holy
 Hath charged me by your voice with folly.*
 Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its wound.
 Return ye to your silences inborn,
 Or to your inarticulated sound !

Ador. Zerah.

Zerah. Wilt thou rebuke ?

God hath rebuked me, brother. I am weak.

Ador. Zerah, my brother *Zerah !* could I speak
 Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.

Zerah.

Thy look

Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy face !—

Where shall I seek His ?—

I have thrown

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

He is not there.

All these are unworthy
 Those footsteps to bear—

Before which, bowing down,

I would fain quench the stars of my crown

In the dark of the earthy.

Where shall I seek Him ?

No reply ?

Hath language left thy lips, to place

Its vocal in thine eye ?

Ador, Ador ! are we come

To a double portent, that

Dumb matter grows articulate

And songful seraphs dumb ?

Ador, Ador !—

Ador.

I constrain

The passion of my silence. None

Of those places gazed upon

Are gloomy enow to fit His pain.

Unto Him, whose forming word

Gave to Nature flower and sward,

She hath given back again,

For the myrtle, the thorn ;

* " His angels He charged with folly."—Job iv. 18.

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

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

Ador. Ah me, not so
In the state of a King, did the victim go!
And THOU who hangest mute of speech,
'Twixt heaven and earth, with forehead yet
Stained by the bloody sweat—
God! man! Thou hast forgone Thy throne in each!

Zerah. Thine eyes behold Him?

Ador. Yea, below.

Track the gazing of mine eyes,
Naming God within thine heart
That its weakness may depart
And the vision rise.

Seest thou yet, beloved?

Zerah. I see

Beyond the city, crosses three,
And mortals three that hang thereon,
'Ghast and silent to the sun.

Round them blacken and welter and press
Staring multitudes, whose father
Adam was—whose brows are dark
With his Cain's corroded mark;
Who curse with looks. Nay—let me rather
Turn unto the wilderness.

Ador. Turn not. God dwells with men.

Zerah. Above

He dwells with angels, and they love.
Can these love? With the living's pride
They stare at those who die—who hang
In their sight and die. They bear the streak
Of the crosses' shadow, black not wide,
To fall on their heads, as it swerves aside

When the victims' pang
Makes the dry wood creak.

Ador. The cross—the cross!

Zerah. A woman kneels
The mid cross under—

With white lips asunder,
 And motion on each :
 They throb, as she feels,
 With a spasm, not a speech ;
 And her lids, close as sleep,
 Are less calm—for the eyes
 Have made room there to weep
 Drop on drop—

Ador. Weep? Weep blood,

All women, all men !
 He sweated it, He,
 For your pale womanhood
 And base manhood. Agree
 That these water-tears, then,
 Are vain, mocking like laughter.
 Weep blood ! Shall the flood

Of salt curses, whose foam is the darkness, on roll
 Forward, on from the strand of the storm-beaten years,
 And back from the rocks of the horrid hereafter,
 And up, in a coil, from the present's wrath-spring,
 Yea, down from the windows of heaven opening,
 Deep calling to deep as they meet on His soul,—
 And men weep only tears ?

Zerah. Little drops in the lapse !

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

Ador. Nor on God.

Zerah. Do all-givers need gifts ?

If the Giver said "Give," the first motion would slay
 Our Immortals, the echo would ruin away
 The same worlds which He made. Why, what angel
 uplifts
 Such a music, so clear,
 It may seem in God's ear

Worth more than a woman's hoarse weeping ? And thus,
 Pity tender as tears, I above thee would speak,
 Thou woman that weepest ! weep unscorned of us :
 I, the tearless and pure, am but loving and weak.

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

In whose infinitude the secrecies
Of thine own being lie hid, and lift thine hand
Exultant, saying, "Lord God, I am wise!" -
Than utter *here*, "I love."

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

Ador. Of heaven. Ah me!

Zerah. Ador!

Ador. Say on.

Zerah. The crucified are three.
Beloved, they are unlike.

Ador. Unlike.

Zerah. For one

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

Ador. And one—

Zerah. Has also sinned.

And yet (O marvel!) doth the Spirit-wind
Blow white those waters? Death upon his face
Is rather shine than shade,
A tender shine by looks beloved made:
He seemeth dying in a quiet place,
And less by iron wounds in hands and feet
Than heart-broke by new joy too sudden and sweet.

Ador. And ONE!—

Zerah. And ONE!—

Ador.

Why dost thou pause
God! God!

Zerah. Spirit of my spirit! who movest
Through seraph veins in burning deity,
To light the quenchless pulses!—

Ador. But hast trod

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

Zerah. Above, Creator!

Within, Upholder!—

Ador. And below, below,

The creature's and the upholden's sacrifice!

Zerah. Why do I pause?—

Zerah. He opened His,
And looked. I cannot bear—

Ador. Their agony?

Zerah. Their love. God's depth is in them. From h
brows
White, terrible in meekness, didst thou see
The lifted eyes unclose?

He is God, seraph! Look no more on me,
O God—I am not God.

Ador. The loving is
Sublimed within them by the sorrowful.
In heaven we could sustain them.

Zerah. Heaven is dull,
Mine Ador, to man's earth. The light that burns
In fluent, reflux motion

Along the crystal ocean;
The springing of the golden harps between
The bowery wings, in fountains of sweet sound—
The winding, wandering music that returns
Upon itself, exultingly self-bound
In the great spheric round

Of everlasting praises;
The God-thoughts in our midst that intervene,
Visibly flashing from the supreme throne,
Full in seraphic faces,
Till each astonishes the other, grown
More beautiful with worship and delight—
My heaven! my home of heaven! my infinite
Heaven-choirs! what are ye to this dust and death,
This cloud, this cold, these tears, this failing breath,
Where God's immortal love now issueth
In this MAN'S woe?

Ador. His eyes are very deep yet calm.

Zerah. No more
On me, Jehovah-man—

Ador. Calm-deep. They show
A passion which is tranquil. They are seeing
No earth, no heaven: no men that slay and curse—
No seraphs that adore;

Their gaze is on the invisible, the dread—
The things we cannot view or think or speak,
Because we are too happy, or too weak,—
The sea of ill, for which the universe,
With all its piled space, can find no shore,

Zerah.

Yea,

But not as man shall! not with life for death,
 New-throbbing through the startled being; not
 With strange astonished smiles, that ever may
 Gush passionate like tears and fill their place:
 Nor yet with speechless memories of what
 Earth's winters were, enverduring the green

Of every heavenly palm

Whose windless, shadeless calm

Moves only at the breath of the Unseen.

Oh, not with this blood on us—and this face,—

Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it bore

In our behalf, and tender evermore

With nature all our own, upon us gazing—

Nor yet with these forgiving hands upraising

Their unreprouchful wounds, alone to bless!

Alas, Creator! shall we love Thee less

Than mortals shall?

Ador.

Amen! so let it be.

We love in our proportion—to the bound

Thine infinite, our finite, set around,

And that is finitely,—Thou, infinite

And worthy infinite love! And our delight

Is watching the dear love poured out to Thee

From ever fuller chalice. Blessed they,

Who love Thee more than we do: blessed we,

Viewing that love which shall exceed even this,

And winning in the sight a double bliss,

For all so lost in love's supremacy.

The bliss is better. Only on the sad

Cold earth there are who say

It seemeth better to be great than glad.

The bliss is better. Love Him more, O man,

Than sinless seraphs can.

Zerah. Yea, love Him more.*Voices of the Angelic Multitude.* Yea, more.*Ador.*

The loving word

Is caught by those from whom we stand apart.

For silence hath no deepness in her heart

Where love's low name low breathed would not be heard

By angels, clear as thunder.

Angelic voices.

Love Him more.

Ador. Sweet voices, swooning o'er!

The music which ye make!

Albeit to love there were not ever given
 A mournful sound when uttered out of heaven,
 That angel-sadness ye would fitly take.
 Of love be silent now : we gaze adown
 Upon the incarnate Love who wears no crown.

Zerah. No crown ! the woe instead
 Is heavy on His head,
 Pressing inward on His brain
 With a hot and clinging pain
 Till all tears are prest away,
 And clear and calm His vision may
 Peruse the black abyss.
 No rod, no sceptre is
 Holden in his fingers pale ;
 They close instead upon the nail,
 Concealing the sharp dole—
 Never stirring to put by
 The fair hair peaked with blood,
 Drooping forward from the rood,
 Helplessly—heavily—
 On the cheek that waxeth colder,
 Whiter ever—and the shoulder
 Where the government was laid.
 His glory made the Heavens afraid ;
 Will He not unearth this cross from its hole ?
 His pity makes his piteous state ;
 Will He be uncompassionate
 Alone to His proper soul ?
 Yea, will He not lift up
 His lips from the bitter cup,
 His brows from the dreary weight,
 His hand from the clenching cross—
 Crying, “ My Father, give to me
 Again the joy I had with Thee,
 Or ere this earth was made for loss ? ”
 No stir : no sound.
 The love and woe being interwound
 He cleaveth to the woe ;
 And putteth forth heaven’s strength below—
 To bear.

Ador. And that creates His anguish now,
 Which made His glory there.

Zerah. Shall it need be so ?
 Awake, thou Earth ! behold !

Thou, uttered forth of old,
 In all thy life-emotion,
 In all thy vernal noises ;
 In the rollings of thine ocean,
 Leaping founts, and rivers running,—
 In thy woods' prophetic heaving,
 Ere the rains a stroke have given ;
 In thy winds' exultant voices
 When they feel the hills anear,—
 In the firmamental sunning,
 And the tempest which rejoices
 Thy full heart with an awful cheer !
 Thou ! uttered forth of old,
 And with all thy music rolled
 In a breath abroad
 By the breathing God,—
 Awake ! He is here ! behold !
 Even *thou*—beseems it good
 To thy vacant vision dim,
 That the deadly ruin should,
 For thy sake, encompass Him ?
 That the Master-word should lie
 A mere silence—while His own
 Processive harmony—
 The faintest echo of His lightest tone,
 Is sweeping in a choral triumph by ?
 Awake ! emit a cry !
 And say, albeit used
 From Adam's ancient years
 To falls of acrid tears,
 To frequent sighs unloosed,
 Caught back to press again
 On bosoms zoned with pain—
 To corpses still and sullen
 The shine and music dulling
 With closed eyes and ears
 That nothing sweet can enter,
 Commoving thee no less
 With that forced quietness,
 Than the earthquake in thy centre—
 Thou hast not learnt to bear
 This new divine despair !
 These tears that sink into thee,
 These dying eyes that view thee,

This dropping blood from lifted rood,
They darken and undo thee !

Thou canst not presently sustain this corse—

Cry, cry, thou hast not force !

Cry, thou wouldst fainer keep

Thy hopeless charnels deep—

Thyself a general tomb—

Where the first and the second Death

Sit gazing face to face,

And mar each other's breath,

While silent bones through all the place

'Neath sun and moon do faintly glisten,

And seem to lie and listen

For the tramp of the coming Doom.

Is it not meet

That they who erst the Eden fruit did eat,

Should champ the ashes ?

That they who wrap them in the thunder-cloud,

Should wear it as a shroud,

Perishing by its flashes ?

That they who vexed the lion, should be rent ?

Cry, cry—"I will sustain my punishment,

The sin being mine ; but take away from me

This visioned Dread—this Man—this Deity."

The Earth. I have groaned; I have travailed: I am weary

I am blind with my own grief, and cannot see,

As clear-eyed angels can, His agony,

And what I see I also can sustain,

Because His power protects me from His pain.

I have groaned—I have travailed—I am dreary,

Hearkening the thick sobs of my children's heart :

How can I say "Depart"

To that Atoner making calm and free ?

Am I a God as He,

To lay down peace and power as willingly ?

Ador. He looked for some to pity. There is none.

All pity is within Him and not for Him.

His earth is iron under Him, and o'er Him

His skies are brass.

His seraphs cry "Alas !"

With hallelujah voice that cannot weep.

And man, for whom the dreadful work is done . . .

Scornful voices from the Earth. If verily this be the

Eternal's son—

Ador. Thou hearest. Man is grateful.

Zerah.

Can I hear

Nor darken into man and cease for ever

My seraph-smile to wear?

Was it for such,

It pleased Him to overleap

His glory with His love, and sever

From the God-light and the throne,

And all angels bowing down,

For whom His every look did touch

New notes of joy on the unworn string

Of an eternal worshipping?

For such, He left His heaven?

There, though never bought by blood

And tears, we gave Him gratitude:

We loved Him there, though unforgiven.

Ador. The light is riven

Above, around,

And down in lurid fragments flung,

That catch the mountain-peak and stream

With momentary gleam,

Then perish in the water and the ground.

River and waterfall,

Forest and wilderness,

Mountain and city, are together wrung

Into one shape, and that is shapelessness;

The darkness stands for all.

Zerah. The pathos hath the day undone:

The death-look of His eyes

Hath overcome the sun

And made it sicken in its narrow skies.

Ador. Is it to death? He dieth.

Zerah.

Through the dark

He still, He only, is discernible—

The naked hands and feet transfixed stark,

The countenance of patient anguish white,

Do make themselves a light

More dreadful than the glooms which round them dwell

And therein do they shine.

Ador.

God! Father-God!

Perpetual Radiance on the radiant throne!

Uplift the lids of inward Deity,

Flashing abroad

Thy burning Infinite!

Light up this dark where there is nought to see
 Except the unimagined agony
 Upon the sinless forehead of the Son.

Zerah. God, tarry not! Behold, enow
 Hath He wandered as a stranger,
 Sorrowed as a victim. Thou,
 Appear for Him, O Father!
 Appear for Him, Avenger!
 Appear for Him, just One and holy One,
 For He is holy and just!
 At once the darkness and dishonour rather
 To the ragged jaws of hungry chaos rake,
 And hurl aback to ancient dust
 These mortals that make blasphemies
 With their made breath, this earth and skies
 That only grow a little dim,
 Seeing their curse on Him.
 But Him, of all forsaken,
 Of creature and of brother,
 Never wilt Thou forsake!

Thy living and Thy loving cannot slacken
 Their firm essential hold upon each other,
 And well Thou dost remember how His part
 Was still to lie upon Thy breast and be
 Partaker of the light that dwelt in Thee
 Ere sun or seraph shone;
 And how, while silence trembled round the throne,
 Thou countedst by the beatings of His heart,
 The moments of Thine own eternity!

Awaken,
 O right Hand with the lightnings! Again gather
 His glory to Thy glory! What stranger—
 What ill supreme in evil, can be thrust
 Between the faithful Father and the Son?

Appear for Him, O Father!
 Appear for Him, Avenger!
 Appear for Him, just One and holy One,
 For He is holy and just.

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

Zerah. No reply,
 O unforsaking Father?

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

Zerah. And by a sharper sound than death,
Mine immortality is riven.

The heavy darkness which doth tent the sky,
Floats backward as by a sudden wind :

But I see no light behind,

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

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

On our vacant thrones in heaven.

Voice from the Cross. MY GOD, MY GOD,
WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN ?

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

My sin is on Thee, sinless One! Thou art
God-orphaned, for my burden on Thy head,
Dark sin, white innocence, endurance dread!
Be still, within your shrouds, my buried dead;
Nor work with this quick horror round mine heart.

Zerah. He hath forsaken *Him*. I perish.

Ador.

Hold

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

Zerah. I seek His will. Seek, seraphim!

My God, my God! where is it? Doth that curse
Reverberate, spare us, seraph or universe?

He hath forsaken Him.

Ador. He cannot fail.

Angel Voices. We faint, we droop,

Our love doth tremble like fear.

Voices of Fallen Angels from the Earth. Do we prevail?
Or are we lost? Hath not the ill we did

Been heretofore our good?

Is it not ill that One, all sinless, should
Hang heavy with all curses on a cross?

Nathless, that cry! With huddled faces hid

Within the empty graves which men did scoop

To hold more damned dead, we shudder through

What shall exalt us or undo,

Our triumph, or—our loss.

Voice from the Cross. IT IS FINISHED.

Zerah.

Hark, again!

Like a victor, speaks the Slain.

Angel Voices. Finished be the trembling vain!

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

Angel Voices. Finished is the mystic pain!

Voices of Fallen Angels. His deathly forehead at the
word,

Gleameth like a seraph sword.

Angel Voices. Finished is the demon reign!

Ador. His breath, as living God, createth,
His breath, as dying man, completeth.

Angel Voices. Finished work His hands sustain!

The Earth. In mine ancient sepulchres
Where my kings and prophets freeze,
Adam dead four thousand years,
Unwakened by the universe's
Everlasting moan,

Aye his ghastly silence mocking—
Unwakened by his children's knocking
At his old sepulchral stone,

"Adam, Adam, all this curse is
Thine and on us yet!"—

Unwakened by the ceaseless tears
Wherewith they made his cerement wet,
"Adam, must thy curse remain?"—

Starts with sudden life, and hears

Through the slow dripping of the caverned eaves,—

Angel Voices. Finished is his bane.

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

Ador. Hear the wailing winds that be
By wings of unclean spirits made.

They, in that last look, surveyed
The love they lost in losing heaven,
And passionately flee,

With a desolate cry that cleaves
The natural storms—though *they* are lifting
God's strong cedar-roots like leaves,
And the earthquake and the thunder,
Neither keeping either under,
Roar and hurtle through the glooms—
And a few pale stars are drifting
Past the Dark, to disappear,
What time, from the splitting tombs,
Gleamingly the Dead arise,
Viewing with their death-calmed eyes

The elemental strategies,
 To witness, Victory is the Lord's !
 Hear the wail o' the spirits ! hear.
Zerah. I hear alone the memory of His words.

EPILOGUE.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

And I—ah ! what am I
 To counterfeit, with faculty earth-darkened,
 Seraphic brows of light,
 And seraph language never used nor hearkened ?
 Ah me ! what word that seraphs say, could come
 From mouth so used to sighs—so soon to lie
 Sighless, because then breathless, in the tomb ?

IV.

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

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

v.

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

THE POET'S VOW.

"—O be wiser thou,
 Instructed that true knowledge leads to love."
 WORDSWORTH.

PART THE FIRST.

Showing wherefore the Vow was made.

I.

EVE is a twofold mystery—
 The stillness Earth doth keep ;
 The motion wherewith human hearts
 Do each to either leap,
 As if all souls between the poles
 Felt "Parting comes in sleep."

II.

The rowers lift their oars to view
 Each other in the sea ;
 The landsmen watch the rocking boats,
 In a pleasant company ;
 While up the hill go gladlier still
 Dear friends by two and three.

III.

The peasant's wife hath looked without
 Her cottage door and smiled ;
 For there the peasant drops his spade
 To clasp his youngest child,
 Which hath no speech, but its hand can reach
 And stroke his forehead mild.

IV.

A poet sate that eventide
 Within his hall alone,
 As silent as its ancient lords
 In the confined place of stone ;
 When the bat hath shrunk from the praying monk—
 And the praying monk is gone.

V.

Nor wore the dead a stiller face
 Beneath the cerement's roll :
 His lips refusing out in words
 Their mystic thoughts to dole ;
 His steadfast eye burnt inwardly,
 As burning out his soul.

VI.

You would not think that brow could e'er
 Ungentle moods express :
 Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,
 Too calm for gentleness :
 When the very star, that shines from far,
 Shines trembling, ne'ertheless.

VII.

It lacked—all need—the softening light
 Which other brows supply :
 We should conjoin the scathed trunks
 Of our humanity,
 That each leafless spray, entwining, may
 Look softer 'gainst the sky.

VIII.

None gazed within the poet's face—
 The poet gazed in none :

He threw a lonely shadow straight
 Before the moon and sun,
 Affronting nature's heaven-dwelling creatures,
 With wrong to nature done :

IX.

Because this poet daringly,
 The nature at his heart,
 And that quick tune along his veins
 He could not change by art,
 Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
 To a stagnant place apart.

X.

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,
 Or grief's fantastic whim ;
 But, weights and shows of sensual things
 Too closely crossing him,
 On his soul's eyelid the pressure slid
 And made its vision dim.

XI.

And darkening in the dark, he strove
 'Twixt earth and sea and sky,
 To lose in shadow, wave, and cloud,
 His brother's haunting cry.
 The winds were welcome as they swept :
 God's five-day work he would accept,
 But let the rest go by.

XII.

He cried—"O touching, patient Earth,
 That weepest in thy glee !
 Whom God created very good,
 And very mournful, we !
 Thy voice of moan doth reach His throne,
 As Abel's rose from thee.

XIII.

" Poor crystal sky, with stars astray !
 Mad winds that howling go
 From east to west ! perplexed seas
 That stagger from their blow !

O motion wild! O wave defiled!
Our curse hath made thee so.

XIV.

"*We!* and *our* curse! Do *I* partake
The desiccating sin?
Have *I* the apple at my lips?
The money-lust within?
Do *I* human stand with the wounding hand,
To the blasting heart akin?

XV.

"Thou solemn pathos of all things,
For solemn joy designed!
Behold, submissive to your cause,
An holy wrath I find,
And, for your sake, the bondage break
That knits me to my kind.

XVI.

"Hear me forswear man's sympathies,
His pleasant yea and no—
His riot on the piteous earth
Whereon his thistles grow;
His changing love—with stars above!
His pride—with graves below!

XVII.

"Hear me forswear his roof by night,
His bread and salt by day,
His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,
His greetings by the way,
His answering looks, his systemed books,
All man, for aye and aye.

XVIII.

"That so my purged, once human heart,
From all the human rent,
May gather strength to pledge and drink
Your wine of wonderment,
While you pardon me, all blessingly,
The woe mine Adam sent.

XIX.

“ And I shall feel your unseen looks
 Innumerable, constant, deep,
 And soft as haunted Adam once,
 Though sadder, round me creep;
 As slumbering men have mystic ken
 Of watchers on their sleep.

XX.

“ And ever, when I lift my brow
 At evening to the sun,
 No voice of woman or of child
 Recording ‘ Day is done,’
 Your silence shall a love express,
 More deep than such an one !”

PART THE SECOND.

Showing to whom the Vow was declared.

I.

THE poet's vow was inly sworn—
 The poet's vow was told :
 He parted to his crowding friends
 The silver and the gold ;
 They clasping bland his gift—his hand,
 In a somewhat slacker hold.

II.

They wended forth, the crowding friends,
 With farewells smooth and kind—
 They wended forth, the solaced friends,
 And left but twain behind :
 One loved him true as brothers do,
 And one was Rosalind.

III.

He said—“ My friends have wended forth,
 With farewells smooth and kind ;
 Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,
 Ye need not stay behind.

Friend, wed my fair bride for my sake—
 And let my lands ancestral make
 A dower for Rosalind.

IV.

“And when beside your wassail board
 Ye bless your social lot,
 I charge you, that the giver be
 In all his gifts forgot!
 Or alone of all his words recall
 The last—Lament me not.”

V.

She looked upon him silently,
 With her large, doubting eyes,
 Like a child that never knew but love,
 Whom words of wrath surprise;
 Till the rose did break from either cheek
 And the sudden tears did rise.

VI.

She looked upon him mournfully,
 While her large eyes were grown
 Yet larger with the steady tears;
 Till, all his purpose known,
 She turned slow, as she would go—
 The tears were shaken down.—

VII.

She turned slow, as she would go,
 Then quickly turned again;
 And gazing in his face to seek
 Some little touch of pain—
 “I thought,” she said—but shook her head—
 She tried that speech in vain.

VIII.

“I thought—but I am half a child,
 And very sage art thou—
 The teachings of the heaven and earth
 Did keep us soft and low.
 They have drawn *my* tears, in early years
 Or ere I wept—as now.

IX.

“ But now that in thy face I read
 Their cruel homily,
 Before their beauty I would fain
 Untouched, unsoftened be—
 If I indeed could look on even
 The senseless, loveless earth and heaven,
 As thou canst look on me.

X.

“ And couldest thou as coldly view
 Thy childhood's far abode,
 Where little feet kept time with thine
 Along the dewy sod?
 And thy mother's look from holy book
 Rose like a thought of God?

XI.

“ O brother—called so, ere her last
 Betrothing words were said!
 O fellow-watcher in her room,
 With hushed voice and tread!
 Rememberest thou how, hand in hand,
 O friend, O lover, we did stand,
 And knew that she was dead?

XII.

“ I will not live Sir Roland's bride—
 That dower I will not hold!
 I tread below my feet that go,
 These parchments bought and sold:
 The tears I weep are mine to keep,
 And worthier than thy gold.”

XIII.

The poet and Sir Roland stood
 Alone, each turned to each;
 Till Roland brake the silence left
 By that soft-throbbing speech—
 “ Poor heart!” he cried, “ it vainly tried
 The distant heart to reach!

XIV.

“ And thou, O distant, sinful heart,
 That climbest up so high,

To wrap and blind thee with the snows
 That cause to dream and die—
 What blessing can, from lips of man,
 Approach thee with his sigh ?

XV.

“ Ay ! what from earth—create for man,
 And moaning in his moan ?
 Ay ! what from stars—revealed to man,
 And man-named one by one ?
 Ay, more ! what blessing can be given,
 Where the Spirits seven, do show in Heaven,
 A MAN upon the throne ?—

XVI.

“ A man on earth HE wandered once,
 All meek and undefiled :
 And those who loved Him, said ‘ He wept,’—
 None ever said He smiled ;
 Yet there might have been a smile unseen,
 When He bowed His holy face, I ween,
 To bless that happy child.

XVII.

“ And now HE pleadeth up in Heaven
 For our humanities,
 Till the ruddy light on seraphs’ wings
 In pale emotion dies.
 They can better bear His Godhead’s glare
 Than the pathos of His eyes.

XVIII.

“ I will go pray our God to-day
 To teach thee how to scan
 His work divine, for human use,
 Since earth on axle ran !
 To teach thee to discern as plain
 His grief divine—the blood-drop’s stain
 He left there, MAN for man.

XIX.

“ So, for the blood’s sake, shed by Him,
 Whom angels, God, declare,

Tears, like it, moist and warm with love,
 Thy reverent eyes shall wear,
 To see i' the face of Adam's race
 The nature God doth share."

XX.

"I heard," the poet said, "thy voice
 As dimly as thy breath!
 The sound was like the noise of life
 To one anear his death;
 Or of waves that fail to stir the pale
 Sere leaf they roll beneath.

XXI.

"And still between the sound and me,
 White creatures like a mist
 Did interfloat confusedly—
 Mysterious shapes unwist!
 Across my heart and across my brow
 I felt them droop like wreaths of snow,
 To still the pulse they kist.

XXII.

"The castle and its lands are thine—
 The poor's—it shall be done;
 Go, *man*; to love! I go to live
 In Courland hall, alone.
 The bats along the ceilings cling—
 The lizards in the floors do run—
 And storms and years have worn and reft
 The stain by human builders left
 In working at the stone!"

PART THE THIRD.

Showing how the Vow was kept.

I.

HE dwelt alone, and, sun and moon,
 Were witness that he made
 Rejection of his humanness
 Until they seemed to fade;

His face did so, for he did grow
Of his own soul afraid.

II.

The self-poised God may dwell alone
With inward glorying ;
But God's chief angel waiteth for
A brother's voice, to sing ;
And a lonely creature of sinful nature—
It is an awful thing.

III.

An awful thing that feared itself
While many years did roll—
A lonely man, a feeble man—
A part beneath the whole—
He bore by day, he bore by night
That pressure of God's infinite
Upon his finite soul.

IV.

The poet at his lattice sate,
And downwardly looked he :
Three Christians wended by to prayers,
With mute ones in their ee.
Each turned above a face of love,
And called him to the far chapelle
With voice more tuneful than its bell—
But still they wended three.

V.

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,
A bridegroom and his dame :
She speaketh low for happiness,
She blusheth red for shame—
But never a tone of benison
From out the lattice came.

VI.

A little child with inward song,
No louder noise to dare,
Stood near the wall to see at play
The lizards green and rare—
Unblessed the while for his childish smile
Which cometh unaware.

PART THE FOURTH.

Showing how Rosalind fared by the keeping of the Vow.

I.

In death-sheets lieth Rosalind,
 As white and still as they ;
 And the old nurse that watched her bed,
 Rose up with " Well-a-day !"
 And oped the casement to let in
 The sun, and that sweet doubtful din
 Which droppeth from the grass and bough
 Sans wind and bird—none knoweth how—
 To cheer her as she lay.

II.

The old nurse started when she saw
 Her sudden look of woe !
 But the quick wan tremblings round her mouth
 In a meek smile did go ;
 And calm she said " When I am dead,
 Dear nurse, it shall be so.

III.

" Till then, shut out those sights and sounds,
 And pray God pardon me,
 That I without this pain, no more,
 His blessed works can see !
 And lean beside me, loving nurse,
 That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse,
 What thy last love should be."

IV.

The loving nurse leant over her,
 As white she lay beneath ;
 The old eyes searching, dim with life,
 The young ones dim with death,
 To read their look, if sound forsook
 The trying, trembling breath.—

V.

" When all this feeble breath is done,
 And I on bier am laid,

My tresses smoothed, for never a feast,
 My body in shroud arrayed ;
 Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
 As if that still I prayed.

VI.

“ And heap beneath mine head the flowers^{*}
 You stoop so low to pull ;
 The little white flowers from the wood,
 Which grow there in the cool ;
 Which *he* and I, in childhood's games,
 Went plucking, knowing not their names,
 And filled thine apron full.

VII.

“ Weep not ! *I* weep not. Death is strong ;
 The eyes of Death are dry ;
 But lay this scroll upon my breast
 When hushed its heavings lie ;
 And wait awhile for the corpse's smile
 Which shineth presently.

VIII.

“ And when it shineth, straightway call
 Thy youngest children dear,
 And bid them gently carry me
 All barefaced on the bier—
 But bid them pass my kirkyard grass
 That waveth long anear.

IX.

“ And up the bank where I used to sit
 And dream what life would be,
 Along the brook, with its sunny look
 Akin to living glee ;
 O'er the windy hill, through the forest still,
 Let them gently carry me.

X.

“ And through the piney forest still,
 And down the open moorland—
 Round where the sea beats mistily
 And blindly on the foreland—

And let them chant that hymn I know,
 Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,
 To the ancient hall of Courland.

XI.

"And when withal they near the hall,
 In silence let them lay
 My bier before the bolted door,
 And leave it for a day :
 For I have vowed, though I am proud,
 To go there as a guest in shroud,
 And not be turned away."

XII.

The old nurse looked within her eyes,
 Whose mutual look was gone :
 The old nurse stooped upon her mouth,
 Whose answering voice was done ;
 And nought she heard, till a little bird
 Upon the casement's woodbine swinging
 Broke out into a loud sweet singing
 For joy o' the summer sun.
 "Alack ! alack !" — she watched no more —
 With head on knee she wailéd sore ;
 And the little bird sang o'er and o'er
 For joy o' the summer sun.

PART THE FIFTH.

Showing how the Vow was broken.

I.

THE poet oped his bolted door,
 The midnight sky to view ;
 A spirit-feel was in the air
 Which seemed to touch his spirit bare
 Whenever his breath he drew ;
 And the stars a liquid softness had
 As alone their holiness forbade
 Their falling with the dew.

II.

They shine upon the steadfast hills,
 Upon the swinging tide ;

Upon the narrow track of beach,
 And the murmuring pebbles pied ;
 They shine on every lovely place—
 They shine upon the corpse's face,
 As *it* were fair beside.

III.

It lay before him, humanlike,
 Yet so unlike a thing !
 More awful in its shrouded pomp
 Than any crownèd king ;
 All calm and cold, as it did hold
 Some secret, glorying.

IV.

A heavier weight than of its clay
 Clung to his heart and knee :
 As if those folded palms could strike,
 He staggered groaningly,
 And then o'erhung, without a groan,
 The meek close mouth that smiled alone,
 Whose speech the scroll must be.

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL.

" I LEFT thee last, a child at heart,
 A woman scarce in years :
 I come to thee, a solemn corpse,
 Which neither feels nor fears.
 I have no breath to use in sighs ;
 They laid the death-weights on mine eyes,
 To seal them safe from tears.

" Look on me with thine own calm look—
 I meet it calm as thou !
 No look of thine can change *this* smile,
 Or break thy sinful vow.
 I tell thee that my poor scorned heart
 Is of thine earth—thine earth—a part—
 It cannot vex thee now.

" But out, alas ! these words are writ
 By a living, loving one,

Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of life,
 The warm, quick tears do run.
 Ah, let the unloving corpse control
 Thy scorn back from the loving soul,
 Whose place of rest is won.

“ I have prayed for thee with bursting sobs,
 When passion's course was free :
 I have prayed for thee with silent lips,
 In the anguish none could see !
 They whispered oft, ‘ She sleepeth soft ’—
 But I only prayed for thee.

“ Go to ! I pray for thee no more—
 The corpse's tongue is still :
 Its folded fingers point to heaven,
 But point there stiff and chill :
 No farther wrong, no farther woe
 Hath license from the sin below
 Its tranquil heart to thrill.

“ I charge thee, by the living's prayer,
 And the dead's silentness,
 To wring from out thy soul a cry,
 Which God shall hear and bless !
 Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my hand,
 And pale among the saints I stand,
 A saint companionless.”

V.

Bow lower down before the throne,
 Triumphant Rosalind !
 He boweth on thy corpse his face,
 And weepeth as the blind.
 'Twas a dread sight to see them so—
 For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro,
 With the wail of his living mind.

VI.

But dreader sight, could such be seen,
 His inward mind did lie ;
 Whose long-subjected humanness
 Gave out its lion cry,
 And fiercely rent its tenement
 In a mortal agony.

VII.

I tell you, friends, had you heard his wail,
 'Twould haunt you in court and mart,
 And in merry feast, until you set
 Your cup down to depart—
 That weeping wild of a reckless child
 From a proud man's broken heart!

VIII.

O broken heart! O broken vow,
 That wore so proud a feature!
 God, grasping as a thunderbolt
 The man's rejected nature,
 Smote him therewith—i' the presence high
 Of his so worshipped earth and sky
 That looked on all indifferently—
 A wailing human creature.

IX.

A human creature found too weak
 To bear his human pain—
 (May Heaven's dear grace have spoken peace
 To his dying heart and brain!)
 For when they came at dawn of day
 To lift the lady's corpse away,
 Her bier was holding twain.

X.

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass,
 For both, one dwelling deep:
 To which, when years had mossed the stone,
 Sir Roland brought his little son
 To watch the funeral heap.
 And, when the happy boy would rather
 Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
 The wood-doves nodding from the tree—
 "Nay, boy, look downward," said his father,
 "Upon this human dust asleep:
 And hold it in thy constant ken,
 That God's own unity compresses
 One into one, the human many,
 And that His everlastingness is
 The bond which is not loosed by any.

That thou and I this law must keep,
 If not in love, in sorrow then ;
 Though smiling not like other men,
 Still, like them, we must weep."

THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.

"Can my affections find out nothing best,
 But still and still remove?"—QUARLES.

I.

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
 The yew-tree leaf will suit ;
 But when its shade is o'er you laid,
 Turn round and pluck the fruit !
 Now reach my harp from off the wall,
 Where shines the sun aslant ;
 The sun may shine and we be cold—
 O hearken, loving hearts and bold,
 Unto my wild romaunt,
 Margret, Margret.

II.

Sitteth the fair ladye
 Close to the river side,
 Which runneth on with a merry tone,
 Her merry thoughts to guide.
 It runneth through the trees,
 It runneth by the hill,
 Nathless the lady's thoughts have found
 A way more pleasant still.
 Margret, Margret.

III.

The night is in her hair,
 And giveth shade to shade,
 And the pale moonlight on her forehead white
 Like a spirit's hand is laid :
 Her lips part with a smile,
 Instead of speakings done—
 I ween, she thinketh of a voice,
 Albeit uttering none.
 Margret, Margret.

IV.

All little birds do sit
 With heads beneath their wings :
 Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,
 Absorbed from her living things :
 That dream, by that ladye,
 Is certes unpartook,
 For she looketh to the high cold stars
 With a tender human look.
 Margret, Margret.

V.

The lady's shadow lies
 Upon the running river :
 It lieth no less in its quietness,
 For that which resteth never :
 Most like a trusting heart
 Upon a passing faith—
 Or as, upon the course of life,
 The steadfast doom of death.
 Margret, Margret.

VI.

The lady doth not move,
 The lady doth not dream—
 Yet she seeth her shade no longer laid
 In rest upon the stream !
 It shaketh without wind ;
 It parteth from the tide ;
 It standeth upright in the cleft moonlight—
 It sitteth at her side.
 Margret, Margret.

VII.

Look in its face, ladye,
 And keep thee from thy swoond ;
 With a spirit bold, thy pulses hold,
 And hear its voice's sound !
 For so will sound thy voice,
 When thy face is to the wall ;
 And such will be thy face, ladye,
 When the maidens work thy pall—
 Margret, Margret.

VIII.

"Am I not like to thee?"—

The voice was calm and low—

And between each word you might have heard
The silent forests grow.

"*The like may sway the like!*"

By which mysterious law,

Mine eyes from thine, and my lips from thine,
The light and breath may draw,

Margret, Margret.

IX.

"My lips do need thy breath,

My lips do need thy smile,

And my pallid eyne, that light in thine,
Which met the stars erewhile;

Yet go with light and life,

If that thou lovest one

In all the earth, who loveth thee

As truly as the sun,

Margret, Margret."

X.

Her cheek had waxèd white,

Like cloud at fall of snow;

Then like to one at set of sun,

It waxèd red alsò;

For love's name maketh bold,

As if the loved were near!

And then she sighed the deep long sigh

Which cometh after fear.

Margret, Margret.

XI.

"Now, sooth, I fear thee not—

Shall never fear thee now!"

(And a noble sight was the sudden light
Which lit her lifted brow.)

"Can earth be dry of streams;

Or hearts, of love?" she said—

"Who doubteth love, can know not love:

He is already dead."

Margret, Margret.

XII.

"I have" . . . and here her lips
 Some word in haste did keep,
 And gave the while a quiet smile,
 As if they paused in sleep ;—

"I have . . . a brother dear,
 A knight of knightly fame!
 I broidered him a knightly scarf
 With letters of my name.

Margret, Margret.

XIII.

"I fed his gray goss-hawk,
 I kissed his fierce bloodhound ;
 I sate at home when he might come,
 And caught his horn's far sound :
 I sang him hunter's songs,
 I poured him the red wine—
 He looked across the cup, and said,
 '*I love thee, sister mine.*'"

Margret, Margret.

XIV.

IT trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter :
 The sounding river which rolled for ever,
 Stood dumb and stagnant after.

"Brave knight thy brother is ;
 But better loveth he
 Thy chalice wine than thy chanted song—
 And better both, than thee,

Margret, Margret."

XV.

The lady did not heed
 The river's silence, while
 Her own thoughts still ran at their will,
 And calm was still her smile.

"My little sister wears
 The look our mother wore :
 I smooth her locks with a golden comb—
 I bless her evermore."

Margret, Margret.

XVI.

"I gave her my first bird,
 When first my voice it knew ;
 I made her share my posies rare,
 And told her where they grew :
 I taught her God's dear name
 With prayer and praise, to tell—
 She looked from heaven into my face,
 And said, '*I love thee well.*'"
 Margret, Margret.

XVII.

IT trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter :
 You could see each bird as it woke and stared
 Through the shrivelled foliage, after.
 "Fair child thy sister is ;
 But better loveth she
 Thy golden comb than thy gathered flowers—
 And better both, than thee,
 Margret, Margret."

XVIII.

The lady did not heed
 The withering on the bough :
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while
 A little pale her brow.
 "I have a father old,
 The lord of ancient halls :
 An hundred friends are in his court,
 Yet only me he calls.
 Margret, Margret.

XIX.

"An hundred knights are in his court,
 Yet read I by his knee ;
 And when forth they go to the tourney show,
 I rise not up to see.
 'Tis a weary book to read—
 My tryst's at set of sun !
 But loving and dear beneath the stars
 Is his blessing when I've done."
 Margret, Margret.

XX.

IT trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter :
 And moon and star, though bright and far,
 Did shrink and darken after.
 " High lord thy father is ;
 But better loveth he
 His ancient halls than his hundred friends—
 His ancient halls, than thee,
 Margret, Margret.

XXI.

The lady did not heed
 That the far stars did fail :
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while . . .
 Nay, but she is not pale !
 " I have more than a friend
 Across the mountains dim :
 No other's voice is soft to me,
 Unless it nameth *him*."
 Margret, Margret.

XXII.

" Though louder beats mine heart,
 I know his tread again—
 And his far plume eye, unless turned away,
 For the tears do blind me then.
 We brake no gold, a sign
 Of stronger faith to be ;
 But I wear his last look in my soul,
 Which said, *I love but thee!*"
 Margret, Margret.

XXIII.

IT trembled on the grass,
 With a low, shadowy laughter :
 And the wind did toll, as a passing soul
 Were sped by church-bell, after :
 And shadows, 'stead of light,
 Fell from the stars above,
 In flakes of darkness on her face
 Still bright with trusting love.
 Margret, Margret.



B.P.—I. "Hear not the wind—view not the woods ;
Look out o'er vale and hill."

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XXIV.

" He *loved* but only thee !
 That love is transient too.
 The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still
 I' the mouth that vowed thee true.
 Will he open his dull eyes,
 When tears fall on his brow ?
 Behold, the death-worm to his heart
 Is a nearer thing than *thou*,
 Margret, Margret."

XXV.

Her face was on the ground—
 None saw the agony !
 But the men at sea did that night agree
 They heard a drowning cry.
 And when the morning brake,
 Fast rolled the river's tide,
 With the green trees waving overhead,
 And a white corse lain beside.
 Margret, Margret.

XXVI.

A knight's bloodhound and he
 The funeral watch did keep :
 With a thought o' the chase, he stroked its face,
 As it howled to see him weep.
 A fair child kissed the dead,
 But shrank before its cold :
 And alone, yet proudly, in his hall,
 Did stand a baron old.
 Margret, Margret.

XXVII.

Hang up my harp again—
 I have no voice for song.
 Not song but wail, and mourners pale
 Not bards, to love belong.
 O failing human love !
 O light by darkness known !
 O false, the while thou treadest earth !
 O deaf, beneath the stone !
 Margret, Margret.

ISOBEL'S CHILD.

"—so find we profit,
By losing of our prayers."—SHAKESPEARE.

I.

To rest the weary nurse has gone ;
An eight-day watch had watchèd she,
Still rocking beneath sun and moon
The baby on her knee :
Till Isobel its mother said,
"The fever waneth—wend to bed—
For now the watch comes round to me."

II.

Then wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
Of that sick room, and slept and dreamed :
For, as the gusty wind did blow
The night-lamp's flare across her face,
She saw or seemed to see, but dreamed,
That the poplars tall on the opposite hill,
The seven tall poplars on the hill,
Did clasp the setting sun until
His rays dropped from him, pined and still
As blossoms in frost :
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly crossed,
To the colour of moonlight which doth pass
Over the dank ridged churchyard grass.
The poplars held the sun, and he
The eyes of the nurse that they should not see,
Not for a moment, the babe on her knee,
Though she shuddered to feel that it grew to be
Too chill, and lay too heavily.

III.

She only dreamed : for all the while
'Twas Lady Isobel that kept
The little baby ; and it slept
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,
Laden with love's dewy weight,
And red as a rose of Harpocrate,
Dropt upon its eyelids, pressed
Lashes to cheek in a sealèd rest.

IV.

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—

She knew not that she smiled,
Against the lattice, dull and wild,
Drive the heavy droning drops,
Drop by drop, the sound being one—
As momentarily time's segments fall
On the ear of God who hears through all,
Eternity's unbroken monotone.

And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—

She knew not that she smiled.
The wind in intermission stops
Down in the beechen forest,
Then cries aloud
As one at the sorest,
Self-stung, self-driven,
And rises up to its very tops,
Stiffening erect the branches bowed ;
Dilating with a tempest-soul
The trees that with their dark hands break
Through their own outline, and heavy roll
Shadows as massive as clouds in heaven,
Across the castle lake.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well—
She knew not that she smiled ;
She knew not that the storm was wild.
Through the uproar drear she could not hear
The castle clock which struck anear—
She heard the low, light breathing of her child.

V.

O sight for wondering look !
While the external nature broke
Into such abandonment ;
While the very mist, heart-rent
By the lightning, seemed to eddy
Against nature, with a din—
A sense of silence and of steady
Natural calm appeared to come
From things without, and enter in
The human creature's room.

VI.

So motionless she sate,
 The babe asleep upon her knees,
 You might have dreamed their souls had gone
 Away to things inanimate,
 In such to live, in such to moan ;
 And that their bodies had ta'en back,
 In mystic change, all silences
 That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
 Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
 In waters safe from their own sound.

Only she wore
 The deepening smile I named before,
 And *that* a deepening love expressed—
 And who at once can love and rest ?

VII.

In sooth the smile that then was keeping
 Watch upon the baby sleeping,
 Floated with its tender light
 Downward, from the drooping eyes,
 Upward, from the lips apart,
 Over cheeks which had grown white
 With an eight-day weeping.
 All smiles come in such a wise,
 Where tears shall fall, or have of old—
 Like northern lights that fill the heart
 Of heaven in sign of cold.

VIII.

Motionless she sate :
 Her hair had fallen by its weight
 On each side of her smile, and lay
 Very blackly on the arm
 Where the baby nestled warm ;
 Pale as baby carved in stone
 Seen by glimpses of the moon
 Up a dark cathedral aisle :
 But, through the storm, no moonbeam fell
 Upon the child of Isobel—
 Perhaps you saw it by the ray
 Alone of her still smile.

IX.

A solemn thing it is to me
 To look upon a babe that sleeps—
 Wearing in its spirit-deeps
 The undeveloped mystery
 Of our Adam's taint and woe,
 Which, when they developed be,
 Will not let it slumber so :
 Lying new in life beneath
 The shadow of the coming death,
 With that soft, low, quiet breath,
 As if it felt the sun !

Knowing all things by their blooms,
 Not their roots ; yea—sun and sky,
 Only by the warmth that comes
 Out of each—earth, only by
 The pleasant hues that o'er it run ;
 And human love, by drops of sweet
 White nourishment still hanging round
 The little mouth so slumber-bound.

All which broken sentiency
 And conclusion incomplete,
 Will gather and unite and climb
 To an immortality
 Good or evil, each sublime,
 Through life and death to life again !

O little lids, now folded fast,
 Must ye learn to drop at last
 Our large and burning tears ?
 O warm quick body, must thou lie,
 When the time comes round to die,
 Still from all the whirl of years,
 Bare of all the joy and pain ?

O small frail being, wilt thou stand
 At God's right hand—

Lifting up those sleeping eyes,
 Dilated by great destinies,
 To an endless waking ? Thrones and seraphim,
 Through the long ranks of their solemnities,
 Sunning thee with calm looks of Heaven's surprise—

But thine alone on *Him* ?

Or else, self-willed to tread the Godless place,
 (God keep thy will !) feel thine own energies,

Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead man's clasp,
 The sleepless, deathless life within thee, grasp ;
 While myriad faces, like one changeless face,
 With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee everywhere,
 And overcome thee with thine own despair ?

x.

More soft, less solemn images
 Drifted o'er the lady's heart,
 Silently as snow :
 She had seen eight days depart
 Hour by hour, on bended knees,
 With pale-wrung hands and prayings low
 And broken—through which came the sound
 Of tears that fell against the ground,
 Making sad stops :—“ Dear Lord, dear Lord ! ”
 She still had prayed—(the heavenly word,
 Broken by an earthly sigh :)
 “ Thou, who didst not erst deny
 The mother-joy to Mary mild,
 Blessed in the Blessed Child,
 Which hearkened in meek babyhood
 Her cradle-hymn, albeit used
 To all that music interfused
 In breasts of angels high and good !
 Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away—
 Oh, take not to Thy songful heaven
 The pretty baby Thou hast given,
 Or ere that I have seen him play
 Around his father's knees, and known
 That *he* knew how my love has gone
 From all the world to him.
 Think, God among the cherubim,
 How I shall shiver every day
 In Thy June sunshine, knowing where
 The grave-grass keeps it from his fair
 Still cheeks ! and feel at every tread
 His little body which is dead
 And hidden in the turfy fold,
 Doth make the whole warm earth a-cold !
 O God, I am so young, so young—
 I am not used to tears at nights
 Instead of slumber—not to prayer
 With sobbing lips and hands out-wrung :

Thou knowest all my prayings were,
 'I bless Thee, God, for past delights—
 Thank God!' I am not used to bear
 Hard thoughts of death. The earth doth cover
 No face from me of friend or lover:
 And must the first who teaches me
 The form of shrouds and funerals, be
 Mine own first-born beloved? he
 Who taught me first this mother-love?
 Dear Lord, who spreadest out above
 Thy loving, transpierced hands to meet
 All lifted hearts with blessing sweet—
 Pierce not my heart, my tender heart,
 Thou madest tender! Thou who art
 So happy in Thy heaven always,
 Take not mine only bliss away!"

XI.

She so had prayed: and God, who hears
 Through seraph-songs the sound of tears,
 From that beloved babe had ta'en
 The fever and the beating pain.
 And more and more smiled Isobel
 To see the baby sleep so well—
 (She knew not that she smiled, I wis)
 Until the pleasant gradual thought
 Which near her heart, the smile, enwrought,
 Now soft and slow, itself, did seem
 To float along a happy dream,
 Beyond it, into speech like this.—

XII.

"I prayed for thee, my little child,
 And God has heard my prayer!
 And when thy babyhood is gone,
 We two together undefiled
 By men's repinings, will kneel down
 Upon His earth which will be fair
 (Not covering thee, sweet!) to us twain,
 And give Him thankful praise."

XIII.

Dully and wildy drives the rain:
 Against the lattices drives the rain.

XIV.

“ I thank Him now, that I can think
 Of those same future days,
 Nor from the harmless image shrink
 Of what I there might see—
 Strange babies on their mothers' knee,
 Whose innocent soft faces might
 From off mine eyelids strike the light,
 With looks not meant for me ! ”

XV.

Gustily blows the wind through the rain,
 As against the lattices drives the rain.

XVI.

“ But now, O baby mine, together
 We turn this hope of ours again
 To many an hour of summer weather,
 When we shall sit and intertwine
 Our spirits, and instruct each other
 In the pure loves of child and mother !—
 Two human loves make one divine. ”

XVII.

The thunder tears through the wind and the rain,
 As full on the lattices drives the rain.

XVIII.

“ My little child, what wilt thou choose ?
 Now let me look at thee and ponder.
 What gladness, from the gladnesses
 Futurity is spreading under
 Thy gladsome sight ? Beneath the trees,
 Wilt thou lean all day, and lose
 Thy spirit with the river, seen
 Intermittently between
 The winding beechen alleys ?
 Half in labour, half repose,
 Like a shepherd keeping sheep,
 Thou, with only thoughts to keep
 Which never bound will overpass,
 And which are innocent as those
 That feed among Arcadian valleys
 Upon the dewy grass ? ”

XIX.

The large white owl that with age is blind,
 That hath sate for years in the old tree hollow,
 Is carried away in a gust of wind !
 His wings could bear him not as fast
 As he goeth now the lattice past—
 He is borne by the winds ; the rains do follow :
 His white wings to the blast out-flowing,
 He hooteth in going,
 And still, in the lightnings, coldly glitter
 His round unblinking eyes.

XX.

“ Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
 To be eloquent and wise ?
 One upon whose lips the air
 Turns to solemn verities,
 For men to breathe anew, and win
 A deeper-seated life within ?
 Wilt be a philosopher,
 By whose voice the earth and skies
 Shall speak to the unborn ?
 Or a poet, broadly spreading
 The golden immortalities
 Of thy soul on natures lorn
 And poor of such, them all to guard
 From their decay ? beneath thy treading,
 Earth's flowers recovering hues of Eden ;
 And stars, drawn downward by thy looks
 To shine ascendant in thy books ? ”

XXI.

The tame hawk in the castle yard,
 How it screams to the lightning, with its wet
 Jagged plumes overhanging the parapet !
 And at the lady's door the hound
 Scratches with a crying sound !

XXII.

“ But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
 Close, fast upon thy cheek !
 And not a dream of power and sheen
 Can make a passage up between :
 Thy heart is of thy mother's made—
 Thy looks are very meek !

And it will be their chosen place
 To rest on some beloved face,
 As these on thine—and let the noise
 Of the whole world go on, nor drown
 The tender silence of thy joys ;
 Or when that silence shall have grown
 Too tender for itself, the same
 Yearning for sound—to look above,
 And utter their one meaning, LOVE—
 That *He* may hear His name !”

XXIII.

No wind—no rain—no thunder !
 The waters had trickled not slowly,
 The thunder was not spent,
 Nor the wind near finishing.
 Who would have said that the storm was diminishing ?
 No wind—no rain—no thunder !
 Their noises dropped asunder
 From the earth and the firmament,
 From the towers and the lattices,
 Abrupt and echoless,
 As ripe fruits on the ground, unshaken wholly—
 As life in death ;
 And sudden and solemn the silence fell,
 Startling the heart of Isobel,
 As the tempest could not !
 Against the door went panting the breath
 Of the lady's hound whose cry was still—
 And *she*, constrained, howe'er she would not,
 Lifted her eyes, and saw the moon
 Looking out of heaven alone
 Upon the poplared hill—
 A calm of God made visible,
 That men might bless it at their will.

XXIV.

The moonshine on the baby's face
 Falleth clear and cold.
 The mother's looks have fallen back
 To the same place :
 Because no moon with silver rack,

Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies
 Has power to hold
 Our loving eyes,
 Which still revert, as ever must
 Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the dust.

XXV.

The moonshine on the baby's face
 Cold and clear remaineth !
 The mother's looks do shrink away,
 The mother's looks return to stay,
 As charmed by what paineth.
 Is any glamour in the case ?
 Is it dream or is it sight ?
 Hath the change upon the wild
 Elements, that signs the night,
 Passed upon the child ?
 It is not dream, but sight !—

XXVI.

The babe hath awakened from sleep,
 And unto the gaze of its mother,
 Bent over it, lifted another !
 Not the baby-looks that go
 Unaimingly to and fro ;
 But an earnest gazing deep,
 Such as soul gives soul at length,
 When by work and wail of years
 It winneth a solemn strength,
 And mourneth as it wears !
 A strong man could not brook
 With pulse unhurried by fears,
 To meet that baby's look
 O'er glazed by manhood's tears—
 The tears of a man full grown,
 With a power to wring our own,
 In the eyes all undefiled
 Of a little three-months' child !
 To see that babe-brow, wrought
 By witnessings of thought,
 To judgment's prodigy ;
 And the small soft mouth unweaned,
 By mother's kiss o'erleaned

(Putting the sound of loving
 Where no sound else was moving,
 Except the speechless cry)
 Quickened to mind's expression,
 Shaped to articulation—
 Yea, speaking words—yea, naming woe
 In tones that with it strangely went,
 Because so baby-innocent,
 As the child spake out to the mother so!—

XXVII.

“O mother, mother, loose thy prayer!
 Christ's name hath made it strong!
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me
 With its most loving cruelty,
 From floating my new soul along
 The happy heavenly air!
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me
 In all this dark, upon this dull
 Low earth, by only weepers trod!—
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me!—
 Mine angel looketh sorrowful
 Upon the face of God.*

XXVIII.

“Mother, mother! can I dream
 Beneath your earthly trees?
 I had a vision and a gleam—
 I heard a sound more sweet than these
 When rippled by the wind.
 Did you see the Dove, with wings
 Bathed in golden glistenings
 From a sunless light behind,
 Dropping on me from the sky,
 Soft as mother's kiss, until
 I seemed to leap, and yet was still?
 Saw you how His love-large eye
 Looked upon me mystic calms,
 Till the power of His divine
 Vision was indrawn to mine?

* “For I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. xviii. 10).

XXIX.

"Oh, the dream within the dream !
 I saw celestial places even.
 Oh, the vistas of high palms,
 Making finites of delight
 Through the heavenly infinite—
 Lifting up their green still tops
 To the heaven of Heaven !
 Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
 Shade like light across the river
 Glorified in its for ever
 Flowing from the Throne !
 Oh, the shining holinesses
 Of the thousand thousand faces
 God-sunned by the thronèd ONE !
 And made intense with such a love,
 That though I saw them turned above,
 Each, loving, seemed for also me !
 And oh, the Unspeakable ! the HE—
 The manifest in secrecies,
 Yet of mine own heart partaker !
 With the overcoming look
 Of one who hath been once forsook,
 And blesseth the forsaker.
 Mother, mother, let me go
 Toward the face that looketh so—
 Through the mystic, wingèd Four
 Whose are inward, outward eyes
 Dark with light of mysteries—
 And the restless evermore
 'Holy, holy, holy ;'—through
 The sevenfold Lamps that burn in view
 Of cherubim and seraphim ;—
 Through the four-and-twenty crowned
 Stately elders, white around—
 Suffer me to go to Him !

XXX.

"Is your wisdom very wise,
 Mother, on the narrow earth ?
 Very happy, very worth
 That I should stay to learn ?

Are these air-corrupting sighs
 Fashioned by unlearned breath?
 Do the students' lamps that burn
 All night, illumine death?
 Mother, albeit this be so,
 Loose thy prayer, and let me go
 Where that bright chief angel stands
 Apart from all his brother bands,
 Too glad for smiling; having bent
 In angelic wilderment
 O'er the depths of God, and brought
 Reeling, thence, one only thought
 To fill his whole eternity.
 He the teacher is for me!—
 He can teach what I would know—
 Mother, mother, let me go!—

XXXI.

' Can your poet make an Eden
 No winter will undo?
 And light a starry fire, while heeding
 His hearth's is burning too?
 Drown in music the earth's din?—
 And keep his own wild soul within
 The law of his own harmony?—
 Mother! albeit this be so,
 Let me to my Heav'n go!
 A little harp me waits thereby—
 A harp whose strings are golden all,
 And tuned to music spherical,
 Hanging on the green life-tree,
 Where no willows ever be.
 Shall I miss that harp of mine?
 Mother, no!—the Eye divine
 Turned upon it, makes it shine—
 And when I touch it, poems sweet
 Like separate souls shall fly from it,
 Each to an immortal fytte,
 We shall all be poets there,
 Gazing on the chiefest Fair!

XXXII.

Love! earth's love! and *can* we love
 Fixedly where all things move?

Can the sinning love each other?
 Mother, mother,
 I tremble in thy close embrace—
 I feel thy tears adown my face—
 Thy prayers do keep me out of bliss—
 O dreary earthly love!
 Loose thy prayer, and let me go
 To the place which loving is,
 Yet not sad! and when is given
 Escape to *thee* from this below,
 Thou shalt behold me that I wait
 For thee beside the happy gate;
 And silence shall be up in Heaven,
 To hear our greeting kiss."

XXIII.

The nurse awakes in the morning sun,
 And starts to see, beside her bed,
 The lady, with a grandeur spread,
 Like pathos, o'er her face; as one
 God-satisfied and earth-undone:—
 The babe upon her arm was dead!
 And the nurse could utter forth no cry—
 She was awed by the calm in the mother's eye.

XXXIV.

"Wake, nurse!"—the lady said:
 "We are waking—he and I—
 I, on earth, and he, in sky!
 And thou must help me to o'erlay,
 With garment white, this little clay,
 Which needs no more our lullaby.

XXXV.

"I changed the cruel prayer I made,
 And bowed my meekened face, and prayed
 That God would do His will! and thus
 He did it, nurse: He parted *us*.
 And His sun shows victorious
 The dead calm face:—and *I* am calm:
 And Heaven is hearkening a new psalm.

XXXVI.

"This earthly noise is too anear,
 Too loud, and will not let me hear
 The little harp. My death will soon
 Make silence."

And a sense of tune,
 A satisfièd love, meanwhile,
 Which nothing earthly could despoil,
 Sang on within her soul.

XXXVII.

Oh you,
 Earth's tender and impassioned few,
 Take courage to entrust your love
 To Him so Named, who guards above
 Its ends and shall fulfil ;
 Breaking the narrow prayers that may
 Befit your narrow hearts, away
 In His broad, loving will.

AN ISLAND.

"All goeth but Goddis will."—OLD POET.

I.

My dream is of an island place,
 Which distant seas keep lonely ;
 A little island, on whose face
 The stars are watchers only.
 Those bright still stars ! they need not seem
 Brighter or stiller in my dream.

II.

An island full of hills and dells,
 All rumbled and uneven
 With green recesses, sudden swells,
 And odorous valleys driven
 So deep and straight, that always there
 The wind is craèd to soft air.

III.

Hills running up to heaven for light
 Through woods that half-way ran!
 As if the wild earth mimicked right
 The wilder heart of man;
 Only it shall be greener far
 And gladder, than hearts ever are.

IV.

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece
 Of Dante's paradise,
 Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
 In falling from the skies—
 Bringing within it all the roots
 Of heavenly trees, and flowers and fruits.

V.

For, saving where the gray rocks strike
 Their javelins up the azure,
 Or where deep fissures, miser-like,
 Hoard up some fountain treasure
 (And e'en in them—stoop down and hear—
 Leaf sounds with water in your ear!)

VI.

The place is all awave with trees—
 Limes, myrtles purple-beaded;
 Acacias having drunk the lees
 Of the night-dew, faint-headed;
 And wan gray olive-woods, which seem
 The fittest foliage for a dream.

VII.

Trees, trees on all sides! they combine
 Their plummy shades to throw;
 Through whose clear fruit and blossom fine,
 Whene'er the sun may go,
 The ground beneath he deeply stains,
 As passing through cathedral panes.

VIII.

But little needs this earth of ours
 That shining from above her,
 When many Pleiades of flowers
 (Not one lost) star her over ;
 The rays of their unnumbered hues
 Being all refracted by the dews.

IX.

Wide-petalled plants, that boldly drink
 The Amreeta of the sky ;
 Shut bells that, dull with rapture, sink,
 And lolling buds, half shy ;
 I cannot count them ; but between
 Is room for grass and mosses green,

X.

And brooks, that glass in different strengths,
 All colours in disorder,
 Or, gathering up their silver lengths
 Beside their winding border,
 Sleep, haunted through the slumber hidden,
 By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

XI.

Nor think each archèd tree with each
 Too closely interlaces,
 To admit of vistas out of reach
 And broad moon-lighted places,
 Upon whose sward the antlered deer
 May view their double image clear.

XII.

For all this island's creature-full,
 (Kept happy not by halves),
 Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths pull,
 Then low back at their calves,
 With tender lowings, to approve
 The warm mouths milking them for love.

XIII.

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
 And harmless, leaping leopards,
 And buffaloes upon the slopes,
 And sheep unrul'd by shepherds ;
 Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers, mice,
 Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

XIV.

And birds that live there in a crowd—
 Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
 Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks proud,
 Self-sphered in those grand tails ;
 All creatures glad and safe, I deem ;
 No guns nor springes in my dream !

XV.

The island's edges are a-wing
 With trees that overbranch
 The sea with song-birds, welcoming
 The curlews to green change,
 And doves from half-closed lids espy
 The red and purple fish go by.

XVI.

One dove is answering in trust
 The water every minute,
 Thinking so soft a murmur must
 Have her mate's cooing in it ;
 So softly doth earth's beauty round
 Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

XVII.

My sanguine soul bounds forward
 To meet the bounding waves !
 Beside them straightway I repair,
 To live within the caves ;
 And near me two or three may dwell
 Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

XVIII.

Long winding caverns ! glittering far
 Into a crystal distance ;
 Through clefts of which, shall many a star
 Shine clear, without resistance,
 And carry down its rays the smell
 Of flowers above invisible.

XIX.

I said that two or three might choose
 Their dwelling near mine own :
 Those who would change man's voice and use
 For Nature's way and tone—
 Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
 For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

XX.

Ourselves to meet her faithfulness,
 Shall play a faithful part :
 Her beautiful shall ne'er address
 The monstrous at our heart ;
 Her musical shall ever touch
 Something within us also such.

XXI.

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
 As doth the moon, of ocean ;
 Though gently as the moon she give
 Our thoughts a light and motion,
 More like a harp of many lays,
 Moving its master while he plays.

XXII.

No sod in all that island doth
 Yawn open for the dead ;
 No wind hath borne a traitor's oath ;
 No earth, a mourner's tread :
 We cannot say by stream or shade,
 " I suffered *here*—was *here* betrayed."

XXIII.

Our only "farewell" we shall laugh
 To shifting cloud or hour—
 And use our only epitaph
 To some bud turned a flower :
 Our only tears shall serve to prove
 Excess in pleasure or in love.

XXIV.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
 From fairest island birds,
 Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,
 Born singing ! then our words
 Unconsciously shall take the dyes
 Of those prodigious fantasies.

XXV.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
 Our smile-turned lips shall reach ;
 Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth,
 Shall glide into our speech—
 (What music certes can you find
 As soft as voices which are kind ?)

XXVI.

And often by the joy without
 And in us, overcome,
 We, through our musing, shall let float
 Such poems—sitting dumb—
 As Pindar might have writ, if he
 Had tended sheep in Arcady ;

XXVII.

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
 He died in, longer knowing ;
 Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
 Been lost in Meles flowing ;
 Or poet Plato, had the undim
 Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

XXVIII.

Choose me the cave most worthy choice,
 To make a place for prayer ;
 And I will choose a praying voice
 To pour our spirits there.
 How silverly the echoes run—
Thy will be done—Thy will be done.

XXIX.

Gently yet strangely uttered words !—
 They lift me from my dream.
 The island fadeth with its swards,
 That did no more than seem !
 The streams are dry, no sun could find—
 The fruits are fallen, without wind !—

XXX.

So oft the doing of God's will
 Our foolish wills undoeth !
 And yet what idle dream breaks ill,
 Which morning-light subdueth ;
 And who would murmur and misdoubt,
 When God's great sunrise finds him out ?

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me in the days departed,
 How often underneath the sun
 With childish bounds I used to run
 To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite ;
 And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
 The greenest grasses Nature laid,
 To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
 For no one entered there but I ;
 The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,
 And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me !
I crept beneath the boughs, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
Beneath a poplar tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
Bedropt with roses waxen-white,
Well satisfied with dew and light,
And careless to be seen.

Long years ago, it might befall,
When all the garden flowers were trim,
The grave old gardener prided him
On these the most of all.

Some Lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the voice
That likened her to such.

Or these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and twined :
Half-smiling as it came to mind,
That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that Lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud !—

Nor thought that gardener (full of scorns
For men unlearned and simple phrase),
A child would bring it all its praise,
By creeping through the thorns !

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment,
I ween they smelt as sweet.

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

It did not move my grief, to see
 The trace of human step departed :
 Because the garden was deserted,
 The blither place for me !

Friends, blame me not ! a narrow ken
 Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sward :
 We draw the moral afterward—
 We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
 In silence at the rose-tree wall :
 A thrush made gladness musical
 Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
 To peck or pluck the blossoms white—
 How should I know but that they might
 Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-home complete,
 I brought clear water from the spring
 Praised in its own low murmuring,—
 And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought my likeness grew
 (Without the melancholy tale)
 To "gentle hermit of the dale,"
 And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
 Such minstrel stories ; till the breeze
 Made sounds poetic in the trees,—
 And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write,
 I hear no more the wind athwart
 Those trees—nor feel that childish heart
 Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,
 My footstep from the moss which drew
 Its fairy circle round : anew
 The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
 The madrigals which sweetest are ;
 No more for me !—myself afar
 Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me ! when erst I lay
 In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,
 I laughed unto myself and thought
 "The time will pass away."

And still I laughed, and did not fear
 But that, whene'er was past away
 The childish time, some happier play
 My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away ;
 And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
 Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
 Did I look up to pray !

The time *is* past—and now that grows
 The cypress high among the trees,
 And I behold white sepulchres
 As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,
 And I have learnt to lift my face,
 Reminded how earth's greenest place
 The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
 But more for heavenly promise free,
 That I who was, would shrink to be
 That happy child again.

THE SLEEP.

"He giveth his beloved sleep."—PSALM CXXVII. 2.

I.

OF all the thoughts of God that are
 Borne inward unto souls afar,
 Along the Psalmist's music deep,
 Now tell me if that any is,
 For gift or grace, surpassing this—
 "He giveth His beloved, sleep" ?

II.

What would we give to our beloved?—
 The hero's heart, to be unmoved,
 The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,
 The patriot's voice, to teach and rouse,
 The monarch's crown, to light the brows?—
 "He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

III.

What do we give to our beloved?—
 A little faith, all undisproved,
 A little dust, to overweep,
 And bitter memories, to make
 The whole earth blasted for our sake—
 "He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

IV.

"Sleep soft, beloved!" we sometimes say,
 But have no tune to charm away
 Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep:
 But never doleful dream again
 Shall break the happy slumber, when
 "He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

V.

O earth, so full of dreary noises!
 O men, with wailing in your voices!
 O delvèd gold, the wailers heap!
 O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
 God strikes a silence through you all,
 And "giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

VI.

His dews drop mutely on the hill,
 His cloud above it saileth still,
 Though on its slope men sow and reap.
 More softly than the dew is shed,
 Or cloud is floated overhead,
 "He giveth *His* beloved, sleep."

VII.

Ay, men may wonder while they scan
 A living, thinking, feeling man,
 Confirmed, in such a rest to keep;

But angels say—and through the word
I think their happy smile is *heard*—
“He giveth His beloved, sleep.”

VIII.

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the mummers leap—
Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on *His* love repose,
Who “giveth His beloved, sleep!”

IX.

And, friends, dear friends.—when it shall be
That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let one, most loving of you all,
Say, “Not a tear must o’er her fall—
He giveth His beloved, sleep.”

THE SEA-MEW.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO M. E. H.

I.

How joyously the young sea-mew
Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
Whereon our little bark had thrown
A forward shade, the only one
(But shadows ever man pursue.)

II.

Familiar with the waves and free,
As if their own white foam were he,
His heart, upon the heart of ocean,
Lay learning all its mystic motion,
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

III.

And such a brightness in his eye,
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul, God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.

IV.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
 His white wing from the blue waves under,
 And bound it, while his fearless eyes
 Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
 As deeming us some ocean wonder !

V.

We bore our ocean bird unto
 A grassy place, where he might view
 The flowers that curtsy to the bees,
 The waving of the tall green trees,
 The falling of the silver dew.

VI.

But flowers of earth were pale to him
 Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim ;
 And when earth's dew around him lay,
 He thought of ocean's wingèd spray,
 And his eye waxèd sad and dim.

VII.

The green trees round him only made
 A prison, with their darksome shade :
 And drooped his wing, and mournèd he
 For his own boundless glittering sea—
 Albeit he knew not they could fade.

VIII.

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
 Her gentle voice's murmuring,
 In ocean's stead his heart to move,
 And teach him what was human love—
 He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

IX.

He lay down in his grief to die
 (First looking to the sea-like sky,
 That hath no waves !) because, alas !
 Our human touch did on him pass,
 And with our touch, our agony.

VICTORIA'S TEARS.

"Hark! the reiterated clangour sounds!
 Now murmurs, like the sea or like the storm,
 Or like the flames on forests, move and mount
 From rank to rank, and loud and louder roll,
 Till all the people is one vast applause."

LANDOR'S *Gebir*.

"O MAIDEN! heir of kings!
 A king has left his place!
 The majesty of Death has swept
 All other from his face!
 And thou upon thy mother's breast
 No longer lean adown,
 But take the glory for the rest,
 And rule the land that loves thee best!"
 She heard, and wept—
 She wept, to wear a crown!

They decked her courtly halls;
 They reined her hundred steeds;
 They shouted at her palace gate,
 "A noble Queen succeeds!"
 Her name has stirred the mountain's sleep,
 Her praise has filled the town!
 And mourners God had stricken deep,
 Looked hearkening up, and did not weep.
 Alone she wept,
 Who wept, to wear a crown!

She saw no purples shine,
 For tears had dimmed her eyes;
 She only knew her childhood's flowers
 Were happier pageantries!
 And while her heralds played the part,
 For million shouts to drown—
 "God save the Queen" from hill to mart—
 She heard through all her beating heart,
 And turned and wept—
 She wept, to wear a crown!

THE PET-NAME.

God save thee, weeping Queen!
 Thou shalt be well beloved!
 The tyrant's sceptre cannot move,
 As those pure tears have moved!
 The nature in thine eyes we see,
 That tyrants cannot own—
 The love that guardeth liberties!
 Strange blessing on the nation lies,
 Whose Sovereign wept—
 Yea! wept, to wear its crown!

God bless thee, weeping Queen,
 With blessing more divine!
 And fill with happier love than earth's,
 That tender heart of thine!
 That when the thrones of earth shall be
 As low as graves brought down;
 A piercèd Hand may give to thee
 The crown which angels shout to see!
 Thou wilt not *weep*,
 To wear that heavenly crown!

THE PET-NAME.

“——— the name
 Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress.”
 MISS MITFORD'S *Dramatic Scenes*.

I.

I HAVE a name, a little name,
 Uncadenced for the ear,
 Unhonoured by ancestral claim,
 Unsanctified by prayer and psalm,
 The solemn font anear.

II.

It never did to pages wove
 For gay romance belong;
 It never dedicate did move,
 As “Sacharissa,” unto love—
 “Orinda,” unto song.

III.

Though I write books, it will be read
Upon the leaves of none;
And afterward, when I am dead,
Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,
Across my funeral stone.

IV.

This name, whoever chance to call,
Perhaps your smile will win.
Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes, and feel withal
The sudden tears within.

V.

Is there a leaf that greenly grows
Where summer meadows bloom,
But gathereth the winter snows,
And changeth to the hue of those,
If lasting till they come?

VI.

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time encrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the same?
And so to me my very name
Assumes a mournful sound.

VII.

My brother gave that name to me
When we were children twain;
When names acquired baptismally
Were hard to utter, as to see
That life had any pain.

VIII.

No shade was on us then, save one
Of chestnuts from the hill—
And through the word our laugh did run
As part thereof! The mirth being done,
He calls me by it still.

IX.

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it
 What none of you can hear!
 The talk upon the willow seat,
 The bird and wind that did repeat
 Around, our human cheer.

X.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,
 My sisters' woodland glee,—
 My father's praise, I did not miss,
 When stooping down he cared to kiss
 The poet at his knee ;—

XI.

And voices which, to name me, aye
 Their tenderest tones were keeping!—
 To some I never more can say
 An answer till God wipes away
 In heaven these drops of weeping.

XII.

My name to me a sadness wears ;
 No murmurs cross my mind :
 Now God be thanked for these thick tears,
 Which show, of those departed years,
 Sweet memories left behind !

XIII.

Now God be thanked for years enwrought
 With love which softens yet !
 Now God be thanked for every thought
 Which is so tender, it has caught
 Earth's guerdon of regret !

XIV.

Earth saddens, never shall remove,
 Affections purely given ;
 And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
 The immortality of love,
 And heighten it with Heaven.



B.P.—I.

“ Or these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and twined :
Half-smiling as it came to mind,
That few would look at *them*.”

Page 91.

A DRAMA OF EXILE.

SCENE.—*The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with cloud, from the depth of which revolves a sword of fire self-moved. ADAM and EVE are seen in the distance flying along the glare.*

LUCIFER, *alone.*

REJOICE in the clefts of Gehenna,
 My exiled, my host!
 Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a
 Heaven's empire was lost.
 Through the seams of her shaken foundations,
 Smoke up in great joy!
 With the smoke of your fierce exultations
 Deform and destroy!
 Smoke up with your lurid revenges,
 And darken the face
 Of the white heavens and taunt them with changes
 From glory and grace.
 We, in falling, while destiny strangles,
 Pull down with us all.
 Let them look to the rest of their angels!
 Who's safe from a fall?
 HE saves not. Where's Adam? Can pardon
 Requicken that sod?
 Unkinged is the King of the Garden,
 The image of God.
 Other exiles are cast out of Eden,—
 More curse has been hurled.
 Come up, O my locusts, and feed in
 The green of the world.
 Come up! we have conquered by evil.
 Good reigns not alone.
 I prevail now, and, angel or devil,
 Inherit a throne.

[*In sudden apparition a watch of innumerable angels, rank above rank, slopes up from around the gate to the zenith. The angel GABRIEL descends.*]

Luc. Hail Gabriel, the keeper of the gate!
 Now that the fruit is plucked, prince Gabriel,

I hold that Eden is impregnable
Under thy keeping.

Gab. Angel of the sin,
Such as thou standest,—pale in the drear light
Which rounds the rebel's work with Maker's wrath,—
Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls,
A monumental melancholy gloom
Seen down all ages, whence to mark despair
And measure out the distances from good.
Go from us straightway.

Luc. Wherefore?

Gab. Lucifer,
Thy last step in this place trod sorrow up.
Recoil before that sorrow, if not this sword.

Luc. Angels are in the world—wherefore not I?
Exiles are in the world—wherefore not I?
The cursed are in the world—wherefore not I?

Gab. Depart.

Luc. And where's the logic of "depart"?
Our lady Eve had half been satisfied
To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt
To fix my postulate better. Dost thou dream
Of guarding some monopoly in heaven
Instead of earth? Why, I can dream with thee
To the length of thy wings.

Gab. I do not dream.
This is not Heaven, even in a dream, nor earth,
As earth was once, first breathed among the stars,
Articulate glory from the mouth divine,
To which the myriad spheres thrilled audibly
Touched like a lute-string, and the sons of God
Said AMEN, singing it. I know that this
Is earth not new created but new cursed—
This, Eden's gate not opened but built up
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I dream?
Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the serpent! this the sword
(This sword alive with justice and with fire!)
That smote upon the forehead, Lucifer
The angel. Wherefore, angel, go—depart—
Enough is sinned and suffered.

Luc. By no means.
Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer on.
It holds fast still—it cracks not under curse;

It holds like mine immortal. Presently
 We'll sow it thick enough with graves as green
 Or greener certes, than its knowledge-tree—
 We'll have the cypress for the tree of life,
 More eminent for shadow :—for the rest
 We'll build it dark with towns and pyramids,
 And temples, if it please you :—we'll have feasts
 And funerals also, merrymakes and wars,
 Till blood and wine shall mix and run along
 Right o'er the edges. And, good Gabriel
 (Ye like that word in Heaven !) *I* too have strength—
 Strength to behold Him and not worship Him ;
 Strength to fall from Him and not cry on Him ;
 Strength to be in the universe and yet
 Neither God nor his servant. The red sign
 Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt me with,
 Is God's sign that it bows not unto God ;
 The potter's mark upon his work, to show
 It rings well to the striker. I and the earth
 Can bear more curse.

Gab. O miserable earth,
 O ruined angel !

Luc. Well, and if it be !
 I CHOSE this ruin ; I elected it
 Of my will, not of service. What I do,
 I do volitent, not obedient,
 And overtop thy crown with my despair.
 My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back to Heaven,
 And leave me to the earth, which is mine own
 In virtue of her ruin, as I hers
 In virtue of my revolt ! turn thou from both
 That bright, impassive, passive angelhood,
 And spare to read us backward any more
 Of the spent hallelujahs.

Gab. Spirit of scorn,
 I might say, of unreason ! I might say,
 That who despairs, acts ; that who acts, connives
 With God's relations set in time and space ;
 That who elects, assumes a something good
 Which God made possible ; that who lives, obeys
 The law of a Life-maker . . .

Luc. Let it pass.
 No more, thou Gabriel ! What if I stand up
 And strike my brow against the crystalline

Roofing the creatures,—shall I say, for that,
My stature is too high for me to stand,—
Henceforward I must sit? Sit *thou*.

Gab. I kneel.

Luc. A heavenly answer. Get thee to thy
Heaven,
And leave my earth to me.

Gab. Through Heaven and earth
God's will moves freely, and I follow it,
As colour follows light. He overflows
The firmamental walls with deity,
Therefore with love; His lightnings go abroad,
His pity may do so, His angels must,
Whene'er He gives them charges.

Luc. Verily,
I and my demons, who are spirits of scorn,
Might hold this charge of standing with a sword
'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well
As the benignant angel of you all.

Gab. Thou speakest in the shadow of thy change.
If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God
This morning for a moment, thou hadst known
That only pity fitly can chastise.
Hate but avenges.

Luc. As it is, I know
Something of pity. When I reeled in Heaven,
And my sword grew too heavy for my grasp,
Stabbing through matter, which it could not pierce
So much as the first shell of,—toward the throne;
When I fell back, down,—staring up as I fell,—
The lightnings holding open my scathed lids,
And that thought of the infinite of God,
Hurled after to precipitate descent;
When countless angel faces still and stern
Pressed out upon me from the level heavens
Adown the abysmal spaces, and I fell
Trampled down by your stillness, and struck blind
By the sight within your eyes,—'twas then I knew
How ye could pity, my kind angelhood!

Gab. Alas, discrowned one, by the truth in me
Which God keeps in me, I would give away
All—save that truth and His love keeping it,—
To lead thee home again into the light
And hear thy voice chant with the morning stars.

When their rays tremble round them with much
 song
 Sung in more gladness!

Luc. Sing, my Morning Star!
 Last beautiful, last heavenly, that I loved!
 If I could drench thy golden locks with tears,
 What were it to this angel?

Gab. What love is.
 And now I have named God.

Luc. Yet Gabriel,
 By the lie in me which I keep myself,
 Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it otherwise,
 What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender thoughts
 To that earth-angel or earth-demon—which,
 Thou and I have not solved the problem yet
 Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam there,—
 That red-clay and a breath! who must, forsooth,
 Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
 With beauty and music waving in his trees
 And running in his rivers, to make glad
 His soul made perfect?—is it not for hope,
 A hope within thee deeper than thy truth,
 Of finally conducting him and his
 To fill the vacant thrones of me and mine,
 Which affront Heaven with their vacuity?

Gab. Angel, there are no vacant thrones in Heaven
 To suit thy empty words. Glory and life
 Fulfil their own depletions; and if God
 Sighed you far from Him, His next breath drew in
 A compensative splendour up the vast,
 Flushing the starry arteries.

Luc. With a change!
 So, let the vacant thrones and gardens too
 Fill as may please you!—and be pitiful,
 As ye translate that word, to the dethroned
 And exiled, man or angel. The fact stands,
 That I, the rebel, the cast out and down,
 Am here and will not go; while there, along
 The light to which ye flash the desert out,
 Flies your adopted Adam, your red-clay
 In two kinds, both being flawed. Why, what is this?
 Whose work is this? Whose hand was in the work?
 Against whose hand? In this last strife, methinks,
 I am not a fallen angel!

Gab. Dost thou know
Aught of those exiles?

Luc. Ay: I know they have fled
Silent all day along the wilderness:
I know they wear, for burden on their backs,
The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,
And faces of the marshalled cherubim
Shining against, not for them; and I know
They dare not look in one another's face,—
As if each were a cherub!

Gab. Dost thou know
Aught of their future?

Luc. Only as much as this:
That evil will increase and multiply
Without a benediction.

Gab. Nothing more?

Luc. Why so the angels taunt! What should be more?

Gab. God is more.

Luc. Proving what?

Gab. That He is God

And capable of saving. Lucifer,
I charge thee by the solitude He kept
Ere He created,—leave the earth to God!

Luc. My foot is on the earth, firm as my sin.

Gab. I charge thee by the memory of Heaven
Ere any sin was done,—leave earth to God!

Luc. My sin is on the earth, to reign thereon.

Gab. I charge thee by the choral song we sang,
When up against the white shore of our feet,
The depths of the creation swelled and brake,—
And the new worlds, the beaded foam and flower
Of all that coil, roared outward into space
On thunder-edges,—leave the earth to God!

Luc. My woe is on the earth, to curse thereby.

Gab. I charge thee by that mournful Morning Star
Which trembles

Luc. Enough spoken. As the pine
In norland forest, drops its weight of snows
By a night's growth, so, growing toward my ends
I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabriel!
Watch out thy service; I achieve my will.
And peradventure in the after years,
When thoughtful men shall bend their spacious brows
Upon the storm and strife seen everywhere

To ruffle their smooth manhood and break up
 With lurid lights of intermittent hope
 Their human fear and wrong,—they may discern
 The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS.

*(Chanting from Paradise, while ADAM and EVE fly across
 the Sword-glare.)*

Hearken, oh hearken ! let your souls behind you
 Turn, gently moved !
 Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,
 O lost, beloved !
 Through the thick-shielded and strong-marshalled
 angels,
 They press and pierce :
 Our requiems follow fast on our evangels,—
 Voice throbs in verse.
 We are but orphaned spirits left in Eden
 A time ago.
 God gave us golden cups, and we were bidden
 To feed you so.
 But now our right hand hath no cup remaining,
 No work to do,
 The mystic hydromel is spilt, and staining
 The whole earth through.
 Most ineradicable stains, for showing
 (Not interfused !)
 That brighter colours were the world's foregoing,
 Than shall be used.
 Hearken, oh hearken ! ye shall hearken surely
 For years and years,
 The noise beside you, dripping coldly, purely,
 Of spirits' tears.
 The yearning to a beautiful denied you,
 Shall strain your powers.
 Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide you,
 Resumed from ours.
 In all your music, our pathetic minor
 Your ears shall cross ;
 And all good gifts shall mind you of diviner,
 With sense of loss.

We shall be near you in your poet-languors
 And wild extremes,
 What time ye vex the desert with vain angers,
 Or mock with dreams.
 And when upon you, weary after roaming,
 Death's seal is put,
 By the foregone ye shall discern the coming,
 Through eyelids shut.

Spirits of the trees.

Hark! the Eden trees are stirring,
 Soft and solemn in your hearing!
 Oak and linden, palm and fir,
 Tamarisk and juniper,
 Each still throbbing in vibration
 Since that crowning of creation
 When the God-breath spake abroad,
Let us make man like to God!
 And the pine stood quivering
 As the awful word went by,
 Like a vibrant music-string
 Stretched from mountain-peak to sky;
 And the platan did expand
 Slow and gradual, branch and head;
 And the cedar's strong black shade
 Fluttered brokenly and grand:
 Grove and wood were swept aslant
 In emotion jubilant.

Voice of the same, but softer.

Which divine impulsion cleaves
 In dim movements to the leaves
 Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
 In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
 In the sunlight and the moonlight
 Greenly sifted through the trees.
 Ever wave the Eden trees
 In the nightlight and the noonlight,
 With a ruffling of green branches
 Shaded off to resonances,
 Never stirred by rain or breeze.
 Fare ye well, farewell!
 The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door.
 Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some murmur which ye heard before.
 Farewell! the trees of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

River-spirits.

Hark! the flow of the four rivers—
 Hark the flow!
 How the silence round you shivers,
 While our voices through it go,
 Cold and clear.

A softer voice.

Think a little, while ye hear,
 Of the banks
 Where the willows and the deer
 Crowd in intermingled ranks,
 As if all would drink at once
 Where the living water runs!—
 Of the fishes' golden edges
 Flashing in and out the sedges;
 Of the swans on silver thrones,
 Floating down the winding streams
 With impassive eyes turned shoreward
 And a chant of undertones,—
 And the lotos leaning forward
 To help them into dreams.
 Fare ye well, farewell!
 The river-sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door.
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some murmur which ye heard before.
 Farewell! the streams of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale
 That singeth in Eden after you;
 And I am singing loud and true,
 And sweet,—I do not fail.
 I sit upon a cypress bough,
 Close to the gate, and I fling my song
 Over the gate and through the mail
 Of the warden angels marshalled strong,—
 Over the gate and after you!
 And the warden angels let it pass,
 Because the poor brown bird, alas,
 Sings in the garden, sweet and true.

And I built my song of high pure notes,
 Note over note, height over height,
 Till I strike the arch of the Infinite,
 And I bridge abysmal agonies
 With strong, clear calms of harmonies,—
 And something abides, and something floats,
 In the song which I sing after you.

Fare ye well, farewell !

The creature-sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some cadence which ye heard before.

Farewell ! the birds of Eden,

Ye shall hear nevermore.

Flower-spirits.

We linger, we linger,

The last of the throng,

Like the tones of a singer

Who loves his own song.

We are spirit-aromas

Of blossom and bloom.

We call your thoughts home as

Ye breathe our perfume,—

To the amaranth's splendour

Afire on the slopes ;

To the lily-bells tender,

And gray heliotropes ;

To the poppy-plains keeping

Such dream-breath and blee

That the angels there stepping

Grew whiter to see :

To the nook, set with moly,

Ye jested one day in,

Till your smile waxed too holy

And left your lips praying :

To the rose in the bower-place,

That dripped o'er you sleeping :

To the asphodel flower-place,

Ye walked ankle-deep in !

We pluck at your raiment,

We stroke down your hair,

We faint in our lament

And pine into air.

Fare ye well, farewell !

The Eden scents, no longer sensible,
 Expire at Eden's door.
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some fragrance which ye knew before.
 Farewell! the flowers of Eden,
 Ye shall smell nevermore.

[*There is silence. ADAM and EVE fly on, and never look back. Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark Angel passing quickly, is cast upon the Sword-glare.*]

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

Adam. Pausing a moment on this outer edge
 Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in light
 The dark exterior desert,—hast thou strength,
 Beloved, to look behind us to the gate?

Eve. Have I not strength to look up to thy face?

Adam. We need be strong: yon spectacle of
 cloud

Which seals the gate up to the final doom.
 Is God's seal manifest. There seem to lie
 A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead;
 The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless;
 And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword
 Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire
 From side to side, in pendulous horror slow,
 Across the stagnant, ghastly glare thrown flat
 On the intermediate ground from that to this.
 The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,
 Thrones, dominations, pryncedoms, rank on rank,
 Rising sublimely to the feet of God,
 On either side and overhead the gate,
 Show like a glittering and sustained smoke
 Drawn to an apex. That their faces shine
 Betwixt the solemn clasping of their wings
 Clasped high to a silver point above their heads,—
 We only guess from hence, and not discern.

Eve. Though we were near enough to see them
 shine,

The shadow on thy face were awfuller,
 To me, at least,—to me—than all their light.

Adam. What is this, Eve? thou dropp'est heavily
 In a heap earthward, and thy body heaves
 Under the golden floodings of thine hair!

Eve. O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve—
Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me little
now,
Seeing that I now confess myself thy death
And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—
I do adjure thee, put me straight away,
Together with my name. Sweet, punish me!
O Love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond
The light cast outward by the fiery sword,
Into the dark which earth must be to us,
Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the curse
said
My seed shall the first tempter's! strike with
curse,
As God struck in the garden! and as HE,
Being satisfied with justice and with wrath,
Did roll His thunder gentler at the close,—
Thou, peradventure, may'st at last recoil
To some soft need of mercy. Strike, my lord!
I, also, after tempting, writhe on the ground,
And I would feed on ashes from thine hand,
As suits me, O my tempted!

Adam. My beloved,
Mine Eve and life—I have no other name
For thee or for the sun than what ye are,
My utter life and light! If we have fallen,
It is that we have sinned,—we: God is just;
And, since His curse doth comprehend us both,
It must be that His balance holds the weights
Of first and last sin on a level. What!
Shall I who had not virtue to stand straight
Among the hills of Eden, here assume
To mend the justice of the perfect God,
By piling up a curse upon His curse,
Against thee—thee—

Eve. For so, perchance, thy God,
Might take thee into grace for scorning me;
Thy wrath against the sinner giving proof
Of inward abrogation of the sin.
And so, the blessed angels might come down
And walk with thee as erst,—I think they
would,—
Because I was not near to make them sad
Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

Adam. They know me. I am deepest in the guilt,
If last in the transgression.

Eve. THOU!

Adam. If God,
Who gave the right and joyaunce of the world
Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to me,
The best gift last, the last sin was the worst,
Which sinned against more complement of gifts
And grace of giving. God! I render back
Strong benediction and perpetual praise
From mortal feeble lips (as incense-smoke,
Out of a little censer, may fill heaven),
That Thou, in striking my benumbèd hands
And forcing them to drop all other boons
Of beauty and dominion and delight,—
Hast left this well-belovèd Eve, this life
Within life, this best gift between their palms,
In gracious compensation!

Eve. Is it thy voice?
Or some saluting angel's—calling home
My feet into the garden?

Adam. O my God!
I, standing here between the glory and dark,—
The glory of Thy wrath projected forth
From Eden's wall, the dark of our distress
Which settles a step off in that drear world—
Lift up to Thee the hands from whence hath fallen
Only creation's sceptre,—thanking Thee
That rather Thou hast cast me out with *her*
Than left me lorn of her in Paradise,
With angel looks and angel songs around
To show the absence of her eyes and voice,
And make society full desertness
Without her use in comfort!

Eve. Where is loss?
Am I in Eden? can another speak
Mine own love's tongue?

Adam. Because with *her*, I stand
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
And look away from heaven which doth accuse,
And look away from earth which doth convict,
Into her face, and crown my discrowned brow
Out of her love, and put the thought of her
Around me, for an Eden full of birds,

And lift her body up—thus—to my heart,
 And with my lips upon her lips,—thus, thus,—
 Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath
 Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides
 But overtops this grief!

Eve.

I am renewed.

My eyes grow with the light which is in thine;
 The silence of my heart is full of sound.
 Hold me up—so! Because I comprehend
 This human love, I shall not be afraid
 Of any human death; and yet because
 I know this strength of love, I seem to know
 Death's strength by that same sign. Kiss on my lips,
 To shut the door close on my rising soul,—
 Lest it pass outwards in astonishment
 And leave thee lonely.

Adam.

Yet thou liest, Eve,

Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,
 Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve.

Ay! and the tears

Running, as it might seem, my life from me,
 They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,
 And weep so, as if in a dream or prayer,
 Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard, tight thought
 Which clipped my heart and showed me evermore
 Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,
 And as the pure ones loathe our sin. To-day,
 All day, beloved, as we fled across
 This desolating radiance cast by swords
 Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless to myself,
 Striking against each other—"O Lord God!"
 ('Twas so I prayed) "I ask Thee by my sin,
 ' And by Thy curse, and by Thy blameless heavens,
 ' Make dreadful haste to hide me from Thy face
 ' And from the face of my beloved here
 ' For whom I am no helpmeet, quick away
 ' Into the new dark mystery of death!
 ' I will lie still there, I will make no plaint,
 ' I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word,
 ' Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun
 ' Where peradventure I might sin anew
 ' Against Thy mercy and his pleasure. Death,
 ' Oh death, whate'er it be, is good enough
 ' For such as I am.—While for Adam here

' No voice shall say again, in heaven or earth,
' *It is not good for him to be alone.*"

Adam. And was it good for such a prayer to pass,
My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives?
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

Eve. 'Twas an ill prayer: it shall be prayed no more;
And God did use it like a foolishness,
Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown
Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer;
Love makes it strong: and since I was the first
In the transgression, with a steady foot
I will be first to tread from this sword-glare
Into the outer darkness of the waste,—
And thus I do it.

Adam. Thus I follow thee,
As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds! what sounds!
I feel a music which comes straight from Heaven,
As tender as a watering dew.

Eve. I think
That angels—not those guarding Paradise,—
But the love-angels, who came erst to us,
And when we said "GOD," fainted unawares
Back from our mortal presence unto God,
(As if He drew them inward in a breath)
His name being heard of them,—I think that they
With sliding voices lean from heavenly towers,
Invisible but gracious. Hark—how soft!

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

Faint and tender.

Mortal man and woman,
Go upon your travel!
Heaven assist the human
Smoothly to unravel
All that web of pain
Wherein ye are holden.
Do ye know our voices
Chanting down the Golden?
Do ye guess our choice is,
Being un beholden,
To be hearkened by you yet again?

This pure door of opal
 God hath shut between us,—
 Us, his shining people,
 You, who once have seen us,
 And are blinded new !
 Yet, across the doorway,
 Past the silence reaching,
 Farewells evermore may,
 Blessing in the teaching,
 Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.

Think how erst your Eden,
 Day on day succeeding,
 With our presence glowed.
 We came as if the Heavens were bowed
 To a milder music rare.
 Ye saw us in our solemn treading,
 Treading down the steps of cloud,
 While our wings, outspreading
 Double calms of whiteness,
 Dropped superfluous brightness
 Down from stair to stair.

Second semichorus.

Or oft, abrupt though tender,
 While ye gazed on space,
 We flashed our angel-splendour
 In either human face.
 With mystic lilies in our hands,
 From the atmospheric bands
 Breaking with a sudden grace,
 We took you unaware !
 While our feet struck glories
 Outward, smooth and fair,
 Which we stood on floorwise,
 Platformed in mid air.

First semichorus.

Or oft, when Heaven-descended,
 Stood we in your wondering sight
 In a mute apocalypse !
 With dumb vibrations on our lips
 From hosannas ended,
 And grand half-vanishings
 Of the empyreal things
 Within our eyes belated,

Till the heavenly Infinite
 Falling off from the Created,
 Left our inward contemplation
 Opened into ministration.

Chorus.

Then upon our axle turning
 Of great joy to sympathy,
 We sang out the morning
 Broadening up the sky.
 Or we drew
 Our music through
 The noontide's hush and heat and shine,
 Informed with our intense Divine!
 Interrupted vital notes
 Palpitating hither, thither,
 Burning out into the æther,
 Sensible like fiery motes.

Or, whenever twilight drifted
 Through the cedar masses,
 The globed sun we lifted,
 Trailing purple, trailing gold
 Out between the passes
 Of the mountains manifold,
 To anthems slowly sung!
 While he, aweary, half in swoon
 For joy to hear our climbing tune
 Transpierce the stars' concentric rings,—
 The burden of his glory flung
 In broken lights upon our wings.

[*The chant dies away confusedly, and LUCIFER appears.*]

Luc. Now may all fruits be pleasant to thy lips,
 Beautiful Eve! The times have somewhat changed
 Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree,
 Albeit ye are not gods yet.

Eve. Adam! hold
 My right hand strongly. It is Lucifer—
 And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God,
 Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!
 And leave us to the desert thou hast made
 Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-slime
 Athwart this path kept holy to our tears,
 Or we may curse thee with their bitterness.

Luc. Curse freely! curses thicken. Why, this
Eve

Who thought me once part worthy of her ear
And somewhat wiser than the other beasts,—
Drawing together her large globes of eyes,
The light of which is throbbing in and out
Their steadfast continuity of gaze,—
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a knot,
And down from her white heights of womanhood
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should fear
To wager such an apple as she plucked,
Against one riper from the tree of life,
That she could curse too—as a woman may—
Smooth in the vowels.

Eve. So—speak wickedly!

I like it best so. Let thy words be wounds,—
For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt.
Trench on the forms of good by open ill—
For, so, I shall wax strong and grand with
scorn,

Scorning myself for ever trusting thee
As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust,
He could speak wisdom.

Luc. Our new gods, it seems,
Deal more in thunders than in courtesies.

And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which anon
I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery
From all the wandering visions of the world,
May show worse railing than our lady Eve
Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.

But why should this be? Adam pardoned Eve.

Adam. Adam loved Eve. Jehovah pardon both!

Eve. Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve.

Luc. So, well. Yet Adam was undone of Eve,
As both were by the snake. Therefore forgive,
In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor snake—
Who stung there, not so poorly!

Eve.

Hold thy wrath,
Beloved Adam! let me answer him;
For this time he speaks truth, which we should
hear,

And asks for mercy, which I most should grant,
In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise!
And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,

[*Aside.*

As freely as the streams of Eden flowed
 When we were happy by them. So, depart;
 Leave us to walk the remnant of our time
 Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek
 To harm us any more or scoff at us
 Or ere the dust be laid upon our face
 To find there the communion of the dust
 And issue of the dust.—Go!

Adam. At once, go!

Luc. Forgive! and go! Ye images of clay,
 Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what jest is this?
 What words are these to use? By what a thought
 Conceive ye of me? Yesterday—a snake!
 To-day—what?

Adam. A strong spirit.

Eve. A sad spirit.

Adam. Perhaps a fallen angel.—Who shall say!

Luc. Who told thee, Adam?

Adam. Thou! The prodigy
 Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes
 Which comprehend the heights of some great fall,
 I think that thou hast one day worn a crown
 Under the eyes of God.

Luc. And why of God?

Adam. It were no crown else. Verily, I think
 Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday
 Said it so surely, but I know to-day
 Grief by grief, sin by sin!

Luc. A crown, by a crown.

Adam. Ay, mock me! now I know more than I
 knew:
 Now I know that thou art fallen below hope
 Of final re-ascent.

Luc. Because?

Adam. Because
 A spirit who expected to see God
 Though at the last point of a million years,
 Could dare no mockery of a ruined man
 Such as this Adam.

Luc. Who is high and bold—
 Be it said passing!—of a good red clay
 Discovered on some top of Lebanon,
 Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
 Of the black eagle's wing! A furlong lower

Had made a meeker king for Eden. Soh !
 Is it not possible, by sin and grief
 (To give the things your names) that spirits should
 rise
 Instead of falling ?

Adam. Most impossible.
 The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,
 Whoever rises must approach delight
 And sanctity in the act.

Luc. Ha, my clay-king !
 Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long
 The after generations. Earth, methinks,
 Will disinherit thy philosophy
 For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs,
 And class these present dogmas with the rest
 Of the old-world traditions, Eden fruits
 And Saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with him,
 Beloved ! it is not good to speak with him.
 Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more !
 We have no pardon which thou dost not scorn,
 Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,
 Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,
 We would be alone.—Go !

Luc. Ah ! ye talk the same,
 All of you—spirits and clay—go, and depart !
 In Heaven they say so ; and at Eden's gate,—
 And here, reiterant, in the wilderness.
 None saith, Stay with me, for thy face is fair !
 None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice is sweet !
 And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.
 Look on me, woman ! Am I beautiful ?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness.

Luc. Nothing more ?

Eve. I think, no more.

Luc. False Heart—thou thinkest more !
 Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,
 Unwillingly but fully, that I stand
 Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves
 Were fashioned very good at best, so *we*
 Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word
 Which thrilled behind us, God Himself being
 moved
 When that august work of a perfect shape

His dignities of sovran angel-hood
 Swept out into the universe,—divine
 With thunderous movements, earnest looks of gods,
 And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings!
 Whereof was I, in motion and in form,
 A part not poorest. And yet,—yet, perhaps,
 This beauty which I speak of, is not here,
 As God's voice is not here, nor even my crown—
 I do not know. What is this thought or thing
 Which I call beauty? is it thought, or thing?
 Is it a thought accepted for a thing?
 Or both? or neither?—a pretext—a word?
 Its meaning flutters in me like a flame
 Under my own breath: my perceptions reel
 For evermore around it, and fall off,
 As if it too were holy.

Eve. Which it is.

Adam. The essence of all beauty, I call love.
 The attribute, the evidence, and end,
 The consummation to the inward sense,
 Of beauty apprehended from without,
 I still call love. As form, when colourless,
 Is nothing to the eye,—that pine-tree there,
 Without its black and green, being all a blank,—
 So, without love, is beauty undiscerned
 In man or angel. Angel! rather ask
 What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,
 And what collateral love moves on with thee;
 Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

Luc. Love! what is love? I lose it. Beauty and
 love!
 I darken to the image. Beauty—love!

[*He fades away, while a low music sounds.*]

Adam. Thou art pale, *Eve.*

Eve. The precipice of ill
 Down this colossal nature, dizzies me—
 And, hark! the starry harmony remote
 Seems measuring the heights from whence he fell.

Adam. Think that we have not fallen so. By the
 hope
 And aspiration, by the love and faith,
 We do exceed the stature of this angel.

Eve. Happier we are than he is, by the death.

Adam. Or rather, by the life of the Lord God!
How dim the angel grows, as if that blast
Of music swept him back into the dark.

*[The music is stronger, gathering
itself into uncertain articulation]*

Eve. It throbs in on us like a plaintive heart,
Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative,
Its gradual sweetness through the yielding air,
To such expression as the stars may use,
Most starry-sweet and strange! With every note
That grows more loud, the angel grows more dim,
Receding in proportion to approach,
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

Adam.

Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

(He fades utterly away and vanishes, as it proceeds.)

Mine orbèd image sinks

Back from thee, back from thee,

As thou art fallen, methinks,

Back from me, back from me,

O my light-bearer,

Could another fairer

Lack to thee, lack to thee?

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

I loved thee with the fiery love of stars

Who love by burning, and by loving move,

Too near the throned Jehovah not to love.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Their brows flash fast on me from gliding cars,

Pale-passioned for my loss

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Mine orbèd heats drop cold

Down from thee, down from thee,

As fell thy grace of old

Down from me, down from me.

O my light-bearer,

Is another fairer

Won to thee, won to thee?
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros,
 Great love preceded loss,
 Known to thee, known to thee.
 Ah, ah!

Thou, breathing thy communicable grace
 Of life into my light,
 Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,
 Hast inly fed,
 And flooded me with radiance overmuch
 From thy pure height.
 Ah, ah!

Thou, with calm, floating pinions both ways spread,
 Erect, irradiated,
 Didst sting my wheel of glory
 On, on before thee
 Along the Godlight by a quickening touch!
 Ha, ha!

Around, around the firmamental ocean
 I swam expanding with delirious fire!
 Around, around, around, in blind desire
 To be drawn upward to the Infinite—
 Ha, ha!

Until, the motion flinging out the motion
 To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,
 To a dim whirl of languor and delight,
 I wound in girant orbits smooth and white
 With that intense rapidity.
 Around, around,
 I wound and interwound,
 While all the cyclic heavens about me spun.
 Stars, planets, suns, and moons dilated broad,
 Then flashed together into a single sun,
 And wound, and wound in one,
 And as they wound I wound,—around, around,
 In a great fire I almost took for God!
 Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks
 Down from me, down from me—
 My beauty falls, methinks,
 Down from thee, down from thee!

O my light-bearer,
O my path-preparer,
Gone from me, gone from me!

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

I cannot kindle underneath the brow
Of this new angel here, who is not Thou.
All things are altered since that time ago,—
And if I shine at eve, I shall not know.

I am strange—I am slow.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,
With tears between the looks raised up to me.

Ah, ah!

When, having wept all night, at break of day
Above the folded hills they shall survey
My light, a little trembling, in the gray.

Ah, ah!

And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,
Through all my piteous pomp at morn or even
And melancholy leaning out of heaven,
That love, their own divine, may change or end,
That love may close in loss!

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

SCENE.—*Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.*

Adam. How doth the wide and melancholy earth
Gather her hills around us, gray and ghast,
And stare with blank significance of loss
Right in our faces! Is the wind up?

Eve.

Nay.

Adam. And yet the cedars and the junipers
Rock slowly through the mist, without a sound,
And shapes which have no certainty of shape
Drift dusky in and out between the pines,
And loom along the edges of the hills,
And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—
Shadows without a body, which contract
And lengthen as we gaze on them.

Eve.

O life

Which is not man's nor angel's! What is this?

Adam. No cause for fear. The circle of God's life
Contains all life beside.

Eve. I think the earth
Is crazed with curse, and wanders from the sense
Of those first laws affixed to form and space
Or ever she knew sin.

Adam. We will not fear :
We were brave sinning.

Eve. Yea, I plucked the fruit
With eyes upturned to heaven and seeing there
Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,—not God.
My heart, which beats then, sinks. The sun hath sunk
Out of sight with our Eden.

Adam. Night is near.

Eve. And God's curse, nearest. Let us travel back
And stand within the sword-glare till we die,
Believing it is better to meet death
Than suffer desolation.

Adam. Nay, beloved !
We must not pluck death from the Maker's hand,
As erst we plucked the apple : we must wait
Until He gives death as He gave us life,
Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift
Because we spoilt its sweetness with our sin.

Eve. Ah, ah ! dost thou discern what I behold ?

Adam. I see all. How the spirits in thine eyes
From their dilated orbits bound before
To meet the spectral Dread !

Eve. I am afraid—
Ah, ah ! the twilight bristles wild with shapes
Of intermittent motion, aspect vague
And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep the earth,
Keeping slow time with horrors in the blood.
How near they reach . . . and far ! How gray they move—
Treading upon the darkness without feet,
And fluttering on the darkness without wings !
Some run like dogs, with noses to the ground ;
Some keep one path, like sheep ; some rock like trees ;
Some glide like a fallen leaf ; and some flow on
Copious as rivers.

Adam. Some spring up like fire—
And some coil . . .

Eve. Ah, ah ! dost thou pause to say
Like what ?—coil like the serpent, when he fell

From all the emerald splendour of his height
 And writhed, and could not climb against the curse.
 Not a ring's length. I am afraid—afraid—
 I think it is God's will to make me afraid,—
 Permitting THESE to haunt us in the place
 Of His beloved angels—gone from us
 Because we are not pure. Dear Pity of God,
 That didst permit the angels to go home
 And live no more with us who are not pure,
 Save *us* too from a loathly company—
 Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,
 As *we* are in the purest! Pity us—
 Us too! nor shut us in the dark, away
 From verity and from stability,
 Or what we name such through the precedence
 Of earth's adjusted uses,—leave us not
 To doubt betwixt our senses and our souls,
 Which are the more distraught and full of pain,
 And weak of apprehension.

Adam. Courage, Sweet!
 The mystic shapes ebb back from us, and drop
 With slow concentric movement, each on each,—
 Expressing wider spaces,—and collapsed
 In lines more definite for imagery
 And clearer for relation, till the throng
 Of shapeless spectra merge into a few
 Distinguishable phantasms vague and grand
 Which sweep out and around us vastly
 And hold us in a circle and a calm.

Eve. Strange phantasms of pale shadow! there are
 twelve.
 Thou who didst name all lives, hast names for these?

Adam. Methinks this is the zodiac of the earth,
 Which rounds us with a visionary dread,
 Responding with twelve shadowy signs of earth,
 In fantasque apposition and approach,
 To those celestial, constellated twelve
 Which palpitate adown the silent nights
 Under the pressure of the hand of God
 Stretched wide in benediction. At this hour,
 Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of heaven!
 But, girdling close our nether wilderness,
 The zodiac figures of the earth loom slow,—
 Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and time,

In twelve colossal shades instead of stars,
Through which the ecliptic line of mystery
Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting scope,
Foreshowing life and death.

Eve. By dream or sense,
Do we see this?

Adam. Our spirits have climbed high
By reason of the passion of our grief,
And, from the top of sense, looked over sense,
To the significance and heart of things
Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the dim twelve . . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the creature-life
As earth contains it. Gaze on them, beloved!
By stricter apprehension of the sight,
Suggestions of the creatures shall assuage
The terror of the shadows,—what is known
Subduing the unknown and taming it
From all prodigious dread. That phantasm, there,
Presents a lion, albeit twenty times
As large as any lion—with a roar
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,
And a strange horror stirring in his mane.
And, there, a pendulous shadow seems to weigh—
Good against ill, perchance; and there, a crab
Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all the ground,
Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself.
A bull stands hornèd here with gibbous glooms;
And a ram likewise! and a scorpion writhes
Its tail in ghastly slime and stings the dark.
This way a goat leaps with wild blank of beard;
And here, fantastic fishes duskly float,
Using the calm for waters, while their fins
Throb out quick rhythms along the shallow air.
While images more human—

Eve. How he stands,
That phantasm of a man—who is not *thou*!
Two phantasms of two men!

Adam. One that sustains,
And one that strives,—resuming, so, the ends
Of manhood's curse of labour.* Dost thou see

* Adam recognises in *Aquarius*, the water-bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combating—the passive and active

That phantasm of a woman?—

Eve. I have seen,
 But look off to those small humanities *
 Which draw me tenderly across my fear,—
 Lesser and fainter than my womanhood
 Or yet thy manhood—with strange innocence
 Set in the misty lines of head and hand.
 They lean together! I would gaze on them
 Longer and longer, till my watching eyes,
 As the stars do in watching anything,
 Should light them forward from their outline vague
 To clear configuration—

[*Two spirits, of organic and inorganic
 nature, arise from the ground.*

But what Shapes

Rise up between us in the open space,
 And thrust me into horror, back from hope!
Adam. Colossal Shapes—twin sovran images,
 With a disconsolate, blank majesty
 Set in their wondrous faces! with no look,
 And yet an aspect—a significance
 Of individual life and passionate ends,
 Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound,
 O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin sound!
 How it comes, wheeling as the pale moth wheels,
 Wheeling and wheeling in continuous wail
 Around the cyclic zodiac, and gains force,
 And gathers, settling coldly like a moth,
 On the wan faces of these images
 We see before us,—whereby modified,
 It draws a straight line of articulate song
 From out that spiral faintness of lament,
 And, by one voice, expresses many griefs.

First Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless earth.
 God spake me softly out among the stars,
 As softly as a blessing of much worth;
 And then, His smile did follow unawares,
 That all things fashioned so for use and duty
 Might shine anointed with His chrism of beauty—
 Yet I wail!

forms of human labour. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Capricornus, and Pisces, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

* Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

I drave on with the worlds exultingly,
 Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual fall ;
 Individual aspect and complexity
 Of giratory orb and interval
 Lost in the fluent motion of delight
 Toward the high ends of Being beyond sight—
 Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I am the Spirit of the harmless beasts,
 Of flying things, and creeping things, and swimming ;
 Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,
 That found the love-kiss on the goblet brimming,
 And tasted, in each drop within the measure,
 The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's good pleasure—
 Yet I wail !

What a full hum of life around His lips
 Bore witness to the fullness of creation !
 How all the grand words were full-laden ships ;
 Each sailing onward from enunciation
 To separate existence,—and each bearing
 The creature's power of joying, hoping, fearing !—
 Yet I wail !

Eve. They wail, beloved ! they speak of glory and
 God,
 And they wail—wail. That burden of the song
 Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls
 Into the lap of silence.

Adam. Hark, again !

First Spirit.

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,
 My joy stood up within me bold to add
 A word to God's,—and, when His work was full,
 To "very good," responded "very glad !"
 Filtered through roses, did the light enclose me,
 And bunches of the grape swam blue across me—
 Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I bounded with my panthers ! I rejoiced
 In my young tumbling lions rolled together !
 My stag, the river at his fetlocks, poised
 Then dipped his antlers through the golden weather
 In the same ripple which the alligator
 Left, in his joyous troubling of the water—
 Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,
 What wordless triumph did your voices render !
 O mountain-summits, where the angels stood
 And shook from head and wing thick dews of splendour
 How, with a holy quiet, did your Earthy
 Accept that Heavenly, knowing ye were worthy !
 Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

O my wild wood-dogs, with your listening eyes !
 My horses—my ground-eagles, for swift fleeing !
 My birds, with viewless wings of harmonies,
 My calm cold fishes of a silver being,
 How happy were ye, living and possessing,
 O fair half-souls capacious of full blessing !
 Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Now hear my charge to-day,
 Thou man, thou woman, marked as the misdoers
 By God's sword at your backs ! I lent my clay
 To make your bodies, which had grown more flowers :
 And now, in change for what I lent, ye give me
 The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to cleave me—
 And I wail !

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Behold ye that I fasten
 My sorrow's fang upon your souls dishonoured ?
 Accursed transgressors ! down the steep ye hasten,—
 Your crown's weight on the world, to drag it downward
 Unto your ruin. Lo ! my lions, scenting
 The blood of wars, roar hoarse and unrelenting—
 And I wail !

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Do you hear that I wail ?
 I had no part in your transgression—none.
 My roses on the bough did bud not pale,
 My rivers did not loiter in the sun ;
 I was obedient. Wherefore in my centre
 Do I thrill at this curse of death and winter ?—
 Do I wail ?

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! I wail in the assault
 Of undeserved perdition, sorely wounded !
 My nightingale sang sweet without a fault,
 My gentle leopards innocently bounded.

We were obedient. What is this convulses
Our blameless life with pangs and fever pulses?
And I wail!

Eve. I choose God's thunder and His angels'
swords

To die by, Adam, rather than such words.
Let us pass out and flee.

Adam. We cannot flee.
This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
Curls round us, like a river cold and drear,
And shuts us in, constraining us to hear.

First Spirit.
I feel your steps, O wandering sinners, strike
A sense of death to me, and undug graves!
The heart of earth, once calm, is trembling like
The ragged foam along the ocean-waves:
The restless earthquakes rock against each other;
The elements moan 'round me—"Mother, mother"—
And I wail!

Second Spirit.
Your melancholy looks do pierce me through;
Corruption swathes the paleness of your beauty.
Why have ye done this thing? What did we do
That we should fall from bliss as ye from duty?
Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for their jesses,
Fierce howl the wolves along the wildernesses—
And I wail!

Adam. To thee, the Spirit of the harmless earth,
To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless lives,
Inferior creatures but still innocent,
Be salutation from a guilty mouth
Yet worthy of some audience and respect
From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,
God hath rebuked us, who is over us
To give rebuke or death, and if ye wail
Because of any suffering from our sin,
Ye who are under and not over us,
Be satisfied with God, if not with us,
And pass out from our presence in such peace
As we have left you, to enjoy revenge
Such as the Heavens have made you. Varily,
There must be strife between us, large as sin.
Eve. No strife, mine Adam! Let us not stand high
Upon the wrong we did to reach disdain,

Who rather should be humbler evermore
 Since self-made sadder. Adam! shall I speak—
 I who spake once to such a bitter end—
 Shall I speak humbly now, who once was proud?
 I, schooled by sin to more humility
 Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king—
 My king, if not the world's?

Adam. Speak as thou wilt.

Eve. Thus, then—my hand in thine—

. . . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits!

I pray you humbly in the name of God,
 Not to say of these tears, which are impure—
 Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth
 From clean volitions towards a spotted will,
 From the wronged to the wronger, this and no more;
 I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,
 That absolute pardon is impossible
 From you to me, by reason of my sin,—
 And that I cannot evermore, as once,
 With worthy acceptation of pure joy,
 Behold the trances of the holy hills
 Beneath the leaning stars, or watch the vales
 Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy,—
 Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between
 Two grassy uplands,—and the river-wells
 Work out their bubbling mysteries underground,—
 And all the birds sing, till for joy of song
 They lift their trembling wings as if to heave
 The too-much weight of music from their heart
 And float it up the æther. I am 'ware
 That these things I can no more apprehend
 With a pure organ into a full delight,—
 The sense of beauty and of melody
 Being no more aided in me by the sense
 Of personal adjustment to those heights
 Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,
 But rather coupled darkly and made ashamed
 By my percipiency of sin and fall
 In melancholy of humiliant thoughts.
 But, oh! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this
 Your accusation must confront my soul,
 And your pathetic utterance and full gaze
 Must evermore subdue me, be content—
 Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,



B.P.—I.

“Familiar with the waves and free,
As if their own white foam were he.”

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E

Not to say loving ! let my tears fall thick
 As watering dews of Eden, unreprieved ;
 And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,
 Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,
 And peradventure better while more sad.
 For look to it, sweet Spirits, look well to it,
 It will not be amiss in you who kept
 The law of your own righteousness, and keep
 The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves, —
 To pity me twice fallen, from that, and this,
 From joy of place, and also right of wail,
 "I wail" being not for me—only "I sin."
 Look to it, O sweet Spirits!—

For was I not,

At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
 When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs
 Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
 All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God
 Held them suspended,—was I not, that hour,
 The lady of the world, princess of life,
 Mistress of feast and favour? Could I touch
 A rose with my white hand, but it became
 Redder at once? Could I walk leisurely
 Along our swarded garden, but the grass
 Tracked me with greenness? Could I stand aside
 A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
 But all the leaves did tremble as alive
 With songs of fifty birds who were made glad
 Because I stood there? Could I turn to look
 With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast,
 Now good for only weeping,—upon man,
 Angel, or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced
 Because I looked on him? Alas, alas!
 And is not this much woe, to cry "alas!"
 Speaking of joy? And is not this more shame,
 To have made the woe myself, from all that joy?
 To have stretched my hand, and plucked it from the tree,
 And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is not this
 Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit,
 And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have,
 Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy?
Adam. I will not hear thee speak so. Harken, Spirits!
 Our God, who is the enemy of none
 But only of their sin, hath set your hope

And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.
 Show reverence, then, and never bruise her more
 With unpermitted and extreme reproach,—
 Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling down
 Beneath your trampling feet, God's gift to us
 Of sovrantry by reason and freewill ;
 Sinning against the province of the Soul
 To rule the soulless. Reverence her estate,
 And pass out from her presence with no words.

Eve. O dearest Heart, have patience with my heart !
 O Spirits, have patience, 'stead of reverence,
 And let me speak ; for, not being innocent,
 It little doth become me to be proud,
 And I am prescient by the very hope
 And promise set upon me, that henceforth
 Only my gentleness shall make me great,
 My humbleness exalt me. Awful Spirits,
 Be witness that I stand in your reproof
 But one sun's length off from my happiness—
 Happy, as I have said, to look around,
 Clear to look up !—And now ! I need not speak—
 Ye see me what I am ; ye scorn me so,
 Because ye see me what I have made myself
 From God's best making ! Alas,—peace foregone,
 Love wronged, and virtue forfeit, and tears wept
 Upon all, vainly ! Alas, me ! alas,
 Who have undone myself from all that best
 Fairest and sweetest, to this wretchedest
 Saddest and most defiled—cast out, cast down—
 What word metes absolute loss ? let absolute loss
 Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who lived
 Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,
 Wander to-day beneath the roofless world !
I, reigning the earth's empress yesterday,
 Put off from me, to-day, your hate with prayers !
I, yesterday, who answered the Lord God,
 Composed and glad as singing-birds the sun,
 Might shriek now from our dismal desert, " God,"
 And hear Him make reply, " What is thy need,
 Thou whom I cursed to-day ? "

Adam.

Eve !

Eve.

I, at last,

Who yesterday was helpmate and delight
 Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief

And curse-mete for him! And, so, pity us,
 Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,
 And let some tender peace, made of our pain,
 Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow,
 With boughs on both sides. In the shade of which,
 When presently ye shall behold us dead,—
 For the poor sake of our humility,
 Breathe out your pardon on our breathless lips,
 And drop your twilight dews against our brows,
 And stroking with mild airs our harmless hands
 Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love
 Distilling through your pity over us,
 And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass.

LUCIFER *rises in the circle.*

Luc. Who talks here of a complement of grief?
 Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?
 Of hate subduable to pity? Eve?
 Take counsel from thy counsellor the snake,
 And boast no more in grief, nor hope from pain,
 My docile Eve! I teach you to despond,
 Who taught you disobedience. Look around;—
 Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you talk unmoved,
 As if ye were red clay again and talked!
 What are your words to them? your grief to them?
 Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the hand pause
 For *their* sake, in the plucking of the fruit,
 That they should pause for *you*, in hating you?
 Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,
 Bring change upon their final doom? Behold,
 Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,
 And cannot expiate for it.

Adam. That is true.

Luc. Ay, that is true. The clay-king testifies
 To the snake's counsel,—hear him!—very true.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Luc. And certes, *that* is true.

Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I
 Could wail among you. O thou universe,
 That holdest sin and woe,—more room for wail!
Distant starry voice. Ah, ah, Heosphoros! Heosphoros!
Adam. Mark Lucifer. He changes awfully.
Eve. It seems as if he looked from grief to God
 And could not see Him!—wretched Lucifer!

Adam. How he stands—yet an angel!

Earth Spirits.

We all wail!

Luc. (after a pause.) Dost thou remember, Adam, when
the curse

Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak
Half-sheathed in primal woods and glittering
In spasms of awful sunshine at that hour,
A lion couched, part raised upon his paws,
With his calm, massive face turned full on thine,
And his mane listening. When the ended curse
Left silence in the world, right suddenly
He sprang up rampant and stood straight and stiff,
As if the new reality of death
Were dashed against his eyes, and roared so fierce
(Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat
Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)
And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills
Such fast, keen echoes crumbling down the vales
Precipitately,—that the forest beasts,
One after one, did mutter a response
Of savage and of sorrowful complaint
Which trailed along the gorges. Then, at once,
He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height
Into the dusk of pines.

Adam.

It might have been.

I heard the curse alone.

Earth Spirits.

I wail, I wail!

Luc. That lion is the type of what I am.

And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,
And roared, O Adam, comprehending doom,
So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,
I cry out here between the Heavens and Earth
My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,
Which damn me to this depth.

Earth Spirits.

I wail, I wail!

Eve. I wail—O God!

Luc.

I scorn you that ye wail,

Who use your pretty griefs for pedestals
To stand on, beckoning pity from without,
And deal in pathos of antithesis
Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye are;—
I scorn you like an angel! Yet, one cry
I, too, would drive up like a column erect,
Marble to marble, from my heart to Heaven,

A monument of anguish to transpierce
 And overtop your vapoury complaints
 Expressed from feeble woes.

Earth Spirits.

I wail, I wail!

Luc. For, O ye Heavens, ye are my witnesses,
 That I, struck out from nature in a blot,
 The outcast and the mildew of things good,
 The leper of angels, the excepted dust
 Under the common rain of daily gifts,—
 I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—
 To whom the highest and the lowest alike
 Say, Go from us—we have no need of thee,—
 Was made by God like others. Good and fair,
 He did create me!—ask Him, if not fair!
 Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly
 His blessing for chief angels on my head,
 Until it grew there, a crown crystallised!
 Ask, if He never called me by my name,
Lucifer—kindly said as “Gabriel”—
Lucifer—soft as “Michael!” while serene
 I, standing in the glory of the lamps,
 Answered “my Father,” innocent of shame
 And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye think
 White angels in your niches,—I repent,
 And would tread down my own offences back
 To service at the footstool? *that's* read wrong!
 I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—
 Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep,
 Against the sides of this prodigious pit
 I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of wail
 On each side, to meet anguish everywhere,
 And to attest it in the ecstasy
 And exaltation of a woe sustained
 Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along

Your wilderness, vain mortals! Puny griefs
 In transitory shapes, be henceforth dwarfed
 To your own conscience, by the dread extremes
 Of what I am and have been. If ye have fallen,
 It is but a step's fall,—the whole ground beneath
 Strewn woolly soft with promise! if ye have sinned,
 Your prayers tread high as angels! if ye have grieved,
 Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,
 The power to die disproves the right to grieve.

Go to ! ye call this ruin ? I half-scorn
 The ill I did you ! Were ye wronged by me,
 Hated and tempted and undone of me,—
 Still, what's your hurt to mine of doing hurt,
 Of hating, tempting, and so ruining ?
 This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and cuts through
 The hand that wields it.

Go—I curse you all.

Hate one another—feebly—as ye can ;
 I would not certes cut you short in hate,
 Far be it from me ! hate on as ye can !
 I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth,
 As wintry blast may breathe on wintry leaves
 And lifting up their brownness show beneath
 The branches bare.—Beseech you, spirits, give
 To Eve who beggarly entreats your love
 For her and Adam when they shall be dead,
 An answer rather fitting to the sin
 Than to the sorrow—as the Heavens, I trow,
 For justice' sake gave theirs.

I curse you both,

Adam and Eve ! Say grace as after meat,
 After my curses. May your tears fall hot
 On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures here,—
 And yet rejoice. Increase and multiply,
 Ye in your generations, in all plagues,
 Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,
 And hideous forms of life and fears of death,—
 The thought of death being alway eminent
 Immovable and dreadful in your life,
 And deafly and dumbly insignificant
 Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,
 Whichever of you lieth dead the first,
 Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice !
 My curse catch at you strongly, body and soul,
 And He find no redemption—nor the wing
 Of seraph move your way ; and yet rejoice !
 Rejoice,—because ye have not, set in you,
 This hate which shall pursue you—this fire-hate
 Which glares without, because it burns within—
 Which kills from ashes—this potential hate,
 Wherein I, angel, in antagonism
 To God and his reflex beatitudes,
 Moan ever in the central universe

With the great woe of striving against Love—
 And gasp for space amid the Infinite,
 And toss for rest amid the Desertness,
 Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect
 To kingship of resistant agony
 Toward the Good round me—hating good and love,
 And willing to hate good and to hate love,
 And willing to will on so evermore,
 Scorning the past and damning the To come—
 Go and rejoice! I curse you.

[LUCIFER *vanishes.*

Earth Spirits.

And we scorn you! there's no pardon
 Which can lean to you aright.
 When your bodies take the guerdon
 Of the death-curse in our sight,
 Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall transcend you:
 Then ye shall not move an eyelid
 Though the stars look down your eyes;
 And the earth which ye defiled,
 Shall expose you to the skies,—
 "Lo! these kings of ours, who sought to comprehend you."

First Spirit.

And the elements shall boldly
 All your dust to dust constrain.
 Unresistedly and coldly
 I will smite you with my rain.
 From the slowest of my frosts is no receding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
 To assume a royal part,
 He shall reign, crowned and anointed,
 O'er the noble human heart.
 Give him counsel against losing of that Eden!

Adam. Do ye scorn us? Back your scorn
 Toward your faces gray and lorn,
 As the wind drives back the rain,
 Thus I drive with passion-strife,
 I who stand beneath God's sun,
 Made like God, and, though undone,
 Not unmade for love and life.
 Lo! ye utter threats in vain.
 By my free will that chose sin,
 By mine agony within
 Round the passage of the fire,

By the pinings which disclose
That my native soul is higher
Than what it chose,

We are yet too high, O Spirits, for your disdain.
Eve. Nay, beloved! If these be low,
We confront them from no height.
We have stooped down to their level
By infecting them with evil,
And their scorn that meets our blow
Scathes aright.
Amen. Let it be so.

Earth Spirits.

We shall triumph—triumph greatly
When ye lie beneath the sward.
There, our lily shall grow stately
Though ye answer not a word,
And her fragrance shall be scornful of your silence:
While your throne ascending calmly
We, in heirdom of your soul,
Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,
The dilated ocean roll
By the thoughts that throbbed within you, round the
islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit
Your significance of will,
And the grandeur of your spirit
Shall our broad savannahs fill;
In our winds, your exultations shall be springing.
Even your parlance which inveigles,
By our rudeness shall be won.
Hearts poetic in our eagles
Shall beat up against the sun
And strike downward in articulate clear singing.

Your bold speeches, our Behemoth
With his thunderous jaw shall wield.
Your high fancies, shall our Mammoth
Breathe sublimely up the shield
Of St. Michael at God's throne, who waits to speed him
Till the heavens' smooth-groovèd thunder
Spinning back, shall leave them clear,
And the angels smiling wonder
With dropt looks from sphere to sphere,
Shall cry, "Ho, ye heirs of Adam! ye exceed him."

Adam. Root out thine eyes, sweet, from the dreary ground.

Beloved, we may be overcome by God,
But not by these.

Eve. By God, perhaps, in these.

Adam. I think, not so. Had God foredoomed despair
He had not spoken hope. He may destroy,
Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose!

I plucked it in our bower of Paradise
This morning as I went forth, and my heart
Has beat against its petals all the day.
I thought it would be always red and full
As when I plucked it—*Is it?*—ye may see!
I cast it down to you that ye may see,
All of you!—count the petals lost of it,
And note the colours faded! ye may see!
And I am as it is, who yesterday
Grew in the same place. O ye spirits of earth!
I almost, from my miserable heart,
Could here upbraid you for your cruel heart,
Which will not let me, down the slope of death,
Draw any of your pity after me,
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
As my flower, there, in mine.

[*A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct human voices, spins around the earth-sodiac, filling the circle with its presence; and then wailing off into the east, carries the rose away with it. EVE falls upon her face. ADAM stands erect.*]

Adam. So, verily,

The last departs.

Eve. So Memory follows Hope,

And Life both. Love said to me, "Do not die,"

And I replied, "O Love, I will not die.

I exiled and I will not orphan Love."

But now it is no choice of mine to die—

My heart throbs from me.

Adam. Call it straightway back.

Death's consummation crowns completed life,

Or comes too early. Hope being set on thee

For others, if for others then for thee,—

For thee and me.

[*The wind revolves from the east, and round again to the east, perfumed by the Eden-rose, and full of voices which sweep out into articulation as they pass.*]

Let thy soul shake its leaves.
To feel the mystic wind—hark!

Eve.

I hear life.

Infant voices passing in the wind.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we receive
Is a warm thing and a new,
Which we softly bud into
From the heart and from the brain,—
Something strange that overmuch is
Of the sound and of the sight,
Flowing round in trickling touches,
With a sorrow and delight,—
Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Youthful voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we achieve,
Is a loud thing and a bold,
Which with pulses manifold
Strikes the heart out full and fain—
Active doer, noble liver,
Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,
Though the vessel's prow will quiver
At the lifting of the anchor :
Yet do we strive in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we conceive,
Is a clear thing and a fair,
Which we set in crystal air
That its beauty may be plain!
With a breathing and a flooding
Of the heaven-life on the whole,
While we hear the forests budding

To the music of the soul—
Yet is it tuned in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Philosophic voices passing.

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we perceive,
Is a great thing and a grave,
Which for others' use we have,
Duty-laden to remain.

We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
Of the right against the wrong,
We are earnest-hearted teachers
Of the truth which maketh strong—
Yet do we teach in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly

Lest it be all in vain.

Revel voices passing.

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we reprieve,
Is a low thing and a light,
Which is jested out of sight,
And made worthy of disdain!

Strike with bold electric laughter
The high tops of things divine—
Turn thy head, my brother, after,
Lest thy tears fall in my wine;—
For is all laughed in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life—of life like ours—
Of laughter and of wailing, of grave speech,
Of little plaintive voices innocent,
Of life in separate courses flowing out
Like our four rivers to some outward main.
I hear life—life!

Adam. And, so, thy cheeks have snatched
Scarlet to paleness, and thine eyes drink fast
Of glory from full cups, and thy moist lips
Seem trembling, both of them, with earnest doubts
Whether to utter words or only smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the coming life?
 Hear the steep generations, how they fall
 Adown the visionary stairs of Time
 Like supernatural thunders—far, yet near,—
 Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills.
 Am I a cloud to these—mother to these?

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these,
 [EVE sinks down again]

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life that we conceive,
 Is a noble thing and high,
 Which we climb up loftily
 To view God without a stain;
 Till, recoiling where the shade is,
 We retread our steps again,
 And descend the gloomy Hades
 To resume man's mortal pain.
 Shall it be climbed in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
 Lest it be all in vain.

Love voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
 And this life we would retrieve,
 Is a faithful thing apart
 Which we love in, heart to heart,
 Until one heart fitteth twain.
 "Wilt thou be one with me?"
 "I will be one with thee."
 "Ha, ha!—we love and live!"
 Alas! ye love and die.
 Shriek—who shall reply?
 For is it not loved in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
 Though it be all in vain.

Aged voices passing.

O we live, O we live
 And this life we would survive,
 Is a gloomy thing and brief,
 Which, consummated in grief,
 Leaveth ashes for all gain.
 Is it not *all* in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Though it be *all* in vain. [*Voices die away.*

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. The voices of foreshown Humanity
Die off;—so let me die.

Adam. So let us die.

When God's will soundeth the right hour of death.

Earth Spirits. And bringer of the curse upon all these.

Eve. O Spirits! by the gentleness ye use
In winds at night, and floating clouds at noon,
In gliding waters under lily-leaves,
In chirp of crickets, and the settling hush
A bird makes in her nest with feet and wings,—
Fulfil your natures now!

Earth Spirits. Agreed, allowed!

We gather out our natures like a cloud,
And thus fulfil their lightnings! Thus, and thus!

Hearken, O hearken to us!

First Spirit.

As the storm-wind blows bleakly from the nor-
land,

As the snow-wind beats blindly on the moorland,
As the simoom drives hot across the desert,
As the thunder roars deep in the Unmeasured,
As the torrent tears the ocean-world to atoms,
As the whirlpool grinds it fathoms below fathoms,
Thus,—and thus!

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its poison chilly,
As the tiger, in the jungle crouching stilly,
As the wild boar, with ragged tusks of anger,
As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering clangour,
As the vultures, that scream against the thunder,
As the owlets, that sit and moan asunder,
Thus,—and thus!

Eve. Adam! God!

Adam. Cruel, unrelenting Spirits!

By the power in me of the sovran soul
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with the angel's march,
I charge you into silence—trample you
Down to obedience.—I am king of you!

Earth Spirits.

Ha, ha ! thou art king !
 With a sin for a crown,
 And a soul undone !
 Thou, the antagonised,
 Tortured and agonised,
 Held in the ring
 Of the zodiac !
 Now, king, beware !
 We are many and strong
 Whom thou standest among,—
 And we press on the air,
 And we stifle thee back,
 And we multiply where
 Thou wouldst trample us down
 From rights of our own
 To an utter wrong—

And, from under the feet of thy scorn,
 O forlorn !

We shall spring up like corn,
 And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in Thee ! I make appeal
 Unto thy kingship.

Eve. There is pity in THEE,
 O sinned against, great God !—My seed, my seed,
 There is hope set on THEE—I cry to Thee,
 Thou mystic Seed that shalt be !—leave us not
 In agony beyond what we can bear,
 Fallen in debasement below thunder-mark,
 A mark for scorning—taunted and perplexed
 By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,
 Whom thou, Lord, rulest alway. O my Seed,
 Through the tempestuous years that rain so thick
 Betwixt my ghostly vision and thy face,
 Let me have token ! for my soul is bruised
 Before the serpent's head is.

[*A vision of CHRIST appears in the midst of the zodiac,
 which pales before the heavenly light. The Earth
 Spirits grow grayer and fainter.*]

CHRIST.

I AM HERE !

Adam. This is God !—Curse us not, God, any more.

Eve. But gazing so—so—with omnific eyes,
 Lift my soul upward till it touch thy feet

Than any of your highest. So at last,
 He shall look round on you with lids too straight
 To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well,
 And bless you when he prays his secret prayers,
 And praise you when he sings his open songs
 For the clear song-note he has learnt in you
 Of purifying sweetness, and extend
 Across your head his golden fantasies
 Which glorify you into soul from sense !
 Go, serve him for such price. That not in vain
 Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place
 My word here for an oath, Mine oath for act
 To be hereafter. In the name of which
 Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,
 I bless you through the hope and through the peace
 Which are Mine,—to the Love, which is Myself.

Eve. Speak on still, Christ. Albeit Thou bless me not
 In set words, I am blessed in hearkening thee—
 Speak, Christ.

CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless the woman, man—
 It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,
 Take heart before this Presence. Lo, my voice,
 Which, naming erst the creatures, did express
 (God breathing through my breath) the attributes
 And instincts of each creature in its name,
 Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and heaves
 Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,
 A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,
 Out fairly and wide. Henceforward, arise, aspire
 To all the calms and magnanimities,
 The lofty uses and the noble ends,
 The sanctified devotion and full work,
 To which thou art elect for evermore,
 First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin.

Adam. And also the sole bearer of the Seed
 Whereby sin dieth ! raise the majesties
 Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,
 And front with level eyelids the To come,
 And all the dark o' the world. Rise, woman, rise
 To thy peculiar and best altitudes
 Of doing good and of enduring ill,
 Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,

And reconciling all that ill and good
Unto the patience of a constant hope,—
Rise with thy daughters! If sin came by thee,
And by sin, death,—the ransom-righteousness
The heavenly life and compensative rest
Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee
Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth
An angel of the woe thou didst achieve
Found acceptable to the world instead
Of others of that name, of whose bright steps
Thy deeds stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied;
Something thou hast to bear through womanhood,
Peculiar suffering answering to the sin,—
Some pang paid down for each new human life,
Some weariness in guarding such a life,
Some coldness from the guarded, some mistrust
From those thou hast too well served, from those beloved
Too loyally some treason; febleness
Within thy heart, and cruelty without,
And pressures of an alien tyranny
With its dynastic reasons of larger bones
And stronger sinews. But, go to! thy love
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes
After its own life-working. A child's kiss
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad;
A poor man served by thee, shall make thee rich;*
A sick man helped by thee, shall make thee strong;
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense
Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown
I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing
With looks of prompting love—to keep thee clear
Of all reproach against the sin forgone,
From all the generations which succeed.
Thy hand which plucked the apple, I clasp close,
Thy lips which spake wrong counsel, I kiss close,
I bless thee in the name of Paradise
And by the memory of Edenic joys
Forfeit and lost,—by that last cypress tree
Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out,
And by the blessed nightingale which threw
Its melancholy music after us,—
And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells
Did follow softly, plucking us behind
Back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers

And fourfold river-courses.—By all these,
 I bless thee to the contraries of these,
 I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,
 To the elemental change and turbulence,
 And to the roar of the estranged beasts,
 And to the solemn dignities of grief,—
 To each one of these ends,—and to their END
 Of Death and the hereafter !

Eve. I accept
 For me and for my daughters this high part
 Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work
 Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest,
 And in the place of Eden's lost delight
 Worthy endurance of permitted pain ;
 While on my longest patience there shall wait
 Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east
 Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself
 Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,
 That humbleness may keep it in the shade.
 Shall it be so ? shall I smile, saying so ?
 O Seed ! O King ! O God, who *shalt* be seed,—
 What shall I say ? As Eden's fountains swelled
 Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul
 Betwixt Thy love and power !

And, sweetest thoughts
 Of foregone Eden ! now, for the first time
 Since God said " Adam," walking through the trees,
 I dare to pluck you as I plucked erewhile
 The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope.
 So pluck I you—so largely—with both hands,
 And throw you forward on the outer earth
 Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

Adam. As thou, Christ, to illumine it, holdest Heaven
 Broadly over our heads.

[*The CHRIST is gradually transfigured during the following phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.*]

Eve. O Saviour Christ,
 Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun.

Adam. We worship in Thy silence, Saviour Christ.

Eve. Thy brows grow grander with a forecast woe,—
 Diviner, with the possible of death !
 We worship in Thy sorrow, Saviour Christ.

Adam. How do Thy clear, still eyes transpierce our souls,
As gazing *through* them toward the Father-throne
In a pathological, full Deity,
Serenely as the stars gaze through the air
Straight on each other.

Eve. O pathetic Christ,
Thou standest mute in glory, like the moon.

CHRIST. Eternity stands alway fronting God ;
A stern colossal image, with blind eyes
And grand dim lips that murmur evermore
God, God, God ! while the rush of life and death,
The roar of act and thought, of evil and good,
The avalanches of the ruining worlds
Tolling down space,—the new world's genesis
Budding in fire,—the gradual humming growth
Of the ancient atoms and first forms of earth,
The slow procession of the swathing seas
And firmamental waters,—and the noise
Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—
All these flow onward in the intervals
Of that reiterated sound of—GOD !
Which WORD, innumerable angels straightway lift
Wide on celestial altitudes of song
And choral adoration, and then drop
The burden softly, shutting the last notes
In silver wings. Howbeit in the noon of time
Eternity shalt wax as dumb as Death,
While a new voice beneath the spheres shall cry,
" God ! why hast Thou forsaken Me, My God ? "
And not a voice in Heaven shall answer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*]

Adam. Thy speech is of the Heavenlies, yet, O Christ,
Awfully human are Thy voice and face.

Eve. My nature overcomes me from Thine eyes.

CHRIST. In the set noon of time, shall one from Heaven,
An angel fresh from looking upon God,
Descend before a woman, blessing her
With perfect benediction of pure love,
For all the world in all its elements,
For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea,
For all men in the body and in the soul,
Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I worship Thee !
I thank Thee for that woman !

CHRIST. Then, at last,
 I, wrapping round Me your humanity,
 Which being sustained, shall neither break nor burn
 Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread earth,
 And ransom you and it, and set strong peace
 Betwixt you and its creatures. With My pangs
 I will confront your sins ; and since those sins
 Have sunken to all Nature's heart from yours,
 The tears of My clean soul shall follow them
 And set a holy passion to work clear
 Absolute consecration. In My brow
 Of kingly whiteness, shall be crowned anew
 Your discrowned human nature. Look on Me !
 As I shall be uplifted on a cross
 In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread,
 So shall I lift up in My piercèd hands,
 Not into dark, but light—not unto death,
 But life,—beyond the reach of guilt and grief,
 The whole creation. Henceforth in My name
 Take courage, O thou woman,—man, take hope !
 Your grave shall be as smooth as Eden's sward,
 Beneath the steps of your prospective thoughts,
 And, one step past it, a new Eden-gate
 Shall open on a hinge of harmony
 And let you through to mercy. Ye shall fall
 No more, within that Eden, nor pass out
 Any more from it. In which hope, move on,
 First sinners and first mourners. Live and love,—
 Doing both nobly, because lowly.
 Live and work, strongly, because patiently.
 And, for the deed of death, trust it to God
 That it be well done, unrepented of,
 And not to loss. And thence, with constant prayers
 Fasten your souls so high, that constantly
 The smile of your heroic cheer may float
 Above all floods of earthly agonies,
 Purification being the joy of pain.

[The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM and EVE stand
 in an ecstasy. The earth-zodiac pales away shade
 by shade, as the stars, star by star, shine out in the
 sky ; and the following chant from the two Earth
 Spirits (as they sweep back into the zodiac and
 disappear with it) accompanies the process of change.]

Earth Spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken
 Both for living and for dying,
 We our homage-oath, once broken,
 Fasten back again in sighing,
 And the creatures and the elements renew their covenanting.

Here, forgive us all our scorning ;
 Here, we promise milder duty :
 And the evening and the morning
 Shall re-organise in beauty,
 A sabbath day of sabbath joy, for universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy
 May be strong to overcome us,
 If this mortal and unholy
 We still fail to cast out from us,
 If we turn upon you, unaware, your own dark influences,—

If ye tremble when surrounded
 By our forest pine and palm-trees,
 If we cannot cure the wounded
 With our gum-trees and our balm-trees,
 And if your souls all mournfully sit down among your
 senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,
 We are gentle in our languor ;
 Much more good ye shall have near us
 Than any pain or anger,
 And our God's refracted blessing in our blessing shall be
 given.

By the desert's endless vigil
 We will solemnise your passions,
 By the wheel of the black eagle
 We will teach you exaltations,
 When he sails against the wind, to the white spot up in
 Heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
 To your weariness of nature,
 And our hands shall stroke the curse's
 Dreary furrows from the creature,
 Till your bodies shall lie smooth in death and straight and
 slumberful.

Then, a couch we will provide you
 Where no summer heats shall dazzle,
 Strewing on you and beside you
 Thyme and rosemary and basil,
 And the yew-tree shall grow overhead to keep all safe
 and cool.

Till the Holy blood awaited
 Shall be chrism around us running,
 Whereby, newly-consecrated
 We shall leap up in God's sunning,
 To join the spheric company which purer worlds assemble.

While, renewed by new evangel,
 Soul-consummated, made glorious,
 Ye shall brighten past the angels,
 Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious,
 And the rays around His feet beneath your sobbing lips
 shall tremble.

[*The phantastic vision has all passed; the earth-zodiac
 has broken like a belt, and is dissolved from the
 desert. The Earth Spirits vanish, and the stars
 shine out above.*]

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

While ADAM and EVE advance into the desert, hand in hand.

Hear our heavenly promise
 Through your mortal passion!
 Love, ye shall have from us,
 In a pure relation.
 As a fish or bird
 Swims or flies, if moving,
 We unseen are heard
 To live on by loving.
 Far above the glances
 Of your eager eyes,
 Listen! we are loving.
 Listen, through man's ignorances,
 Listen, through God's mysteries,
 Listen down the heart of things,—
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings

Murmurous with loving,
 Through the opal door
 Listen evermore
 How we live by loving!

First Semichorus.

When your bodies therefore
 Reach the grave their goal,
 Softly will we care for
 Each enfranchised soul.
 Softly and unloathly
 Through the door of opal
 Toward the Heavenly people,
 Floated on a minor fine
 Into the full chant divine,
 We will draw you smoothly,—
 While the human in the minor
 Makes the harmony diviner.
 Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.

There, a sough of glory
 Shall breathe on you as you come,
 Ruffling round the doorway
 All the light of angeldom.
 From the empyrean centre
 Heavenly voices shall repeat,
 "Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter,
 For the chrism on you is sweet."
 And every angel in the place
 Lowlily shall bow his face,
 Folded fair on softened sounds,
 Because upon your hands and feet
 He images his Master's wounds.
 Listen to our loving!

First semichorus.

So, in the universe's
 Consummated undoing,
 Our seraphs of white mercies
 Shall hover round the ruin.
 Their wings shall stream upon the flame
 As if incorporate of the same
 In elemental fusion,
 And calm their faces shall burn out
 With a pale and mastering thought,
 And a steadfast looking of desire

From out between the clefts of fire,—
 While they cry, in the Holy's name,
 To the final Restitution.
 Listen to our loving !

Second semichorus.

So, when the day of God is
 To the thick graves accompted,
 Awaking the dead bodies
 The angel of the trumpet
 Shall split and shatter the earth
 To the roots of the grave
 Which never before were slackened,
 And quicken the charnel birth,
 With his blast so clear and brave ;
 That the Dead shall start and stand erect,
 And every face of the burial-place
 Shall the awful, single look, reflect,
 Wherewith he them awakened.
 Listen to our loving !

First semichorus.

But wild is the horse of Death.
 He will leap up wild at the clamour
 Above and beneath.
 And where is his Tamer
 On that last day,
 When he crieth, Ha, ha !
 To the trumpet's blare,
 And paweth the earth's Aceldama ?
 When he tosseth his head,
 The drear-white steed,
 And ghastrily champeth the last moon-ray—
 What angel there
 Can lead him away,
 That the living may rule for the Dead ?

Second semichorus.

Yet a TAMER shall be found !
 One more bright than seraph crowned,
 And more strong than cherub bold,
 Elder, too, than angel old,
 By his gray eternities.
 He shall master and surprise
 The steed of Death.
 For He is strong, and He is fain.
 He shall quell him with a breath,

And shall lead him where He will,
 With a whisper in the ear,
 Full of fear,
 And a hand upon the mane,
 Grand and still.

First semichorus.

Through the flats of Hades where the souls assemble
 He will guide the Death-steed calm between their ranks,
 While, like beaten dogs, they a little moan and tremble
 To see the darkness curdle from the horse's glittering
 flanks.

Through the flats of Hades where the dreary shade is,
 Up the steep of Heaven will the Tamer guide the steed,—
 Up the spheric circles, circle above circle,
 We who count the ages, shall count the tolling tread—
 Every hoof-fall striking a blinder, blanker sparkle
 From the stony orbs, which shall show as they were dead.

Second semichorus.

All the way the Death-steed with tolling hoofs shall
 travel,

Ashen gray the planets shall be motionless as stones,
 Loosely shall the systems eject their parts coæval,
 Stagnant in the spaces shall float the pallid moons :
 Suns that touch their apogees, reeling from their level,
 Shall run back on their axles, in wild, low broken tunes.

Chorus.

Up against the arches of the crystal ceiling,
 From the horse's nostrils shall steam the blurting breath :
 Up between the angels pale with silent feeling,
 Will the Tamer calmly lead the horse of Death.

Semichorus.

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all that glory,
 Will the Tamer lead him straightway to the Throne ;
 " Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring before Thee,
 With a hand nail piercèd, I who am Thy Son."
 Then the Eye Divinest, from the Deepest, flaming,
 On the mystic courser shall look out in fire :
 Blind the beast shall stagger where It overcame him,
 Meek as lamb at pasture, bloodless in desire.
 Down the beast shall shiver,—slain amid the taming,—
 And, by Life essential, the phantasm Death expire.

Chorus.

Listen, man, through life and death,
 Through the dust and through the breath,

Listen down the heart of things !
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings
 Murmurous with loving.

A Voice from below. Gabriel, thou Gabriel !

A Voice from above. What wouldst *thou* with me ?

First Voice. I heard thy voice sound in the angels' song
 And I would give thee question.

Second Voice. Question me.

First Voice. Why have I called thrice to my Morning Star
 And had no answer ? All the stars are out,
 And answer in their places. Only in vain
 I cast my voice against the outer rays
 Of *my* Star shut in light behind the sun.
 No more reply than from a breaking string,
 Breaking when touched. Or is she *not* my star ?
 Where *is* my Star—my Star ? Have ye cast down
 Her glory like my glory ? has she waxed
 Mortal, like Adam ? has she learnt to hate
 Like any angel ?

Second Voice. She is sad for thee.
 All things grow sadder to thee, one by one.

Angel chorus.

Live, work on, O Earthy !

By the Actual's tension,
 Speed the arrow worthy
 Of a pure ascension.

From the low earth round you,
 Reach the heights above you :
 From the stripes that wound you,
 Seek the loves that love you.
 God's divinest burneth plain
 Through the crystal diaphane
 Of our loves that love you.

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel !

Second Voice. What wouldst *thou* with me ?

First Voice. Is it true, O thou Gabriel, that the crown
 Of sorrow which I claimed, another claims ?
 That HE claims THAT too ?

Second Voice. Lost one, it is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an exile from His Heaven
 To lead those exiles homeward ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That HE will be an exile by His will,
 As I by mine election ?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. That I shall stand sole exile finally,—
Made desolate for fruition?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Gabriel!

Second Voice. I hearken.

First Voice. Is it true besides—
Aright true—that mine orient Star will give
Her name of "Bright and Morning-Star" to HIM,—
And take the fairness of His virtue back
To cover loss and sadness?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. UNtrue, UNtrue! O Morning-Star, O
MINE,
Who sittest secret in a veil of light
Far up the starry spaces, say—*Untrue!*
Speak but so loud as doth a wasted moon
To Tyrrhene waters. I am Lucifer.

[A pause. Silence in the stars.]

All things grow sadder to me, one by one.

Angel chorus.

Exiled human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger:
Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight.
From this chain of Nature's
God is the Discharger,
And the Actual's prison
Opens to your sight.

Semichorus.

Calm the stars and golden
In a light exceeding:
What their rays have measured
Let your feet fulfil.
These are stars beholden
By your eyes in Eden,
Yet, across the desert,
See them shining still.

Chorus.

Future joy and far light
Working such relations,
Hear us singing gently
Exiled is not lost.

God, above the starlight,
 God, above the patience,
 Shall at last present ye
 Guerdons worth the cost.
 Patiently enduring,
 Painfully surrounded,
 Listen how we love you,
 Hope the uttermost.
 Waiting for that curing
 Which exalts the wounded,
 Hear us sing above you
 EXILED, BUT NOT LOST !

[The stars shine on brightly while ADAM and EVE pursue their way into the far wilderness. There is a sound through the silence, as of the falling tears of an angel.]

THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

I.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds,
 And a young page at his side,
 From the holy war in Palestine,
 Did slow and thoughtful ride,
 As each were a palmer, and told for beads
 The dews of the eventide.

II.

"O young page," said the knight,
 "A noble page art thou !
 Thou fearest not to steep in blood
 The curls upon thy brow ;
 And once in the tent, and twice in the fight,
 Didst ward me a mortal blow."

III.

"O brave knight," said the page,
 "Or ere we hither came,
 We talked in tent, we talked in field,
 Of the bloody battle-game :
 But here, below this greenwood bough,
 I cannot speak the same."

IV.

“ Our troop is far behind,
 The woodland calm is new ;
 Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,
 Tread deep the shadows through :
 And in my mind some blessing kind
 Is dropping with the dew.

V.

“ The woodland calm is pure—
 I cannot choose but have
 A thought, from these, o’ the beechen-trees
 Which in our England wave ;
 And of the little finches fine,
 Which sang there, while in Palestine
 The warrior-hilt we drave.

VI.

“ Methinks, a moment gone,
 I heard my mother pray !
 I heard, Sir Knight, the prayer for *me*
 Wherein she passed away ;
 And I know the Heavens are leaning down
 To hear what I shall say.”

VII.

The page spake calm and high,
 As of no mean degree ;
 Perhaps he felt in nature’s broad
 Full heart, his own was free.
 And the knight looked up to his lifted eye,
 Then answered smilingly :

VIII.

“ Sir Page, I pray your grace !
 Certes, I meant not so
 To cross your pastoral mood, Sir Page,
 With the crook of the battle-bow ;
 But a knight may speak of a lady’s face,
 I ween, in any mood or place,
 If the grasses die or grow.

IX.

“And this I meant to say,—
 My lady’s face shall shine,
 As ladies’ faces use, to greet
 My page from Palestine ;
 Or speak she fair, or prank she gay,
 She is no lady of mine.

X.

“And this I meant to fear,—
 Her bower may suit thee ill !
 For sooth, in that same field and tent,
 Thy *talk* was somewhat still ;
 And fitter thine hand for my knightly spear,
 Than thy tongue for my lady’s will.”

XI.

Slowly and thankfully
 The young page bowed his head :
 His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,
 Until he blushed instead ;
 And no lady in her bower, *pardie*,
 Could blush more sudden red—
 “Sir Knight,—thy lady’s bower to me
 Is suited well,” he said.

XII.

Beati, beati, mortui!
 From the convent on the sea,—
 One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
 Swells the dirge as clear and high
 As if that, over brake and lea,
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of St. Mary,
 And the fifty tapers burning o’er it,
 And the Lady Abbess dead before it,—
 And the chanting nuns whom yesterweek
 Her voice did charge and bless—
 Chanting steady, chanting meek,
 Chanting with a solemn breath
 Because that they are thinking less
 Upon the Dead than upon death !
Beati, beati, mortui!

Now the vision in the sound
 Wheeleth on the wind around—
 Now it sweepeth back, away—
 The uplands will not let it stay
 To dark the western sun.
Mortui!—away at last,—
 Or ere the page's blush is past !
 And the knight heard all, and the page heard none.

XIII.

“ A boon, thou noble knight,
 If ever I servèd thee !
 Though thou art a knight, and I am a page,
 Now grant a boon to me—
 And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
 If little loved, or loved aright,
 Be the face of thy ladye.”

XIV.

Gloomily looked the knight ;—
 “ As a son thou hast servèd me :
 And would to none I had granted boon,
 Except to only thee !
 For haply then I should love aright,—
 For then I should know if dark or bright
 Were the face of my ladye.

XV.

“ Yet it still suits my knightly tongue
 To grudge that granted boon ;
 That heavy price, from heart and life,
 I paid in silence down ;
 The hand that claimed it, cleared in fine
 My father's fame : I swear by mine,
 That price was nobly won.

XVI.

“ Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
 He was my father's friend ;
 And while I rode the lists at court,
 And little guessed the end,—
 My noble father in his shroud,
 Against a slanderer lying loud,
 He rose up to defend.

XVII.

"Oh, calm, below the marble gray,
 My father's dust was strown !
 Oh, meek, above the marble gray,
 His image prayed alone !
 The slanderer lied—the wretch was brave,—
 For, looking up the minster-nave,
 He saw my father's knightly glaive
 Was changed from steel to stone.

XVIII.

"Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
 With a brave old hand to wear it !
 And dashed the lie back in the mouth
 Which lied against the godly truth
 And against the knightly merit.
 The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's heel,
 Struck up the dagger in appeal
 From stealthy lie to brutal force—
 And out upon the traitor's corse,
 Was yielded the true spirit.

XIX.

"I would mine hand had fought that fight,
 And justified my father !
 I would mine heart had caught that wound,
 And slept beside him rather !
 I think it were a better thing
 Than murdered friend, and marriage-ring,
 Forced on my life together.

XX.

"Wail shook Earl Walter's house—
 His true wife shed no tear—
 She lay upon her bed as mute
 As the earl did on his bier :
 Till—'Ride, ride fast,' she said at last,
 'And bring the avengèd's son anear !
 Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can flee ;
 For white of blee, with waiting for me,
 Is the corse in the next chambère.'



R.P.—L.

"I, struck out from nature in a blot,
Was made by God like others."

Page 137.

XXI.

“ I came—I knelt beside her bed—
 Her calm was worse than strife—
 ‘ My husband, for thy father dear,
 Gave freely, when thou wast not here,
 His own and eke my life.
 A boon ! Of that sweet child we make
 An orphan for thy father’s sake,
 Make thou, for ours, a wife.’

XXII.

“ I said, ‘ My steed neighs in the court ;
 My bark rocks on the brine ;
 And the warrior’s vow, I am under now,
 To free the pilgrim’s shrine :
 But fetch the ring, and fetch the priest,
 And call that daughter of thine ;
 And rule she wide, from my castle on Nyde,
 While I am in Palestine.’

XXIII.

“ In the dark chambère, if the bride was fair,
 Ye wis, I could not see ;
 But the steed thrice neighed, and the priest fast
 prayed,
 And wedded fast were we.
 Her mother smiled upon her bed,
 As at its side we knelt to wed ;
 And the bride rose from her knee,
 And kissed the smile of her mother dead,
 Or ever she kissed me.

XXIV.

“ My page, my page, what grieves thee so,
 That the tears run down thy face ? ”—
 “ Alas, alas ! mine own sistèr
 Was in thy lady’s case !
 But *she* laid down the silks she wore,
 And followed him she wed before,
 Disguised as his true servitor,
 To the very battle-place.”

XXV.

And wept the page, but laughed the knight,—
 A careless laugh laughed he :
 “ Well done it were for thy sistèr,
 But not for my ladye !
 My love, so please you, shall requite
 No woman, whether dark or bright,
 Unwomaned if she be.”

XXVI.

The page stopped weeping, and smiled cold—
 “ Your wisdom may declare
 That womanhood is proved the best
 By golden brooch and glossy vest
 The mincing ladies wear ;
 Yet is it proved, and was of old,
 Anear as well—I dare to hold—
 By truth, or by despair.”

XXVII.

He smiled no more—he wept no more,—
 But passionate he spake,—
 “ Oh, womanly, she prayed in tent,
 When none beside did wake !
 Oh, womanly, she paled in fight,
 For one belovèd’s sake !—
 And her little hand defiled with blood,
 Her tender tears of womanhood,
 Most woman-pure, did make ! ”

XXVIII.

“ Well done it were for thy sistèr—
 Thou tellest well her tale !
 But for my lady, she shall pray
 I’ the kirk of Nydesdale—
 Not dread for me, but love for me,
 Shall make my lady pale.
 No casque shall hide her woman’s tear—
 It shall have room to trickle clear
 Behind her woman’s veil.”

XXIX.

“But what if she mistook thy mind,
 And followed thee to strife;
 Then kneeling, did entreat thy love
 As Paynims ask for life?”
 “I would forgive, and evermore
 Would love her as my servitor,
 But little as my wife.

XXX.

“Look up—there is a small bright cloud
 Alone amid the skies!
 So high, so pure, and so apart,
 A woman’s honour lies.”
 The page looked up—the cloud was sheen—
 A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
 Betwixt it and his eyes:

XXXI.

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
 From welkin unto hill—
 Ha! who rides there?—the page is ’ware,
 Though the cry at his heart is still!
 And the page seeth all, and the knight seeth none,
 Though banner and spear do fleck the sun,
 And the Saracens ride at will.

XXXII.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low,—
 “Ride fast, my master, ride,
 Or ere within the broadening dark
 The narrow shadows hide!”
 “Yea, fast, my page; I will do so;
 And keep thou at my side.”

XXXIII.

“Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,
 Thy faithful page precede!
 For I must loose on saddle-bow
 My battle-casque, that galls, I trow,
 The shoulder of my steed;
 And I must pray, as I did vow,
 For one in bitter need.

XXXIV.

“ Ere night I shall be near to thee,-
 Now ride, my master, ride !
 Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
 To mortals too beloved to leave,
 I shall be at thy side.”
 The knight smiled free at the fantasy,
 And adown the dell did ride.

XXXV.

Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
 No smile the word had won ;
 Had the knight looked up to the page's face,
 I ween he had never gone.
 Had the knight looked back to the page's geste,
 I ween he had turned anon ;
 For dread was the woe in the face so young,
 And wild was the silent geste that flung
 Casque, sword to earth—as the boy down-sprung
 And stood—alone, alone.

XXXVI.

He clenched his hands, as if to hold
 His soul's great agony—
 “ Have I renounced my womanhood,
 For wifehood unto *thee*,
 And is this the last, last look of thine,
 That ever I shall see ?

XXXVII.

“ Yet God thee save, and mayst thou have
 A lady to thy mind ;
 More woman-proud, and half as true
 As one thou leav'st behind !
 And God me take with HIM to dwell—
 For HIM I cannot love too well,
 As I have loved my kind.”

XXXVIII.

SHE looketh up in earth's despair,
 The hopeful heavens to seek :
 That little cloud still floateth there,
 Whereof her Loved did speak.

How bright the little cloud appears !
 Her eyelids fall upon the tears,—
 And the tears, down either cheek.

XXXIX.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel—
 The Paynims round her coming !
 The sound and sight have made her calm,—
 False page, but truthful woman !
 She stands amid them all unmoved :
 A heart, once broken by the Loved,
 Is strong to meet the foeman.

XL.

“ Ho, Christian page ! art keeping sheep,
 From pouring wine-cups, resting ? ”
 “ I keep my master’s noble name,
 For warring, not for feasting :
 And if that here Sir Hubert were,
 My master brave, my master dear,
 Ye would not stay the questing.”

XLI.

“ Where is thy master, scornful page,
 That we may slay or bind him ? ”—
 “ Now search the lea, and search the wood,
 And see if ye can find him !
 Nathless, as hath been often tried,
 Your Paynim heroes faster ride
 Before him than behind him.”

XLII.

“ Give smoother answers, lying page,
 Or perish in the lying.”—
 “ I trow that if the warrior brand
 Beside my foot, were in my hand,
 ’Twere better at replying.”
 They cursed her deep, they smote her low,
 They cleft her golden ringlets through ;
 The Loving is the Dying.

XLIII.

She felt the scimitar gleam down
 And met it from beneath,

With smile more bright in victory
 Than any sword from sheath,—
 Which flashed across her lip serene,
 Most like the spirit-light between
 The darks of life and death.

XLIV.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
 From the convent on the sea,
 Now it sweepeth solemnly!
 As over wood and over lea,
 Bodily the wind did carry
 The great altar of St. Mary,
 And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,
 And the Lady Abbess stark before it,
 And the weary nuns, with hearts that faintly
 Beat along their voices saintly—

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
 Dirge for abbess laid in shroud,
 Sweepeth o'er the shroudless Dead.
 Page or lady, as we said,
 With the dews upon her head,
 All as sad if not as loud.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!
 Is ever a lament begun
 By any mourner under sun,
 Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one*?

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

FIRST PART.

“ONORA, Onora!”—her mother is calling—
 She sits at the lattice, and hears the dew falling
 Drop after drop from the sycamores laden
 With dew as with blossom—and calls home the maiden—
 “Night cometh, Onora!”

She looks down the garden-walk caverned with trees,
 To the limes at the end, where the green arbour is—
 “Some sweet thought or other may keep where it found
 her,
 While, forgot or unseen in the dreamlight around her,
 Night cometh, Onora!”

She looks up the forest, whose alleys shoot on
 Like the mute minster-aisles, when the anthem is
 done,
 And the choristers, sitting with faces aslant,
 Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—
 “Onora, Onora!”

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
 “Onora, art coming?”—what is it she seeth?
 Nought, nought, but the gray border-stone that is wist—
 To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—
 “My daughter!”—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so,
 She is 'ware of her little son playing below:
 “Now where is Onora?”—He hung down his head
 And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet-red,—
 “At the tryst with her lover.”

But his mother was wroth. In a sternness quoth she,
 “As thou play'st at the ball, art thou playing with me?
 When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
 And the saints know above that she loveth but one,
 And will ne'er wed another?”

Then the boy wept aloud. 'Twas a fair sight, yet sad,
 To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:
 He stamped with his foot, said—“The saints know
 lied,
 Because truth that is wicked, is fittest to hide!
 Must I utter it, mother?”

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,
 And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin;
 But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
 “Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,
 At nights in the ruin!

“The old convent ruin, the ivy rots off,
 Where the owl hoots by day, and the toad is sun-proof;
 Where no singing-birds build; and the trees gaunt and
 gray,
 As in stormy sea-coasts, appear blasted one way—
 But is *this* the wind's doing?”

“A nun in the east wall was buried alive,
 Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,—
 And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,
 The old abbess fell backwards and swooned unto death
 With an Ave half-spoken.

“I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
 Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground!
 A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
 And the wolf thought the same, with his fangs at
 throat,
 In the pass of the Brocken.

“At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there,
 With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?
 Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,
 What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be
 At dawn and at even!

“Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?
 Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?
 O sweetest my sister, what doeth with *thee*
 The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary,
 And a face turned from heaven?

“St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams; and erewhile
 I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of
 smile—
 But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,
 She whispered—‘Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora!
 The Tempted is sinning.’”

Onora, Onora! they heard her not coming—
 Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming
 But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor,
 Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,
 And a smile just beginning.

It touches her lips—but it dares not arise
 To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes:
 And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,
 Sing on like the angels in separate glory,
 Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-coloured, till stirred
 Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word ;
 While—O soft !—her speaking is so interwound
 Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound,
 And floats through the chamber.

"Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother," said she,
 "I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me ;
 And I know by the hills, that the battle is done—
 That my lover rides on—will be here with the sun,
 'Neath the eyes that behold thee."

Her mother sate silent—too tender, I wis,
 Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss ;
 But the boy started up, pale with tears, passion-wrought,—
 "O wicked fair sister, the hills utter nought !
 If he cometh, who told thee ?"

"I know by the hills," she resumed calm and clear,
 "By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear ;
 Did they ever look so since he bade me adieu ?
 Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true
 As St. Agnes in sleeping."

Half-ashamed and half-softened, the boy did not speak,
 And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek ;
 She bowed down to kiss him—Dear saints, did he see
 Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY—
 That he shrank away weeping ?

SECOND PART.

A bed—ONORA sleeping. ANGELS, but not near.

First Angel.

Must we stand so far, and she
 So very fair ?

Second Angel.

As bodies be.

First Angel.

And she so mild ?

Second Angel.

As spirits, when

They meeken, not to God but men.

First Angel.

And she so young,—that I who bring
 Good dreams for saintly children, might
 Mistake that small soft face to-night,
 And fetch her such a blessed thing,
 That, at her waking, she would weep
 For childhood lost anew in sleep.
 How hath she sinned?

Second Angel.

In bartering love—

God's love—for man's.

First Angel.

We may reprove

The world for this! not only her.—
 Let me approach, to breathe away
 This dust o' the heart with holy air.

Second Angel.

Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—

Who never, praying, wept before :
 While, in a mother undefiled
 Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
 And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word: Is she redeemed?

Second Angel.

No more!

THE PLACE IS FILLED.

[ANGELS vanish]

Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the bed.

Forbear that dream—forebear that dream! too near
 Heaven it leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this! 'tis but a dream, sweet
 fiend!

Evil Spirit.

It is a thought.

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most innocent of good—
It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend! it cannot, if it
would.

I say in it no holy hymn—I do no holy work;
I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me *dream* at least.

That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast—
I only walk among the fields, beneath the autumn sun,
With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often
done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream—forbear that dream!

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go—

I never more can walk with *him*, oh, never more but so.
For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirkyard
stone,—

Oh, deep and straight; oh, very straight! they move at
nights alone:

And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth
tenderly,—

“Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the
fields with me!”

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied! my word shall answer
thine.

I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was
praying;

I see the poppies in the corn, I used to sport away in.—

What shall I do—tread down the dew, and pull the
blossoms blowing?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the
rowan?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something^r harder still. Stand up where
thou dost stand,

Among the fields of Dreamland, with thy father, hand in
hand,

And clear and slow, repeat the vow—declare its cause and
kind,
Which, not to break in sleep or wake, thou bearest on the
mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause :
I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong—the spirits laugh
applause :
The spirits trailed, along the pines, low laughter like
breeze,
While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appear
to freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free,—speak out to me, why such a vow
was made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my death, and I shrank back
afraid.

Have patience, O dead father mine ! I did not fear to die ;—
I wish I were a young dead child, and had thy company !
I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,
And wearing only a kiss of thine, upon my lips that
smiled !

The linden-tree that covers thee, might, so, have shadowed
twain—

For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes the pain.
Love feareth death. I was no child—I was betrothed that day.
I wore a troth-kiss on my lips, I could not give away.
How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,
And feel mine own Betrothed go by—alas ! no more mine
own,—

Go leading by, in wedding pomp, some lovely lady brave,
With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were
white in grave ?

How could I bear to sit in Heaven, on e'er so high a throne,
And hear him say to her—to *her!* that else he loveth none ?
Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low he
spake,

As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he might
take—

That *hers*, forsooth, are heavenly eyes—ah me ! while very
dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of Heaven!) would darken
down to *him*.

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wert called to death?

Onora in sleep.

I sate all night beside thee—
The gray owl on the ruined wall shut both his eyes to hide thee;

And ever he flapped his heavy wing, all brokenly and weak,
And the long grass waved against the sky, around his gasping beak.

I sate beside thee all the night, while the moonlight lay forlorn,

Strewn round us like a dead world's shroud, in ghastly fragments torn.

And through the night, and through the hush, and over the flapping wing,

We heard, beside the Heavenly Gate, the angels murmuring:—

We heard them say, "Put day to day, and count the days to seven,

'And God will draw Onora up the golden stairs of Heaven:

'And yet the Evil ones have leave that purpose to defer,

'For if she has no need of HIM, He has no need of *her*.'—

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me—speak bold and free.

Onora in sleep.

And then I heard thee say,—
"I count, upon my rosary brown, the hours thou hast to stay!

'Yet God permits us Evil ones to put by that decree,

'Since if thou hast no need of HIM, He has no need of *thee*—

'And if thou wilt forego the sight of angels, verily

'Thy true love gazing on thy face, shall guess what angels be—

'Nor bride shall pass, save thee" . . . Alas!—my father's hand's a-cold—

The meadows seem . . .

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be told!

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this string of antique beads,

By charnel lichens overgrown, and dank among the weeds—

This rosary brown, which is thine own,—lost soul o
buried nun—

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render now all souls alike
undone;—

I vowed upon thy rosary brown,—and, till such vow should
break,

A pledge always of living days, 'twas hung around my
neck—

I vowed to thee on rosary, (Dead father, look not so!),
I would not thank God in my weal, nor seek God in my woe.

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove . . .

Onora in sleep.

O love—my love! I felt him near again!

I saw his steed on mountain-head, I heard it on the
plain!

Was this no weal for me to feel?—is greater weal than
this?

Yet when he came, I wept his name—and the angels
heard but *his*.

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done!

Onora in sleep.

Ah me, the sun! the dreamlight 'gins to pine,—

Ah me, how dread can look the Dead!—Aroint thee,
father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth upright,
And her breath comes in sobs while she stares through the
night,

There is nought. The great willow, her lattice before,
Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm on the floor;
But her hands tremble fast as their pulses, and, free
From the death-clasp, close over—the BROWN ROSARY.

THIRD PART.

'Tis a morn for a bridal; the merry bride-bell
Rings clear through the greenwood that skirts the
chapelle

And the priest at the altar awaiteth the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting aside

At the work shall be doing.

While down through the wood rides that fair company,
 The youths with the courtship, the maids with the glee,—
 Till the chapel-cross opens to sight, and at once
 All the maids sigh demurely, and think for the nonce,
 "And so endeth a wooing!"

And the bride and the bridegroom are leading the way,
 With his hand on her rein, and a word yet to say :
 Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft answers beneath,—
 And the little quick smiles come and go with her
 breath,
 When she sightheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks off unaware
 From an Ave, to think that her daughter is fair,—
 Till in nearing the chapel, and glancing before,
 She seeth her little son stand at the door,—
 Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play? when his eyes wander innocent-wild,
 And sublimed with a sadness unfitting a child!
 He trembles not, weeps not—the passion is done,
 And calmly he kneels in their midst, with the sun
 On his head like a glory.

"O fair-featured maids, ye are many!" he cried,—
 "But, in fairness and vileness, who matcheth the bride?
 O brave-hearted youths, ye are many! but whom,
 For the courage and woe, can ye match with the
 groom,
 As ye see them before ye?"

Out spake the bride's mother—"The vileness is thine,
 If thou shame thine own sister, a bride at the shrine!"
 Out spake the bride's lover—"The vileness be mine,
 If he shame mine own wife at the hearth of the shrine,
 And the charge be unprovèd.

"Bring the charge, prove the charge, brother! speak it
 aloud—
 Let thy father and hers hear it deep in his shroud!"—
 —"O father, thou seest—for dead eyes can see—
 How she wears on her bosom a *brown rosary*,
 O my father beloved!"

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and outlaughed withal
 Both maidens and youths, by the old chapel-wall—
 "So she weareth no love-gift, kind brother," quoth he,
 "She may wear an she listeth a brown rosary,
 Like a pure-hearted lady."

Then swept through the chapel the long bridal train :
 Though he spake to the bride, she replied not again :
 On, as one in a dream, pale and stately she went,
 Where the altar-lights burn o'er the great sacrament,
 Faint with daylight, but steady.

But her brother had passed in between them and her,
 And calmly knelt down on the high-altar stair—
 Of an infantine aspect so stern to the view,
 That the priest could not smile on the child's eyes of blue,
 As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculptured and white,
 That seems kneeling to pray on the tomb of a knight,
 With a look taken up to each iris of stone
 From the greatness and death where he kneeleth, but none
 From the face of a mother.

"In your chapel, O priest, ye have wedded and shriven
 Fair wives for the hearth, and fair sinners for Heaven !
 But this fairest my sister, ye think now to wed,
 Bid her kneel where she standeth, and shrive her instead—
 O shrive her and wed not !"

In tears, the bride's mother—"Sir Priest, unto thee
 Would he lie, as he lied to this fair company !"
 In wrath, the bride's lover—"The lie shall be clear !
 Speak it out, boy ! the saints in their niches shall hear—
 Be the charge proved or said not !"

Then serene in his childhood he lifted his face,
 And his voice sounded holy and fit for the place—
 "Look down from your niches, ye still saints, and see
 How she wears on her bosom a *brown rosary* !
 Is it used for the praying ?"

The youths looked aside—to laugh there were a sin—
 And the maidens' lips trembled with smiles shut within :
 Quoth the priest—"Thou art wild, pretty boy ! Blessed she
 Who prefers at her bridal a brown rosary
 To a worldly arraying !"

The bridegroom spake low, and led onward the bride,
 And before the high altar they stood side by side :
 The rite-book is opened, the rite is begun—
 They have knelt down together to rise up as one—
 Who laughed by the altar ?

The maidens looked forward, the youths looked around,—
 The bridegroom's eye flashed from his prayer at the sound ;
 And each saw the bride, as if no bride she were,
 Gazing cold at the priest, without gesture of prayer,
 As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did so, but still
 He felt a power on him, too strong for his will ;
 And whenever the Great Name was there to be read,
 His voice sank to silence—THAT could not be said,
 Or the air could not hold it.

"I have sinned," quoth he, "I have sinned, I wot"—
 And the tears ran adown his old cheeks at the thought ;
 They dropped fast on the book ; but he read on the same,—
 And aye was the silence where should be the NAME,—
 As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the rite being done,
 They who knelt down together, arise up as one :
 Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair bride is she,—
 But, for all (think the maidens) that brown rosary,
 No saint at her praying !

What aileth the bridegroom ? He glares blank and wide—
 Then suddenly turning, he kisseth the bride—
 His lip stung her with cold : she glanced upwardly mute :
 "Mine own wife," he said, and fell stark at her foot
 In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his head sinks away,—
 And his face showeth bleak in the sunshine, and gray.
 Leave him now where he lieth—for oh, never more
 Will he kneel at an altar or stand on a floor !
 Let his bride gaze upon him !

Long and still was her gaze, while they chafed him there,
 And breathed in the mouth whose last life had kissed her.
 But when they stood up—only *they!* with a start
 The shriek from her soul struck her pale lips apart—
 She has lived, and foregone him !

And low on his body she droppeth adown—

“Didst call me thine own wife, beloved—thine own?
Then take thine own with thee! thy coldness is warm
To the world’s cold without thee! Come, keep me from
harm

In a calm of thy teaching!”

She looked in his face earnest long, as in sooth
There were hope of an answer,—and then kissed his
mouth;

And with head on his bosom, wept, wept bitterly,—
“Now, O God, take pity—take pity on me!—
God, hear my beseeching!”

She was ’ware of a shadow that crossed where she lay;
She was ’ware of a presence that withered the day—
Wild she sprang to her feet,—“I surrender to *thee*
The broken vow’s pledge,—the accursed rosary,—
I am ready for dying!”

She dashed it in scorn to the marble-paved ground,
Where it fell mute as snow; and a weird music-sound
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles long and dim,—
As the fiends tried to mock at the choristers’ hymn,
And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the garden walk:

“I am weary, O my mother, of thy tender talk!
I am weary of the trees a-waving to and fro—
Of the steadfast skies above, the running brooks below;—
All things are the same but I;—only I am dreary;
And, mother, of my dreariness, behold me very weary.

“Mother, brother, pull the flowers I planted in the spring
And smiled to think I should smile more upon them
gathering.

The bees will find out other flowers—oh, pull them, dearest
mine,

And carry them and carry me before St. Agnes’ shrine.”
—Whereat they pulled the summer flowers she planted in
the spring,

And her and them, all mournfully, to Agnes’ shrine did
bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint, and gently shook her head—

“The picture is too calm for *me*—too calm for *me*,” she said :

“The little flowers we brought with us, before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at Heaven,—but *I* must turn
away,—

Because no sinner under sun can dare or bear to gaze
On God’s or angel’s holiness, except in Jesu’s face.”

She spoke with passion after pause—“And were it wisely
done,

If we who cannot gaze above, should walk the earth alone?—
If we whose virtue is so weak, should have a will so
strong,—

And stand blind on the rocks, to choose the right path from
the wrong?

To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth, instead of love and
Heaven,—

A single rose, for a rose-tree, which beareth seven times
seven?

A rose that droppeth from the hand, that fadeth in the breast,
Until, in grieving for the worst, we learn what is the best !”

Then breaking into tears,—“Dear God,” she cried, “and
must we see

All blissful things depart from *us*, or ere we go to THEE?

We cannot guess Thee in the wood, or hear Thee in the
wind?

Our cedars must fall round us, ere we see the light behind?

Ay sooth, we feel too strong in weal, to need Thee on that
road ;

But woe being come, the soul is dumb, that crieth not on
‘God.’”

Her mother could not speak for tears ; she ever musèd
thus—

“*The bees will find out other flowers*,—but what is left for *us*?”

But her young brother stayed his sobs, and knelt beside her
knee,

—“Thou sweetest sister in the world, hast never a word
for me?”

She passed her hand across his face, she pressed it on his
cheek,

So tenderly, so tenderly—she needed not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that day, at vespers bloomed
no more—

The woman fair who placed it there, had died an hour
before.

Both perished mute, for lack of root, earth's nourishment
to reach ;—

O reader, breathe (the ballad saith) some sweetness out
each !

LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A poet writes to his friend. PLACE—*A room in Wycombe
Hall.* TIME—*Late in the evening.*

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit
o'er you !

Down the purple of this chamber tears should scarcely
run at will.

I am humbled who was humble. Friend, I bow my head
before you :

You should lead me to my peasants, but their faces are
too still.

There's a lady, an earl's daughter,—she is proud and she
is noble,

And she treads the crimson carpet and she breathes the
perfumed air,

And a kingly blood sends glances up, her princely eyes
to trouble,

And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in
her hair.

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles by
the breakers,

She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten and
command,

And the palpitating engines snort in steam across
acres,

As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of
the land.

There are none of England's daughters who can show a prouder presence :

Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her disdain.

She was sprung of English nobles, I was born of English peasants ;

What was *I* that I should love her, save for competence to pain ?

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her case-ment,

As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other things.

Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abasement,

In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !

Many vassals bow before her, as her carriage sweeps their door-ways ;

She has blest their little children, as a priest or queen were she :

Far too tender, or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,

For I thought it was the same smile which she used to smile on *me*.

She has voters in the commons, she has lovers in the palace,

And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine ;

Oft the prince has named her beauty 'twixt the red wine and the chalice :

Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my beloved, my Geraldine !

Yet I could not choose but love her: I was born to poet-uses,

To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair.

Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the Muses ;

And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the public
praised me,
With a critical deduction for the modern writer's fault,
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies
that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of
the salt.

And they praised me in her presence;—"Will your book
appear this summer?"
Then returning to each other—"Yes, our plans are for the
moors."
Then with whisper dropped behind me—"There he is! the
latest comer.
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is over, she endures.

"Quite low-born, self-educated! somewhat gifted though
by nature,
And we make a point of asking him,—of being very
kind.
You may speak, he does not hear you! and besides, he
writes no satire,—
All these serpents kept by charmers leave the natural sting
behind."

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among
them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning
scorched my brow;
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, over-
rung them,
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature
through.

I looked upward and beheld her: with a calm and
regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before
them all—
"Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that able to
confer it
You will come down, Mister Bertram, as my guest to
Wycombe Hall?"

Here she paused; she had been paler at the first word of her speaking,
 But because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat, as for shame,
 Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—"I am seeking
 More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my claim.

"Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman"

(Here her smile sprang like a fountain and, so, overflowed her mouth)

"But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloaming
 Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

"I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—

Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the thrushes first:

And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,

I will thank you for the woodlands,—for the human world, at worst."

Then she smiled around right childly, then she gazed around right queenly,

And I bowed—I could not answer; alternated light and gloom—

While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,

She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

Oh, the blessèd woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around me,

With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind.

Oh, the cursèd woods of Sussex! where the hunter's arrow found me,

When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind!

In that ancient hall of Wycombe thronged the numerous
 guests invited,
 And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding
 feet ;
 And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, soft
 freighted
 All the air about the windows with elastic laughter
 sweet.

For at eve the open windows flung their light out on the
 terrace,
 Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual
 shadow sweep,
 While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the
 heiress,
 Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music
 in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and
 singing,
 Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the
 dark ;
 But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight-
 ringing,
 And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of
 the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-
 corded speeches
 To commix my words and laughter with the converse and
 the jest,
 Oft I sate apart and, gazing on the river through the beeches
 Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice
 o'erfloat the rest.

In the morning, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed and
 laugh of rider,
 Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost them
 in the hills,
 While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left
 beside her,
 Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels and
 abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass, bareheaded,
 with the flowing
 Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her
 throat,
 And the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by
 her going,
 And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to
 float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held
 above her,
 And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and
 the skies,
 As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on
 to love her,
 And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her
 eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly; her lips have serious
 sweetness,
 And her front is calm, the dimple rarely ripples on the
 cheek;
 But her deep blue eyes smile constantly, as if they in
 discreetness
 Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not care to
 speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the
 garden,
 And I walked among her noble friends and could not keep
 behind.
 Spake she unto all and unto me—"Behold, I am the
 warden
 Of the song-birds in these lindens, which are cages to their
 mind.

"But within this swarded circle into which the lime-walk
 brings us,
 Whence the beeches, rounded greenly, stand away in
 reverent fear,
 I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us,
 Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to
 hear.

“The live air that waves the lilies waves the slender
of water,
Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint
Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping, (Lough the
sculptor wrought her)
So asleep she is forgetting to say Hush!—a fancy quaint.

“Mark how heavy white her eyelids! not a dream between
them lingers;
And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the
cheek:
While the right hand,—with the symbol-rose held slack
within the fingers,—
Has fallen backward in the basin—yet this Silence will not
speak!

“That the essential meaning growing may exceed the
special symbol,
Is the thought as I conceive it: it applies more high and low
Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow
humble,
And assert an inward honour by denying outward show.”

“Nay, your Silence,” said I, “truly, holds her symbol rose
but slackly,
Yet *she holds it*, or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken:
And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk
blackly
In the presence of the social law as mere ignoble men.

“Let the poets dream such dreaming! madam, in these
British islands
'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that
exceeds.
Soon we shall have nought but symbol: and, for statues
like this Silence,
Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the weed's.”

“Not so quickly,” she retorted,—“I confess, where'er you
go, you
Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold
for honour clear:
But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
The world's book which now reads drily, and sit down with
Silence here.”

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation ;
Friends who listened, laughed her words off, while her lovers deemed her fair :
A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station
Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny air !

With the trees round, not so distant but you heard their vernal murmur,
And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward move,
And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be warmer,
Then recoiling in a tremble from the too much light above.—

'Tis a picture for remembrance. And thus, morning after morning,
Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet.
Why, her grayhound followed also ! dogs—we both were dogs for scorning—
To be sent back when she pleased it and her path lay through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite of sorrow,
Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed along ;
Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns to-morrow,
Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a song.

Ay, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sate down in the gowans,
With the forest green behind us and its shadow cast before,
And the river running under, and across it from the rowans,
A brown partridge whirring near us till we felt the air it bore,—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the
 poems
 Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various
 our own ;
 Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or the subtle inter-
 flowings
 Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book, the leaf is
 folded down !—

Or at times a modern volume, Wordsworth's solemn-
 thoughted idyl,
 Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
 Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which, if cut
 deep down the middle,
 Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined
 humanity.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my
 making :
 Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their
 worth,
 For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you are
 speaking,
 And the chariot wheels jar in the gate through which you
 drive them forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, the silence
 round us flinging
 A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the
 breast,
 She would break out on a sudden in a gush of woodland
 singing,
 Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing ! scarce I know which is
 divinest,
 For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on
 the tune,
 And her mouth stirs with the song, like song ; and when
 the notes are finest,
 'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell
 them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked! her voice, so
 cadenced in the talking,
 Made another singing—of the soul! a music without
 bars:
 While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round
 where we were walking,
 Brought interposition worthy-sweet,—as skies about the
 stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she
 always thought them;
 She had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on
 branch,
 Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought
 them,
 In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a cock-crow in the
 grange.

In her utmost lightness there is truth—and often she
 speaks lightly;
 Has a grace in being gay which even mournful souls
 approve,
 For the root of some grave earnest thought is understruck
 so rightly
 As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather! upon all things—
 substance—shadow—
 Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the reapers in
 the corn—
 Of the little children from the schools, seen winding
 through the meadow—
 Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by
 its scorn.

So, of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher
 stature,
 And the only men that speak aloud for future times to
 hear;
 So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into
 nature,
 Yet will lift the cry of "progress," as it trod from sphere
 to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—“The Age
 culls simples,
 With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory
 the stars.
 We are gods by our own reck'ning, and may well shut
 the temples,
 And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our
 cars.

“For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-
 admiring,
 With, at every mile run faster,—‘O the wondrous
 wondrous age!’
 Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our
 iron,
 Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

“Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep
 resources,
 But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright
 without bane?—
 When we drive out, from the cloud of steam, majestic
 white horses,
 Are we greater than the first men who led black ones by
 the mane?”

“If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars
 rising,
 If we wrapped the globe intensely with one hot electric
 breath,
 'Twere but power within our tether—no new spirit-power
 comprising—
 And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men
 death.”

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her—love
 her certes,
 As I loved all heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and
 hands;
 As I loved pure inspirations, loved the graces, loved the
 virtues,—
 In a Love content with writing his own name on desert
 sands.

Or at least I thought so, purely; thought no idiot Hope
was raising
Any crown to crown Love's silence, silent Love that sate
alone:
Out, alas! the stag is like me—he that tries to go on
grazing
With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels
with sudden moan.

It was thus I reeled. I told you that her hand had many
suits;
But she smiles them down imperially as Venus did the
waves,
And with such a gracious coldness that they cannot press
their futures
On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning, as I sat alone within the inner
chamber
With the great saloon beyond it, lost in pleasant thought
serene,
For I had been reading Camöens—that poem you
remember,
Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever
seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it,
taking from it
A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,
As the branch of a green osier, when a child would
overcome it,
Springs up freely from his claspings and goes swinging
in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur; it grew deep as it grew
longer—
Speakers using earnest language—"Lady Geraldine, you
would!"
And I heard a voice that pleaded, ever on in accents
stronger,
As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric
good.

Well I knew that voice ; it was an earl's, of soul the
 matched his station—

Soul completed into lordship, might and right read
 his brow ;

Very finely courteous ; far too proud to doubt his dominations
 Of the common people, he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes
 less expression

Than resistance—coldly casting off the looks of other men
 As steel, arrows ; unelastic lips which seem to taste
 possession,

And be cautious lest the common air should injure
 distract.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,—ay, and standing
 by his order

With a bearing not ungraceful ; fond of art and letters too
 Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks
 that border

A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus, I knew that voice, I heard it, and I could not help
 the hearkening :

In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart
 within

Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses till they ran on all
 sides darkening,

And scorched, weighed, like melted metal, round my feet
 that stood therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—
 wealth, position,

For the sake of liberal uses and great actions to be done—
 And she interrupted gently, "Nay, my lord, the
 tradition

Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine
 should be won."

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly,—and in
 he either drew it,

Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied—
 "Nay indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best
 eschew it,

And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to decide."

What he said again, I know not: it is likely that his
trouble
Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in
slow scorn,
"And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall
be noble,
Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he
was born."

There, I maddened! her words stung me. Life swept
through me into fever,
And my soul sprang up astonished, sprang full-statured
in an hour.
Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic
NEVER,
To a Pythian height dilates you,—and despair sublimes
to power?

From my brain the soul-wings budded—waved a flame
about my body,
Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn out,
as man,
From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow
ruddy
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what
spirits can.

I was mad—inspired—say either! (anguish worketh
inspiration)
Was a man, or beast—perhaps so, for the tiger roars when
speared;
And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my
passion—
Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never
feared.

He had left her, peradventure, when my footstep proved
my coming,
But for *her*—she half arose, then sate, grew scarlet and
grew pale.
Oh, she trembled! 'tis so always with a worldly man or
woman,
In the presence of true spirits; what else *can* they do but
quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest-
 brothers,
 Far too strong for it ; then drooping, bowed her face upon
 her hands ;
 And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and
 others :
 I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with
 my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though leaf-
 verdant,
 Trod them down with words of shaming,—all the purple
 and the gold,
 All the “landed stakes” and lordships—all, that spirits
 pure and ardent
 Are cast out of love and honour, because chancing not
 to hold.

“For myself I do not argue,” said I, “though I love you,
 madam,
 But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have
 trod :
 And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels
 to Adam
 Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

“Yet, O God,” I said, “O grave,” I said, “O mother’s
 heart and bosom,
 With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and
 little child !
 We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of
 heart-closing ;
 We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies
 defiled.

“Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or wealth—
that needs no learning,
That comes quickly—quick as sin does, ay, and culminates
 to sin ;
 But for Adam’s seed, MAN ! Trust me, ’tis a clay above
 your scorning,
 With God’s image stamped upon it, and God’s kindling
 breath within.

"What right have you, madam, gazing in your palace
 mirror daily,
 Getting so, by heart, your beauty, which all others must
 adore,
 While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to
 vow gaily,
 You will wed no man that's only good to God, and nothing
 more ?

"Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God,
 the sweetest woman
 Of all women He has fashioned—with your lovely spirit-face,
 Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not
 so human,
 And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words
 to grace :

"What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn,
 despise, revile them
 In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men,
 forsooth,—
 As mere *Parias* of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them,
 In the hope of living,—dying,—near that sweetness of your
 mouth ?

"Have you any answer, madam ? If my spirit were less
 earthly,
 If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string,
 I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold me !
 I am worthy
 Of thy loving, for I love thee. I am worthy as a king.

"As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this
 stain upon her,
 That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me
 and you again,
 Love you, madam—dare to love you—to my grief and
 your dishonour—
 To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain !"

More mad words like these—mere madness ! friend, I
 need not write them fuller,
 For I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers
 of tears.

Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! why, a beast had scarce
 been duller
 Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of
 the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with
 thunder,
 Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up
 like a call.
 Could you guess what word she uttered? She looked
 up, as if in wonder,
 With tears beaded on her lashes, and said—"Bertram!"
 it was all.

If she had cursed me—and she might have—or if even,
 with queenly bearing,
 Which at need is used by women, she had risen up
 and said,
 "Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you
 a full hearing:
 Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat
 less, instead!"—

I had borne it: but that "Bertram"—why, it lies there
 on the paper
 A mere word, without her accent, and you cannot judge
 the weight
 Of the calm which crushed my passion: I seemed
 drowning in a vapour;
 And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn made
 desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted by that inward flow
 of passion
 Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of
 abstract truth,
 By a logic agonising through unseemly demonstration,
 And by youth's own anguish turning grimly gray the
 hairs of youth,—

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake
 wisely
 I spake basely—using truth, if what I spake indeed was
 true,

To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sate there
weighing nicely
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as
I could do!—

By such wrong and woe exhausted—what I suffered and
occasioned,—
As a wild horse through a city runs with lightning in
his eyes,
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall,
impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly
drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her—do you blame me,
friend, for weakness?
'Twas my strength of passion slew me!—fell before her
like a stone;
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring
wheels of blackness:
When the light came I was lying in this chamber and alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the
sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight, but not *beyond*
the gate;
She is too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
Such a man as I; 'twere something to be level to her hate.

But for me—you now are conscious why, my friend, I
write this letter,
How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life
undone.
I shall leave her house at dawn; I would to-night, if I
were better—
And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for
the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart, with no last
gazes,
No weak moanings, (one word only, left in writing for
her hands,)
Out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign
lands.

Blame me not. I would not squander life in grief—
 am abstemious.
 I but nurse my spirit's falcon that its wing may soar
 again.
 There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes of a
 Phemius:
 Into work the poet kneads them, and he does not die *ill*
then.

CONCLUSION.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence
 ever
 Still in hot and heavy splashes fell the tears on every leaf.
 Having ended, he leans backward in his chair, with lips
 that quiver
 From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts
 of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'Tis a dream—a dream
 of mercies!
 'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she standeth still
 and pale!
 'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self
 curses,
 Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

"Eyes," he said, "now throbbing through me! are ye
 eyes that did undo me?
 Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-
 stone!
 Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning
 torrid,
 O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?"

With a murmurous stir, uncertain, in the air, the purple
 curtain
 Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale
 brows,
 While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for
 ever
 Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's
 slant repose.

Said he—"Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there steady!

Now I see it plainly, plainly; now I cannot hope or doubt—
There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of
silent passion,
Curvèd like an archer's bow, to send the bitter arrows out."

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling,
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured
pace;
With her two white hands extended, as if praying one
offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.

Said he—"Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or
stir of vesture!
Let the blessèd apparition melt not yet to its divine!
No approaching—hush, no breathing! or my heart must
swoon to death in
The too utter life thou bringest, O thou dream of
Geraldine!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling,—
But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes, and
tenderly:—
"Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me? Is no woman far
above me
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart, than such a one
as I?"

Said he—"I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that
river,
Flowing ever in a shadow, greenly onward to the sea!
So, thou vision of all sweetness, princely to a full
completeness
Would my heart and life flow onward—deathward—through
this dream of THEE!"

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept
smiling,
While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her
cheeks;

Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly
told him,
"Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only
speaks."

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knees he fell
before her,
And she whispered low in triumph,—“It shall be as I
have sworn!
Very rich he is in virtues, very noble—noble, certes;
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly
born.”

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

I.

To the belfrey, one by one, went the ringers from the sun,—
Toll slowly.
And the oldest ringer said, “Ours is music for the Dead,
When the rebecks are all done.”

II.

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow, on the northside in a
row,—
Toll slowly.
And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes
Of the grassy graves below.

III.

On the south side and the west, a small river runs in haste,—
Toll slowly.
And between the river flowing, and the fair green trees
a-growing,
Do the dead lie at their rest.

IV.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow gray :—
Toll slowly.
Through the rain of willow-branches, I could see the low
hill-ranges,
And the river on its way.

V.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly,—
Toll slowly.
 While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the
 solemn noises,—
 Yet death seemed more loud to me.

VI.

There, I read this ancient rhyme, while the bell did all the
 time
Toll slowly.
 And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,
 Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME.

I.

Broad the forest stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged,—
Toll slowly.
 And three hundred years had stood, mute adown each
 hoary wood,
 Like a full heart, having prayed.

II.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
 And but little thought was theirs, of the silent antique years,
 In the building of their nest.

III.

Down the sun dropt, large and red, on the towers of
 Linteged,—
Toll slowly.
 Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in fiery
 light,
 While the castle stood in shade.

IV.

There, the castle stood up black, with the red sun at its
 back,—
Toll slowly.
 Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a top that flickers fire,
 When the wind is on its track.

V.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall,—
Toll slowly,
 And the castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights
 had stood,
 And to-night was near its fall.

VI.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride
 did come,—
Toll slowly.
 One who proudly trod the floors, and softly whispered in
 the doors,
 “May good angels bless our home.”

VII.

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,—
Toll slowly.
 Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where the untired smile of
 youth
 Did light outward its own sighs.

VIII.

’Twas a Duke’s fair orphan-girl, and her uncle’s ward, the
 Earl,
Toll slowly.
 Who betrothed her twelve years old, for the sake of dowry
 gold,
 To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

IX.

But what time she had made good all her years of woman-
 hood,—
Toll slowly.
 Unto both these Lords of Leigh spake she out right
 sovranly,
 “My will runneth as my blood.

X.

“And while this same blood makes red this same right
 hand’s veins,” she said,—
Toll slowly.
 “’Tis my will, as lady free, not to wed a Lord of Leigh,
 But Sir Guy of Linteged.”

XI.

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful youth,—

Toll slowly.

“Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft and small

For so large a will, in sooth.”

XII.

She too smiled by that same sign,—but her smile was cold and fine,—

Toll slowly.

“Little hand clasps muckle gold; or it were not worth the hold

Of thy son, good uncle mine!”

XIII.

Then the young Lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in his teeth,—

Toll slowly.

“He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him an she loathed,

Let the life come or the death.”

XIV.

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father's child might rise,—

Toll slowly.

“Thy hound's blood, my Lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,” quoth she,

“And he moans not where he lies:

XV.

“But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward!”—

Toll slowly.

“By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl and dowered lady,

I deny you wife and ward.”

XVI.

Unto each she bowed her head, and swept past with jolly
tread,—

Toll slowly.

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the
priest

Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

XVII.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode
amain:—

Toll slowly.

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on
the turf,

In the pauses of the rain.

XVIII.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pursued
amain,—

Toll slowly.

Steed on steed-track, dashing off—thickening, doubling,
hoof on hoof,

In the pauses of the rain.

XIX.

And the bridegroom led the flight, on his red-roan steed of
might,—

Toll slowly.

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as if she feared no
harm,

Smiling out into the night.

XX.

“Dost thou fear?” he said at last;—“Nay!” she answered
him in haste,—

Toll slowly.

“Not such death as we could find—only life with *one*
behind—

Ride on fast as fear—ride fast!”

XXI.

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and
fetlocks spread,—

Toll slowly.

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered
—down the banks,

To the towers of Linteged.

XXII.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed
about,—

Toll slowly.

In the courtyard rose the cry — “Live the Duchess and
Sir Guy!”

But she never heard them shout.

XXIII.

On the steed she dropped her cheek, kissed his mane and
kissed his neck,—

Toll slowly.

“I had happier died by thee, than lived on a Lady
Leigh,”

Were the first words she did speak.

XXIV.

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment and
to-day,—

Toll slowly.

When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle
wall,

To recapture Duchess May.

XXV.

And the castle standeth black, with the red sun at its
back,—

Toll slowly.

And a fortnight's siege is done—and, except the Duchess,
none

Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

XXVI.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so gray
of blee,—

Toll slowly.

And thin lips, that scarcely sheathe the cold white gnashing
of his teeth,

Gnashed in smiling, absently,—

XXVII.

Cried aloud—"So goes the day, bridegroom fair of
Duchess May!"—

Toll slowly.

"Look thy last upon that sun. If thou seest to-morrow's
one,

'Twill be through a foot of clay.

XXVIII.

"Ha, fair bride! Dost hear no sound, save that moaning
of the hound?"—

Toll slowly.

"Thou and I have parted troth,—yet I keep my vengeance-
oath,

And the other may come round.

XXIX.

"Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past
compare,"—

Toll slowly.

"Yet thine old love's faulchion brave is as strong a thing
to have,

As the will of lady fair.

XXX.

"Peck on blindly, netted dove!—If a wife's name thee
behave,"—

Toll slowly.

"Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has
hid the sorrow

Of thy last ill-mated love.

XXXI.

"O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back
troth,"—

Toll slowly.

"He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least
' I forbid you—I am loth !'

XXXII.

"I will wring thy fingers pale in the gauntlet of my mail,"—

Toll slowly.

" ' Little hand and muckle gold ' close shall lie within my
hold,

As the sword did to prevail."

XXXIII.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly.

Oh, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put
away

All his boasting, for a jest.

XXXIV.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,—

Toll slowly.

" Tower is strong and will is free—thou canst boast, my
Lord of Leigh,—

But thou boastest little wit."

XXXV.

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she blushed right womanly,—

Toll slowly.

She blushed half from her disdain—half, her beauty was so
plain,

—" Oath for oath, my Lord of Leigh !

XXXVI.

Straight she called her maidens in—" Since ye gave me
blame herein,"—

Toll slowly.

" That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it
fine,

Come and shrieve me from that sin.

XXXVII.

"It is three months gone to-day since I gave mine hand
away :"—

Toll slowly.

"Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride
state in them,

While we keep the foe at bay.

XXXVIII.

"On your arms I loose mine hair ;—comb it smooth and
crown it fair,"—

Toll slowly.

"I would look in purple-pall from this lattice down the wall
And throw scorn to one that's there !"

XXXIX.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—

Toll slowly.

On the tower the castle's lord leant in silence on his sword,
With an anguish in his breast.

XL.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean down passionate,—

Toll slowly.

They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter there-
withal,

With no knocking at the gate.

XLI.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered—snapped upon the
stone,—

Toll slowly.

"Sword," he thought, with inward laugh, "ill thou
servest for a staff,

When thy nobler use is done !

XLII.

"Sword, thy nobler use is done !—tower is lost, and shame
begun :"—

Toll slowly.

"If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to
speech,

We should die there, each for one.

XLIII.

"If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly
fall,"—

Toll slowly.

"But if *I* die here alone,—then I die, who am but one,
And die nobly for them all.

XLIV.

"Five true friends lie for my sake—in the moat and in the
brake ;"—

Toll slowly.

"Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a black wound in the
breast,
And not one of these will wake.

XLV.

"So no more of this shall be!—heart-blood weighs too
heavily,"—

Toll slowly.

"And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the
brave
Heaped around and over me.

XLVI.

"Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a
plighted faith,"—

Toll slowly.

"Since my pale young sister's cheeks blush like rose when
Ronald speaks,
Albeit never a word she saith—

XLVII.

"These shall never die for me—life-blood falls too
heavily :"—

Toll slowly.

"And if *I* die here apart,—o'er my dead and silent
heart
They shall pass out safe and free.

XLVIII.

“When the foe hath heard it said—‘Death holds Guy
Lintege,’”—

Toll slowly.

“That new corse new peace shall bring; and a blessed
blessèd thing
Shall the stone be at its head.

XLIX.

“Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear
memory,”—

Toll slowly.

“Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my
widowed bride,
Whose sole sin was love of me.

L.

“With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her
and entreat :”—

Toll slowly.

“And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting
head,
While her tears drop over it.

LI.

“She will weep her woman’s tears, she will pray her
woman’s prayers,”—

Toll slowly.

“But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring
again
By the suntime of her years.

LII.

“Ah, sweet May—ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed thee
my belief,”—

Toll slowly.

“That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets
in completeness!
Now my May-day seemeth brief.”

LIII.

All these silent thoughts did swim o'er his eyes grown
strange and dim,—

Toll slowly.

Till his true men in the place wished they stood there face
to face

With the foe instead of him.

LIV.

"One last oath, my friends, that wear faithful hearts to do
and dare!"

Toll slowly.

"Tower must fall, and bride be lost!—swear me service
worth the cost,"

—Bold they stood around to swear.

LV.

"Each man clasp my hand, and swear, by the deed we
failed in there,"—

Toll slowly.

"Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow
to-night!"—

Pale they stood around—to swear.

LVI.

"One last boon, young Ralph and Clare! faithful hearts to
do and dare!"

Toll slowly.

"Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before
you all,—

Guide him up the turret-stair.

LVII.

"Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this
height!"—

Toll slowly.

"Once in love and twice in war, hath he borne me strong
and far,—

He shall bear me far to-night."

LVIII.

Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him
speaking so,—

Toll slowly.

—“Las! the noble heart,” they thought,—“he in sooth
grief-distraught.—

Would we stood here with the foe!”

LIX.

But a fire flashed from his eye, 'twixt their thought and
their reply,—

Toll slowly.

“Have ye so much time to waste? We who ride here,
must ride fast,

As we wish our foes to fly.”

LX.

They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he
did wear,—

Toll slowly.

Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes of
the floors;

But they goad him up the stair.

LXI.

Then from out her bower chambère did the Duchess May
repair,—

Toll slowly.

“Tell me now what is your need,” said the lady, “of this
steed,

That ye goad him up the stair?”

LXII.

Calm she stood! unbodkined through, fell her dark hair
to her shoe,—

Toll slowly.

And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
Had not time enough to go.

LXIII.

"Get thee back, sweet Duchess May! hope is gone like
yesterday,"—

Toll slowly.

"One half-hour completes the breach; and thy lord grows
wild of speech.—

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.

LXIV.

"In the east tower, high'st of all,—loud he cries for steed
from stall,"—

Toll slowly.

"'He would ride as far,' quoth he, 'as for love and victory,
Though he rides the castle-wall.'

LXV.

"And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof
did fall."—

Toll slowly.

"Wifely prayer meets deathly need! may the sweet
Heavens hear thee plead,

If he rides the castle-wall."

LXVI.

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled
on the floor,—

Toll slowly.

And tear after tear you heard, fall distinct as any word
Which you might be listening for.

LXVII.

"Get thee in, thou soft ladye!—here, is never a place for
thee!"

Toll slowly.

"Braid thine hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in
its moan

May find grace with Leigh of Leigh."

LXVIII.

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet steady face,—
Toll slowly.

Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering
 seems to look

Right against the thunder-place.

LXIX.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone
 beside,—

Toll slowly.

“Go to, faithful friends, go to!—Judge no more what
 ladies do,—

No, nor how their lords may ride!”

LXX.

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss
 and stroke:—

Toll slowly.

Soft he neighed to answer her; and then followed up the
 stair,

For the love of her sweet look.

LXXI.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair
 around,—

Toll slowly.

Oh, and closely, closely speeding, step by step beside her
 treading,

Did he follow, meek as hound.

LXXII.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a
 hoof did fall,—

Toll slowly.

Out they swept, a vision steady,—noble steed and lovely
 lady,

Calm as if in bower or stall.

LXXIII.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up
silently,—

Toll slowly.

And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her
eyes,

Which he could not bear to see.

LXXIV.

Quoth he, "Get thee from this strife,—and the sweet saints
bless thy life!"—

Toll slowly.

In this hour, I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed—
But no more of my noble wife."

LXXV.

Quoth she, "Meekly have I done all thy biddings under
sun:"—

Toll slowly.

"But by all my womanhood,—which is proved so, true and
good,

I will never do this one.

LXXVI.

"Now, by womanhood's degree, and by wifehood's
verity,"—

Toll slowly.

"In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,
Thou hast also need of *me*.

LXXVII.

"By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand, *pardie*,"—

Toll slowly.

"If, this hour, on castle wall, can be room for steed from
stall,

Shall be also room for *me*.

LXXVIII.

"So the sweet saints with me be," (did she utter solemnly),—

Toll slowly.

"If a man, this eventide, on this castle wall will ride,
He shall ride the same with *me*."

LXXIX.

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he laughed out bitterly
well,—

Toll slowly.

“Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other
eves,

To hear chime a vesper-bell?”

LXXX.

She clang closer to his knee—“Ay, beneath the cypress
tree!”—

Toll slowly.

“Mock me not; for otherwhere, than along the greenwood
fair,

Have I ridden fast with thee!

LXXXI.

“Fast I rode, with new-made vows, from my angry
kinsman’s house!”

Toll slowly.

“What! and would you men should reckon, that I dare
more for love’s sake,

As a bride than as a spouse?”

LXXXII.

“What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before
all,”—

Toll slowly,

“That a bride may keep your side, while through castle-
gate you ride,

Yet eschew the castle-wall?”

LXXXIII.

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and roars up against the
suing,—

Toll slowly.

With the inarticulate din, and the dreadful falling in—
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

LXXXIV.

Twice he wrung her hands in twain,—but the small hands
closed again,—

Toll slowly.

Back he reined the steed—back, back! but she trailed
along his track,

With a frantic clasp and strain.

LXXXV.

Evermore the foemen pour through the crash of window
and door,—

Toll slowly.

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of
“kill!” and “flee!”

Strike up clear the general roar.

LXXXVI.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,—but they closed and
clung again,—

Toll slowly.

Wild she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon
the rood,

In a spasm of deadly pain.

LXXXVII.

She clung wild and she clung mute,—with her shuddering
lips half-shut,—

Toll slowly.

Her head fallen as in swoond,—hair and knee swept on the
ground,—

She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

LXXXVIII.

Back he reined his steed, back thrown on the slippery
coping-stone,—

Toll slowly.

Back the iron hoofs did grind, on the battlement behind,
Whence a hundred feet went down:

LXXXIX.

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flame
bestrode,—

Toll slowly.

'Friends, and brothers! save my wife!—Pardon, sweet
in change for life,—
But I ride alone to God.'

XC.

Straight as if the Holy Name had upbreathed her lil
flame,—

Toll slowly.

She upsprang, she rose upright—in his selle she sate
sight;

By her love she overcame.

XCI.

And her head was on his breast, where she smiled as
at rest,—

Toll slowly.

"Ring," she cried, "O vesper-bell, in the beechwood's
chappelle!

But the passing-bell rings best."

XCII.

They have caught out at the rein, which Sir Guy thro
loose—in vain,—

Toll slowly.

For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poi
in air,

On the last verge, rears amain.

XCIII.

And he hangs, he rocks between—and his nostrils cur
in,—

Toll slowly.

And he shivers head and hoof—and the flakes of foam
off;

And his face grows fierce and thin!

XCIV.

And a look of human woe, from his staring eyes did go,—
Toll slowly.
 And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony
 Of the headlong death below,—

XCV.

And, "Ring, ring, thou passing-bell," still she cried, "i'
 the old chapelle!"—
Toll slowly.
 Then back-toppling, crashing back—a dead weight flung
 out to wrack,
 Horse and riders overfell.

I.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
 west,—
Toll slowly.
 And I read this ancient Rhyme, in the kirkyard, while the
 chime
 Slowly tolled for one at rest.

II.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did
 run,—
Toll slowly.
 And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and
 its change,
 Here, where all done lay undone.

III.

And beneath a willow-tree I a little grave did see,—
Toll slowly.
 Where was graved,—"HERE UNDEFILED, LIETH MAUD, A
 THREE-YEAR CHILD,
 EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE."

IV.

Then, O Spirits—did I say—ye who rode so fast that day,—
Toll slowly.

Did star-wheels and angel-wings, with their holy
 winnowings,

Keep beside you all the way?

V.

Though in passion ye would dash, with a blind and
 heavy crash,

Toll slowly.

Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment
 in the field,—

Though your heart and brain were rash,—

VI.

Now, your will is all unwilled—now, your pulses are all
 stilled,—

Toll slowly.

Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the
 child,

Whose small grave was lately filled.

VII.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient
 now,—

Toll slowly.

And the children might be bold to pluck the kingscups
 from your mould,

Ere a month had let them grow.

VIII.

And you let the goldfinch sing, in the alder near, in spring,—
Toll slowly.

Let her build her nest, and sit all the three weeks
 on it,

Murmuring not at anything.

IX.

In your patience ye are strong ; cold and heat ye take not
wrong :—

Toll slowly.

When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
Time will seem to you not long.

X.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
west,—

Toll slowly.

And I said in underbreath,—All our life is mixed with death,
And who knoweth which is best ?

XI.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang
west,—

Toll slowly.

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our
incompleteness,—

Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE LOST BOWER.

I.

IN the pleasant orchard-closes,
"God bless all our gains," say we ;
But "May God bless all our losses,"
Better suits with our degree.

Listen, gentle—ay, and simple ! listen, children on the knee !

II.

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played,
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade ;

Summer-snow of apple-blossoms running up from glade
to glade.

III.

There is one hill I see nearer
 In my vision of the rest ;
 And a little wood seems clearer
 As it climbeth from the west,
 Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland
 crest.

IV.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
 And, completing the ascent,
 Where the wind blows and sun dazzles,
 Thrills in leafy tremblement,
 Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth quickly through
 content.

V.

Not a step the wood advances
 O'er the open hill-top's bound ;
 There, in green arrest, the branches
 See their image on the ground :
 You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and
 glad with sound.

VI.

For you hearken on your right hand,
 How the birds do leap and call
 In the greenwood, out of sight and
 Out of reach and fear of all ;
 And the squirrels crack the filberts through their cheerful
 madrigal.

VII.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
 The slant grass and daisies pale,
 And five apple-trees stand dropping
 Separate shadows toward the vale
 Over which, in choral silence, the hills look you
 "All hail !"

VIII.

Far out, kindled by each other,
 Shining hills on hills arise ;

Close as brother leans to brother,
When they press beneath the eyes

Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

IX.

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods also,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—

Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the sunshine
and the snow.*

X.

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and far survey ;
'Twas a straight walk unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay ;

Up and down—as dull as grammar on the eve of holiday.

XI.

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over-branching)
At your head than at your foot,—

Oh, the wood drew me within it by a glamour past dispute !

XII.

Few and broken paths showed through it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced with snowy wool to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon

They, with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into
the sun.

XIII.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow :
I could pierce them ! I could longer
Travel on, methought, than so :

Sheep for sheep-paths ! braver children climb and creep
where they would go.

* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's visions,
and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

XIV.

And the poets wander, said I,
 Over places all as rude :
 Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
 Sate to meet him in a wood :

Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude

XV.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
 Through a forest by a well,
 He had never dreamt nor marvelled
 At those ladies fair and fell

Who lived smiling without loving, in their island-citadel.

XVI.

Thus I thought of the old singers,
 And took courage from their song,
 Till my little struggling fingers
 Tore asunder gyve and thong

Of the brambles which entrapped me, and the barrier
 branches strong.

XVII.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
 With a fawn's heart debonair,
 Under-crawling, overleaping
 Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,

I stood suddenly astonished—I was gladdened unaware.

XVIII.

From the place I stood in, floated
 Back the covert dim and close,
 And the open ground was coated
 Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,

And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worth
 across.

XIX.

Here a linden-tree stood, bright'ning
 All adown its silver rind ;
 For, as some trees draw the lightning,
 So this tree, unto my mind,

Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from the sky where
 was shrined.

XX.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
 An old hawthorn also grew ;
 And wood-ivy like a spirit
 Hovered dimly round the two,
 Shaping thence that bower of beauty which I sing of thus
 to you.

XXI.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
 Than for any woodland wide :
 Though a fresh and dewy glitter
 Struck it through from side to side,
 Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-
 cunning plied.

XXII.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
 Hooded fairly like her hawk,
 With a book or lute in summer,
 And a hope of sweeter talk,—
 Listening less to her own music than for footsteps on the
 walk !

XXIII.

But that bower appeared a marvel
 In the wildness of the place ;
 With such seeming art and travail,
 Finely fixed and fitted was
 Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the
 base.

XXIV.

And the ivy veined and glossy
 Was enwrought with eglantine ;
 And the wild hop fibred closely,
 And the large-leaved columbine,
 Arch of door and window-mullion, did right sylvanly
 entwine.

XXV.

Rose-trees either side the door were
 Growing lithe and growing tall,
 Each one set a summer warder
 For the keeping of the hall,—
 With a red rose and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the
 wall.

XXVI.

As I entered, mosses hushing
 Stole all noises from my foot ;
 And a green elastic cushion,
 Clasped within the linden's root,
 Took me in a chair of silence very rare and absolute.

XXVII.

All the floor was paved with glory,
 Greenly, silently inlaid
 (Through quick motions made before me)
 With fair counterparts in shade
 Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead.

XXVIII.

"Is such pavement in a palace?"
 So I questioned in my thought :
 The sun, shining through the chalice
 Of the red rose hung without,
 Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt.

XXIX.

At the same time, on the linen
 Of my childish lap there fell
 Two white may-leaves, downward winning
 Through the ceiling's miracle,
 From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing
 well.

XXX.

Down to floor and up to ceiling
 Quick I turned my childish face,
 With an innocent appealing
 For the secret of the place
 To the trees, which surely knew it in partaking of the
 grace.

XXXI.

Where's no foot of human creature
 How could reach a human hand?
 And if this be work of nature,
 Why has nature turned so bland,
 Breaking off from other wild-work? It was hard to under-
 stand.

XXXII.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn?
Did she pause, in tender ruing,
Here, of all her sylvan scorn?

Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the sudden mildness
worn?

XXXIII.

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong,
Who, surviving all that chanced
In the world's old pagan wrong,

Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on the last true poet's
song?

XXXIV.

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,

And beyond St. Catherine's chiming on the blessed Sabbath
days?

XXXV.

So, young muser, I sate listening
To my fancy's wildest word:
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,

Came a sound, a sense of music, which was rather felt than
heard.

XXXVI.

Softly, finely, it inwound me;
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain, falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin

Clips a little water Naiad, sitting smilingly within.

XXXVII.

Whence the music came, who knoweth?
I know nothing: but indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed

Which has sucked the milk of waters at the oldest riverhead.

XXXVIII.

Never lark the sun can waken
 With such sweetness! when the lark,
 The high planets overtaking
 In the half-*evanished* Dark,
 Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark.

XXXIX.

Never nightingale so singeth:
 Oh, she leans on thorny tree,
 And her poet-song she flingeth
 Over pain to victory!
 Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me.

XL.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
 Nor small finches sing as sweet,
 When the sun strikes through the bushes,
 To their crimson clinging feet,
 And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens
 complete.

XLI.

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd
 Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
 He of green and azure dreamèd,
 While it sate in spirit-ruth
 On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent
 mouth.

XLII.

If it *were* a bird?—ah, sceptic,
 Give me "yea" or give me "nay"—
 Though my soul were nympholeptic,
 As I heard that *virèlay*,
 You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far
 away!

XLIII.

I rose up in exaltation
 And an inward trembling heat,

And (it seemed) in geste of passion
 Dropped the music to my feet
 Like a garment rustling downwards — such a silence
 followed it!

XLIV.

Heart and head beat through the quiet
 Full and heavily, though slower :
 In the song, I think, and by it,
 Mystic Presences of power
 Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to
 the Hour.

XLV.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
 Straightway from the bower I past ;
 Foot and soul being dimly drifted
 Through the greenwood, till, at last,
 In the hill-top's open sunshine, I all consciously was cast.

XLVI.

Face to face with the true mountains,
 I stood silently and still ;
 Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,
 From the air about the hill,
 And from Nature's open mercies and most debonair good-
 will.

XLVII.

Oh ! the golden-hearted daisies
 Witnessed there, before my youth,
 To the truth of things, with praises
 Of the beauty of the truth ;
 And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

XLVIII.

And I said within me, laughing ;
 I have found a bower to-day,
 A green lusus, fashioned half in
 Chance and half in Nature's play—
 And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay.

XLIX.

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy
 Of this bower not built by one ;
 I will go there, sad or merry,
 With each morning's benison,
 And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have
 won.

L.

So I said. But the next morning,
 (—Child, look up into my face—
 'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorning !
 This is truth in its pure grace !)
 The next morning, all had vanished, or my wandering
 missed the place.

LI.

Bring an oath most sylvan-holy,
 And upon it swear me true—
 By the wind-bells swinging slowly
 Their mute curfews in the dew,
 By the advent of the snow-drop, by the rosemary and rue,—

LII.

I affirm by all or any,
 Let the cause be charm or chance,
 That my wandering searches many
 Missed the bower of my romance—
 That I nevermore upon it turned my mortal countenance.

LIII.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
 Never bower has seemed so fair ;
 Never garden-creeper crossed it
 With so deft and brave an air,
 Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them
 there.

LIV.

Day by day, with new desire,
 Toward my wood I ran in faith,
 Under leaf and over brier,
 Through the thickets, out of breath ;
 Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long
 as death.

LV.

But his sword of mettle clashèd,
 And his arm smote strong, I ween,
 And her dreaming spirit flashèd
 Through her body's fair white screen,
 And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys
 green :

LVI.

But for me, I saw no splendour—
 All my sword was my child-heart ;
 And the wood refused surrender
 Of that bower it held apart,
 Safe as Œdipus's grave-place 'mid Colone's olives swart.

LVII.

As Aladdin sought the basements
 His fair palace rose upon,
 And the four-and-twenty casements
 Which gave answers to the sun ;
 So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked up, and I looked
 down.

LVIII.

Years have vanished since, as wholly
 As the little bower did then ;
 And you call it tender folly
 That such thoughts should come again ?
 Ah, I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother
 men !

LIX.

For this loss it did prefigure
 Other loss of better good,
 When my soul, in spirit-vigour,
 And in ripened womanhood,
 Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a wood.

LX.

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure,
 Many a hope and many a power—
 Studious health and merry leisure—
 The first dew on the first flower !
 But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

LXI.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
 And the other dream of Done,
 The first spring in the pursuing,
 The first pride in the Begun,—
 First recoil from incompleteness, in the face of what is won—

LXII.

Exaltations in the far light
 Where some cottage only is ;
 Mild dejections in the starlight,
 Which the sadder-hearted miss ;
 And the child-cheek blushing scarlet, for the very shame of
 bliss.

LXIII.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
 Which the thunder could not break ;
 Something too of the strong leaping
 Of the staglike heart awake,
 Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought
 to take.

LXIV.

Some respect to social fictions
 Has been also lost by me ;
 And some generous genuflexions,
 Which my spirit offered free
 To the pleasant old conventions of our false humanity.

LXV.

All my losses did I tell you,
 Ye, perchance, would look away ;—
 Ye would answer me, " Farewell ! you
 Make sad company to-day,
 And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words
 you say."

LXVI.

For God placed me like a dial
 In the open ground with power,
 And my heart had for its trial,
 All the sun and all the shower :
 And I suffered many losses,—and my first was of the bower.

LXVII.

Laugh you? If that loss of mine be
 Of no heavy-seeming weight—
 When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
 The young children laugh thereat ;
 Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall
 be great.

LXVIII.

One who knew me in my childhood
 In the glamour and the game,
 Looking on me long and mild, would
 Never know me for the same.
 Come, unchanging recollections, where those changes
 overcame !

LXIX.

By this couch I weakly lie on,
 While I count my memories,—
 Through the fingers which, still sighing,
 I press closely on mine eyes,—
 Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower
 arise.

LXX.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
 Stroked with light adown its rind ;
 And the ivy-leaves serenely
 Each in either intertwined ;
 And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown
 nor pined.

LXXI.

From those overblown faint roses
 Not a leaf appeareth shed,
 And that little bud discloses
 Not a thorn's-breadth more of red,
 For the winters and the summers which have passed me
 overhead.

LXXII.

And that music overfloweth,
 Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves :
 Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth ?
 Fay or Faunus—who believes ?
 But my heart still trembles in me to the trembling of the
 leaves

LXXIII.

Is the bower lost, then? who sayeth
 That the bower indeed is lost?
 Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
 Through the sunshine and the frost,—
 And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and
 uttermost.

LXXIV.

Till another open for me
 In God's Eden-land unknown,
 With an angel at the doorway,
 White with gazing at His Throne;
 And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—"ALL IS
 LOST . . . and won!"

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

"φεῦ, φεῦ, τι προσδερκεσθε μ' ομμασιν, τέκνα."—MEDEA.

I.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
 Ere the sorrow comes with years?
 They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,—
 And *that* cannot stop their tears.
 The young lambs are bleating in the meadows;
 The young birds are chirping in the nest;
 The young fawns are playing with the shadows;
 The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
 But the young, young children, O my brothers,
 They are weeping bitterly!—
 They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
 In the country of the free.

II.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,
 Why their tears are falling so?—
 The old man may weep for his to-morrow
 Which is lost in Long Ago—
 The old tree is leafless in the forest—
 The old year is ending in the frost—
 The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest—
 The old hope is hardest to be lost:

But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

III.

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy—
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary";
"Our young feet," they say, "are very weak!
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,—
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.

IV.

"True," say the young children, "it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year—the grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her—
Was no room for any work in the close clay:
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries!—
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes,—
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud, by the kirk-chime!
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

V.

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have!
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.

Go out, children, from the mine and from the city—
 Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do—
 Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty—
 Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
 But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
 Like our weeds anear the mine?
 Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
 From your pleasures fair and fine!

VI.

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
 And we cannot run or leap—
 If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
 To drop down in them and sleep.
 Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping—
 We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
 And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
 The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
 For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
 Through the coal-dark, underground—
 Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
 In the factories, round and round.

VII.

"For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning,—
 Their wind comes in our faces,—
 Till our hearts turn,—our heads, with pulses burning,
 And the walls turn in their places—
 Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling—
 Turns the long light that drops adown the wall—
 Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling—
 All are turning, all the day, and we with all.—
 And, all day, the iron wheels are droning;
 And sometimes we could pray,
 'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)
 'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

VIII.

Ay! be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
 For a moment, mouth to mouth—
 Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
 Of their tender human youth!

Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
 Is not all the life God fashions or reveals—
 Let them prove their living souls against the notion
 That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!—
 Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
 Grinding life down from its mark ;
 And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
 Spin on blindly in the dark.

IX.

Now, tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
 To look up to Him and pray—
 So the blessed One, who blesseth all the others,
 Will bless them another day.
 They answer, "Who is God that He should hear us,
 While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
 When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
 Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word!
 And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
 Strangers speaking at the door :
 Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
 Hears our weeping any more ?

X.

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember ;
 And at midnight's hour of harm,—
 'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
 We say softly for a charm.*
 We know no other words except 'Our Father,'
 And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
 God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
 And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
 'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
 (For they call Him good and mild)
 Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
 'Come and rest with me, my child.'

* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet of "Orion" and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations; and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.—1844.

XI.

"But no!" say the children, weeping faster,
 "He is speechless as a stone;
 And they tell us, of His image is the master
 Who commands us to work on.
 Go to!" say the children,— "Up in Heaven,
 Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
 Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving—
 We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
 Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
 O my brothers, what ye preach?
 For God's possible is taught by His world's loving—
 And the children doubt of each.

XII.

And well may the children weep before you;
 They are weary ere they run;
 They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
 Which is brighter than the sun:
 They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
 They sink in man's despair, without its calm—
 Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,—
 Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm,—
 Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievingly
 The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
 Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly:
 Let them weep! let them weep!

XIII.

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
 And their look is dread to see,
 For they mind you of their angels in high places,
 With eyes turned on Deity;—
 "How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
 Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
 Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
 And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
 Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
 And your purple shows your path;
 But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
 Than the strong man in his wrath!"

TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

I.

LOVING friend, the gift of one
 Who, her own true faith, has run,
 Through thy lower nature ; *
 Be my benediction said
 With my hand upon thy head,
 Gentle fellow-creature !

II.

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
 Flow thy silken ears adown
 Either side demurely,
 Of thy silver-suited breast,
 Shining out from all the rest
 Of thy body purely.

III.

Darkly brown thy body is,
 Till the sunshine, striking this,
 Alchemise its dullness ;
 When the sleek curls manifold
 Flash all over into gold,
 With a burnished fullness.

IV.

Underneath my stroking hand,
 Startled eyes of hazel bland
 Kindling, growing larger,
 Up thou leapest with a spring,
 Full of prank and curveting,
 Leaping like a charger.

V.

Leap ! thy broad tail waves a light ;
 Leap ! thy slender feet are bright,
 Canopied in fringes.
 Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
 Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
 Down their golden inches.

* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars.—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown.—1844.

VI.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
 Little is't to such an end
 That I praise thy rareness !
 Other dogs may be thy peers
 Haply in these drooping ears,
 And this glossy fairness.

VII.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
 This dog watched beside a bed
 Day and night unwearied,—
 Watched within a curtained room,
 Where no sunbeam brake the gloom
 Round the sick and dreary.

VIII.

Roses, gathered for a vase,
 In that chamber died apace,
 Beam and breeze resigning—
 This dog only, waited on,
 Knowing that when light is gone,
 Love remains for shining.

IX.

Other dogs in thymy dew
 Tracked the hares and followed through
 Sunny moor or meadow—
 This dog only, crept and crept
 Next a languid cheek that slept,
 Sharing in the shadow.

X.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
 Bounded at the whistle clear,
 Up the woodside hieing—
 This dog only, watched in reach
 Of a faintly uttered speech,
 Or a louder sighing.

XI.

And if one or two quick tears
 Dropped upon his glossy ears,
 Or a sigh came double,—

Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble.

XII.

And this dog was satisfied,
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

XIII.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blyther choice
Than such chamber-keeping,
“Come out!” praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

XIV.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly, not scornfully,
Render praise and favour :
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
Therefore, and for ever.

XV.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often, man or woman,—
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,—
Leaning from my Human.

XVI.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugared milk make fat thee !
Pleasures wag on in thy tail—
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore, to pat thee !

A PORTRAIT.

XVII.

Downy pillow take thy head
 Silken coverlid bestead,
 Sunshine help thy sleeping !
 No fly's buzzing wake thee up—
 No man break thy purple cup,
 Set for drinking deep in.

XVIII.

Whiskered cats aointed flee—
 Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
 Cologne distillations ;
 Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
 And thy feast-day macaroons
 Turn to daily rations !

XIX.

Mock I thee, in wishing weal ?—
 Tears are in my eyes to feel
 Thou art made so straightly,
 Blessing needs must straighten too,—
 Little canst thou joy or do,
 Thou who lovest *greatly*.

XX.

Yet be blessèd to the height
 Of all good and all delight
 Pervious to thy nature,—
 Only *loved* beyond that line,
 With a love that answers thine,
 Loving fellow-creature !

A PORTRAIT.

"One name is Elizabeth."—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her.
 Ten times have the lilies blown,
 Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear—
 Lily-shaped, and drooped in duty
 To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks, encoloured faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air :

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient,—waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things—
As young birds, or early wheat
When the wind blows over it.

Only free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures (for the rest)
Which come softly—just as *she*,
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks,—
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more far,
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
He would sing of her with falls
Used in lovely madrigals.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

And if any painter drew her,
 He would paint her unaware
 With a halo round the hair.

And if reader read the poem,
 He would whisper—"You have done a
 Consecrated little Una!"

And a dreamer (did you show him
 That same picture) would exclaim,
 "'Tis my angel, with a name!"

And a stranger—when he sees her
 In the street even—smileth stilly,
 Just as *you* would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
 Soften, sleecken every word,—
 As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
 The hard earth whereon she passes,
 With the thymy-scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, "God love her!"
 Ay, and always in good sooth,
 We may all be sure HE DOTH.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

I.

Sleep on, baby, on the floor,
 Tired of all the playing,—
 Sleep with smile the sweeter for
 That, you dropped away in!
 On your curls' full roundness, stand
 Golden lights serenely—
 One cheek, pushed out by the hand,
 Folds the dimple inly:
 Little head and little foot
 Heavy laid for pleasure,
 Underneath the lids half-shut,
 Slants the shining azure;—

Open-soul in noonday sun,
 So, you lie and slumber !
 Nothing evil, having done,
 Nothing can encumber.

II.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
 Shall I sigh to view you ?
 Or sigh further to foretell
 All that may undo you ?
 Nay, keep smiling, little child,
 Ere the sorrow neareth,—
 I will smile too. Patience mild
 Pleasure's token weareth.
 Nay, keep sleeping, before loss ;
 I shall sleep though losing !
 As by cradle, so by cross,
 Sure is the reposing.

III.

And God knows, who sees us twain,
 Child at childish leisure,
 I am near as tired of pain
 As you seem of pleasure ;—
 Very soon, too, by His grace
 Gently wrapt around me,
 Shall I show as calm a face,
 Shall I sleep as soundly !
 Differing in this, that you
 Clasp your playthings sleeping,
 While my hand shall drop the few
 Given to my keeping ;
 Differing in this, that I,
 Sleeping, shall be colder,
 And in waking presently,
 Brighter to beholder !
 Differing in this beside
 (Sleeper, have you heard me ?
 Do you move, and open wide
 Eyes of wonder toward me ?)—
 That while you I thus recall
 From your sleep,—I solely,—
 Me, from mine, an angel shall,
 With reveillé holy !

THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.

" So the dreams depart,
 So the fading phantoms flee,
 And the sharp reality
 Now must act its part."

WESTWOOD'S *Beads from a Rosary.*

I.

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
 'Mid the beeches of a meadow,
 By a stream-side, on the grass ;
 And the trees are showering down
 Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
 On her shining hair and face.

II.

She has thrown her bonnet by :
 And her feet she has been dipping
 In the shallow water's flow—
 Now she holds them nakedly
 In her hands, all sleek and dripping,
 While she rocketh to and fro.

III.

Little Ellie sits alone,—
 And the smile, she softly uses,
 Fills the silence like a speech ;
 While she thinks what shall be done,—
 And the sweetest pleasure chooses
 For her future within reach.

IV.

Little Ellie in her smile
 Chooseth—" I will have a lover,
 Riding on a steed of steeds !
 He shall love me without guile ;
 And to *him* I will discover
 That swan's nest among the reeds.

V.

“ And the steed shall be red-roan,
 And the lover shall be noble,
 With an eye that takes the breath,—
 And the lute he plays upon,
 Shall strike ladies into trouble,
 As his sword strikes men to death.

VI.

“ And the steed, it shall be shod
 All in silver, housed in azure,
 And the mane shall swim the wind;
 And the hoofs, along the sod,
 Shall flash onward and keep measure,
 Till the shepherds look behind.

VII.

“ But my lover will not prize
 All the glory that he rides in,
 When he gazes in my face.
 He will say, ‘ O Love, thine eyes
 Build the shrine my soul abides in;
 And I kneel here for thy grace.’

VIII.

“ Then, ay, then—he shall kneel low,—
 With the red-roan steed anear him,
 Which shall seem to understand
 Till I answer, ‘ Rise and go!
 For the world must love and fear him
 Whom I gift with heart and hand.’

IX.

“ Then he will arise so pale,
 I shall feel my own lips tremble
 With a *yes* I must not say—
 Nathless, maiden-brave, ‘ Farewell,’
 I will utter, and dissemble—
 ‘ Light to-morrow with to-day.’

X.

“Then he'll ride among the hills
 To the wide world past the river,
 There to put away all wrong ;
 To make straight distorted wills,
 And to empty the broad quiver
 Which the wicked bear along.

XI.

“Three times shall a young foot-page
 Swim the stream, and climb the mountain,
 And kneel down beside my feet—
 ‘Lo! my master sends this gage,
 Lady, for thy pity's counting !
 What wilt thou exchange for it?’

XII.

“And the first time, I will send
 A white rosebud for a guerdon,—
 And the second time, a glove ;
 But the third time—I may bend
 From my pride, and answer—‘Pardon—
 If he comes to take my love.’

XIII.

“Then the young foot-page will run—
 Then my lover will ride faster,
 Till he kneeleth at my knee :
 ‘I am a duke's eldest son !
 Thousand serfs do call me master,—
 But, O, Love, I love but *thee!*’

XIV.

“He will kiss me on the mouth
 Then, and lead me as a lover,
 Through the crowds that praise his deeds :
 And, when soul-tied by one troth,
 Unto *him* I will discover
 That swan's nest among the reeds.”

XV.

Little Ellie, with her smile
 Not yet ended, rose up gaily,—
 Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,—
 And went homeward, round a mile,
 Just to see, as she did daily,
 What more eggs were with the *two*.

XVI.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,
 Winding by the stream, light-hearted,
 Where the osier pathway leads—
 Past the boughs she stoops—and stops :
 Lo ! the wild swan had deserted—
 And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

XVII.

Ellie went home sad and slow ;
 If she found the lover ever,
 With his red-roan steed of steeds,
 Sooth I know not ! but I know
 She could never show him—never,
 That swan's nest among the reeds !

THE DEAD PAN.

Excited by Schiller's *Götter Griechenlands*, and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch (*De Oraculorum Defectu*), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller, that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude (1844).

I.

GODS of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
 Can ye listen in your silence ?
 Can your mystic voices tell us
 Where ye hide ? In floating islands,
 With a wind that evermore
 Keeps you out of sight of shore ?
 Pan, Pan is dead.

II.

In what revels are ye sunken
 In old Æthiopia?
 Have the pygmies made you drunken,
 Bathing in mandragora
 Your divine pale lips that shiver
 Like the lotus in the river?

Pan, Pan is dead.

III.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
 In gigantic Alpine rows?
 The black poppies out of number
 Nodding, dripping from your brows
 To the red lees of your wine,—
 And so kept alive and fine?

Pan, Pan is dead.

IV.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corpses
 Where the silver spheres roll on,
 Stung to life by centric forces
 Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
 While the smoke of your old altars
 Is the shroud that round you welters?

Great Pan is dead.

V.

“Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,”
 Said the old Hellenic tongue!
 Said the hero-oaths, as well as
 Poets’ songs the sweetest sung!
 Have ye grown deaf in a day?
 Can ye speak not yea or nay—

Since Pan is dead?

VI.

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
 All alone, O Naiades,
 While your drenchèd locks dry slow in
 This cold feeble sun and breeze?—
 Not a word the Naiads say,
 Though the rivers run for aye—

For Pan is dead.

VII.

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
 O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
 At the rushing thunderstroke, would
 No sob tremble through the tree?—
 Not a word the Dryads say,
 Though the forests wave for aye—
 For Pan is dead.

VIII.

Have ye left the mountain places,
 Oreads wild, for other tryst?
 Shall we see no sudden faces
 Strike a glory through the mist?
 Not a sound the silence thrills,
 Of the everlasting hills.
 Pan, Pan is dead.

IX.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
 Crowned to starry wanderings,—
 With your chariots in procession,
 And your silver clash of wings!
 Very pale ye seem to rise,
 Ghosts of Grecian deities—
 Now Pan is dead.

X.

Jove! that right hand is unloaded,
 Whence the thunder did prevail:
 While in idiocy of godhead,
 Thou art staring the stars pale!
 And thine eagle, blind and old,
 Roughs his feathers in the cold.
 Pan, Pan is dead.

XI.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
 Of thy regal look and tread?
 Will they lay, for evermore, thee
 On thy dim, straight, golden bed?
 Will thy queendom all lie hid
 Meekly under either lid?
 Pan, Pan is dead.

XII.

Ha, Apollo! Floats his golden
 Hair, all mist-like where he stands;
 While the Muses hang enfolding
 Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
 'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
 Niobe looked lost as thou!

Pan, Pan is dead.

XIII.

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
 Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,—
 And no hero take inspiring
 From the God-Greek of her lips?
 'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
 Mars the mighty, cursing it?

Pan, Pan is dead.

XIV.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
 He swoons,—bound with his own vines!
 And his Mænads slowly saunter,
 Head aside, among the pines,
 While they murmur dreamingly,—
 "Evohe—ah evohe—!"

Ah, Pan is dead.

XV.

Neptune lies beside the trident,
 Dull and senseless as a stone:
 And old Pluto, deaf and silent,
 Is cast out into the sun.
 Ceres smileth stern thereat,—
 "We *all* now are desolate—

Now Pan is dead.

XVI.

Aphrodite! dead and driven
 As thy native foam, thou art;
 With the cestus long done heaving
 On the white calm of thine heart!
Ai Adonis! At that shriek,
 Not a tear runs down her cheek—

Pan, Pan is dead.

XVII.

And the Loves, we used to know from
 One another,—huddled lie,
 Frore as taken in a snowstorm,
 Close beside her tenderly,—
 As if each had weakly tried
 Once to kiss her as he died.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XVIII.

What, and Hermes? Time enthralleth
 All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—
 And the ivy blindly crawleth
 Round thy brave caduceus?
 Hast thou no new message for us,
 Full of thunder and Jove-glories?

Nay! Pan is dead.

XIX.

Crownèd Cybele's great turret
 Rocks and crumbles on her head:
 Roar the lions of her chariot
 Toward the wilderness, unfed:
 Scornful children are not mute,—
 "Mother, mother, walk a-foot—
 Since Pan is dead."

XX.

In the fiery-hearted centre
 Of the solemn universe,
 Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
 To consume thee with this curse?
 Drop thy gray chin on thy knee,
 O thou palsied Mystery!
 For Pan is dead.

XXI.

Gods! we vainly do adjure you,—
 Ye return nor voice nor sign:
 Not a votary could secure you
 Even a grave for your Divine!
 Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these gray old gods do lie.
 Pan, Pan is dead.

XXII.

Even that Greece who took your wages,
 Calls the obolus outworn :
 And the hoarse deep-throated ages
 Laugh your godships unto scorn—
 And the poets do disclaim you,
 Or grow colder if they name you—
And Pan is dead.

XXIII.

Gods bereavèd, gods belated,—
 With your purples rent asunder !
 Gods discrowned and desecrated,
 Disinherited of thunder !
 Now, the goats may climb and crop
 The soft grass on Ida's top—
Now Pan is dead.

XXIV.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
 When a cry more loud than wind,
 Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
 From the piled Dark behind :
 And the sun shrank and grew pale,
 Breathed against by the great wail—
“ Pan, Pan is dead.”

XXV.

And the rowers from the benches
 Fell,—each shuddering on his face—
 While departing Influences
 Struck a cold back through the place :
 And the shadow of the ship
 Reeled along the passive deep—
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXVI.

And that dismal cry rose slowly,
 And sank slowly through the air ;
 Full of spirit's melancholy
 And eternity's despair !
 And they heard the words it said—
 PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

XXVII.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
 Hung for love's sake on a cross—
 When His brow was chill with dying,
 And His soul was faint with loss ;
 When His priestly blood dropped downward,
 And His kingly eyes looked throneward—
Then, Pan was dead.

XXVIII.

By the love He stood alone in,
 His sole Godhead rose complete :
 And the false gods fell down moaning,
 Each from off his golden seat—
 All the false gods with a cry
 Rendered up their deity—
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXIX.

Wailing wide across the islands,
 They rent, vest-like, their Divine !
 And a darkness and a silence
 Quenched the light of every shrine :
 And Dodona's oak swang lonely
 Henceforth, to the tempest only.
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXX.

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her
 Her lost god's forsaking look !
 Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror,
 And her crispy fillets shook—
 And her lips gasped through their foam,
 For a word that did not come.
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXXI.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
 Ye are silent evermore !
 And I dash down this old chalice,
 Whence libations ran of yore.
 See ! the wine crawls in the dust
 Wormlike—as your glories must !
Since Pan is dead.

XXXII.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
 By a common doom and track !
 Let no Schiller from the portals
 Of that Hades, call you back,—
 Or instruct us to weep all
 At your antique funeral.

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXIII.

By your beauty, which confesses
 Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
 By our grand heroic guesses,
 Through your falsehood, at the True,—
 We will weep *not!* earth shall roll
 Heir to each god's aureole—

And Pan is dead.

XXXIV.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
 Sung beside her in her youth :
 And those debonaire romances
 Sound but dull beside the truth.
 Phœbus' chariot-course is run.
 Look up, poets, to the sun !

Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXV.

Christ hath sent us down the angels ;
 And the whole earth and the skies
 Are illumed by altar-candles
 Lit for blessed mysteries :
 And a Priest's Hand through creation,
 Waveth calm and consecration—

And Pan is dead.

XXXVI.

Truth is fair : should we forego it ?
 Can we sigh right for a wrong ?
 God Himself is the best Poet,
 And the Real is His song.
 Sing His truth out fair and full,
 And secure His beautiful.

Let Pan be dead.



E.P.—I.

“And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines.”

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I

XXXVII.

Truth is large. Our aspiration
 Scarce embraces half we be.
 Shame! to stand in His creation
 And doubt Truth's sufficiency!—
 To think God's song unexcelling
 The poor tales of our own telling—
 When Pan is dead!

XXXVIII.

What is true and just and honest,
 What is lovely, what is pure—
 All of praise that hath admonisht,—
 All of virtue, shall endure,—
 These are themes for poets' uses,
 Stirring nobler than the Muses—
 Ere Pan was dead.

XXXIX.

O brave poets, keep back nothing,
 Nor mix falsehood with the whole!
 Look up Godward! speak the truth in
 Worthy song from earnest soul!
 Hold, in high poetic duty,
 Truest Truth the fairest Beauty!
 Pan, Pan is dead.

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT.

I.

I STAND on the mark beside the shore
 Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,
 Where exile turned to ancestor,
 And God was thanked for liberty.
 I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,
 I bend my knee down on this mark:
 I look on the sky and the sea.

II.

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you !
 I see you come proud and slow
 From the land of the spirits pale as dew,
 And round me and round me ye go.
 O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
 All night long from the whips of one
 Who in your names works sin and woe !

III.

And thus I thought that I would come
 And kneel here where ye knelt before,
 And feel your souls around me hum
 In undertone to the ocean's roar ;
 And lift my black face, my black hand,
 Here, in your names, to curse this land
 Ye blessed in freedom's evermore.

IV.

I am black, I am black,
 And yet God made me, they say :
 But if He did so, smiling back
 He must have cast His work away
 Under the feet of His white creatures,
 With a look of scorn, that the dusky features
 Might be trodden again to clay.

V.

And yet He has made dark things
 To be glad and merry as light :
 There's a little dark bird sits and sings ;
 There's a dark stream ripples out of sight ;
 And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,
 And the sweetest stars are made to pass
 O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI.

But *we* who are dark, we are dark !
 Ah God, we have no stars !
 About our souls in care and cark
 Our blackness shuts like prison-bars :
 The poor souls crouch so far behind,
 That never a comfort can they find
 By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII.

Indeed, we live beneath the sky,
 That great smooth Hand of God stretched out
 On all His children fatherly,
 To save them from the dread and doubt
 Which would be, if, from this low place,
 All opened straight up to His face
 Into the grand eternity.

VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His frost,
 They make us hot, they make us cold,
 As if we were not black and lost ;
 And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,
 Do fear and take us for very men :
 Could the weep-poor-will or the cat of the glen
 Look into my eyes and be bold ?

IX.

I am black, I am black !
 But, once, I laughed in girlish glee,
 For one of my colour stood in the track
 Where the drivers drove, and looked at me,
 And tender and full was the look he gave—
 Could a slave look so at another slave?—
 I look at the sky and the sea,

X.

And from that hour our spirits grew
 As free as if unsold, unbought :
 Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
 To conquer the world, we thought !
 The drivers drove us day by day ;
 We did not mind, we went one way,
 And no better a freedom sought.

XI.

In the sunny ground between the canes,
 He said " I love you " as he passed ;
 When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,
 I heard how he vowed it fast :
 While others shook he smiled in the hut,
 As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut,
 Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII.

I sang his name instead of a song,
 Over and over I sang his name,
 Upward and downward I drew it along
 My various notes,—the same, the same!
 I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
 Might never guess from aught they could hear,
 It was only a name—a name.

XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea—
 We were two to love, and two to pray,
 Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
 Though nothing didst Thou say!
 Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun:
 And now I cry who am but one,
 Thou wilt not speak to-day.

XIV.

We were black, we were black!—
 We had no claim to love and bliss:
 What marvel if each went to wrack?
 They wrung my cold hands out of his,
 They dragged him—where? I crawled to touch
 His blood's mark in the dust . . . not much,
 Ye pilgrim-souls, though plain as *this!*

XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!
 Mere grief's too good for such as I:
 So the white men brought the shame ere long
 To strangle the sob of my agony.
 They would not leave me for my dull
 Wet eyes!—it was too merciful
 To let me weep pure tears and die.

XVI.

I am black, I am black!—
 I wore a child upon my breast,
 An amulet that hung too slack,
 And, in my unrest, could not rest:
 Thus we went moaning, child and mother,
 One to another, one to another,
 Until all ended for the best:

XVII.

For hark ! I will tell you low, low,
 I am black, you see, —
 And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
 Was far too white, too white for me ;
 As white as the ladies who scorned to pray
 Beside me at church but yesterday,
 Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

XVIII.

My own, own child ! I could not bear
 To look in his face, it was so white ;
 I covered him up with a kerchief there,
 I covered his face in close and tight :
 And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,
 For the white child wanted his liberty—
 Ha, ha ! he wanted the master-right.

XIX.

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,
 His little feet that never grew ;
 He struck them out, as it was meet,
 Against my heart to break it through :
 I might have sung and made him mild,
 But I dared not sing to the white-faced child
 The only song I knew.

XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close :
 He could not see the sun, I swear,
 More, then, alive, than now he does
 From between the roots of the mango . . . where ?
 I know where. Close ! A child and mother
 Do wrong to look at one another,
 When one is black and one is fair.

XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had
 Of my child's face, . . . I tell you all,
 I saw a look that made me mad !
 The *master's* look, that used to fall
 On my soul like his lash . . . or worse !
 And so, to save it from my curse,
 I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII.

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,
 He shivered from head to foot ;
 Till, after a time, he lay instead
 Too suddenly still and mute.
 I felt, beside, a stiffening cold,
 I dared to lift up just a fold,
 As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII.

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha !—there, had been
 (I laugh to think on't at this hour !)
 Your fine white angels (who have seen
 Nearest the secret of God's power)
 And plucked my fruit to make them wine,
 And sucked the soul of that child of mine,
 As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower.

XXIV.

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white !
 They freed the white child's spirit so.
 I said not a word, but, day and night,
 I carried the body to and fro,
 And it lay on my heart like a stone, as chill.
 —The sun may shine out as much as he will :
 I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

XXV.

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,
 I carried the little body on ;
 The forest's arms did round us shut,
 And silence through the trees did run :
 They asked no question as I went,
 They stood too high for astonishment,
 They could see God sit on his throne.

XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
 I bore it on through the forest, on ;
 And when I felt it was tired at last,
 I scooped a hole beneath the moon :
 Through the forest-tops the angels far,
 With a white sharp finger from every star,
 Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright,—
 Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed,—
 All, changed to black earth,—nothing white,—
 A dark child in the dark!—ensued
 Some comfort, and my heart grew young :
 I sate down smiling there and sung
 The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled,
 The white child and black mother, thus ;
 For, as I sang it, soft and wild,
 The same song, more melodious,
 Rose from the grave whereon I sate :
 It was the dead child singing that,
 To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky !
 Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay
 The free sun rideth gloriously,
 But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away
 Through the earliest streaks of the morn :
 My face is black, but it glares with a scorn
 Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX.

Ha!—in their stead, their hunter sons !
 Ha, ha ! they are on me—they hunt in a ring !
 Keep off ! I brave you all at once,
 I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting !
 You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think :
 Did you ever stand still in your triumph, and shrink
 From the stroke of her wounded wing ?

XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!—)
 I wish you, who stand there five abreast;
 Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
 A little corpse as safely at rest
 As mine in the mangos ! Yes, but *she*
 May keep live babies on her knee,
 And sing the song she likes the best.

XXXII.

I am not mad : I am black.
 I see you staring in my face—
 I know you, staring, shrinking back—
 Ye are born of the Washington-race :
 And this land is the free America :
 And this mark on my wrist—(I prove what I say)
 Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then ? Not a sound !
 I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun ;
 I only cursed them all around,
 As softly as I might have done
 My very own child : from these sands
 Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
 O slaves, and end what I begun !

XXXIV.

Whips, curses ; these must answer those !
 For in this UNION, you have set
 Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
 Each loathing each ; and all forget
 The seven wounds in Christ's body fair ;
 While HE sees gaping everywhere
 Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your white men
 Are, after all, not gods indeed,
 Nor able to make Christs again
 Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed
 (Stand off!) we help not in our loss !
We are too heavy for our cross,
 And fall and crush you and your seed.

XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon ! I look at the sky :
 The clouds are breaking on my brain ;
 I am floated along, as if I should die
 Of liberty's exquisite pain—
 In the name of the white child waiting for me
 In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
 White men, I leave you all curse-free
 In my broken heart's disdain !

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA.

I.

THE ship went on with solemn face ;
To meet the darkness on the deep,
The solemn ship went onward.
I bowed down weary in the place ;
For parting tears and present sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

II.

Thick sleep, which shut all dreams from me,
And kept my inner self apart,
And quiet from emotion,
Then brake away and left me free,
Made conscious of a human heart
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

III.

The new sight, the new wondrous sight !
The waters round me, turbulent,
The skies, impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
Half glorified by that intent
Of holding the day-glory !

IV.

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
The meeting line of sea and sky,
With aspect still and mystic.
I think they did foresee the sun,
And rested on their prophecy
In quietude majestic ;

V.

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,
Like statues by the open tomb
Of shining saints half risen.—
The sun !—he came up to be viewed ;
And sky and sea made mighty room
To inaugurate the vision !

VI.

I oft had seen the dawnlight run,
 As red wine, through the hills, and break
 Through many a mist's inurning ;
 But, here, no earth profaned the sun !
 Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
 The sacrament of morning.

VII.

Away with thoughts fantastical !
 I would be humble to my worth,
 Self-guarded as self-doubted.
 Though here no earthly shadows fall,
 I, joying, grieving without earth,
 May desecrate without it.

VIII.

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves :
 I would not praise the pageant high,
 Yet miss the dedicature :
 I, carried toward the sunless graves
 By force of natural things,—should I
 Exult in only nature ?

IX.

And could I bear to sit alone
 'Mid nature's fixed benignities,
 While my warm pulse was moving ?
 Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
 Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
 To satisfy the loving.

X.

It seems a better lot than so,
 To sit with friends beneath the beech,
 And feel them dear and dearer ;
 Or follow children as they go
 In pretty pairs, with softened speech,
 As the church-bells ring nearer.

XI.

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day !
 The sea sings round me while ye roll
 Afar the hymn unaltered,
 And kneel, where once I knelt, to pray,
 And bless me deeper in the soul,
 Because the voice has faltered.

XII.

And though this sabbath comes to me
 Without the stolèd minister,
 Or chanting congregation,
 God's Spirit brings communion, He
 Who brooded soft on waters drear,
 Creator on creation.

XIII.

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher,
 Where keep the saints, with harp and song,
 An endless sabbath morning,
 And, on that sea commixed with fire,
 Oft drop their eyelids raised too long
 To the full Godhead's burning.

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS.

SHE has laughed as softly as if she sighed,
 She has counted six, and over,
 Of a purse well filled, and a heart well tried—
 Oh, each a worthy lover !
 They "give her time" ; for her soul must slip
 Where the world has set the grooving :
 She will lie to none with her fair red lip—
 But love seeks truer loving.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,
 As her thoughts were beyond recalling,
 With a glance for *one*, and a glance for *some*,
 From her eyelids rising and falling ;

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS.

Speaks common words with a blushful air,
 Hears bold words, unreproving ;
 But her silence says—what she never will swear—
 And love seeks better loving.

Go, lady, lean to the night-guitar
 And drop a smile to the bringer,
 Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
 At the voice of an indoor singer.
 Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes ;
 Glance lightly, on their removing ;
 And join new vows to old perjuries—
 But dare not call it loving !

Unless you can think, when the song is done,
 No other is soft in the rhythm ;
 Unless you can feel, when left by One,
 That all men else go with him ;
 Unless you can know, when upraised by his breath,
 That your beauty itself wants proving ;
 Unless you can swear, " For life, for death ! " —
 Oh, fear to call it loving !

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day,
 On the absent face that fixed you ;
 Unless you can love, as the angels may,
 With the breadth of heaven betwixt you ;
 Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
 Through behoving and unbehoving ;
 Unless you can *die* when the dream is past—
 Oh, never call it loving !

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS.

LOVE me, Sweet, with all thou art,
 Feeling, thinking, seeing ;
 Love me in the lightest part,
 Love me in full being.

Love me with thine open youth
 In its frank surrender ;
 With the vowing of thy mouth,
 With its silence tender.

Love me with thine azure eyes,
Made for earnest granting ;
Taking colour from the skies,
Can Heaven's truth be wanting ?

Love me with their lids, that fall
Snow-like at first meeting ;
Love me with thine heart, that all
Neighbours then see beating.

Love me with thine hand stretched out
Freely—open minded :
Love me with thy loitering foot,—
Hearing one behind it.

Love me with thy voice, that turns
Sudden faint above me ;
Love me with thy blush that burns
When I murmur, *Love me!*

Love me with thy thinking soul,
Break it to love-sighing ;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
On through living—dying.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
When the world has crowned thee ;
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
With the angels round thee.

Love me pure, as musers do,
Up the woodlands shady :
Love me gaily, fast and true,
As a winsome lady.

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
Further off or nigher,
Love me for the house and grave,—
And for something higher.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, Dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee*—half a year—
As a man is able.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

I.

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had sung
 Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
 Who each one in a gracious hand appears
 To bear a gift for mortals, old or young :
 And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
 I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
 The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
 Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
 A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
 So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
 Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair ;
 And a voice said in mastery, while I strove,—
 " Guess now who holds thee ?"—" Death," I said. But
 there,
 The silver answer rang—" Not Death, but Love."

II.

BUT only three in all God's universe
 Have heard this word thou hast said,—Himself, beside
 Thee speaking, and me listening ! and replied
 One of us . . . *that* was God, . . . and laid the curse
 So darkly on my eyelids, as to amerce
 My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
 The deathweights, placed there, would have signified
 Less absolute exclusion. " Nay " is worse
 From God than from all others, O my friend !
 Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
 Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend ;
 Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars :
 And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
 We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III.

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely Heart !
 Unlike our uses and our destinies.
 Our ministering two angels look surprise
 On one another, as they strike athwart
 Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
 A guest for queens to social pageantries,

With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
 Than tears, even, can make mine, to play thy part
 Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
 With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
 A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through
 The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
 The chrisam is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
 And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV.

THOU hast thy calling to some palace floor,
 Most gracious singer of high poems! where
 The dancers will break footing, from the care
 Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
 And dost thou lift this house's latch, too poor
 For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
 To let thy music drop here unaware
 In folds of golden fullness at my door?
 Look up and see the casement broken in,
 The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
 My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
 Hush, call no echo up in further proof
 Of desolation! There's a voice within
 That weeps . . . as thou must sing . . . alone, aloof.

V.

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
 As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
 And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
 The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
 What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
 And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
 Through the ashen grayness. If thy foot in scorn
 Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
 It might be well, perhaps. But if, instead,
 Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
 The gray dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head,
 O my Belovèd, will not shield thee so,
 That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
 The hair beneath. Stand further off then! go.

VI.

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
 Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
 Alone upon the threshold of my door
 Of individual life, I shall command
 The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
 Serenely in the sunshine as before,
 Without the sense of that which I forbore—
 Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
 Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
 With pulses that beat double. What I do
 And what I dream include thee, as the wine
 Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
 God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
 And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

VII.

THE face of all the world is changed, I think,
 Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
 Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
 Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
 Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
 Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
 Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
 God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
 And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
 The names of country, heaven, are changed away
 For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
 And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved yesterday,
 (The singing angels know) are only dear
 Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII.

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal
 And princely giver, who hast brought the gold
 And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
 And laid them on the outside of the wall
 For such as I to take or leave withal,
 In unexpected largesse? am I cold,
 Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
 High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
 Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.
 Ask God who knows. For frequent tears have run

The colours from my life, and left so dead
 And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
 To give the same as pillow to thy head.
 Go farther ! let it serve to trample on.

IX.

CAN it be right to give what I can give?
 To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
 As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
 Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
 Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
 For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
 That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
 So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve,
 That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
 Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
 I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
 Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
 Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.
 Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X.

YET, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
 And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
 Let temple burn, or flax; an equal light
 Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed:
 And love is fire. And when I say at need
I love thee . . . mark! . . . I love thee—in thy sight
 I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
 With conscience of the new rays that proceed
 Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
 In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
 Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
 And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
 Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
 How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI.

AND therefore if to love can be desert,
 I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
 As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
 To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—

This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
 To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
 To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
 A melancholy music,—why advert
 To these things? O Belovèd, it is plain
 I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!
 And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
 From that same love this vindicating grace,
 To live on still in love, and yet in vain,—
 To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII:

INDEED this very love which is my boast,
 And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
 Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
 To draw men's eyes and prove the inner cost,—
 This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
 I should not love withal, unless that thou
 Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
 When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed
 And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak
 Of love even, as a good thing of my own:
 Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
 And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
 And that I love (O soul, we must be meek!)
 Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII.

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech
 The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
 And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
 Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
 I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
 My hand to hold my spirit so far off
 From myself—me—that I should bring thee proof
 In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
 Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
 Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
 Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
 And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
 By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
 Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV.

IF thou must love me, let it be for nought
 Except for love's sake only. Do not say
 "I love her for her smile—her look—her way
 Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
 That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"—
 For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
 Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
 May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
 A creature might forget to weep, who bore
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
 But love me for love's sake, that evermore
 Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

XV.

ACCUSE me not, beseech thee, that I wear
 Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
 For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
 With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
 On me thou lookest with no doubting care,
 As on a bee shut in a crystalline;
 Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine
 And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
 Were most impossible failure, if I strove
 To fail so. But I look on thee—on thee—
 Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
 Hearing oblivion beyond memory;
 As one who sits and gazes from above,
 Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI.

AND yet, because thou overcomest so,
 Because thou art more noble and like a king,
 Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
 Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
 Too close against thine heart henceforth to know
 How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
 May prove as lordly and complete a thing
 In lifting upward, as in crushing low!

And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
 To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,
 Even so, Belovèd, I at last record,
 Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me forth,
 I rise above abasement at the word.
 Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVII.

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
 God set between His After and Before,
 And strike up and strike off the general roar
 Of the rushing worlds a melody that floats
 In a serene air purely. Antidotes
 Of medicated music, answering for
 Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
 From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
 Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.
 How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
 A hope, to sing by gladly? or a fine
 Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
 A shade, in which to sing—of palm or pine?
 A grave, on which to rest from singing? Choose.

XVIII.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
 To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
 Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
 I ring out to the full brown length, and say,
 "Take it." My day of youth went yesterday;
 My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
 Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
 As girls do, any more: it only may
 Now shade on two pale cheeks the mark of tears,
 Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
 Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
 Would take this first, but Love is justified,—
 Take it thou,—finding pure, from all those years
 The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX.

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
 I barter curl for curl upon that mart,
 And from my poet's forehead to my heart
 Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,—

As purple black, as erst to Pindar's eyes
 The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart
 The nine white Muse-brows. For this counterpart, . . .
 The bay-crown's shade, Belovèd, I surmise,
 Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!
 Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
 I tie the shadows safe from gliding back,
 And lay the gift where nothing hindereth;
 Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to lack
 No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX.

BELOVÈD, my Belovèd, when I think
 That thou wast in the world a year ago,
 What time I sate alone here in the snow
 And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
 No moment at thy voice, but, link by link,
 Went counting all my chains, as if that so
 They never could fall off at any blow
 Struck by thy possible hand,—why, thus I drink
 Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,
 Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
 With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
 Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
 Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
 Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI.

SAY over again, and yet once over again,
 That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
 Should seem a "cuckoo-song," as thou dost treat it.
 Remember, never to the hill or plain,
 Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain
 Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed.
 Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted
 By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
 Cry, "Speak once more—thou lovest!" Who can fear
 Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,
 Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
 Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
 The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
 To love me also in silence with thy soul.

XXII.

WHEN our two souls stand up erect and strong,
 Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
 Until the lengthening wings break into fire
 At either curvèd point,—what bitter wrong
 Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
 Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
 The angels would press on us and aspire
 To drop some golden orb of perfect song
 Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
 Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
 Contrarious moods of men recoil away
 And isolate pure spirits, and permit
 A place to stand and love in for a day,
 With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII.

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
 Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?
 And would the sun for thee more coldly shine
 Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
 I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read
 Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
 But . . . so much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
 While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
 Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.
 Then, love me, Love; look on me—breathe on me!
 As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
 For Love, to give up acres and degree,
 I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
 My near sweet view of Heaven, for earth with thee!

XXIV.

LET the world's sharpness like a clasping knife
 Shut in upon itself and do no harm
 In this close hand of Love, now soft and warm,
 And let us hear no sound of human strife,
 After the click of the shutting. Life to life—
 I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
 And feel as safe as guarded by a charm
 Against the stab of worldlings, who, if rife,

Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
 The lilies of our lives may reassure
 Their blossoms from their roots, accessible
 Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer ;
 Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.
 God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV.

A HEAVY heart, Belovèd, have I borne
 From year to year until I saw thy face,
 And sorrow after sorrow took the place
 Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
 As the stringed pearls, each lifted in its turn
 By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace
 Were changed to long despairs, till God's own grace
 Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
 My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me bring
 And let it drop adown thy calmly great
 Deep being ! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
 Which its own nature doth precipitate,
 While thine doth close above it, mediating
 Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI.

I LIVED with visions for my company
 Instead of men and women, years ago,
 And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
 A sweeter music than they played to me.
 But soon their trailing purple was not free
 Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,
 And I myself grew faint and blind below
 Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come—to be,
 Belovèd, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
 Their songs, their splendours (better, yet the same,
 As river-water hallowed into fountains),
 Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
 My soul with satisfaction of all wants :
 Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

XXVII.

My own Belovèd, who hast lifted me
 From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
 And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
 A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully

Shines out again, as all the angels see,
 Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
 Who camest to me when the world was gone,
 And I who looked for only God, found *thee*!
 I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.
 As one who stands in dewless asphodel,
 Looks backward on the tedious time he had
 In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,
 Make witness, here, between the good and bad,
 That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII.

My letters! all dead paper, mute and white!
 And yet they seem alive and quivering
 Against my tremulous hands, which loose the string
 And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
 This said,—he wished to have me in his sight
 Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
 To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
 Yet I wept for it!—this, . . . the paper's light . . .
 Said, *Dear, I love thee*; and I sank and quailed
 As if God's future thundered on my past.
 This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
 With lying at my heart that beat too fast.
 And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed,
 If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX.

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
 About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
 Put out broad leaves, and soon there's nought to see
 Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
 Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
 I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
 Who art dearer, better! Rather, instantly
 Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,
 Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
 And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee
 Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered, everywhere!
 Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee,
 And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
 I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX.

I SEE thine image through my tears to-night,
 And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
 Refer the cause?—Belovèd, is it thou
 Or I, who makes me sad? The acolyte
 Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite
 May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
 On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow,
 Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of sight,
 As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's amen.
 Belovèd, dost thou love? or did I see all
 The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
 Too vehement light dilated my ideal,
 For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again,
 As now these tears come—falling hot and real?

XXXI.

THOU comest! all is said without a word.
 I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
 In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble through
 Their happy eyelids from an unaverred
 Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred
 In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
 The sin most, but the occasion—that we two
 Should for a moment stand unministered
 By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,
 Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears would rise,
 With thy broad heart serenely interpose:
 Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
 These thoughts which tremble when bereft of those,
 Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII.

THE first time that the sun rose on thine oath
 To love me, I looked forward to the moon
 To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
 And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
 Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe,
 And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
 For such man's love!—more like an out of tune
 Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth

To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste
 Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
 I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
 A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may float
 'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
 And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII.

YES, call me by my pet-name ! let me hear
 The name I used to run at, when a child,
 From innocent play, and leave the cowslips piled,
 To glance up in some face that proved me dear
 With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
 Fond voices which, being drawn and reconciled
 Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
 Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
 While I call God—call God!—So let thy mouth
 Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
 Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
 And catch the early love up in the late.
 Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
 With the same heart, will answer and not wait.

XXXIV.

WITH the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee,
 As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
 Lo, the vain promise ! is the same, the same,
 Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy ?
 When called before, I told how hastily
 I dropped my flowers, or brake off from a game,
 To run and answer with the smile that came
 At play last moment, and went on with me
 Through my obedience. When I answer now,
 I drop a grave thought, break from solitude ;
 Yet still my heart goes to thee—ponder how—
 Not as to a single good, but all my good !
 Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
 That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV.

IF I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
 And be all to me ? Shall I never miss
 Home-talk and blessing, and the common kiss
 That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,

When I look up, to drop on a new range
 Of walls and floors, another home than this?
 Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
 Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
 That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,
 To conquer grief, tries more, as all things prove
 For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
 Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.
 Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
 And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI.

WHEN we met first and loved, I did not build
 Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
 To last, a love set pendulous between
 Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
 Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
 The onward path, and feared to overlean
 A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
 And strong since then, I think that God has willed
 A still renewable fear . . . O love, O troth . . .
 Lest these enclaspèd hands should never hold,
 This mutual kiss drop down between us both
 As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.
 And Love, be false! if *he*, to keep one oath,
 Must lose one joy, by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII.

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul should make
 Of all that strong divineness which I know
 For thine and thee, an image only so
 Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
 It is that distant years which did not take
 Thy sovranly, recoiling with a blow,
 Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
 Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
 Thy purity of likeness and distort
 Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit;
 As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
 His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
 Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort
 And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII.

FIRST time he kissed me, he but only kissed
 The fingers of this hand wherewith I write ;
 And ever since, it grew more clean and white,
 Slow to world-greetings, quick with its " Oh, list,"
 When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
 I could not wear here plainer to my sight,
 Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
 The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed,
 Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed !
 That was the chrism of love, which love's own crown,
 With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
 The third, upon my lips, was folded down
 In perfect, purple state ; since when, indeed,
 I have been proud and said, " My love, my own."

XXXIX.

BECAUSE thou hast the power and own'st the grace
 To look through and behind this mask of me
 (Against which, years have beat thus blanchingly
 With their rains !) and behold my soul's true face,
 The dim and weary witness of life's race, —
 Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
 Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
 The patient angel waiting for a place
 In the new Heavens, — because nor sin nor woe,
 Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighbourhood,
 Nor all, which others viewing, turn to go,
 Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed, —
 Nothing repels thee, . . . Dearest, teach me so
 To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good !

XL.

OH, yes ! they love through all this world of ours !
 I will not gainsay love, called love, forsooth.
 I have heard love talked in my early youth,
 And since, not so long back but that the flowers
 Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans and Giaours
 Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth
 For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth
 Slips on the nut, if, after frequent showers,
 The shell is over-smooth, — and not so much
 Will turn the thing called love, aside to hate,

Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
 A lover, my Belovèd ! thou canst wait
 Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to touch,
 And think it soon when others cry " Too late."

XLI.

I THANK all who have loved me in their hearts,
 With thanks and love from mine. Deep thanks to all
 Who paused a little near the prison-wall,
 To hear my music in its louder parts,
 Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's
 Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
 But thou, who in my voice's sink and fall,
 When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
 Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot
 To hearken what I said between my tears, . . .
 Instruct me how to thank thee ! Oh, to shoot
 My soul's full meaning into future years,
 That *they* should lend it utterance, and salute
 Love that endures, from Life that disappears !

XLII.

" *My future will not copy fair my past*"—
 I wrote that once ; and thinking at my side
 My ministering life-angel justified.
 The word by his appealing look upcast
 To the white throne of God, I turned at last,
 And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied
 To angels in thy soul ! Then I, long tried
 By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
 While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff
 Gave out green leaves with morning dews impearled.
 I seek no copy now of life's first half :
 Leave here the pages with long musing curled,
 And write me new my future's epigraph,
 New angel mine, unhopèd for in the world !

XLIII.

How do I love thee ? Let me count the ways.
 I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
 My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
 For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
 I love thee to the level of every day's
 Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.

I love thee freely, as men strive for Right ;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life !—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV.

BELOVÈD, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding ; yet here's eglantine,
Here's ivy !—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine :
Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,
And tell thy soul, their roots are left in mine.

AURORA LEIGH.

TO

JOHN KENYON, Esq.

THE words "cousin" and "friend" are constantly recurring in this poem, the last pages of which have been finished under the hospitality of your roof, my own dearest cousin and friend;—cousin and friend, in a sense of less equality and greater disinterestedness than "Romney"'s.

Ending, therefore, and preparing once more to quit England, I venture to leave in your hands this book, the most mature of my works, and the one into which my highest convictions upon Life and Art have entered: that as, through my various efforts in literature and steps in life, you have believed in me, borne with me, and been generous to me, far beyond the common uses of mere relationship or sympathy of mind, so you may kindly accept, in sight of the public, this poor sign of esteem, gratitude, and affection, from—Your unforgetting

E. B. B.

39, DEVONSHIRE PLACE,
October 17, 1856.

FIRST BOOK.

OF writing many books there is no end;
And I who have written much in prose and verse
For others' uses, will write now for mine,—
Will write my story for my better self,
As when you paint your portrait for a friend,
Who keeps it in a drawer and looks at it
Long after he has ceased to love you, just
To hold together what he was and is.

I, writing thus, am still what men call young;
I have not so far left the coasts of life
To travel inland, that I cannot hear
That murmur of the outer Infinite

Which unweaned babies smile at in their sleep
 When wondered at for smiling ; not so far,
 But still I catch my mother at her post
 Beside the nursery-door, with finger up,
 "Hush, hush—here's too much noise!" while her sweet eyes
 Leap forward, taking part against her word
 In the child's riot. Still I sit and feel
 My father's slow hand, when she had left us both,
 Stroke out my childish curls across his knee ;
 And hear Assunta's daily jest (she knew
 He liked it better than a better jest)
 Inquire how many golden scudi went
 To make such ringlets. O my father's hand,
 Stroke the poor hair down, stroke it heavily,—
 Draw, press the child's head closer to thy knee !
 I'm still too young, too young, to sit alone.

I write. My mother was a Florentine,
 Whose rare blue eyes were shut from seeing me
 When scarcely I was four years old ; my life,
 A poor spark snatched up from a failing lamp
 Which went out therefore. She was weak and frail ;
 She could not bear the joy of giving life—
 The mother's rapture slew her. If her kiss
 Had left a longer weight upon my lips,
 It might have steadied the uneasy breath,
 And reconciled and fraternised my soul
 With the new order. As it was, indeed,
 I felt a mother-want about the world,
 And still went seeking, like a bleating lamb
 Left out at night, in shutting up the fold,—
 As restless as a nest-deserted bird
 Grown chill through something being away, though what
 It knows not. I, Aurora Leigh, was born
 To make my father sadder, and myself
 Not over-joyous, truly. Women know
 The way to rear up children (to be just),
 They know a simple, merry, tender knack
 Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,
 And stringing pretty words that make no sense,
 And kissing full sense into empty words ;
 Which things are corals to cut life upon,
 Although such trifles : children learn by such,
 Love's holy earnest in a pretty play,



B.P.—I.

“To meet the darkness on the deep,
The solemn ship went onward.”

Page 200.

And get not over-early solemnised,—
 But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's Divine,
 Which burns and hurts not,—not a single bloom,—
 Become aware and unafraid of Love.
 Such good do mothers. Fathers love as well
 —Mine did, I know,—but still with heavier brains,
 And wills more consciously responsible,
 And not as wisely, since less foolishly ;
 So mothers have God's licence to be missed.

My father was an austere Englishman,
 Who, after a dry life-time spent at home
 In college-learning, law, and parish talk,
 Was flooded with a passion unaware,
 His whole provisioned and complacent past
 Drowned out from him that moment. As he stood
 In Florence, where he had come to spend a month
 And note the secret of Da Vinci's drains,
 He musing somewhat absently, perhaps,
 Some English question . . . whether men should pay
 The unpopular but necessary tax
 With left or right hand—in the alien sun
 In that great square of the Santissima,
 There drifted past him (scarcely marked enough
 To move his comfortable island-scorn),
 A train of priestly banners, cross and psalm,—
 The white-veiled rose-crowned maidens holding up
 Tall tapers, weighty for such wrists, aslant
 To the blue luminous tremor of the air,
 And letting drop the white wax as they went
 To eat the bishop's wafer at the church ;
 From which long trail of chanting priests and girls,
 A face flashed like a cymbal on his face,
 And shook with silent clangour brain and heart,
 Transfiguring him to music. Thus, even thus,
 He too received his sacramental gift
 With eucharistic meanings ; for he loved.

And thus beloved, she died. I've heard it said
 That but to see him in the first surprise
 Of widower and father, nursing me,
 Unmothered little child of four years old,
 His large man's hands afraid to touch my curls,
 K As if the gold would tarnish,—his grave lips

Contriving such a miserable smile,
As if he knew needs must, or I should die,
And yet 'twas hard,—would almost make the stones
Cry out for pity. There's a verse he set
In Santa Croce to her memory,
“Weep for an infant too young to weep much
When death removed this mother”—stops the mirth
To-day, on women's faces when they walk
With rosy children hanging on their gowns,
Under the cloister, to escape the sun
That scorches in the piazza. After which,
He left our Florence, and made haste to hide
Himself, his prattling child, and silent grief,
Among the mountains above Pelago ;
Because unmothered babes, he thought, had need
Of-mother nature more than others use,
And Pan's white goats, with udders warm and full
Of mystic contemplations, come to feed
Poor milkless lips of orphans like his own—
Such scholar-scrap he talked, I've heard from friends,
For even prosaic men, who wear grief long,
Will get to wear it as a hat aside
With a flower stuck in't. Father, then, and child,
We lived among the mountains many years,
God's silence on the outside of the house,
And we, who did not speak too loud, within ;
And old Assunta to make up the fire,
Crossing herself whene'er a sudden flame
Which lightened from the firewood, made alive
That picture of my mother on the wall.
The painter drew it after she was dead ;
And when the face was finished, throat and hands,
Her cameriera carried him, in hate
Of the English-fashioned shroud, the last brocade
She dressed in at the Pitti. “He should paint
No sadder thing than that,” she swore, “to wrong
Her poor signora.” Therefore very strange
The effect was. I, a little child, would crouch
For hours upon the floor, with knees drawn up,
And gaze across them, half in terror, half
In adoration, at the picture there,—
That swan-like supernatural white life,
Just sailing upward from the red stiff silk
Which seemed to have no part in it, nor power

To keep it from quite breaking out of bounds :
 For hours I sate and stared. Assunta's awe
 And my poor father's melancholy eyes
 Still pointed that way. That way, went my thoughts
 When wandering beyond sight. And as I grew
 In years, I mixed, confused, unconsciously,
 Whatever I last read or heard or dreamed,
 Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,
 Pathetical, or ghastly, or grotesque,
 With still that face . . . which did not therefore change,
 But kept the mystic level of all forms
 And fears and admirations ; was by turns
 Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite,—
 A dauntless Muse who eyes a dreadful Fate,
 A loving Psyche who loses sight of Love,
 A still Medusa, with mild milky brows
 All curdled and all clothed upon with snakes
 Whose slime falls fast as sweat will ; or, anon,
 Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed with swords
 Where the Babe sucked ; or, Lamia in her first
 Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk and blinked,
 And, shuddering, wriggled down to the unclean
 Or, my own mother, leaving her last smile
 In her last kiss, upon the baby-mouth
 My father pushed down on the bed for that,—
 Or my dead mother, without smile or kiss,
 Buried at Florence. All which images,
 Concentred on the picture, glassed themselves
 Before my meditative childhood, . . . as
 The incoherences of change and death
 Are represented fully, mixed and merged,
 In the smooth fair mystery of perpetual Life.

And while I stared away my childish wits
 Upon my mother's picture (ah, poor child !)
 My father, who through love had suddenly
 Thrown off the old conventions, broken loose
 From chin-bands of the soul, like Lazarus,
 Yet had no time to learn to talk and walk
 Or grow anew familiar with the sun,—
 Who had reached to freedom, not to action, lived,
 But lived as one entranced, with thoughts, not aims,—
 Whom love had unmade from a common man,
 But not completed to an uncommon man,—

My father taught me what he had learnt the best
 Before he died and left me,—grief and love.
 And, seeing we had books among the hills,
 Strong words of counselling souls, confederate
 With vocal pines and waters,—out of books
 He taught me all the ignorance of men,
 And how God laughs in heaven when any man
 Says, "Here I'm learned; this, I understand;
 In that, I am never caught at fault or doubt."
 He sent the schools to school, demonstrating
 A fool will pass for such through one mistake,
 While a philosopher will pass for such,
 Through said mistakes being ventured in the gross
 And heaped up to a system.

I am like,
 They tell me, my dear father. Broader brows
 Howbeit, upon a slenderer undergrowth
 Of delicate features,—paler, near as grave;
 But then my mother's smile breaks up the whole,
 And makes it better sometimes than itself.

So, nine full years, our days were hid with God
 Among His mountains. I was just thirteen,
 Still growing like the plants from unseen roots
 In tongue-tied Springs,—and suddenly awoke
 To full life and its needs and agonies,
 With an intense, strong, struggling heart beside
 A stone-dead father. Life, struck sharp on death,
 Makes awful lightning. His last word was, "Love—"
 "Love, my child, love, love!"—(then he had done with grief)
 "Love, my child." Ere I answered he was gone,
 And none was left to love in all the world.

There ended childhood: what succeeded next
 I recollect as, after fevers, men
 Thread back the passage of delirium,
 Missing the turn still, baffled by the door;
 Smooth endless days, notched here and there with knives:
 A weary, wormy darkness, spurred i' the flank
 With flame, that it should eat and end itself
 Like some tormented scorpion. Then, at last,
 I do remember clearly, how there came
 A stranger with authority, not right
 (I thought not), who commanded, caught me up

From old Assunta's neck ; how, with a shriek,
 She let me go,—while I, with ears too full
 Of my father's silence, to shriek back a word,
 In all a child's astonishment at grief
 Stared at the wharfage where she stood and moaned,
 My poor Assunta, where she stood and moaned !
 The white walls, the blue hills, my Italy,
 Drawn backward from the shuddering steamer-deck,
 Like one in anger drawing back her skirts
 Which suppliants catch at. Then the bitter sea
 Inexorably pushed between us both,
 And, sweeping up the ship with my despair,
 Threw us out as a pasture to the stars.

Ten nights and days we voyaged on the deep ;
 Ten nights and days, without the common face
 Of any day or night ; the moon and sun
 Cut off from the green reconciling earth,
 To starve into a blind ferocity
 And glare unnatural ; the very sky
 (Dropping its bell-net down upon the sea
 As if no human heart should 'scape alive),
 Bedraggled with the desolating salt,
 Until it seemed no more that holy heaven
 To which my father went. All new, and strange—
 The universe turned stranger, for a child.

Then, land !—then, England ! oh, the frosty cliffs
 Looked cold upon me. Could I find a home
 Among those mean red houses through the fog ?
 And when I heard my father's language first
 From alien lips which had no kiss for mine,
 I wept aloud, then laughed, then wept, then wept,—
 And some one near me said the child was mad
 Through much sea-sickness. The train swept us on.
 Was this my father's England ? the great Isle ?
 The ground seemed cut up from the fellowship
 Of verdure, field from field, as man from man ;
 The skies themselves looked low and positive,
 As almost you could touch them with a hand
 And dared to do it, they were so far off
 From God's celestial crystals ; all things, blurred
 And dull and vague. Did Shakspeare and his mates

Absorb the light here?—not a hill or stone
 With heart to strike a radiant colour up,
 Or active outline on the indifferent air!

I think I see my father's sister stand
 Upon the hall-step of her country-house
 To give me welcome. She stood straight and calm,
 Her somewhat narrow forehead braided tight
 As if for taming accidental thoughts
 From possible pulses; brown hair pricked with gray
 By frigid use of life (she was not old,
 Although my father's elder by a year),
 A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate lines;
 A close mild mouth, a little soured about
 The ends, through speaking unrequited loves,
 Or peradventure niggardly half-truths;
 Eyes of no colour,—once they might have smiled,
 But never, never have forgot themselves
 In smiling; cheeks, in which was yet a rose
 Of perished summers, like a rose in a book,
 Kept more for ruth than pleasure,—if past bloom,
 Past fading also. She had lived, we'll say,
 A harmless life, she called a virtuous life,
 A quiet life, which was not life at all
 (But that, she had not lived enough to know),
 Between the vicar and the county squires,
 The lord-lieutenant looking down sometimes
 From the empyreal, to assure their souls
 Against chance-vulgarisms, and, in the abyss,
 The apothecary looked on once a year,
 To prove their soundness of humility.
 The poor-club exercised her Christian gifts
 Of knitting stockings, stitching petticoats,
 Because we are of one flesh after all
 And need one flannel (with a proper sense
 Of difference in the quality)—and still
 The book-club, guarded from your modern trick
 Of shaking dangerous questions from the crease,
 Preserved her intellectual. She had lived
 A sort of cage-bird life, born in a cage,
 Accounting that to leap from perch to perch
 Was act and joy enough for any bird.
 Dear heaven, how silly are the things that live
 In thickets and eat berries!

I, alas,

A wild bird scarcely fledged, was brought to her cage,
And she was there to meet me. Very kind.
Bring the clean water ; give out the fresh seed.

She stood upon the steps to welcome me,
Calm, in black garb. I clung about her neck,—
Young babes, who catch at every shred of wool
To draw the new light closer, catch and cling
Less blindly. In my ears, my father's word
Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in shells,
"Love, love, my child." She, black there with my
grief,
Might feel my love—she was his sister once—
I clung to her. A moment, she seemed moved,
Kissed me with cold lips, suffered me to cling,
And drew me feebly through the hall, into
The room she sate in.

There, with some strange spasm
Of pain and passion, she wrung loose my hands
Imperiously, and held me at arm's length,
And with two gray-steel naked-bladed eyes
Searched through my face,—ay, stabbed it through and
through,
Through brows and cheeks and chin, as if to find
A wicked murderer in my innocent face,
If not here, there perhaps. Then, drawing breath,
She struggled for her ordinary calm,
And missed it rather,—told me not to shrink,
As if she had told me not to lie or swear,—
"She loved my father, and would love me too
As long as I deserved it." Very kind.
I understood her meaning afterward ;
She thought to find my mother in my face,
And questioned it for that. For she, my aunt,
Had loved my father truly, as she could,
And hated, with the gall of gentle souls,
My Tuscan mother, who had fooled away
A wise man from wise courses, a good man
From obvious duties, and, depriving her,
His sister, of the household precedence,
Had wronged his tenants, robbed his native land,
And made him mad, alike by life and death,
In love and sorrow. She had pored for years

What sort of woman could be suitable
 To her sort of hate, to entertain it with ;
 And so, her very curiosity
 Became hate too, and all the idealism
 She ever used in life, was used for hate,
 Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at last
 The love from which it grew, in strength and heat,
 And wrinkled her smooth conscience with a sense
 Of disputable virtue (say not, sin)
 When Christian doctrine was enforced at church,

And thus my father's sister was to me
 My mother's hater. From that day, she did
 Her duty to me (I appreciate it
 In her own word as spoken to herself),
 Her duty, in large measure, well-pressed out,
 But measured always. She was generous, bland,
 More courteous than was tender, gave me still
 The first place,—as if fearful that God's saints
 Would look down suddenly and say, "Herein
 You missed a point, I think, through lack of love."
 Alas, a mother never is afraid
 Of speaking angerly to any child,
 Since love, she knows, is justified of love.

And I, I was a good child on the whole,
 A meek and manageable child. Why not ?
 I did not live, to have the faults of life :
 There seemed more true life in my father's grave
 Than in all England. Since *that* threw me off
 Who fain would cleave (his latest will, they say,
 Consigned me to his land), I only thought
 Of lying quiet there where I was thrown
 Like sea-weed on the rocks, and suffer her
 To prick me to a pattern with her pin,
 Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from leaf,
 And dry out from my drowned anatomy
 The last sea-salt left in me.

So it was.

I broke the copious curls upon my head
 In braids, because she liked smooth-ordered hair.
 I left off saying my sweet Tuscan words,
 Which still at any stirring of the heart

Came up to float across the English phrase,
As lilies (*Bene . . .* or *che ch'è*), because
She liked my father's child to speak his tongue.
I learnt the collects and the catechism,
The creeds, from Athanasius back to Nice,
The Articles . . . the Tracts *against* the times
(By no means Buonaventure's "Prick of Love"),
And various popular synopses of
Inhuman doctrines never taught by John,
Because she liked instructed piety.
I learnt my complement of classic French
(Kept pure of Balzac and neologism),
And German also, since she liked a range
Of liberal education,—tongues, not books.
I learnt a little algebra, a little
Of the mathematics,—brushed with extreme flounce
The circle of the sciences, because
She disliked women who are frivolous.
I learnt the royal genealogies
Of Oviedo, the internal laws
Of the Burmese empire, . . . by how many feet
Mount Chimborazo outsoars Himmeleh,
What navigable river joins itself
To Lara, and what census of the year five
Was taken at Klagenfurt,—because she liked
A general insight into useful facts.
I learnt much music,—such as would have been
As quite impossible in Johnson's day
As still it might be wished—fine sleights of hand
And unimagined fingering, shuffling off
The hearer's soul through hurricanes of notes
To a noisy Tophet; and I drew . . . costumes
From French engravings, nereids neatly draped,
With smirks of simmering godship,—I washed in
From nature, landscapes (rather say, washed out),
I danced the polka and Cellarius,
Spun glass, stuffed birds, and modelled flowers in wax,
Because she liked accomplishments in girls.
I read a score of books on womanhood
To prove, if women do not think at all,
They may teach thinking (to a maiden-aunt
Or else the author)—books demonstrating
Their right of comprehending husband's talk
When not too deep, and even of answering

With pretty "may it please you," or "so it is,"—
 Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
 Particular worth and general missionariness,
 As long as they keep quiet by the fire
 And never say "no" when the world says "ay,"
 For that is fatal,—their angelic reach
 Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,
 And fatten household sinners,—their, in brief,
 Potential faculty in everything
 Of abdicating power in it: she owned
 She liked a woman to be womanly,
 And English women, she thanked God and sighed
 (Some people always sigh in thanking God),
 Were models to the universe. And last
 I learnt cross-stitch, because she did not like
 To see me wear the night with empty hands,
 A-doing nothing. So, my shepherdess
 Was something after all (the pastoral saints
 Be praised for't), leaning lovelorn with pink eyes
 To match her shoes, when I mistook the silks;
 Her head uncrushed by that round weight of hat
 So strangely similar to the tortoise-shell
 Which slew the tragic poet.

By the way,

The works of women are symbolical.
 We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull our sight,
 Producing what? A pair of slippers, sir,
 To put on when you're weary—or a stool
 To stumble over and vex you . . . "curse that stool!"
 Or else at best, a cushion, where you lean
 And sleep, and dream of something we are not,
 But would be for your sake. Alas, alas!
 This hurts most, this . . . that, after all, we are paid
 The worth of our work, perhaps.

In looking down

Those years of education (to return),
 I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered more
 In the water-torture, . . . flood succeeding flood
 To drench the incapable throat and split the veins . . .
 Than I did. Certain of your feebler souls
 Go out in such a process; many pine
 To a sick, inodorous light; my own endured:
 I had relations in the Unseen, and drew
 The elemental nutriment and heat

From nature, as earth feels the sun at nights,
 Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark.
 I kept the life, thrust on me, on the outside
 Of the inner life, with all its ample room
 For heart and lungs, for will and intellect,
 Inviolable by conventions. God,
 I thank thee for that grace of thine!

At first,

I felt no life which was not patience,—did
 The thing she bade me, without heed to a thing
 Beyond it, sate in just the chair she placed,
 With back against the window, to exclude
 The sight of the great lime-tree on the lawn,
 Which seemed to have come on purpose from the woods
 To bring the house a message,—ay, and walked
 Demurely in her carpeted low rooms,
 As if I should not, hearkening my own steps,
 Misdoubt I was alive. I read her books,
 Was civil to her cousin, Romney Leigh,
 Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her visitors,
 And heard them whisper, when I changed a cup
 (I blushed for joy at that)—“The Italian child,
 For all her blue eyes and her quiet ways,
 Thrives ill in England: she is paler yet
 Than when we came the last time; she will die.”

“Will die.” My cousin, Romney Leigh, blushed too,
 With sudden anger, and, approaching me,
 Said low between his teeth—“You’re wicked now?
 You wish to die and leave the world a-dusk
 For others, with your naughty light blown out?”
 I looked into his face defyingly.
 He might have known that, being what I was,
 ’Twas natural to like to get away
 As far as dead folk can; and then indeed
 Some people make no trouble when they die.
 He turned and went abruptly, slammed the door
 And shut his dog out.

Romney, Romney Leigh.

I have not named my cousin hitherto,
 And yet I used him as a sort of friend;
 My elder by few years, but cold and shy
 And absent . . . tender, when he thought of it,
 Which scarcely was imperative, grave betimes,

As well as early master of Leigh Hall,
 Whereof the nightmare sate upon his youth
 Repressing all its seasonable delights,
 And agonising with a ghastly sense
 Of universal hideous want and wrong
 To incriminate possession. When he came
 From college to the country, very oft
 He crossed the hills on visits to my aunt,
 With gifts of blue grapes from the hot-houses,
 A book in one hand,—mere statistics (if
 I chanced to lift the cover), count of all
 The goats whose beards are sprouting down toward hell
 Against God's separating judgment-hour.
 And she, she almost loved him,—even allowed
 That sometimes he should seem to sigh my way ;
 It made him easier to be pitiful,
 And sighing was his gift. So, undisturbed
 At whiles she let him shut my music up
 And push my needles down, and lead me out
 To see in that south angle of the house
 The figs grow black as if by a Tuscan rock,
 On some light pretext. She would turn her head
 At other moments, go to fetch a thing,
 And leave me breath enough to speak with him,
 For his sake ; it was simple.

Sometimes too
 He would have saved me utterly, it seemed,
 He stood and looked so.

Once, he stood so near
 He dropped a sudden hand upon my head
 Bent down on woman's work, as soft as rain—
 But then I rose and shook it off as fire,
 The stranger's touch that took my father's place,
 Yet dared seem soft.

I used him for a friend
 Before I ever knew him for a friend.
 'Twas better, 'twas worse also, afterward :
 We came so close, we saw our differences
 Too intimately. Always Romney Leigh
 Was looking for the worms, I for the gods.
 A godlike nature his ; the gods look down,
 Incurious of themselves ; and certainly
 'Tis well I should remember, how, those days,
 I was a worm too, and he looked on me.

A little by his act perhaps, yet more
 By something in me, surely not my will,
 I did not die. But slowly, as one in swoon,
 To whom life creeps back in the form of death,
 With a sense of separation, a blind pain
 Of blank obstruction, and a roar i' the ears
 Of visionary chariots which retreat
 As earth grows clearer . . . slowly, by degrees,
 I woke, rose up . . . where was I? in the world;
 For uses, therefore, I must count worth while.

I had a little chamber in the house,
 As green as any privet-hedge a bird
 Might choose to build in, though the nest itself
 Could show but dead-brown sticks and straws; the walls
 Were green, the carpet was pure green, the straight
 Small bed was curtained greenly, and the folds
 Hung green about the window, which let in
 The out-door world with all its greenery.
 You could not push your head out and escape
 A dash of dawn-dew from the honeysuckle,
 But so you were baptised into the grace
 And privilege of seeing. . . .

First, the lime

(I had enough, there, of the lime, be sure,—
 My morning-dream was often hummed away
 By the bees in it); past the lime, the lawn,
 Which, after sweeping broadly round the house,
 Went trickling through the shrubberies in a stream
 Of tender turf, and wore and lost itself
 Among the acacias, over which you saw
 The irregular line of elms by the deep lane
 Which stopped the grounds and dammed the overflow
 Of arbutus and laurel. Out of sight
 The lane was; sunk so deep, no foreign tramp
 Nor drover of wild ponies out of Wales
 Could guess if lady's hall or tenant's lodge
 Dispensed such odours,—though his stick well-crook'd
 Might reach the lowest trail of blossoming briar
 Which dipped upon the wall. Behind the elms,
 And through their tops, you saw the folded hills
 Striped up and down with hedges (burly oaks
 Projecting from the lines to show themselves),
 Through which my cousin Romney's chimneys smoked

As still as when a silent mouth in frost
 Breathes—showing where the woodlands hid Leigh Hall
 While, far above, a jut of table-land,
 A promontory without water, stretched,—
 You could not catch it if the days were thick,
 Or took it for a cloud ; but, otherwise
 The vigorous sun would catch it up at eve
 And use it for an anvil, till he had filled
 The shelves of heaven with burning thunderbolts,
 And proved he need not rest so early :—then,
 When all his setting trouble was resolved
 To a trance of passive glory, you might see
 In apparition on the golden sky
 (Alas; my Giotto's background!) the sheep run
 Along the fine clear outline, small as mice
 That run along a witch's scarlet thread.

Not a grand nature. Not my chestnut-woods
 Of Vallombrosa, cleaving by the spurs
 To the precipices. Not my headlong leaps
 Of waters, that cry out for joy or fear
 In leaping through the palpitating pines,
 Like a white soul tossed out to eternity
 With thrills of time upon it. Not indeed
 My multitudinous mountains, sitting in
 The magic circle, with the mutual touch
 Electric, panting from their full deep hearts
 Beneath the influent heavens, and waiting for
 Communion and commission. Italy
 Is one thing, England one.

On English ground
 You understand the letter . . . ere the fall,
 How Adam lived in a garden. All the fields
 Are tied up fast with hedges, nosegay-like ;
 The hills are crumpled plains, — the plains, parterres,—
 The trees, round, woolly, ready to be clipped ;
 And if you seek for any wilderness
 You find, at best, a park. A nature tamed
 And grown domestic like a barn-door fowl,
 Which does not awe you with its claws and beak,
 Nor tempt you to an eyrie too high up,
 But which, in cackling, sets you thinking of
 Your eggs to-morrow at breakfast, in the pause
 Of finer meditation.