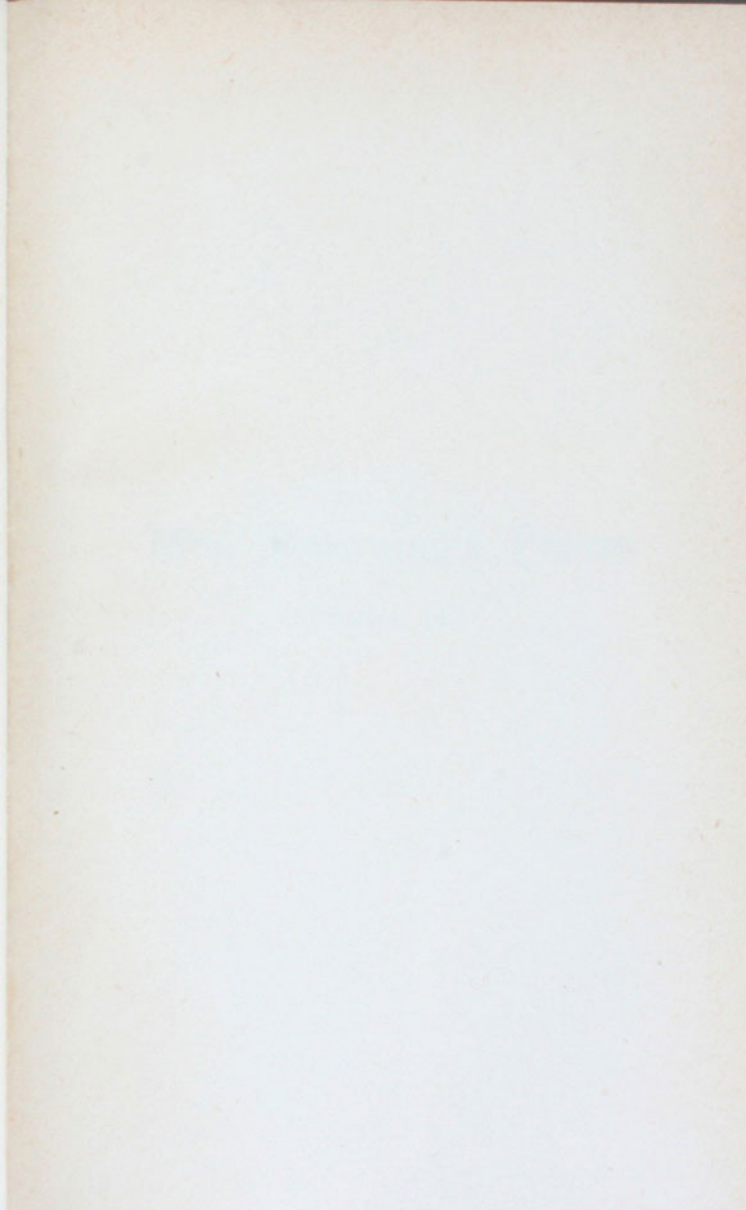


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B.P.—II.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

A

THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
ELIZABETH B. BROWNING
SERIES II
WITH PORTRAIT AND ILLUSTRATIONS



MALCOLM
DUNN

LONDON & GLASGOW
COLLINS' CLEAR-TYPE PRESS

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PROMETHEUS BOUND.

FROM THE GREEK OF ÆSCHYLUS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

PROMETHEUS.

HEPHÆSTUS.

OCEANUS.

IO, daughter of Inachus.

HERMES.

STRENGTH and FORCE.

CHORUS of Ocean Nymphs.

SCENE.—STRENGTH *and* FORCE, HEPHÆSTUS *and* PROMETHEUS, *at the Rocks.*

Strength. We reach the utmost limit of the earth,
The Scythian track, the desert without man.
And now, Hephæstus, thou must needs fulfil
The mandate of our Father, and with links
Indissoluble of adamantine chains
Fasten against this beetling precipice
This guilty god. Because he filched away
Thine own bright flower, the glory of plastic fire,
And gifted mortals with it,—such a sin
It doth behove he expiate to the gods,
Learning to accept the empery of Zeus
And leave off his old trick of loving man.

Hephæstus. O Strength and Force, for you, our Zeus's
will
Presents a deed for doing, no more!—but *I*,
I lack your daring, up this storm-rent chasm

To fix with violent hands a kindred god,
 Howbeit necessity compels me so
 That I must dare it, and our Zeus commands
 With a most inevitable word. Ho, thou!
 High-thoughted son of Themis who is sage!
 Thee loth, I loth must rivet fast in chains
 Against this rocky height unclomb by man,
 Where never human voice nor face shall find
 Out thee who lov'st them, and thy beauty's flower.
 Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall fade away.
 Night shall come up with garniture of stars
 To comfort thee with shadow, and the sun
 Disperse with retrickt beams the morning-frosts,
 But through all changes sense of present woe
 Shall vex thee sore, because with none of them
 There comes a hand to free. Such fruit is plucked
 From love of man! and in that thou, a god,
 Didst brave the wrath of gods and give away
 Undue respect to mortals, for that crime
 Thou art adjudged to guard this joyless rock,
 Erect, unslumbering, bending not the knee,
 And many a cry and unavailing moan
 To utter on the air. For Zeus is stern
 And new-made kings are cruel.

Strength.

Be it so.

Why loiter in vain pity? Why not hate
 A god the gods hate? one too who betrayed
 Thy glory unto men?

Hephæstus.

An awful thing

Is kinship joined to friendship.

Strength.

Grant it be;

Is disobedience to the Father's word

A possible thing? Dost quail not more for that?

Hephæstus. Thou, at least, art a stern one: ever bold.

Strength. Why, if I wept, it were no remedy;

And do not *thou* spend labour on the air
To bootless uses.

Hephæstus. Cursed handicraft!
I curse and hate thee, O my craft!

Strength. Why hate
Thy craft most plainly innocent of all
These pending ills?

Hephæstus. I would some other hand
Were here to work it!

Strength. All work hath its pain,
Except to rule the gods. There is none free
Except King Zeus.

Hephæstus. I know it very well:
I argue not against it."

Strength. Why not, then,
Make haste and lock the fetters over HIM
Lest Zeus behold thee lagging?

Hephæstus. Here be chains.
Zeus may behold these.

Strength. Seize him: strike amain:
Strike with the hammer on each side his hands—
Rivet him to the rock.

Hephæstus. The work is done,
And thoroughly done.

Strength. Still faster grapple him;
Wedge him in deeper: leave no inch to stir.
He's terrible for finding a way out
From the irremediable.

Hephæstus. Here's an arm, at least,
Grappled past freeing.

Strength. Now then, buckle me
The other securely. Let this wise one learn
He's duller than our Zeus.

Hephæstus. Oh, none but he
Accuse me justly.

Strength. Now, straight through the chest,
Take him and bite him with the clenching tooth
Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet him.

Hephæstus. Alas, Prometheus, what thou sufferest here
I sorrow over.

Strength. Dost thou flinch again
And breathe groans for the enemies of Zeus?
Beware lest thine own pity find thee out.

Hephæstus. Thou dost behold a spectacle that turns
The sight o' the eyes to pity.

Strength. I behold
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty.
But lash the thongs about his sides.

Hephæstus. So much,
I must do. Urge no farther than I must.

Strength. Ay, but I *will* urge!—and, with shout on shout
Will hound thee at this quarry. Get thee down
And ring amain the iron round his legs.

Hephæstus. That work was not long doing.

Strength. Heavily now
Let fall the strokes upon the perforant gyves:
For He who rates the work has a heavy hand.

Hephæstus. Thy speech is savage as thy shape.

Strength. Be thou
Gentle and tender! but revile not me
For the firm will and the untrucking hate.

Hephæstus. Let us go. He is netted round with chains.

Strength. Here, now, taunt on! and having spoiled the gods
Of honours, crown withal thy mortal men
Who live a whole day out. Why how could *they*
Draw off from thee one single of thy griefs?
Methinks the Dæmons gave thee a wrong name,
Prometheus, which means Providence,—because
Thou dost thyself need providence to see
Thy roll and ruin from the top of doom.

Prometheus (alone). O holy Æther, and swift-wingèd
Winds,

And River-wells, and laughter innumeros
Of yon sea-waves! Earth, mother of us all,
And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on you,—
Behold me a god, what I endure from gods!

Behold, with throe on throe

How, wasted by this woe,

I wrestle down the myriad years of time!

Behold, how fast around me,

The new King of the happy ones sublime

Has flung the chain he forged, has shamed and bound
me!

Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the coming morrow's

I cover with one groan. And where is found me

A limit to these sorrows?

And yet what word do I say? I have foreknown

Clearly all things that should be; nothing done

Comes sudden to my soul; and I must bear

What is ordained with patience, being aware

Necessity doth front the universe

With an invincible gesture. Yet this curse

Which strikes me now, I find it hard to brave

In silence or in speech. Because I gave

Honour to mortals, I have yoked my soul

To this compelling fate. Because I stole

The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles went

Over the ferule's brim, and manward sent

Art's mighty means and perfect rudiment,

That sin I expiate in this agony,

Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanching sky.

Ah, ah me! what a sound,

What a fragrance sweeps up from a pinion unseen

Of a god, or a mortal, or nature between,

Sweeping up to this rock where the earth has her bound,

To have sight of my pangs or some guerdon obtain.
Lo, a god in the anguish, a god in the chain!

The god, Zeus hateth sore

And his gods hate again,

As many as tread on his glorified floor,

Because I loved mortals too much evermore.

Alas me! what a murmur and motion I hear,

As of birds flying near!

And the air undersings

The light stroke of their wings—

And all life that approaches I wait for in fear.

Chorus of Sea Nymphs, 1st Strophe.

Fear nothing! our troop

Floats lovingly up

With a quick-oaring stroke

Of wings steered to the rock,

Having softened the soul of our father below.

For the gales of swift-bearing have sent me a sound,

And the clank of the iron, the malleted blow,

Smote down the profound

Of my caverns of old,

And struck the red light in a blush from my brow,—

Till I sprang up unsandalled, in haste to behold,

And rushed forth on my chariot of wings manifold.

Prometheus. Alas me!—alas me!

Ye offspring of Tethys, who bore at her breast

Many children, and eke of Oceanus,—he

Coiling still around earth with perpetual unrest!

Behold me and see

How transfixed with the fang

Of a fetter, I hang

On the high-jutting rocks of this fissure, and keep

An uncoveted watch o'er the world and the deep.



R.P.—II.

“I hang
On the high-jutting rocks of this fissure, and keep
An uncoveted watch o'er the world and the deep.”

Page 6.

Chorus, 1st Antistrophe.

I behold thee, Prometheus ; yet now, yet now,
 A terrible cloud, whose rain is tears,
 Sweeps over mine eyes that witness how
 Thy body appears
 Hung awaste on the rocks by infrangible chains !
 For new is the Hand and the rudder that steers
 The ship of Olympus through surge and wind—
 And of old things passed, no track is behind.

Prometheus. Under earth, under Hades

Where the home of the shade is,
 All into the deep, deep Tartarus,

I would he had hurled me adown.

I would he had plunged me, fastened thus
 In the knotted chain with the savage clang,
 All into the dark where there should be none,
 Neither god nor another, to laugh and see.

But now the winds sing through and shake
 The hurting chains wherein I hang,
 And I, in my naked sorrows, make
 Much mirth for my enemy.

Chorus, 2nd Strophe.

Nay ! who of the gods hath a heart so stern
 As to use thy woe for a mock and mirth ?
 Who would not turn more mild to learn
 Thy sorrows ? who of the heaven and earth,
 Save Zeus ? But he
 Right wrathfully
 Bears on his sceptral soul unbent
 And rules thereby the heavenly seed,
 Nor will he pause till he content
 His thirsty heart in a finished deed ;

Or till Another shall appear,
 To win by fraud, to seize by fear
 The hard-to-be-captured government.

Prometheus. Yet even of *me* he shall have need,
 That monarch of the blessed seed,
 Of me, of me, who now am cursed
 By his fetters dire,—
 To wring my secret out withal
 And learn by whom his sceptre shall
 Be filched from him—as was, at first,
 His heavenly fire.

But he never shall enchant me
 With his honey-lipped persuasion ;
 Never, never shall he daunt me
 With the oath and threat of passion
 Into speaking as they want me,
 Till he loose this savage chain,
 And accept the expiation
 Of my sorrow, in his pain.

Chorus, 2nd Antistrophe.

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,
 And, for all thou hast borne
 From the stroke of the rod,
 Nought relaxest from scorn.
 But thou speakest unto me
 Too free and unworn ;
 And a terror strikes through me
 And festers my soul—
 And I fear, in the roll
 Of the storm, for thy fate
 In the ship far from shore :
 Since the son of Saturnius is hard in his hate
 And unmoved in his heart evermore.

Prometheus. I know that Zeus is stern !
 I know he metes his justice by his will !
 And yet, his soul shall learn
 More softness when once broken by this ill—
 And curbing his unconquerable vaunt
 He shall rush on in fear, to meet with me
 Who rush to meet with him, in agony,
 To issues of harmonious covenant.

Chorus. Remove the veil from all things and relate
 The story to us,—of what crime accused,
 Zeus smites thee with dishonourable pangs.
 Speak ! if to teach us do not grieve thyself.

Prometheus. The utterance of these things is torture to me,
 But so, too, is their silence ! each way lies
 Woe strong as fate !—

When gods began with wrath,
 And war rose up between their starry brows,
 Some choosing to cast Chronos from his throne,
 That Zeus might king it there, and some in haste
 With opposite oaths that they would have no Zeus
 To rule the gods for ever,—I, who brought
 The counsel I thought meetest, could not move
 The Titans, children of the Heaven and Earth,—
 What time, disdainingly in their rugged souls
 My subtle machinations, they assumed
 It was an easy thing for force to take
 The mastery of fate. My mother, then,
 Who is called not only Themis but Earth too
 (Her single beauty joys in many names),
 Did teach me with reiterant prophecy
 What future should be, and how conquering god
 Should not prevail by strength and violence,
 But by guile only. When I told them so,
 They would not deign to contemplate the truth
 On all sides round ; whereat I deemed it best

To lead my willing mother upwardly
 And set my Themis face to face with Zeus,
 As willing to receive her. Tartarus,
 With its abyssmal cloister of the Dark,
 Because I gave that counsel, covers up
 The antique Chronos and his siding hosts,
 And, by that counsel helped, the king of gods
 Hath recompensed me with these bitter pangs—
 For kingship wears a cancer at the heart,—
 Distrust in friendship. Do ye also ask
 What crime it is for which he tortures me?
 That shall be clear before you. When at first
 He filled his father's throne, he instantly
 Made various gifts of glory to the gods
 And dealt the empire out. Alone, of men,
 Of miserable men, he took no count,
 But yearned to sweep their track off from the world
 And plant a newer race there. Not a god
 Resisted such desire except myself.
I dared it! *I* drew mortals back to light,
 From meditated ruin deep as hell!
 For which wrong, I am bent down in these pangs
 Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,
 And I, who pitied man, am thought myself
 Unworthy of pity; while I render out
 Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand
 That strikes me thus—a sight to shame your Zeus!

Chorus. Hard as thy chains and cold as all these rocks
 Is he, Prometheus, who withholds his heart
 From joining in thy woe. I yearned before
 To fly this sight; and, now I gaze on it,
 I sicken inwards.

Prometheus. To my friends, indeed,
 I must be a sad sight.

Chorus. And didst thou sin

No more than so ?

Prometheus. I did restrain, besides,
My mortals from premeditating death.

Chorus. How didst thou medicine the plague-fear of
death ?

Prometheus. I set blind Hopes to inhabit in their house.

Chorus. By that gift thou didst help thy mortals well.

Prometheus. I gave them also,—fire.

Chorus. And have they now,

Those creatures of a day, the red-eyed fire ?

Prometheus. They have : and shall learn by it many arts.

Chorus. And, truly, for such sins Zeus tortures thee,
And will remit no anguish ? Is there set

No limit before thee to thine agony ?

Prometheus. No other ! only what seems good to HIM.

Chorus. And how will it seem good ? what hope remains ?
Seest thou not that thou hast sinned ? But that thou hast
sinned

It glads me not to speak of, and grieves thee—

Then let it pass from both, and seek thyself

Some outlet from distress.

Prometheus. It is in truth

An easy thing to stand aloof from pain,

And lavish exhortation and advice

On one vexed sorely by it. I have known

All in prevision. By my choice, my choice,

I freely sinned—I will confess my sin—

And helping mortals, found mine own despair !—

I did not think indeed that I should pine

Beneath such pangs against such skyey rocks,—

Doomed to this drear hill and no neighbouring

Of any life ! but mourn not ye for griefs

I bear to-day ! hear rather, dropping down

To the plain, how other woes creep on to me,

And learn the consummation of my doom.

Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you!—grieve for me,
 Who now am grieving! for Grief walks the earth,
 And sits down at the foot of each by turns.

Chorus. We hear the deep clash of thy words,
 Prometheus, and obey!

And I spring with a rapid foot away
 From the rushing car and the holy air,
 The track of birds;

And I drop to the rugged ground, and there
 Await the tale of thy despair.

OCEANUS enters.

Oceanus. I reach the bourn of my weary road,
 Where I may see and answer thee,
 Prometheus, in thine agony!

On the back of the quick-winged bird I glode,
 And I bridled him in
 With the will of a god.

Behold, thy sorrow aches in me
 Constrained by the force of kin.

Nay, though that tie were all undone,
 For the life of none beneath the sun
 Would I seek a larger benison

Than I seek for thine!

And thou shalt learn my words are truth,—
 That no fair parlance of the mouth

Grows falsely out of mine!

Now give me a deed to prove my faith;
 For no faster friend is named in breath

Than I, Oceanus, am thine.

Prometheus. Ha! what has brought thee? Hast thou
 also come

To look upon my woe? How hast thou dared
 To leave the depths called after thee, the caves
 Self-hewn and self-roofed with spontaneous rock,

To visit Earth, the mother of my chain?
 Hast come indeed to view my doom, and mourn
 That I should sorrow thus? Gaze on, and see
 How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,—how I
 The erector of the empire in his hand,—
 Am bent beneath that hand, in this despair!

Oceanus. Prometheus, I behold: and I would fain
 Exhort thee, though already subtle enough,
 To a better wisdom. Titan, know thyself,
 And take new softness to thy manners, since
 A new king rules the gods. If words like these,
 Harsh words and trenchant, thou wilt fling abroad,
 Zeus haply, though he sit so far and high,
 May hear thee do it; and, so, this wrath of his
 Which now affects thee fiercely, shall appear
 A mere child's sport at vengeance. Wretched god,
 Rather dismiss the passion which thou hast,
 And seek a change from grief. Perhaps I seem
 To address thee with old saws and outworn sense,—
 Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely waits
 On lips that speak too proudly: thou, meantime,
 Art none the meeker, nor dost yield a jot
 To evil circumstance, preparing still
 To swell the account of grief with other griefs
 Than what are borne. Beseech thee, use me then
 For counsel: do not spurn against the pricks,—
 Seeing that who reigns, reigns by cruelty
 Instead of right. And now, I go from hence,
 And will endeavour if a power of mine
 Can break thy fetters through. For thee,—be calm,
 And smooth thy words from passion. Knowest thou not
 Of perfect knowledge, thou who knowest too much,
 That where the tongue wags, ruin never lags?

Prometheus. I congratulate thee, who hast shared and **dared**
 All things with me, except their penalty!

Enough so ! leave these thoughts. It cannot be
That thou shouldst move HIM. HE may *not* be moved ;
And *thou*, beware of sorrow on this road.

Oceanus. Ay ! ever wiser for another's use
Than thine ! the event, and not the prophecy,
Attests it to me. Yet where now I rush,
Thy wisdom hath no power to drag me back ;
Because I glory, glory, to go hence
And win for thee deliverance from thy pangs,
As a free gift from Zeus.

Prometheus. Why there, again,
I give thee gratulation and applause !
Thou lackest no goodwill. But, as for deeds,
Do nought ! 'twere all done vainly ; helping nought,
Whatever thou wouldst do. Rather take rest
And keep thyself from evil. If I grieve,
I do not therefore wish to multiply
The griefs of others. Verily, not so !
For still my brother's doom doth vex my soul,—
My brother Atlas, standing in the west,
Shouldering the column of the heaven and earth,
A difficult burden ! I have also seen,
And pitied as I saw, the earth-born one,
The inhabitant of old Cilician caves,
The great war-monster of the hundred heads
(All taken and bowed beneath the violent Hand),
Typhon the fierce, who did resist the gods,
And, hissing slaughter from his dreadful jaws,
Flash out ferocious glory from his eyes
As if to storm the throne of Zeus. Whereat,
The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew straight at him,
The headlong bolt of thunder breathing flame,
And struck him downward from his eminence
Of exultation ; through the very soul,
It struck him, and his strength was withered up

To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now, he lies
 A helpless trunk supinely, at full length
 Beside the strait of ocean, spurred into
 By roots of Ætna; high upon whose tops
 Hephæstus sits and strikes the flashing ore.
 From thence the rivers of fire shall burst away
 Hereafter, and devour with savage jaws
 The equal plains of fruitful Sicily,
 Such passion he shall boil back in hot darts
 Of an insatiate fury and sough of flame,—
 Fallen Typhon,—howsoever struck and charred
 By Zeus's bolted thunder. But for thee,
 Thou art not so unlearned as to need
 My teaching—let thy knowledge save thyself.
 I quaff the full cup of a present doom,
 And wait till Zeus hath quenched his will in wrath.

Oceanus. Prometheus, art thou ignorant of this,
 That words do medicine anger?

Prometheus. If the word
 With seasonable softness touch the soul,
 And, where the parts are ulcerous, sear them not
 By any rudeness.

Oceanus. With a noble aim
 To dare as nobly—is there harm in *that*?
 Dost thou discern it? Teach me.

Prometheus. I discern
 Vain aspiration, unresultive work.

Oceanus. Then suffer me to bear the brunt of this!
 Since it is profitable that one who is wise
 Should seem not wise at all.

Prometheus. And such would seem
 My very crime.

Oceanus. In truth thine argument
 Sends me back home.

Prometheus. Lest any lament for me

Should cast thee down to hate.

Oceanus.

The hate of Him

Who sits, a new king, on the absolute throne?

Prometheus. Beware of him, lest thine heart grieve by him.

Oceanus. Thy doom, Prometheus, be my teacher!

Prometheus.

Go!

Depart—beware!—and keep the mind thou hast.

Oceanus. Thy words drive after, as I rush before—

Lo! my four-footed bird sweeps smooth and wide

The flats of air with balanced pinions, glad

To bend his knee at home in the ocean-stall.

[OCEANUS *departs.*

Chorus, 1st Strophe.

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,

Prometheus! From my eyes too tender,

Drop after drop incessantly,

The tears of my heart's pity render

My cheeks wet from their fountains free;

Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,

Whose law is taken from his breast,

Uplifts his sceptre manifest

Over the gods of old.

1st Antistrophe.

All the land is moaning

With a murmured plaint to-day!

All the mortal nations,

Having habitations

In the holy Asia,

Are a dirge entoning

For thine honour and thy brothers',

Once majestic beyond others

In the old belief,—

Now are groaning in the groaning
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

2nd Strophe.

Mourn the maids inhabitant
Of the Colchian land,
Who with white, calm bosoms stand
In the battle's roar :
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt
The verge of earth, Mæotis' shore—

2nd Antistrophe.

Yea ! Arabia's battle-crown,
And dwellers in the beetling town
Mount Caucasus sublimely nears,—
An iron squadron, thundering down
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before, have I seen to remain
By invincible pain
Bound and vanquished,—one Titan ! 'twas Atlas, who bears,
In a curse from the gods, by that strength of his own
Which he evermore wears,
The weight of the heaven on his shoulder alone,
While he sighs up the stars ;
And the tides of the ocean wail bursting their bars,—
Murmurs still the profound,—
And black Hades roars up through the chasm of the ground,
And the fountains of pure-running rivers moan low
In a pathos of woe.

Prometheus. Beseech you, think not I am silent thus
Through pride or scorn ! I only gnaw my heart
With meditation, seeing myself so wronged !

For see—their honours to these new-made gods,
What other gave but I,—and dealt them out
With distribution? Ay—but here I am dumb!
For here, I should repeat your knowledge to you,
If I spake aught. List rather to the deeds
I did for mortals; how, being fools before,
I made them wise and true in aim of soul!
And let me tell you—not as taunting men,
But teaching you the intention of my gifts;
How, first beholding, they beheld in vain,
And hearing, heard not, but, like shapes in dreams,
Mixed all things wildly down the tedious time,
Nor knew to build a house against the sun
With wicketed sides, nor any woodcraft knew;
But lived, like silly ants, beneath the ground
In hollow caves unsunned. There, came to them
No steadfast sign of winter, nor of spring
Flower-perfumed, nor of summer full of fruit,—
But blindly and lawlessly they did all things,
Until I taught them how the stars do rise
And set in mystery, and devised for them
Number, the inducer of philosophies,
The synthesis of Letters, and, beside,
The artificer of all things, Memory,
That sweet Muse-mother. I was first to yoke
The servile beasts in couples, carrying
An heirdom of man's burdens on their backs!
I joined to chariots, steeds, that love the bit
They champ at—the chief pomp of golden ease!
And none but I originated ships,
The seaman's chariots, wandering on the brine
With linen wings. And I—oh, miserable!—
Who did devise for mortals all these arts,
Have no device left now to save myself
From the woe I suffer!

Chorus. Most unseemly woe
 Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from the sense,
 Bewildered! like a bad leech falling sick,
 Thou art faint at soul, and canst not find the drugs
 Required to save thyself.

Prometheus. Harken the rest,
 And marvel further—what more arts and means
 I did invent,—this, greatest: if a man
 Fell sick, there was no cure, nor esculent,
 Nor chrysm, nor liquid; but, for lack of drugs,
 Men pined and wasted, till I showed them all
 Those mixtures of emollient remedies
 Whereby they might be rescued from disease.
 I fixed the various rules of mantic art,
 Discerned the vision from the common dream,
 Instructed them in vocal auguries
 Hard to interpret; and defined as plain
 The wayside omens,—flights of crook-clawed birds,—
 Showed which are, by their nature, fortunate,
 And which not so, and what the food of each,
 And what the hates, affections, social needs,
 Of all to one another,—taught what sign
 Of visceral lightness, coloured to a shade,
 May charm the genial gods, and what fair spots
 Commend the lung and liver. Burning so,
 The limbs encased in fat, and the long chine,
 I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,
 And cleared their eyes to the image in the fire,
 Erst filmed in dark. Enough said now of this.
 For the other helps of man hid underground,
 The iron and the brass, silver and gold,
 Can any dare affirm he found them out
 Before me? None, I know! unless he choose
 To lie in his vault. In one word learn the whole,—
 That all arts came to mortals from Prometheus.

Chorus. Give mortals now no inexpedient help,
Neglecting thine own sorrow. I have hope still
To see thee, breaking from the fetter here,
Stand up as strong as Zeus.

Prometheus. This ends not thus,
The oracular Fate ordains. I must be bowed
By infinite woes and pangs, to escape this chain.
Necessity is stronger than mine art.

Chorus. Who holds the helm of that Necessity?

Prometheus. The threefold Fates and the unforgetting
Furies.

Chorus. Is Zeus less absolute than these are?

Prometheus. Yea,
And therefore cannot fly what is ordained.

Chorus. What is ordained for Zeus, except to be
A king for ever?

Prometheus. 'Tis too early yet
For thee to learn it: ask no more.

Chorus. Perhaps
Thy secret may be something holy?

Prometheus. Turn
To another matter: this, it is not time
To speak abroad, but utterly to veil
In silence. For by that same secret kept,
I 'scape this chain's dishonour and its woe.

Chorus, 1st Strophe.

Never, oh never,
May Zeus, the All-giver,
Wrestle down from his throne
In that might of his own
To antagonise mine!
Nor let me delay
As I bend on my way
Toward the gods of the shrine,

Where the altar is full
 Of the blood of the bull,
 Near the tossing brine
 Of Ocean my father.
 May no sin be sped in the word that is said,
 But my vow be rather
 Consummated,
 Nor evermore fail, nor evermore pine.

1st Antistrophe.

'Tis sweet to have
 Life lengthened out
 With hopes proved brave
 By the very doubt,
 Till the spirit enfold
 Those manifest joys which were foretold.
 But I thrill to behold
 Thee, victim doomed,
 By the countless cares
 And the drear despairs
 For ever consumed,—
 And all because thou, who art fearless now
 Of Zeus above,
 Didst overflow, for mankind below,
 With a free-souled, reverent love.

Ah friend, behold and see!
 What's all the beauty of humanity?
 Can it be fair?
 What's all the strength?—is it strong?
 And what hope can they bear,
 These dying livers—living one day long?
 Ah, seest thou not, my friend,
 How feeble and slow
 And like a dream, doth go

This poor blind manhood, drifted from its end?
 And how no mortal wranglings can confuse
 The harmony of Zeus?

Prometheus, I have learnt these things
 From the sorrow in thy face!
 Another song did fold its wings
 Upon my lips in other days,—
 When round the bath and round the bed
 The hymeneal chant instead
 I sang for thee, and smiled,—
 And thou didst lead, with gifts and vows
 Hesione, my father's child,
 To be thy wedded spouse.

Io enters.

Io. What land is this? what people is here?
 And who is he that writhes, I see,
 In the rock-hung chain?
 Now what is the crime that hath brought thee to pain?
 Now what is the land—make answer free—
 Which I wander through, in my wrong and fear?
 Ah! ah! ah me!
 The gad-fly stingeth to agony!
 O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale
 Of earth-born Argus!—ah!—I quail
 When my soul descries
 That herdsman with the myriad eyes
 Which seem, as he comes, one crafty eye.
 Graves hide him not, though he should die,—
 But he doggeth me in my misery
 From the roots of death, on high—on high—
 And along the sands of the siding deep,
 All famine-worn, he follows me,

And his waxen reed doth undersound
 The waters round,
 And giveth a measure that giveth sleep.

Woe, woe, woe!

Where shall my weary course be done?
 What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's son?
 And in what have I sinned, that I should go
 Thus yoked to grief by thine hand for ever!

Ah! ah! dost vex me so,
 That I madden and shiver,
 Stung through with dread?
 Flash the fire down, to burn me!
 Heave the earth up, to cover me!

Or plunge me in the deep, with the salt waves over me,
 That the sea-beasts may be fed!

O king, do not spurn me

In my prayer!

For this wandering everlonger, evermore,

Hath overworn me,

And I know not on what shore

I may rest from my despair.

Chorus. Hearest thou what the ox-horned maiden saith?

Prometheus. How could I choose but hearken what she
 saith,

The phrensied maiden?—Inachus's child?—

Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and now is lashed

By Heré's hate along the unending ways?

Io. Who taught thee to articulate that name,—

My father's? Speak to his child

By grief and shame defiled!

Who art thou, victim, thou who dost acclaim

Mine anguish in true words on the wide air,

And callest too by name the curse that came
 From Heré unaware,
 To waste and pierce me with its maddening goad?
 Ah— ah—I leap
 With the pang of the hungry—I bound on the road—
 I am driven by my doom—
 I am overcome
 By the wrath of an enemy strong and deep!
 Are any of those who have tasted pain,
 Alas! as wretched as I?
 Now tell me plain, doth aught remain
 For my soul to endure beneath the sky?
 Is there any help to be holpen by?
 If knowledge be in thee, let it be said!
 Cry aloud—cry
 To the wandering, woeful maid.

Prometheus. Whatever thou wouldst learn I will declare,—
 No riddle upon my lips, but such straight words
 As friends should use to each other when they talk.
 Thou seest Prometheus, who gave mortals fire.

Io. O common Help of all men, known of all,
 O miserable Prometheus,—for what cause
 Dost thou endure thus?

Prometheus. I have done with wail
 For my own griefs—but lately—

Io. Wilt thou not
 Vouchsafe the boon to me?

Prometheus. Say what thou wilt,
 For I vouchsafe all.

Io. Speak then, and reveal
 Who shut thee in this chasm.

Prometheus. The will of Zeus,
 The hand of his Hephæstus.

Io. And what crime

Dost expiate so?

Prometheus. Enough for thee I have told
In so much only.

Io. Nay, but show besides
The limit of my wandering, and the time
Which yet is lacking to fulfil my grief.

Prometheus. Why, not to know were better than to know
For such as thou.

Io. Beseech thee, blind me not
To that which I must suffer.

Prometheus. If I do,
The reason is not that I grudge a boon.

Io. What reason, then, prevents thy speaking out?

Prometheus. No grudging; but a fear to break thine heart.

Io. Less care for me, I pray thee. Certainty
I count for advantage.

Prometheus. Thou wilt have it so
And, therefore, I must speak. Now hear—

Chorus. Not yet!

Give half the guerdon my way. Let us learn
First, what the curse is that befell the maid,—
Her own voice telling her own wasting woes:
The sequence of that anguish shall await
The teaching of thy lips.

Prometheus. It doth behove
That thou, Maid Io, shouldst vouchsafe to these
The grace they pray,—the more, because they are called
Thy father's sisters: since to open out
And mourn out grief where it is possible
To draw a tear from the audience, is a work
That pays its own price well.

Io. I cannot choose
But trust you, nymphs, and tell you all ye ask,
In clear words—though I sob amid my speech
In speaking of the storm-curse sent from Zeus,

And of my beauty, from which height it took
Its swoop on me, poor wretch ! left thus deformed
And monstrous to your eyes. For evermore
Around my virgin-chamber, wandering went
The nightly visions which entreated me
With syllabled smooth sweetness.—“ Blessed maid,
Why lengthen out thy maiden hours, when fate
Permits the noblest spousal in the world ?
When Zeus burns with the arrow of thy love,
And fain would touch thy beauty ?—Maiden, thou
Despise not Zeus ! depart to Lerne’s mead
That’s green around thy father’s flocks and stalls,
Until the passion of the heavenly Eye
Be quenched in sight.” Such dreams did, all night long,
Constrain me—me, unhappy !—till I dared
To tell my father how they trod the dark
With visionary steps. Whereat he sent
His frequent heralds to the Pythian fane,
And also to Dodona, and inquired
How best, by act or speech, to please the gods.
The same returning brought back oracles
Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,
Dark to interpret ; but at last there came
To Inachus an answer that was clear,—
Thrown straight as any bolt, and spoken out—
This—“ he should drive me from my home and land
And bid me wander to the extreme verge
Of all the earth—or, if he willed it not,
Should have a thunder, with a fiery eye,
Leap straight from Zeus, to burn up all his race,
To the last root of it.” By which Loxian word
Subdued, he drove me forth and shut me out,
He loth, me loth,—but Zeus’s violent bit
Compelled him to the deed : when instantly
My body and soul were changed and distraught,

And, hornèd as ye see, and spurred along
 By the fanged insect, with a maniac leap
 I rushed on to Cerchnea's limpid stream
 And Lerne's fountain-water. There, the earth-born,
 The herdsman Argus, most immitigable
 Of wrath, did find me out, and track me out
 With countless eyes set staring at my steps :
 And though an unexpected sudden doom
 Drew him from life, I, curse-tormented still,
 And driven from land to land before the scourge
 The gods hold o'er me. So thou hast heard the past,
 And if a bitter future thou canst tell,
 Speak on. I charge thee, do not flatter me
 Through pity, with false words ; for, in my mind,
 Deceiving works more shame than torturing doth.

Chorus.

Ah ! silence here !
 Nevermore, nevermore
 Would I languish for
 The stranger's word
 To thrill in mine ear—

Nevermore for the wrong and the woe and the fear
 So hard to behold,
 So cruel to bear,
 Piercing my soul with a double-edged sword
 Of a sliding cold.
 Ah Fate ! ah me !
 I shudder to see

This wandering maid in her agony.

Prometheus. Grief is too quick in thee, and fear too full :
 Be patient till thou hast learnt the rest.

Chorus. Speak ! teach—
 To those who are sad already, it seems sweet,

By clear foreknowledge to make perfect, pain.

Prometheus. The boon ye asked me first was lightly won,—
 For first ye asked the story of this maid's grief
 As her own lips might tell it. Now remains
 To list what other sorrows she so young
 Must bear from Heré!—Inachus's child,
 O thou!—drop down thy soul my weighty words,
 And measure out the landmarks which are set
 To end thy wandering! Toward the orient sun
 First turn thy face from mine and journey on
 Along the desert flats till thou shalt come
 Where Scythia's shepherd peoples dwell aloft,
 Perched in wheeled waggons under woven roofs,
 And twang the rapid arrow past the bow—
 Approach them not; but, siding in thy course,
 The rugged shore-rocks resonant to the sea,
 Depart that country. On the left hand dwell
 The iron-workers, called the Chalybes,
 Of whom beware! for certes they are uncouth
 And nowise bland to strangers. Reaching so
 The stream Hybristes (well the *scorner* called),
 Attempt no passage,—it is hard to pass,—
 Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,
 That highest of mountains, where the river leaps
 The precipice in his strength. Thou must toil up
 Those mountain-tops that neighbour with the stars,
 And tread the south way, and draw near, at last,
 The Amazonian host that hateth man,
 Inhabitants of Themiscyra, close
 Upon Thermodon, where the sea's rough jaw
 Doth gnash at Salmydessa and provide
 A cruel host to seamen, and to ships
 A stepdame. They with unreluctant hand
 Shall lead thee on and on, till thou arrive
 Just where the ocean-gates show narrowest

On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leaving which,
Behoves thee swim with fortitude of soul
The strait Mæotis. Ay, and evermore
That traverse shall be famous on men's lips,
That strait, called Bosphorus, the horned one's road,
So named because of thee, who so wilt pass
From Europe's plain to Asia's continent.
How think ye, nymphs? the king of gods appears
Impartial in ferocious deeds? Behold!
The god desirous of this mortal's love
Hath cursed her with these wanderings. Ah, fair child,
Thou hast met a bitter groom for bridal troth!
For all thou yet hast heard, can only prove
The incompleated prelude of thy doom.

Io. Ah, Ah!

Prometheus. Is't thy turn, now, to shriek and moan?
How wilt thou, when thou hast hearkened what remains?

Chorus. Besides the grief thou hast told, can aught
remain?

Prometheus. A sea—of foredoomed evil worked to storm.

Io. What boots my life, then? why not cast myself
Down headlong from this miserable rock,
That, dashed against the flats, I may redeem
My soul from sorrow? Better once to die,
Than day by day to suffer.

Prometheus. Verily,
It would be hard for thee to bear my woe,
For whom it is appointed not to die.
Death frees from woe: but I before me see
In all my far prevision not a bound
To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall
From being a king.

Io. And can it ever be
That Zeus shall fall from empire?

Prometheus. *Thou, methinks,*

Wouldst take some joy to see it.

Io. Could I choose?

I who endure such pangs now, by that god!

Prometheus. Learn from me, therefore, that the event shall be.

Io. By whom shall his imperial sceptred hand
Be emptied so?

Prometheus. Himself shall spoil himself,
Through his idiotic counsels.

Io. How? declare:
Unless the word bring evil.

Prometheus. He shall wed;
And in the marriage-bond be joined to grief.

Io. A heavenly bride—or human? Speak it out,
If it be utterable.

Prometheus. Why should I say which?
It ought not to be uttered, verily.

Io. Then,
It is his wife shall tear him from his throne?

Prometheus. It is his wife shall bear a son to him,
More mighty than the father.

Io. From this doom
Hath he no refuge?

Prometheus. None—or ere that I,
Loosed from these fetters—

Io. Yea—but who shall loose
While Zeus is adverse?

Prometheus. One who is born of thee—
It is ordained so.

Io. What is this thou sayest?—
A son of mine shall liberate thee from woe?

Prometheus. After ten generations, count three more,
And find him in the third.

Io. The oracle
Remains obscure.

Prometheus. And search it not, to learn
Thine own griefs from it.

Io. Point me not to a good,
To leave me straight bereaved.

Prometheus. I am prepared
To grant thee one of two things.

Io. But which two?
Set them before me; grant me power to choose.

Prometheus. I grant it; choose now: shall I name aloud
What griefs remain to wound thee, or what hand
Shall save me out of mine?

Chorus. Vouchsafe, O god,
The one grace of the twain to her who prays;
The next to me; and turn back neither prayer
Dishonour'd by denial. To herself
Recount the future wandering of her feet;
Then point me to the looser of thy chain,
Because I yearn to know him.

Prometheus. Since ye will,
Of absolute will, this knowledge, I will set
No contrary against it, nor keep back
A word of all ye ask for. Io, first
To thee I must relate thy wandering course
Far winding. As I tell it, write it down
In thy soul's book of memories. When thou hast past
The reflux bound that parts two continents,
Track on the footsteps of the orient sun
In his own fire, across the roar of seas,—
Fly till thou hast reached the Gorgonæan flats
Beside Cisthene. There, the Phorcides,
Three ancient maidens, live, with shape of swan,
One tooth between them, and one common eye,
On whom the sun doth never look at all
With all his rays, nor evermore the moon
When she looks through the night. Anear to whom

Are the Gorgon sisters three, en clothed with wings,
 With twisted snakes for ringlets, man-abhorred :
 There is no mortal gazes in their face
 And gazing can breathe on. I speak of such
 To guard thee from their horror. Ay, and list
 Another tale of a dreadful sight ; beware
 The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of Zeus,
 Those sharp-mouthed dogs !—and the Arimaspians host
 Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting beside
 The river of Pluto that runs bright with gold :
 Approach them not, beseech thee. Presently
 Thou'lt come to a distant land, a dusky tribe
 Of dwellers at the fountain of the Sun,
 Whence flows the river Æthiops ; wind along
 Its banks and turn off at the cataracts,
 Just as the Nile pours from the Byblin hills
 His holy and sweet wave ; his course shall guide
 Thine own to that triangular Nile-ground
 Where, Io, is ordained for thee and thine
 A lengthened exile. Have I said, in this,
 Aught darkly or incompletely ?—now repeat
 The question, make the knowledge fuller ! Lo,
 I have more leisure than I covet, here.

Chorus. If thou canst tell us aught that's left untold,
 Or loosely told, of her most dreary flight,
 Declare it straight ! but if thou hast uttered all,
 Grant us that latter grace for which we prayed,
 Remembering how we prayed it.

Prometheus. She has heard
 The uttermost of her wandering. There it ends.
 But that she may be certain not to have heard
 All vainly, I will speak what she endured
 Ere coming hither, and invoke the past
 To prove my prescience true. And so—to leave
 A multitude of words and pass at once

To the subject of thy course—when thou hadst gone
To those Molossian plains which sweep around
Dodona shouldering Heaven, whereby the fane
Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle,—
And, wonder past belief, where oaks do wave
Articulate adjurations—(ay, the same
Saluted thee in no perplexèd phrase
But clear with glory, noble wife of Zeus
That shouldst be,—there some sweetness took thy sense !)
Thou didst rush further onward, stung along
The ocean-shore, toward Rhea's mighty bay,—
And, tost back from it, wast tost to it again
In stormy evolution !—and, know well,
In coming time that hollow of the sea
Shall bear the name Ionian and present
A monument of Io's passage through,
Unto all mortals. Be these words the signs
Of my soul's power to look beyond the veil
Of visible things. The rest, to you and her,
I will declare in common audience, nymphs,
Returning thither where my speech brake off.
There is a town Canobus, built upon
The earth's fair margin at the mouth of Nile
And on the mound washed up by it ; Io, there
Shall Zeus give back to thee thy perfect mind,
And only by the pressure and the touch
Of a hand not terrible ; and thou to Zeus
Shalt bear a dusky son who shall be called
Thence, Epaphus, *Touched*. That son shall pluck the fruit
Of all that land wide-watered by the flow
Of Nile ; but after him, when counting out
As far as the fifth full generation, then
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,
To fly the proffered nuptials of their kin,

Their father's brothers. These being passion-struck,
 Like falcons bearing hard on flying doves,
 Shall follow, hunting at a quarry of love
 They should not hunt ; till envious Heaven maintain
 A curse betwixt that beauty and their desire,
 And Greece receive them, to be overcome
 In murderous woman-war, by fierce red hands
 Kept savage by the night. For every wife
 Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep in blood
 The sword of a double edge—(I wish indeed
 As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes !)
 One bride alone shall fail to smite to death
 The head upon her pillow, touched with love,
 Made impotent of purpose and impelled
 To choose the lesser evil,—shame on her cheeks,
 Than blood-guilt on her hands : which bride shall bear
 A royal race in Argos. Tedious speech
 Were needed to relate particulars
 Of these things—'tis enough that from her seed
 Shall spring the strong He, famous with the bow,
 Whose arm shall break my fetters off. Behold,
 My mother Themis, that old Titaness,
 Delivered to me such an oracle,—
 But how and when, I should be long to speak,
 And thou, in hearing, wouldst not gain at all.

Io.

Eleleu, eleleu !

How the spasm and the pain,
 And the fire on the brain,

Strike, burning me through .

How the sting of the curse, all aflame as it flew,
 Pricks me onward again !

How my heart, in its terror, is spurning my breast,
 And my eyes, like the wheels of a chariot, roll round !
 I am whirled from my course, to the east, to the west,

In the whirlwind of phrensy all madly inwound—
 And my mouth is unbridled for anguish and hate,
 And my words beat in vain, in wild storms of unrest,
 On the sea of my desolate fate.

[*Io rushes out.*

Chorus,—Strophe.

Oh, wise was he, oh, wise was he
 Who first within his spirit knew,
 And with his tongue declared it true,
 That love comes best that comes unto
 The equal of degree!
 And that the poor and that the low
 Should seek no love from those above,
 Whose souls are fluttered with the flow
 Of airs about their golden height,
 Or proud because they see arow
 Ancestral crowns of light.

Antistrophe.

Oh, never, never may ye, Fates,
 Behold me with your awful eyes
 Lift mine too fondly up the skies
 Where Zeus upon the purple waits!
 Nor let me step too near—too near
 To any suitor, bright from heaven:
 Because I see, because I fear
 This loveless maiden vexed and laden
 By this fell curse of Heré, driven
 On wanderings dread and drear.

Epode.

Nay, grant an equal troth instead
 Of nuptial love, to bind me by!

It will not hurt—I shall not dread
 To meet it in reply.
 But let not love from those above
 Revert and fix me, as I said,
 With that inevitable Eye!
 I have no sword to fight that fight,
 I have no strength to tread that path,
 I know not if my nature hath
 The power to bear,—I cannot see
 Whither, from Zeus's infinite,
 I have the power to flee.

Prometheus. Yet Zeus, albeit most absolute of will
 Shall turn to meekness,—such a marriage-rite
 He holds in preparation, which anon
 Shall thrust him headlong from his gerent seat
 Adown the abysmal void, and so the curse
 His father Chronos muttered in his fall,
 As he fell from his ancient throne and cursed,
 Shall be accomplished wholly. No escape
 From all that ruin shall the filial Zeus
 Find granted to him from any of his gods,
 Unless I teach him. I the refuge know,
 And I, the means. Now, therefore, let him sit
 And brave the imminent doom, and fix his faith
 On his supernal noises, hurtling on
 With restless hand the bolt that breathes out fire;
 For these things shall not help him, none of them,
 Nor hinder his perdition when he falls
 To shame, and lower than patience: such a foe
 He doth himself prepare against himself,
 A wonder of unconquerable hate,
 An organiser of sublimer fire
 Than glares in lightnings, and of grander sound
 Than aught the thunder rolls, out-thundering it,
 With power to shatter in Poseidon's fist

The trident-spear which, while it plagues the sea,
Doth shake the shores around it. Ay, and Zeus,
Precipitated thus, shall learn at length

The difference betwixt rule and servitude.

Chorus. Thou makest threats for Zeus of thy desires.

Prometheus. I tell you, all these things shall be fulfilled
Even so as I desire them.

Chorus. Must we then

Look out for one shall come to master Zeus?

Prometheus. These chains weigh lighter than his sorrows
shall.

Chorus. How art thou not afraid to utter such words?

Prometheus. What should I fear, who cannot die?

Chorus.

But he

Can visit thee with dreader woe than death's.

Prometheus. Why, let him do it! I am here, prepared
For all things and their pangs.

Chorus.

The wise are they

Who reverence Adrasteia.

Prometheus. Reverence thou,

Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever reigns,

Whenever reigning! but for me, your Zeus

Is less than nothing. Let him act and reign

His brief hour out according to his will—

He will not, therefore, rule the gods too long.

But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,

That new-made menial of the new-crowned king;

He doubtless comes to announce to us something new.

HERMES enters.

Hermes. I speak to thee, the sophist, the talker down

Of scorn by scorn, the sinner against gods,

The reverencer of men, the thief of fire,—

I speak to thee and adjure thee! Zeus requires

Thy declaration of what marriage-rite
 Thus moves thy vaunt and shall hereafter cause
 His fall from empire. Do not wrap thy speech
 In riddles, but speak clearly! Never cast
 Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for my feet,
 Since Zeus, thou may'st perceive, is scarcely won
 To mercy by such means.

Prometheus. A speech well-mouthed
 In the utterance, and full-minded in the sense,
 As doth befit a servant of the gods!
 New gods, ye newly reign, and think forsooth
 Ye dwell in towers too high for any dart
 To carry a wound there!—have I not stood by
 While two kings fell from thence? and shall I not
 Behold the third, the same who rules you now,
 Fall, shamed to sudden ruin?—Do I seem
 To tremble and quail before your modern gods?
 Far be it from me!—For thyself, depart,
 Re-tread thy steps in haste. To all thou hast asked
 I answer nothing.

Hermes. Such a wind of pride
 Impelled thee of yore full sail upon these rocks.

Prometheus. I would not barter—learn thou soothly that!
 My suffering for thy service. I maintain
 It is a nobler thing to serve these rocks
 Than live a faithful slave to father Zeus.
 Thus upon scorners I retort their scorn.

Hermes. It seems that thou dost glory in thy despair.

Prometheus. I glory? would my foes did glory so,
 And I stood by to see them!—naming whom,
 Thou art not unremembered.

Hermes. Dost thou charge
 Me also with the blame of thy mischance?

Prometheus. I tell thee I loathe the universal gods,
 Who for the good I gave them rendered back

The ill of their injustice.

Hermes. Thou art mad—
Thou art raving, Titan, at the fever-height.

Prometheus. If it be madness to abhor my foes,
May I be mad!

Hermes. If thou wert prosperous
Thou wouldst be unendurable.

Prometheus. Alas!

Hermes. Zeus knows not that word.

Prometheus. But maturing Time
Teaches all things.

Hermes. Howbeit, thou hast not learnt
The wisdom yet, thou needest.

Prometheus. If I had,
I should not talk thus with a slave like thee.

Hermes. No answer thou vouchsafest, I believe,
To the great Sire's requirement.

Prometheus. Verily
I owe him grateful service,—and should pay it.

Hermes. Why, thou dost mock me, Titan, as I stood
A child before thy face.

Prometheus. No child, forsooth,
But yet more foolish than a foolish child,
If thou expect that I should answer aught
Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from his hand
Nor any machination in the world
Shall force mine utterance ere he loose, himself,
These cankerous fetters from me. For the rest,
Let him now hurl his blanching lightnings down,
And with his white-winged snows and mutterings deep
Of subterranean thunders mix all things,
Confound them in disorder. None of this
Shall bend my sturdy will and make me speak
The name of his dethroner who shall come.

Hermes. Can this avail thee? Look to it!

Prometheus.

Long ago

It was looked forward to, precounselled of.

Hermes. Vain god, take righteous courage! dare
once

To apprehend and front thine agonies
With a just prudence.

Prometheus. Vainly dost thou chafe

My soul with exhortation, as yonder sea
Goes beating on the rock. Oh, think no more
That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a woman's mind,
Will supplicate him, loathèd as he is,
With feminine upliftings of my hands,
To break these chains. Far from me be the thought!

Hermes. I have indeed, methinks, said much in vain,
For still thy heart, beneath my showers of prayers,
Lies dry and hard—nay, leaps like a young horse
Who bites against the new bit in his teeth,
And tugs and struggles against the new-tried rein,—
Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of all,
Which sophism is; since absolute will disjoined
From perfect mind is worse than weak. Behold,
Unless my words persuade thee, what a blast
And whirlwind of inevitable woe
Must sweep persuasion through thee! For at first
The Father will split up this jut of rock
With the great thunder and the bolted flame,
And hide thy body where a hinge of stone
Shall catch it like an arm; and when thou hast passed
A long black time within, thou shalt come out
To front the sun while Zeus's winged hound,
The strong carnivorous eagle, shall wheel down
To meet thee, self-called to a daily feast,
And set his fierce beak in thee and tear off
The long rags of thy flesh and batten deep
Upon thy dusky liver. Do not look

For any end, moreover, to this curse,
 Or ere some god appear, to accept thy pangs
 On his own head vicarious, and descend
 With unreluctant step the darks of hell
 And gloomy abysses around Tartarus.
 Then ponder this—this threat is not a growth
 Of vain invention ; it is spoken and meant ;
 King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,
 Consummating the utterance by the act ;
 So, look to it, thou ! take heed, and nevermore
 Forget good counsel, to indulge self-will !

Chorus. Our Hermes suits his reasons to the times ;
 At least I think so, since he bids thee drop
 Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield to him !
 When the wise err, their wisdom makes their shame.

Prometheus. Unto me the foreknower, this mandate of
 power,

He cries, to reveal it.

What's strange in my fate, if I suffer from hate
 At the hour that I feel it ?

Let the locks of the lightning, all bristling and whitening,
 Flash, coiling me round,

While the æther goes surging 'neath thunder and scourging
 Of wild winds unbound !

Let the blast of the firmament whirl from its place
 The earth rooted below,—

And the brine of the ocean, in rapid emotion,
 Be driven in the face

Of the stars up in heaven, as they walk to and fro !

Let him hurl me anon into Tartarus—on—

To the blackest degree,

With Necessity's vortices strangling me down ;

But he cannot join death to a fate meant for *me* !

Hermes. Why, the words that he speaks and the thoughts
 that he thinks

Are maniacal!—add,
If the Fate who hath bound him should loose not the
links,

He were utterly mad.

Then depart ye who groan with him,

Leaving to moan with him,—

Go in haste! lest the roar of the thunder anearing.

Should blast you to idiocy, living and hearing.

Chorus. Change thy speech for another, thy thought for
a new,

If to move me and teach me indeed be thy care!

For thy words swerve so far from the loyal and true,

That the thunder of Zeus seems more easy to bear.

How! couldst teach me to venture such vileness? behold!

I choose, with this victim, this anguish foretold!

I recoil from the traitor in hate and disdain,

And I know that the curse of the treason is worse

Than the pang of the chain.

Hermes. Then remember, O nymphs, what I tell you
before,

Nor, when pierced by the arrows that Até will throw you

Cast blame on your fate and declare evermore.

That Zeus thrust you on anguish he did not foreshow you

Nay, verily, nay! for ye perish anon

For your deed—by your choice. By no blindness of doubt

No abruptness of doom, but by madness alone,

In the great net of Até, whence none cometh out,

Ye are wound and undone.

Prometheus. Ay! in act now, in word now no more,

Earth is rocking in space.

And the thunders crash up with a roar upon roar,

And the eddying lightnings flash fire in my face,

And the whirlwinds are whirling the dust round and round

And the blasts of the winds universal leap free

And blow each upon each with a passion of sound,

And æther goes mingling in storm with the sea.
 Such a curse on my head, in a manifest dread,
 From the hand of your Zeus has been hurtled along.
 O my mother's fair glory ! O Æther, enringing
 All eyes with the sweet common light of thy bringing !
 Dost see how I suffer this wrong ?

A LAMENT FOR ADONIS.

FROM THE GREEK OF BION.

I.

I MOURN for Adonis—Adonis is dead,
 Fair Adonis is dead and the Loves are lamenting.
 Sleep, Cypris, no more on thy purple-strewed bed :
 Arise, wretch stoled in black ; beat thy breast unrelenting,
 And shriek to the worlds, " Fair Adonis is dead."

II.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.
 He lies on the hills in his beauty and death ;
 The white tusk of a boar has transpierced his white thigh.
 Cytherea grows mad at his thin gasping breath,
 While the black blood drips down on the pale ivory,
 And his eyeballs lie quenched with the weight of his
 brows,
 The rose fades from his lips, and upon them just parted
 The kiss dies the goddess consents not to lose,
 Though the kiss of the Dead cannot make her glad-hearted :
 He knows not who kisses him dead in the dews.

III.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.
 Deep, deep in the thigh is Adonis's wound,

But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom presenting.

The youth lieth dead while his dogs howl around,
 And the nymphs weep aloud from the mists of the hill,
 And the poor Aphrodité, with tresses unbound,
 All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks mournful and shrill
 Through the dusk of the groves. The thorns, tearing
 her feet,

Gather up the red flower of her blood, which is holy,
 Each footstep she takes; and the valleys repeat
 The sharp cry she utters, and draw it out slowly.

She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian; on him
 Her own youth, while the dark blood spreads over his
 body,

The chest taking hue from the gash in the limb,
 And the bosom, once ivory, turning to ruddy.

iv.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! the Loves are lamenting.

She lost her fair spouse and so lost her fair smile:
 When he lived she was fair, by the whole world's con-
 senting,

Whose fairness is dead with him: woe worth the while!
 All the mountains above and the oaklands below

Murmur, ah, ah Adonis! the streams overflow
 Aphrodité's deep wail; river-fountains in pity
 Weep soft in the hills; and the flowers, as they blow,
 Redden outward with sorrow, while all hear her go

With the song of her sadness through mountain and
 city.

v.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead,

Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers, Adonis!
 Who weeps not for Cypris, when bowing her head,
 She stares at the wound where it gapes and astonies?

—When, ah, ah!—she saw how the blood ran away
And empurpled the thigh, and, with wild hands flung
out,

Said with sobs, “Stay, Adonis! unhappy one, stay,
Let me feel thee once more, let me ring thee about
With the clasp of my arms, and press kiss into kiss!
Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me again,
For the last time, beloved,—and but so much of this,
That the kiss may learn life from the warmth of the
strain!

—Till thy breath shall exude from thy soul to my mouth,
To my heart, and, the love-charm I once more receiving,
May drink thy love in it and keep, of a truth,
That one kiss in the place of Adonis the living.

Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest me far,
My Adonis, and seekest the Acheron portal,—
To Hell’s cruel King goest down with a scar,
While I weep and live on like a wretched immortal,
And follow no step! O Persephoné, take him,

My husband!—thou’rt better and brighter than I,
So all beauty flows down to thee: *I* cannot make him
Look up at my grief; there’s despair in my cry,
Since I wail for Adonis who died to me—died to me—

Then, I fear *thee!*—Art thou dead, my Adored?
Passion ends like a dream in the sleep that’s denied to me,—
Cypris is widowed, the Loves seek their lord
All the house through in vain. Charm of cestus has
ceased

With thy clasp! O too bold in the hunt past preventing,
Ay, mad, thou so fair, to have strife with a beast!”

Thus the goddess wailed on—and the Loves are
lamenting.

VI.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is dead.

She wept tear after tear with the blood which was shed,

And both turned into flowers for the earth's garden-close,
Her tears, to the wind-flower ; his blood, to the rose.

VII.

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead.

Weep no more in the woods, Cytherea, thy lover !
So, well : make a place for his corse in thy bed,

With the purples thou sleepest in, under and over.
He's fair though a corse—a fair corse, like a sleeper.

Lay him soft in the silks he had pleasure to fold
When, beside thee at night, holy dreams deep and deeper

Enclosed his young life on the couch made of gold.
Love him still, poor Adonis ; cast on him together

The crowns and the flowers : since he died from the place,
Why, let all die with him ; let the blossoms go wither ;

Rain myrtles and olive-buds down on his face.
Rain the myrrh down, let all that is best fall a-pining,

Since the myrrh of his life from thy keeping is swept.
Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples reclining ;

The Loves raised their voices around him and wept.
They have shorn their bright curls off to cast on Adonis ;

One treads on his bow,—on his arrows, another,—
One breaks up a well-feathered quiver, and one is

Bent low at a sandal, untying the strings,
And one carries the vases of gold from the springs,

While one washes the wound,—and behind them a brother
Fans down on the body sweet air with his wings.

VIII.

Cytherea herself, now, the Loves are lamenting.

Each torch at the door Hymenæus blew out ;
And, the marriage-wreath dropping its leaves as repenting,

No more " Hymen, Hymen," is chanted about.
But the *ai ai* instead—" ai alas " is begun

For Adonis, and then follows " ai Hymenæus ! "

The Graces are weeping for Cinyris' son,

Sobbing low each to each, "His fair eyes cannot see us!"

Their wail strikes more shrill than the sadder Dioné's.

The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis, Adonis,

Deep chanting; he hears not a word that they say:

He *would* hear, but Persephoné has him in keeping.

—Cease moan, Cytherea: leave pomps for to-day,

And weep new when a new year refits thee for weeping.

A VISION OF POETS.

A POET could not sleep aright,
For his soul kept up too much light
Under his eyelids for the night.

And thus he rose disquieted,
With sweet rhymes ringing through his head,
And in the forest wanderèd;

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,
The moon had drawn long colonnades
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver: pavement fair,
The antique wood-nymphs scarce would dare
To footprint o'er, had such been there,

And rather sit by breathlessly,
With fear in her large eyes, to see
The consecrated sight. But HE—

The poet who, with spirit-kiss
Familiar, had long claimed for his
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore
A beauty passing the earth's store,
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,
 Like a babe's hand, without intent,
 Drawn down a seven-stringed instrument :

Nor jarred it with his humour, as,
 With a faint stirring of the grass,
 An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,
 But all things fair and strange did chime
 With his thoughts then, as rhyme to rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,
 Alighted from Heaven's burning rim
 To breathe from glory in the Dim—

Much less a lady riding slow
 Upon a palfrey white as snow,
 And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,—
 “What ho, Sir Poet ! dost thou pace
 Our woods at night, in ghostly chase

“Of some fair Dryad of old tales,
 Who chants between the nightingales,
 And over sleep by song prevails ?”

She smiled ; but he could see arise
 Her soul from far adown her eyes,
 Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay
 From royal grace alone. “Now, nay,”
 He answered, “slumber passed away

“Compelled by instincts in my head
That I should see to-night, instead
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread.”

She looked up quickly to the sky,
And spake: “The moon’s regality
Will hear no praise; She is as I.

“She is in heaven, and I on earth;
This is my kingdom: I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.”

He brake in with a voice that mourned—
“To their worth, lady! They are scorned
By men they sing for, till inurned.

“To their worth! Beauty in the mind
Leaves the hearth cold, and love-refined
Ambitions make the world unkind.

“The boor who ploughs the daisy down,
The chief whose mortgage of renown,
Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

“Both these are happier, more approved
Than poets!—why should I be moved
In saying both are more beloved?”

“The south can judge not of the north,”
She resumed calmly; “I come forth
To crown all poets to their worth.

“Yea, verily, to anoint them all
With blessed oils which surely shall
Smell sweeter as the ages fall.”

“As sweet,” the poet said, and rung
A low sad laugh, “as flowers are, sprung
Out of their graves when they die young ;

“As sweet as window-eglantine,
Some bough of which, as they decline,
The hired nurse gathers at their sign :

“As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud
Which the gay Roman maidens sewed
For English Keats, singing aloud.”

The lady answered, “Yea, as sweet !
The things thou namest being complete
In fragrance, as I measure it.

“Since sweet the death-clothes and the knell
Of him who, having lived, dies well ;
And holy sweet the asphodel,

“Stirred softly by that foot of his,
When he treads brave on all that is
Into the world of souls, from this.

“Since sweet the tears, dropped at the door
Of tearless Death,—and even before :
Sweet, consecrated evermore.

“What ! dost thou judge it a strange thing
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,
Should bear some dust from out the ring ?

“Come on with me, come on with me,
And learn in coming : let me free
Thy spirit into verity.”

She ceased : her palfrey's paces sent
No separate noises as she went ;
'Twas a bee's hum, a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread
Along the drowsy noise so made,
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,
And the calm stars did far and fair
O'erswim the masses everywhere :

Save when the overtopping pines
Did bar their tremulous light with lines
All fixed and black. Now the moon shines

A broader glory. You may see
The trees grow rarer presently ;
The air blows up more fresh and free :

Until they come from dark to light,
And from the forest to the sight
Of the large Heaven-heart, bare with night,—

A fiery throb in every star,
Those burning arteries that are
The conduits of God's life afar.

A wild brown moorland underneath,
And four pools breaking up the heath
With white low gleamings, blank as death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,
A dead tree in set horror stood,
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood ;

Since thunder-stricken, years ago,
 Fixed in the spectral strain and throe
 Wherewith it struggled from the blow :

A monumental tree, alone,
 That will not bend in storms, nor groan,
 But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique
 Upon the pool,—where, javelin-like,
 The star-rays quiver while they strike.

“ Drink,” said the lady, very still—
 “ Be holy and cold.” He did her will
 And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto
 Was bare of trees ; there, only grew
 Straight flags, and lilies just a few

Which sullen on the water sate,
 And leant their faces on the flat,
 As weary of the starlight-state.

“ Drink,” said the lady, grave and slow—
 “ *World's use* behoveth thee to know.”
 He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes,
 And flaunting weeds and reeds and rushes
 That winds sang through in mournful gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round
 By a slow slime ; the starlight swound
 Over the ghastly light it found.

“Drink,” said the lady, sad and slow—
 “*World's love* behoveth thee to know.”
 He looked to her, commanding so ;

Her brow was troubled but her eye
 Struck clear to his soul. For all reply
 He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed
 Beside the fourth pool and the last,
 Where weights of shadow were downcast

From yew and alder and rank trails
 Of nightshade clasping the trunk-scales
 And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew : who dares to stoop
 Where those dank branches overdroop,
 Into his heart the chill strikes up ;

He hears a silent, gliding coil—
 The snakes strain hard against the soil,
 His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,
 And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,
 Full in his face their wings expanu.

A paleness took the poet's cheek :
 “Must I drink *here* ?” he seemed to seek
 The lady's will, with utterance meek :

“Ay, ay,” she said, “it so must be—”
 (And this time she spake cheerfully)—
 “Behoves thee know *World's cruelty*.”

He bowed his forehead till his mouth
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth
As if from rivers of the south ;

His lips sobbed through the water rank,
His heart paused in him while he drank,
His brain beat heart-like, rose and sank,

And he swooned backward to a dream
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,
With Death and Life at each extreme :

And spiritual thunders, born of soul
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant
With their own wheels. Did Heaven so grant
His spirit a sign of covenant ?

At last came silence. A slow kiss
Did crown his forehead after this ;
His eyelids flew back for the bliss—

The lady stood beside his head,
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread ;
The moonshine seemed dishevellèd

In her sleek tresses manifold ;
Like Danae's in the rain of old
That dripped with melancholy gold :

But SHE was holy, pale, and high
As one who saw an ecstasy
Beyond a foretold agony.

“ Rise up ! ” said she with voice where song
Eddied through speech, “ rise up ; be strong :
And learn how right avenges wrong. ”

The poet rose up on his feet :
He stood before an altar set
For sacrament, with vessels meet,

And mystic altar-lights which shine
As if their flames were crystalline
Carved flames that would not shrink or pine.

The altar filled the central place
Of a great church, and toward its face
Long aisles did shoot and interlace

And from it a continuous mist
Of incense (round the edges kissed
By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the archèd roof,
And, thence refracting, eddied off
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,—
Then, poising its white masses brave,
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave

Where now in dark, and now in light,
The countless columns, glimmering white,
Seemed leading out to the Infinite.

Plunged half-way up the shaft they showed,
 In that pale shifting incense-cloud
 Which flowed them by, and overflowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend,
 And the whole temple, at the end,
 With its own incense to distend,—

The arches like a giant's bow
 To bend and slacken,—and below,
 The nichèd saints to come and go :

Alone amid the shifting scene
 That central altar stood serene
 In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware
 Of a chief angel standing there
 Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw
 That *they* saw God ; his lips and jaw
 Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's law

They could enunciate, and refrain
 From vibratory after-pain,
 And his brow's height was sovereign :

On the vast background of his wings
 Rises his image ; and he flings,
 From each plumed arc, pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more
 Or less, the angel-heart) before,
 And round him, upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes :
While at his side, 'twixt lights and glooms,
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument
And angel, right and left-way bent,
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around
And toward the altar ; pale and bound
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet
The power of life was in them set—
Never forgot, nor to forget :

Sublime significance of mouth,
Dilated nostril full of youth,
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied
Beyond your count, but side by side
Did front the altar, glorified,

Still as a vision, yet exprest
Full as an action—look and geste
Of buried saint, in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim
His spirits seemed to sink in him—
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current—these were poets true,
Who died for Beauty as martyrs do
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful
 These poets were ; of iron rule,
 The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here, Homer, with the broad suspense
 Of thunderous brows, and lips intense
 Of garrulous god-innocence.

There, Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb
 The crowns o' the world : O eyes sublime—
 With tears and laughters for all time !

Here, Æschylus, the women swooned
 To see so awful, when he frowned
 As the gods did : he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild
 Scholastic lips,—that could be wild,
 And laugh or sob out like a child

Even in the classes. Sophocles,
 With that king's look which, down the trees,
 Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,
 Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,
 Cared most for gods and bulls. And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,
 With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear
 Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,
 To hurtle past it in his soul.
 And Sappho, with that gloriolè

Of ebon hair on calmèd brows—
O poet-woman ! none forgoes
The leap, attaining the repose.

Theocritus, with glittering locks
Dropt sideways, as betwixt the rocks
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck
The hollow caves of Thought, and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil : shade of Mantuan beech
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high ;
For his gods wore less majesty
Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius—nobler than his mood,
Who dropped his plummet down the broad
Deep universe, and said, " No God—"

Finding no bottom : he denied
Divinely the divine, and died
Chief poet on the Tiber-side,

By grace of God ! his face is stern
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,
To teach a truth he would not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed ;
Once counted greater than the rest,
When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head
 (With languid sleep-smile, you had said,
 From his own verse engenderèd)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
 Their curls in one : the Italian
 Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern
 And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
 For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri ; and fancy-willed
 Boiardo, who with laughter filled
 The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out
 To sleek that storm. And, not without
 The wreath he died in and the doubt

He died by, Tasso ; bard and lover,
 Whose visions were too thin to cover
 The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine ; and grave Corneille,
 The orator of rhymes, whose wail
 Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch pale,

From whose brain-lighted heart were thrown
 A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,
 Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,
 Compelling India's Genius sad
 From the wave through the Lusiad,—

The murmurs of the storm-cape ocean
Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse. And, while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone
Under the tonsure blown upon
By airs celestial,—Calderon.

And bold De Vega,—who breathed quick
Verse after verse, till death's old trick
Put pause to life and rhetorick.

And Goethe—with that reaching eye
His soul reached out from, far and high,
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon 't,
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine
Familiar clasp of things divine—
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim :
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonaire
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne,—with smiles they drew
From outward Nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben—
 Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows, when
 The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings
 Set in his eyes : deep lyric springs
 Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,
 All statue-blind. And Keats the real
 Adonis, with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
 His youthful curls, kissed straight and sheen
 In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron,—sad as grave,
 And salt as life ; forlornly brave,
 And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who
 Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
 Their wings, with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and many more)
 The lighted altar looming o'er
 The clouds of incense dim and hoar :

And all their faces, in the lull
 Of natural things, looked wonderful
 With life and death and deathless rule.

All, still as stone, and yet intense ;
 As if by spirit's vehemence
 That stone were carved, and not by sense.

But where the heart of each should beat,
 There seemed a wound instead of it,
 From whence the blood dropped to their feet,

Drop after drop—dropped heavily,
 As century follows century
 Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady—and her word
 Came distant,—as wide waves were stirred
 Between her and the ear that heard,—

“ *World's use* is cold, *world's love* is vain,—
World's cruelty is bitter bane ;
 But pain is not the fruit of pain.

“ Harken, O poet, whom I led
 From the dark wood : dismissing dread,
 Now hear this angel in my stead.

“ His organ's clavier strikes along
 These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,
 They gave him without count of wrong,—

“ A diapason whence to guide
 Up to God's feet, from these who died,
 An anthem fully glorified—

“ Whereat God's blessing, IBARAK (יְבָרַךְ)
 Breathes back this music—folds it back
 About the earth in vapoury rack,

“ And men walk in it, crying ‘ Lo !
 ‘ The world is wider, and we know
 ‘ The very heavens look brighter so :

A VISION OF POETS.

“The stars move statelier round the edge
 ‘Of the silver spheres, and give in pledge
 ‘Their light for nobler privilege :

“No little flower but joys or grieves—
 ‘Full life is rustling in the sheaves ;
 ‘Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves.’

“So works this music on the earth ;
 God so admits it, sends it forth
 To add another worth to worth—

“A new creation-bloom that rounds
 The old creation and expounds
 His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

“Now hearken !” Then the poet gazed
 Upon the angel glorious-faced,
 Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,
 Like a pale moon o’er murmuring seas,
 With no touch but with influences :

Then rose and fell (with swell and swound
 Of shapeless noises wandering round
 A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys—the tones were mixed,
 Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbbed betwixt
 The incomplete and the unfixd :

And therein mighty minds were heard
 In mighty musings, inly stirred,
 And struggling outward for a word :

Until these surges, having run
This way and that, gave out as one
An Aphrodité of sweet tune,—

A Harmony, that, finding vent,
Upward in grand ascension went,
Winged to a heavenly argument,

Up, upward ! like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,
And rises in apocalypse :

A harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones
Of perplexed chords, and soared at once,
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves, as
It passed to God. The music was
Of divine stature—strong to pass :

And those who heard it, understood
Something of life in spirit and blood—
Something of Nature's fair and good :

And while it sounded, those great souls
Did thrill as racers at the goals
And burn in all their aureoles ;

But she the lady, as vapour-bound,
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,—
Like Nature with the showers around :

And when it ceased, the blood which fell
 Again, alone grew audible,
 Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high
 His hand, and spake out sovranly:
 "Tried poets, hearken and reply!

"Give me true answers. If we grant
 That not to suffer, is to want
 The conscience of the jubilant,—

"If ignorance of anguish is
But ignorance; and mortals miss
 Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

"If, as two colours must be viewed
 In a visible image, mortals should
 Need good and evil, to see good,—

"If to speak nobly, comprehends
 To feel profoundly,—if the ends
 Of power and suffering, Nature blends,—

"If poets on the tripod must
 Writhe like the Pythian, to make just
 Their oracles, and merit trust,—

"If every vatic word that sweeps
 To change the world, must pale their lips,
 And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

"If to search deep the universe
 Must pierce the searcher with the curse,—
 Because that bolt (in man's reverse)

"Was shot to the heart o' the wood and lies
 Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes
 That look for visions and surprise

"From influent angels, must shut down
 Their eyelids first to sun and moon,
 The head asleep upon a stone,—

"If ONE who did redeem you back,
 By His own loss, from final wrack,
 Did consecrate by touch and track

"Those temporal sorrows till the taste
 Of brackish waters of the waste
 Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

"If all the crowns of earth must wound
 With prickings of the thorns He found,—
 If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

"What say ye unto this?—refuse
 This baptism in salt water?—choose
 Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour loose?

"Or, O ye gifted givers! ye
 Who give your liberal hearts to me,
 To make the world this harmony,—

"Are ye resigned that they be spent
 To such world's help?"

The Spirits bent
 Their awful brows, and said—"Content!"

Content! it sounded like *Amen*,
 Said by a choir of mourning men
 An affirmation full of pain

And patience,—ay, of glorying
And adoration, as a king
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face
Lightened abroad until the place
Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,
And nave and transept, columns white,
And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off, and all
Stood in the noon-sun,—“Lo! I call
To other hearts as liberal.

“This pedal strikes out in the air:
My instrument has room to bear
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

“Herein is room, and shall be room
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come
Consummating while they consume.

“What living man will bring a gift
Of his own heart, and help to lift
The tune?—The race is to the swift!”

So asked the angel. Straight the while,
A company came up the aisle
With measured step and sorted smile;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,
With winking unaccustomed eyes,
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest
As if the world were dispossessed,
And one did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid—an as he should faint ;
One shook his curls across his paint,
And moralised on worldly taint ;

One, slanting up his face, did wink
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,
To think—O gods ! or—not to think !

Some trod out stealthily and slow,
As if the sun would fall in snow
If they walked to instead of fro ;

And some, with conscious ambling free,
Did shake their bells right daintily
On hand and foot, for harmony ;

And some, composing sudden sighs
In attitudes of point-device,
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near
The spirits crowned, it might appear
Submitted to a ghastly fear ;

As a sane eye in master-passion
Constrains a maniac to the fashion
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low
O' the lid, the wrinkling of the brow,
Exaggerate with mock and mow, —

So mastered was that company
By the crowned vision utterly,
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached
With Homer's forehead, though he lacked
An inch of any; and one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it; one his smooth

Pink cheeks, did rumple passionate
Like Æschylus, and tried to prate
On trolling tongue of fate and fate;

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or
Any light woman's; one forbore
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo
His hard-shut lips; and one that drew
Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size
Of most unnatural jollities,
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise;

So with the rest: it was a sight
A great world-laughter would requite,
Or great world-wrath, with equal right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd
To speak for all, in sleek and proud
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel—"Thus,
O angel who hast called for us,
We bring thee service emulous,

"Fit service from sufficient soul,
Hand-service to receive world's dole,
Lip-service in world's ear to roll

"Adjusted concords—soft enow
To hear the wine-cups passing, through
And not too grave to spoil the show :

"Thou, certes, when thou askest more,
O sapient angel, leanest o'er
The window-sill of metaphor.

"To give our hearts up? fie! that rage
Barbaric antedates the age!
It is not done on any stage.

"Because your scald or gleeman went
With seven or nine-stringed instrument
Upon his back,—must ours be bent?

"We are not pilgrims, by your leave;
No, nor yet martyrs; if we grieve,
It is to rhyme to—summer eve :

"And if we labour, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie."

More yet that speaker would have said,
Poising between his smiles fair-fed
Each separate phrase till finishèd ;

A VISION OF POETS.

But all the foreheads of those born
 And dead true poets flashed with scorn
 Betwixt the bay leaves round them worn—

Ay, jetted such brave fire that they,
 The new-come, shrank and paled away
 Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,
 A presence known by power, at last
 Took them up mutely—they had passed.

And he, our pilgrim-poet, saw
 Only their places, in deep awe,—
 What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,
 The angel in the angel shone,
 Revealing glory in benison ;

Till, ripened in the light which shut
 The poet in, his spirit mute
 Dropped sudden as a perfect fruit :

He fell before the angel's feet,
 Saying, " If what is true is sweet,
 In something I may compass it :

" For, where my worthiness is poor,
 My will stands richly at the door
 To pay shortcomings evermore.

" Accept me therefore : not for price,
 And not for pride, my sacrifice
 Is tendered, for my soul is nice,

“And will beat down those dusty seeds
Of bearded corn, if she succeeds
In soaring while the covey feeds.

“I soar, I am drawn up like the lark
To its white cloud : so high my mark,
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

“I ask no wages, seek no fame :
Sew me, for shroud round face and name,
God’s banner of the oriflamme.

“I only would have leave to loose
(In tears and blood if so He choose)
Mine inward music out to use ;

“I only would be spent—in pain
And loss, perchance—but not in vain—
Upon the sweetness of that strain ;

“Only project, beyond the bound
Of mine own life, so lost and found,
My voice, and live on in its sound ;

“Only embrace and be embraced
By fiery ends, whereby to waste,
And light God’s future with my past.”

The angel’s smile grew more divine—
The mortal speaking ; ay, its shine
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow
Did vibrate with the light below ;
But what he said, I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,
Rose up accepted, unforbade,
From the church-floor where he was laid ;

Nor if a listening life did run
Through the king-poets, one by one
Rejoicing in a worthy son :

My soul, which might have seen, grew blind
By what it looked on : I can find
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim, white and grand
As in a dream, the angel's hand
Stretched forth in gesture of command,

Straight through the haze. And so, as erst,
A strain, more noble than the first,
Mused in the organ, and outburst :

With giant march from floor to roof
Rose the full notes, now parted off
In pauses massively aloof,

Like measured thunders, now rejoined
In concords of mysterious kind,
Which fused together sense and mind,

Now flashing sharp on sharp along,
Exultant, in a mounting throng,—
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors,—wavelike sounds
Re-eddying into silver rounds,
Enlarging liberty with bounds :

And every rhythm that seemed to close,
Survived in confluent underflows,
Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multiplied
And greatened,—with its glorified
Wings shot abroad from side to side,—

Waved backward (as a wind might wave
A Brocken mist, and with as brave
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—
Then swelling outward, prodigal
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared,—and drew up with it the whole
Of this said vision, as a soul
Is raised by a thought. And as a scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled
Still upward with a gradual gold,—
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits, solemnised and crowned ;
While the freed clouds of incense wound

Ascending, following in their track,
And glimmering faintly like the rack
O' the moon in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn dream withdrew,
The lady's kiss did fall anew
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him first
 Beyond the senses, now reversed
 Its own law and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things
 Sensual and present. Vanishings
 Of glory with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed : the lady's face
 Did melt back in the chrysopras
 Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark,—and there and so
 She melted as a star might do,
 Still smiling as she melted—slow :

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see
 Her smile the last thing, gloriously,
 Beyond her, far as memory.

Then he looked round : he was alone.
 He lay before the breaking sun,
 As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being wound,
 He knew the moorland of his swoond,
 And the pale pools that smeared the ground ;

The far wood-pines like offing ships ;
 The fourth pool's yew anear him drips—
World's cruelty attaints his lips,

And still he tastes it, bitter still ;
 Through all that glorious possible
 He had the sight of present ill.

Yet rising calmly up and slowly,
 With such a cheer as scorneth folly,
 A mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the wood
 And prayed along the solitude,
 Betwixt the pines,—“ O God, my God !”

The golden morning's open flowings
 Did sway the trees to murmurous bowings,—
 In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the wood,
 He prayed along the solitude,—
 “ THOU, Poet-God, art great and good !

“ And though we must have, and have had
 Right reason to be earthly sad,
 THOU, Poet-God, art great and glad !”

CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart ;
 We press too close in church and mart,
 To keep a dream or grave apart :

And I was 'ware of walking down
 That same green forest where had gone
 The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east
 A red and tender radiance pressed
 Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round ;
 While up the leafiness profound
 A wind scarce old enough for sound

A VISION OF POETS.

Stood ready to blow on me when
I turned that way, and now and then
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry
Of the dew sliding droppingly
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song : 'twixt dew and bird
So sweet a silence ministered,
God seemed to use it for a word.

Yet morning souls did leap and run
In all things, as the least had won
A joyous insight of the sun,

And no one looking round the wood
Could help confessing, as he stood,
This Poet-God is glad and good!

But hark ! a distant sound that grows,
A heaving, sinking of the boughs,
A rustling murmur, not of those !

A breezy noise, which is not breeze !
And white-clad children by degrees
Steal out in troops among the trees ;

Fair little children, morning-bright,
With faces grave yet soft to sight,—
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within reach,
And others leapt up high to catch
The upper boughs and shake from each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,
The child who held the branch let go,
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew
The children laughed; but the laugh flew
From its own chirrup, as might do

A frightened song-bird; and a child
Who seemed the chief, said very mild,
"Hush! keep this morning undefiled."

His eyes rebuked them from calm spheres;
His soul upon his brow appears
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,
"What are your palms for?" "To be spread,"
He answered, "on a poet dead.

"The poet died last month; and now
The world, which had been somewhat slow
In honouring his living brow,

"Commands the palms; they must be strown
On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town."

I sighed and said, "Did he foresee
Any such honour?" "Verily
I cannot tell you," answered he.

"But this I know,—I fain would lay
My own head down, another day,
As *he* did,—with the fame away.

“A lily, a friend’s hand had plucked,
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked
As deep down as a bee had sucked ;

“Then, turning to the lattice, gazed
O’er hill and river, and upraised
His eyes illumined and amazed

“With the world’s beauty, up to God,
Re-offering on their iris broad
The images of things bestowed

“By the chief Poet.—‘God!’ he cried,
‘Be praised for anguish, which has tried,
For beauty, which has satisfied :

“‘For this world’s presence, half within
And half without me—thought and scene—
This sense of Being and Having been.

“‘I thank Thee that my soul hath room
For Thy grand world ! Both guests may come—
Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb.

“‘I am content to be so weak :
Put strength into the words I speak,
And I am strong in what I seek.

“‘I am content to be so bare
Before the archers, everywhere
My wounds being stroked by heavenly air.

“‘I laid my soul before Thy feet,
That images of fair and sweet
Should walk to other men on it.

“ I am content to feel the step
Of each pure image : let those keep
To mandragore, who care to sleep.

“ I am content to touch the brink
Of the other goblet, and I think
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

“ Because my portion was assigned
Wholesome and bitter—Thou art kind,
And I am blessed to my mind.

“ Gifted for giving, I receive
The maythorn, and its scent outgive :
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

“ In my large joy of sight and touch
Beyond what others count for such,
I am content to suffer much.

“ I *know*—is all the mourner saith,—
Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And Life is perfected by Death.”

The child spake nobly : strange to hear,
His infantine soft accents clear
Charged with high meanings, did appear ;

And fair to see, his form and face
Winged out with whiteness and pure grace
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew ;
An orient beam which pierced it through
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown,
Traced on its brightness up and down
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown :

Guido might paint his angels so—
A little angel, taught to go
With holy words to saints below—

Such innocence of action yet
Significance of object met
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,
Did round in rosy reverence stand,
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

“And so he died,” I whispered. “Nay,
Not so,” the childish voice did say,—
“That poet turned him first to pray

“In silence, and God heard the rest,
'Twixt the sun's footsteps down the west.
Then he called one who loved him best,

“Yea, he called softly through the room
(His voice was weak yet tender)—‘Come,’
He said, ‘come nearer! Let the bloom

“‘Of Life grow over, undenied,
This bridge of Death, which is not wide—
I shall be soon at the other side.

“‘Come, kiss me!’ So the one in truth
Who loved him best,—in love, not ruth,
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to mouth :

“And in that kiss of Love was won
Life’s manumission. All was done :
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone*.

“But in the former, confluent kiss,
The same was sealed, I think by His,
To words of truth and uprightness.”

The child’s voice trembled—his lips shook,
Like a rose leaning o’er a brook,
Which vibrates though it is not struck.

“And who,” I asked, a little moved
Yet curious-eyed, “was this that loved
And kissed him last, as it behoved?”

“I,” softly said the child ; and then,
“I,” said he louder, once again ;
“His son,—my rank is among men :

“And now that men exalt his name,
I come to gather palms with them.
That holy Love may hallow Fame.

“He did not die alone, nor should
His memory live so, ’mid these rude
World-praisers—a worse solitude.

“Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch and bloom,
Saying, ‘Come nearer :’ and I come.

“Glory to God !” resumèd he,—
And his eyes smiled for victory
O’er their own tears, which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and chin—
 “That poet now has entered in
 The place of rest which is not sin.

“And while he rests, his songs, in troops,
 Walk up and down our earthly slopes,
 Companioned by diviner Hopes.”

“But *thou*,” I murmured,—to engage
 The child’s speech farther—“hast an age
 Too tender for this orphanage.”

“Glory to God—to God!” he saith—
 “KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,
 AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH.”

A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES.

I.

SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight
 Stand near the river-sea,
 Whose water sweepeth white around
 The shadow of the tree ;
 The moon and earth are face to face,
 And earth is slumbering deep ;
 The wave-voice seems the voice of dreams
 That wander through her sleep :
 The river floweth on.

II.

What bring they 'neath the midnight,
 Beside the river-sea ?
 They bring the human heart wherein
 No nightly calm can be,—

That droppeth never with the wind,
 Nor drieth with the dew :
 Oh, calm it, God ! thy calm is broad
 To cover spirits too.

The river floweth on.

III.

The maidens lean them over
 The waters, side by side,
 And shun each other's deepening eyes,
 And gaze adown the tide ;
 For each within a little boat
 A little lamp hath put,
 And heaped for freight some lily's weight
 Or scarlet rose half shut.

The river floweth on.

IV.

Of shell of cocoa carven,
 Each little boat is made ;
 Each carries a lamp, and carries a flower,
 And carries a hope unsaid ;
 And when the boat hath carried the lamp
 Unquenched, till out of sight,
 The maiden is sure that love will endure ;
 But love will fail with light.

The river floweth on.

V.

Why, all the stars are ready
 To symbolise the soul,
 The stars, untroubled by the wind,
 Unwearied as they roll ;
 And yet the soul, by instinct sad,
 Reverts to symbols low—

To that small flame, whose very name
 Breathed o'er it, shakes it so !
 The river floweth on.

VI.

Six boats are on the river,
 Seven maidens on the shore,
 While still above them steadfastly
 The stars shine evermore.
 Go, little boats, go soft and safe,
 And guard the symbol spark !
 The boats aright go safe and bright
 Across the waters dark.
 The river floweth on.

VII.

The maiden Luti watcheth
 Where onwardly they float ;
 That look in her dilating eyes
 Might seem to drive her boat :
 Her eyes still mark the constant fire,
 And kindling unawares
 That hopeful while, she lets a smile
 Creep silent through her prayers.
 The river floweth on.

VIII.

The smile—where hath it wandered ?
 She riseth from her knee,
 She holds her dark, wet locks away—
 There is no light to see !
 She cries a quick and bitter cry—
 “ Nuleeni, launch me thine !
 We must have light abroad to-night,
 For all the wreck of mine.”
 The river floweth on.

IX.

"I do remember watching
 Beside this river-bed
 When on my childish knee was leaned
 My dying father's head ;
 I turned mine own to keep the tears
 From falling on his face :
 What doth it prove, when Death and Love
 Choose out the self-same place ?"
 The river floweth on.

X.

"They say the dead are joyful,
 The death-change here receiving :
 Who say—ah, me ! who dare to say
 Where joy comes to the living ?
 Thy boat, Nuleeni ! look not sad—
 Light up the waters rather !
 I weep no faithless lover where
 I wept a loving father."
 The river floweth on.

XI.

"My heart foretold his falsehood
 Ere my little boat grew dim ;
 And though I closed mine eyes to dream
 That one last dream of *him*,
 They shall not now be wet to see
 The shining vision go :
 From earth's cold love, I look above
 To the holy house of snow."¹
 The river floweth on.

¹ The Hindoo heaven is localised on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmaleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, the abode of snow, winter, or coldness.

XII.

“Come thou—thou never knewest
 A grief, that thou shouldst fear one !
 Thou wearest still the happy look
 That shines beneath a dear one :
 Thy humming-bird is in the sun,¹
 Thy cuckoo in the grove,
 And all the three broad worlds, for thee
 Are full of wandering love.”

The river floweth on.

XIII.

“Why, maiden, dost thou loiter ?
 What secret wouldst thou cover ?
 That peepul cannot hide thy boat,
 And I can guess thy lover ;
 I heard thee sob his name in sleep,
 It was a name I knew :
 Come, little maid, be not afraid,
 But let us prove him true !”

The river floweth on.

XIV.

The little maiden cometh,
 She cometh shy and slow ;
 I ween she seeth through her lids,
 They drop adown so low :
 Her tresses meet her small bare feet—
 She stands and speaketh nought,
 Yet blusheth red as if she said
 The name she only thought.

The river floweth on.

¹ Himadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

XV.

She knelt beside the water,
 She lighted up the flame,
 And o'er her youthful forehead's calm
 The fitful radiance came :—
 " Go, little boat, go soft and safe,
 And guard the symbol spark ! "
 Soft, safe doth float the little boat
 Across the waters dark.

The river floweth on.

XVI.

Glad tears her eyes have blinded,
 The light they cannot reach ;
 She turneth with that sudden smile
 She learnt before her speech—
 " I do not hear his voice, the tears
 Have dimmed my light away,
 But the symbol light will last to-night—
 The love will last for aye ! "

The river floweth on.

XVII.

Then Luti spake behind her—
 Out-spake she bitterly—
 " By the symbol light that lasts to-night,
 Wilt vow a vow to me ? "
 Nuleeni gazeth up her face,
 Soft answer maketh she—
 " By loves that last when lights are past,
 I vow that vow to thee ! "

The river floweth on.

XVIII.

An earthly look had Luti,
 Though her voice was deep as prayer—

“The rice is gathered from the plains
 To cast upon thine hair :¹
 But when *he* comes his marriage-band
 Around thy neck to throw,
 Thy bride-smile raise to meet his gaze,
 And whisper,—*There is one betrays,*
While Luti suffers woe.”

The river floweth on.

XIX.

“And when in seasons after,
 Thy little bright-faced son
 Shall lean against thy knee, and ask
 What deeds his sire hath done,—
 Press deeper down thy mother-smile
 His glossy curls among—
 View deep his pretty childish eyes,
 And whisper,—*There is none denies,*
While Luti speaks of wrong.”

The river floweth on.

XX.

Nuleeni looked in wonder,
 Yet softly answered she—
 “By loves that last when lights are past,
 I vowed that vow to thee :
 But why glads it thee, that a bride-day be
 By a word of *woe* defiled ?
 That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-song
 From the ear of a sinless child ? ”
 “Why ? ” Luti said, and her laugh was dread,
 And her eyes dilated wild—
 “That the fair new love may her bridegroom prove,
 And the father shame the child ! ”

The river floweth on.

¹ The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

XXI.

"Thou flowest still, O river,
 Thou flowest 'neath the moon;
 Thy lily hath not changed a leaf,¹
 Thy charmèd lute a tune:
He mixed his voice with thine—and *his*
 Was all I heard around;
 But now, beside his chosen bride,
 I hear the river's sound."

The river floweth on.

XXII.

"I gaze upon her beauty,
 Through the tresses that enwreath it;
 The light above thy wave, is hers—
 My rest, alone beneath it:
 Oh, give me back the dying look
 My father gave thy water!
 Give back—and let a little love
 O'erwatch his weary daughter!"

The river floweth on.

XXIII.

"Give back!" she hath departed—
 The word is wandering with her;
 And the stricken maidens hear afar
 The step and cry together.
 Frail symbols? None are frail enow
 For mortal joys to borrow!—
 While bright doth float Nuleeni's boat,
 She weepeth, dark with sorrow.

The river floweth on.

¹ The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water-lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

I.

PUT the broidery-frame away,
 For my sewing is all done :
 The last thread is used to-day,
 And I need not join it on.
 Though the clock stands at the noon,
 I am weary. I have sewn,
 Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

II.

Sister, help me to the bed,
 And stand near me, Dearest-sweet.
 Do not shrink nor be afraid,
 Blushing with a sudden heat !
 No one standeth in the street ?—
 By God's love I go to meet,
 Love I thee with love complete.

III.

Lean thy face down ; drop it in
 These two hands, that I may hold
 'Twixt their palms thy cheek and chin,
 Stroking back the curls of gold :
 'Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth—
 Larger eyes and redder mouth
 Than mine were in my first youth.

IV.

Thou art younger by seven years—
 Ah !—so bashful at my gaze,
 That the lashes, hung with tears,
 Grow too heavy to upraise ?

I would wound thee by no touch
Which thy shyness feels as such.
Dost thou mind me, Dear, so much?

v.

Have I not been nigh a mother
To thy sweetness—tell me, Dear?
Have we not loved one another
Tenderly, from year to year,
Since our dying mother mild
Said with accents undefiled,
“Child, be mother to this child!”

vi.

Mother, mother, up in heaven,
Stand up on the jasper sea,
And be witness I have given
All the gifts required of me,—
Hope that blessed me, bliss that crowned,
Love that left me with a wound,
Life itself that turneth round!

vii.

Mother, mother, thou art kind,
Thou art standing in the room,—
In a molten glory shrined,
That rays off into the gloom!
But thy smile is bright and bleak,
Like cold waves—I cannot speak;
I sob in it, and grow weak.

viii.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
One hour longer from my soul—
For I still am thinking of
Earth's warm-beating joy and dole!

On my finger is a ring
Which I still see glittering,
When the night hides everything.

IX.

Little sister, thou art pale !
Ah, I have a wandering brain—
But I lose that fever-bale,
And my thoughts grow calm again.
Lean down closer—closer still !
I have words thine ear to fill,—
And would kiss thee at my will.

X.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring,
Thee and Robert—through the trees,—
When we all went gathering
Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.
Do not start so ! think instead
How the sunshine overhead
Seemed to trickle through the shade.

XI.

What a day it was, that day !
Hills and vales did openly
Seem to heave and throb away,
At the sight of the great sky :
And the Silence, as it stood
In the Glory's golden flood,
Audibly did bud—and bud !

XII.

Through the winding hedgerows green,
How we wandered, I and you,
With the bowery tops shut in,
And the gates that showed the view !

How we talked there ! thrushes soft
 Sang our praises out,—or oft
 Bleatings took them, from the croft :

XIII.

Till the pleasure grown too strong
 Left me muter evermore,
 And, the winding road being long,
 I walked out of sight, before,
 And so, wrapt in musings fond,
 Issued (past the wayside pond)
 On the meadow-lands beyond.

XIV.

I sate down beneath the beech
 Which leans over to the lane,
 And the far sound of your speech
 Did not promise any pain ;
 And I blessed you full and free,
 With a smile stooped tenderly
 O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

XV.

But the sound grew into word
 As the speakers drew more near—
 Sweet, forgive me that I heard
 What you wished me not to hear.
 Do not weep so, do not shake,
 Oh,—I heard thee, Bertha, make
 Good true answers for my sake.

XVI.

Yes, and HE too ! let him stand
 In thy thoughts, untouched by blame
 Could he help it, if my hand
 He had claimed with hasty claim ?

That was wrong, perhaps—but then
 Such things be—and will, again.
 Women cannot judge for men.

XVII.

Had he seen thee when he swore
 He would love but me alone?
 Thou wast absent,—sent before
 To our kin in Sidmouth town.
 When he saw thee, who art best,
 Past compare, and loveliest,
 He but judged thee as the rest.

XVIII.

Could we blame him with grave words,
 Thou and I, Dear, if we might?
 Thy brown eyes have looks like birds,
 Flying straightway to the light:
 Mine are older.—Hush!—look out—
 Up the street! Is none without?
 How the poplar swings about!

XIX.

And that hour—beneath the beech,
 When I listened in a dream,
 And he said, in his deep speech,
 That he owed me all *esteem*,—
 Each word swam in on my brain
 With a dim, dilating pain,
 Till it burst with that last strain.

XX.

I fell flooded with a dark,
 In the silence of a swoon.
 When I rose, still cold and stark,
 There was night; I saw the moon:

And the stars, each in its place,
 And the May-blooms on the grass,
 Seemed to wonder what I was.

XXI.

And I walked as if apart
 From myself, when I could stand,—
 And I pitied my own heart,
 As if I held it in my hand,
 Somewhat coldly, with a sense
 Of fulfilled benevolence,
 And a "Poor thing" negligence.

XXII.

And I answered coldly too,
 When you met me at the door ;
 And I only *heard* the dew
 Dripping from me to the floor :
 And the flowers I bade you see,
 Were too withered for the bee,—
 As my life, henceforth, for me.

XXIII.

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm !
 All was best as it befell.
 If I say he did me harm,
 I speak wild,—I am not well.
 All his words were kind and good—
He esteemed me. Only, blood
 Runs so faint in womanhood !

XXIV.

Then I always was too grave,—
 Liked the saddest ballad sung,—
 With that look, besides, we have
 In our faces, who die young.

I had died, Dear, all the same ;
 Life's long, joyous, jostling game
 Is too loud for my meek shame.

xxv.

We are so unlike each other,
 Thou and I, that none could guess
 We were children of one mother,
 But for mutual tenderness.
 Thou art rose-lined from the cold,
 And meant, verily, to hold
 Life's pure pleasures manifold.

xxvi.

I am pale as crocus grows
 Close beside a rose-tree's root ;
 Whosoe'er would reach the rose,
 Treads the crocus underfoot.
 I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree,
 Thou, like merry summer-bee,—
 Fit that I be plucked for thee !

xxvii.

Yet who plucks me?—no one mourns,—
 I have lived my season out,
 And now die of my own thorns
 Which I could not live without.
 Sweet, be merry ! How the light
 Comes and goes ! If it be night,
 Keep the candles in my sight.

xxviii.

Are there footsteps at the door ?
 Look out quickly. Yea, or nay ?
 Some one might be waiting for
 Some last word that I might say.

Nay? So best!—so angels would
Stand off clear from deathly road,
Not to cross the sight of God.

XXIX.

Colder grow my hands and feet.
When I wear the shroud I made,
Let the folds lie straight and neat,
And the rosemary be spread,
That if any friend should come
(To see *thee*. Sweet!), all the room
May be lifted out of gloom.

XXX.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep
On my hand this little ring,
Which at nights, when others sleep,
I can still see glittering.
Let me wear it out of sight,
In the grave,—where it will light
All the dark up, day and night.

XXXI.

On that grave drop not a tear!
Else, though fathom-deep the place,
Through the woollen shroud I wear,
I shall feel it on my face.
Rather smile there, blessèd one,
Thinking of me in the sun—
Or forget me—smiling on!

XXXII.

Art thou near me? nearer! so—
Kiss me close upon the eyes,
That the earthly light may go
Sweetly, as it used to rise

A CHILD ASLEEP.

When I watched the morning-gray
 Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
 He was sure to come that day.

XXXIII.

So,—no more vain words be said !
 The hosannas nearer roll.
 Mother, smile now on thy Dead,
 I am death-strong in my soul !
 Mystic Dove alit on cross,
 Guide the poor bird of the snows
 Through the snow-wind above loss !

XXXIV.

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
 Love's divine self-abnegation,—
 Cleanse my love in its self-spending,
 And absorb the poor libation !
 Wind my thread of life up higher,
 Up, through angels' hands of fire !
 I aspire while I expire.

A CHILD ASLEEP.

I.

How he sleepeth, having drunken
 Weary childhood's mandragore !
 From its pretty eyes have sunken
 Pleasures to make room for more—
 Sleeping near the withered nosegay which he pulled the
 before.

II.

Nosegays ! leave them for the waking ;
 Throw them earthward where they grew ;

Dim are such beside the breaking
 Amaranths he looks unto—

Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

III.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
 From the palms they sprang beneath,
 Now perhaps divinely holden,
 Swing against him in a wreath—

We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and of
 his breath.

IV.

Vision unto vision calleth,
 While the young child dreameth on :
 Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
 With the glory thou hast won !

Darker wast thou in the garden, yesternorn, by summer
 sun.

V.

We should see the spirits ringing
 Round thee,—were the clouds away !
 'Tis the child-heart draws them, singing
 In the silent-seeming clay—

Singing !—stars that seem the mutest go in music all the
 way.

VI.

As the moths around a taper,
 As the bees around a rose,
 As the gnats around a vapour,
 So the spirits group and close

Round about a holy childhood, as if drinking its repose.

VII.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
 Flash their diadems of youth

On the ringlets which half screen thee,
 While thou smilest . . . not in sooth
Thy smile, but the overfair one, dropt from some æther
 mouth.

VIII.

Haply it is angels' duty,
 During slumber, shade by shade
 To fine down this childish beauty
 To the thing it must be made,
 Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall
 it fade.

IX.

Softly, softly ! make no noises !
 Now he lieth dead and dumb ;
 Now he hears the angels' voices
 Folding silence in the room :
 Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words
 they come.

X.

Speak not ! he is consecrated—
 Breathe no breath across his eyes :
 Lifted up and separated
 On the hand of God he lies,
 In a sweetness beyond touching, held in cloistral sancti-

XI.

Could ye bless him, father—mother,
 Bless the dimple in his cheek ?
 Dare ye look at one another,
 And the benediction speak ?
 Would ye not break out in weeping, and confess yourself
 too weak ?

XII.

He is harmless, ye are sinful ;

Ye are troubled—he, at ease :

From his slumber, virtue winful

Floweth outward with increase—

Dare not bless him ! but be blessed by his peace, and go in
peace.

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

I.

WHEN ye stood up in the house

With your little childish feet,

And, in touching Life's first shows,

First the touch of Love did meet,—

Love and Nearness seeming one,

By the heartlight cast before,—

And of all Beloveds, none

Standing farther than the door ;

Not a name being dear to thought,

With its owner beyond call ;

Not a face, unless it brought

Its own shadow to the wall ;

When the worst recorded change

Was of apple dropt from bough,—

When love's sorrow seemed more strange

Than love's treason can seem now ;—

Then, the Loving took you up

Soft, upon their elder knees,—

Telling why the statues droop

Underneath the churchyard trees,

And how ye must lie beneath them

Through the winters long and deep,

Till the last trump overbreathe them,
 And ye smile out of your sleep.
 Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said
 A tale of fairy ships
 With a swan-wing for a sail ;
 Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
 For the merry, merry tale—
 So, carelessly, ye thought upon the Dead !

II.

Soon ye read in solemn stories
 Of the men of long ago—
 Of the pale bewildering glories
 Shining farther than we know ;
 Of the heroes with the laurel,
 Of the poets with the bay,
 Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
 For that beauteous Helena ;
 How Achilles at the portal
 Of the tent, heard footsteps nigh,
 And his strong heart, half-immortal,
 Met the *keitai* with a cry ;
 How Ulysses left the sunlight
 For the pale eidola race,
 Blank and passive through the dun light,
 Staring blindly in his face ;
 How that true wife said to Pœtus,
 With calm smile and wounded heart,
 "Sweet, it hurts not !" How Admetus
 Saw his blessed one depart ;
 How King Arthur proved his mission,
 And Sir Roland wound his horn,
 And at Sangreal's moony vision
 Swords did bristle round like corn.

Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed, the while ye read,
 That this Death, then, must be found
 A Valhalla for the crowned—
 The heroic who prevail :
 None, be sure, can enter in
 Far below a paladin
 Of a noble, noble tale—
 So, awfully, ye thought upon the Dead !

III.

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,
 As a child that wakes at night
 From a dream of sisters speaking
 In a garden's summer-light,—
 That wakes, starting up and bounding,
 In a lonely, lonely bed,
 With a wall of darkness round him,
 Stifling black about his head !
 And the full sense of your mortal
 Rushed upon you deep and loud,
 And ye heard the thunder hurtle
 From the silence of the cloud.
 Funeral-torches at your gateway
 Threw a dreadful light within.
 All things changed : you rose up straightway,
 And saluted Death and Sin.
 Since,—your outward man has rallied,
 And your eye and voice grown bold ;
 Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
 With her saddest secret told.
 Happy places have grown holy :
 If ye went where once ye went,
 Only tears would fall down slowly,
 As at solemn sacrament.

Merry books, once read for pastime,
 If ye dared to read again,
 Only memories of the last time
 Would swim darkly up the brain.
 Household names, which used to flutter
 Through your laughter unawares,—
 God's Divinest ye could utter
 With less trembling in your prayers.

Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye tread
 On your own hearts in the path
 Ye are called to in His wrath,—
 And your prayers go up in wail!
 —“ Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
 O Thou agonised on cross?
 Art thou reading all its tale?”
 So, mournfully, ye think upon the Dead!

IV.

Pray, pray, thou who also weepst,
 And the drops will slacken so.
 Weep, weep!—and the watch thou keepest,
 With a quicker count will go.
 Think! the shadow on the dial
 For the nature most undone,
 Marks the passing of the trial,
 Proves the presence of the sun!
 Look, look up, in starry passion,
 To the throne above the spheres:
 Learn! the spirit's gravitation
 Still must differ from the tear's.
 Hope! with all the strength thou usest
 In embracing thy despair.
 Love! the earthly love thou lovest
 Shall return to thee more fair.

Work ! make clear the forest-tangles
 Of the wildest stranger-land.
 Trust ! the blessèd deathly angels
 Whisper, "Sabbath hours at hand !"
 By the heart's wound when most gory,
 By the longest agony,
 Smile !—Behold in sudden glory
 The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee* !

And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,
 "My Belovèd, is it so ?
 Have ye tasted of My woe ?—
 Of my Heaven ye shall not fail !"—
 He stands brightly where the shade is,
 With the keys of Death and Hades,
 And there, ends the mournful tale—
 So, hopefully, ye think upon the Dead !

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

NIGHT.

'NEATH my moon what doest thou,
 With a somewhat paler brow
 Than she giveth to the ocean ?
 He, without a pulse or motion,
 Muttering low before her stands,
 Lifting his invoking hands
 Like a seer before a sprite,
 To catch her oracles of light :
 But thy soul out-trembles now
 Many pulses on thy brow !
 Where be all thy laughters clear,
 Others laughed alone to hear ?
 Where, thy quaint jests, said for fame ?
 Where, thy dances, mixed with game ?

Where thy festive companies,
 Moonéd o'er with ladies' eyes
 All more bright for thee, I trow ?
 'Neath my moon what doest thou ?

THE MERRY MAN.

I AM digging my warm heart,
 Till I find its coldest part ;
 I am digging wide and low,
 Further than a spade will go,
 Till that, when the pit is deep
 And large enough, I there may heap
 All my present pain and past
 Joy, dead things that look aghast
 By the daylight : now 'tis done.
 Throw them in, by one and one !
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden
 Treasures which my hands have holden,
 Till the chillness made them ache ;
 Of childhood's hopes that used to wake
 If birds were in a singing strain,
 And for less cause, sleep again ;
 Of the moss-seat in the wood,
 Where I trysted solitude ;
 Of the hill-top, where the wind
 Used to follow me behind,
 Then in sudden rush to blind
 Both my glad eyes with my hair
 Taken gladly in the snare ;
 Of the climbing up the rocks,
 Of the playing 'neath the oaks,
 Which retain beneath them now
 Only shadow of the bough

Of the lying on the grass
While the clouds did overpass,—
Only they, so lightly driven,
Seeming betwixt me and Heaven!
Of the little prayers serene,
Murmuring of earth and sin;
Of large-leaved philosophy
Leaning from my childish knee;
Of poetic book sublime,
Soul-kissed for the first dear time,—
Greek or English, ere I knew
Life was not a poem too!—
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

—Of the glorious ambitions
Yet unquenched by their fruitions;
Of the reading out the nights;
Of the straining at mad heights;
Of achievements, less descried
By a dear few than magnified;
Of praises from the many earned
When praise from love was undiscerned;
Of the sweet reflecting gladness,
Softened by itself to sadness:—
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these? more, more than these!
Throw in dearer memories!—
Of voices—whereof but to speak,
Makes mine own all sunk and weak;
Of smiles, the thought of which is sweeping
All my soul to floods of weeping;

Of looks, whose absence fain would weigh
 My looks to the ground for aye ;
 Of clasping hands—ah me ! I wring
 Mine, and in a tremble fling
 Downward, downward all this paining !
 Partings, with the sting remaining ;
 Meetings, with a deeper throe,
 Since the joy is ruined so ;
 Changes with a fiery burning—
 (Shadows upon all the turning)
 Thoughts of . . . with a storm they came—
Them, I have not breath to name :
 Downward, downward be they cast
 In the pit ! and now at last
 My work beneath the moon is done,
 And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover
 All my treasures darkly over :
 I will speak not in thine ears,
 Only tell my beaded tears
 Silently, most silently !
 When the last is calmly told,
 Let that same moist rosary,
 With the rest sepulchred be,
 Finished now ! The darksome mould
 Sealeth up the darksome pit.
 I will lay no stone on it :
 Grasses I will sow instead,
 Fit for Queen Titania's tread ;
 Flowers, encoloured with the sun,
 And *at at* written upon none ;
 Thus, whenever saileth by
 The Lady World of dainty eye,
 Not a grief shall here remain,

Silken shoon to damp or stain :
 And while she lisps, " I have not seen
 Any place more smooth and clean" . . .
 Here she cometh !—Ha, ha !—who
 Laughs as loud as I can do ?

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS.

I.

THE Earth is old ;
 Six thousand winters make her heart a-cold :
 The sceptre slanteth from her palsied hold.
 She saith, "'Las me !—God's word that I was 'good'
 Is taken back to heaven,
 From whence when any sound comes, I am riven
 By some sharp bolt ; and now no angel would
 Descend with sweet dew-silence on my mountains,
 To glorify the lovely river-fountains
 That gush along their side :
 I see, O weary change ! I see instead
 This human wrath and pride,
 These thrones, and tombs, judicial wrong and blood :
 And bitter words are poured upon mine head—
 'O Earth ! thou art a stage for tricks unholy,
 A church for most remorseful melancholy !
 Thou art so spoilt, we should forget we had
 An Eden in thee,—wert thou not so sad !'
 Sweet children, I am old ! ye, every one,
 Do keep me from a portion of my sun :
 Give praise in change for brightness !
 That I may shake my hills in infiniteness
 Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth,
 To hear Earth's sons and daughters praising Earth."

II.

Whereupon a child began,
 With spirit running up to man,
 As by angel's shining ladder
 (May he find no cloud above!)
 Seeming he had ne'er been sadder
 All his days than now—
 Sitting in the chestnut grove,
 With that joyous overflow
 Of smiling from his mouth o'er brow
 And cheek and chin, as if the breeze
 Leaning tricky from the trees
 To part his golden hairs, had blown
 Into an hundred smiles that one.

III.

“O rare, rare Earth!” he saith,
 “I will praise thee presently;
 Not to-day; I have no breath!
 I have hunted squirrels three—
 Two ran down in the furzy hollow
 Where I could not see nor follow;
 One sits at the top of the filbert-tree,
 With a yellow nut, and a mock at me:
 Presently it shall be done!
 When I see which way these two have run,
 When the mocking one at the filbert-top
 Shall leap a-down, and beside me stop;
 Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,
 Will I pause, having known thy worth,
 To say all good of thee!”

IV.

Next a lover,—with a dream
 'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,

And a frequent sigh unbidden,
 And an idlesse all the day
 Beside a wandering stream ;
 And a silence that is made
 Of a word he dares not say,—
 Shakes slow his pensive head :
 “ Earth, Earth ! ” saith he,
 “ If spirits, like thy roses, grew
 On one stalk, and winds austere
 Could but only blow them near,
 To share each other’s dew ;—
 If, when summer rains agree
 To beautify thy hills, I knew,
 Looking off them, I might see
 Some one very beauteous too,—
 Then Earth,” saith he,
 “ I would praise . . . nay, nay—not *thee* ! ”

v.

Will the pedant name her next ?
 Crabbed with a crabbed text,
 Sits he in his study nook,
 With his elbow on a book,
 And with stately crossèd knees,
 And a wrinkle deeply thrid
 Through his lowering brow,
 Caused by making proofs enow
 That Plato in “ Parmenides ”
 Meant the same Spinoza did,—
 Or, that an hundred of the groping
 Like himself, had made one Homer,
Homeros being a misnomer.
 What hath *he* to do with praise
 Of Earth, or aught ? Whene’er the sloping

Sunbeams, through his window, daze
 His eyes off from the learned phrase,
 Straightway he draws close the curtain.
 May abstraction keep him dumb !
 Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain
 "Derivatium est" would come.

VI.

Then a mourner moveth pale
 In a silence full of wail,
 Raising not his sunken head
 Because he wandered last that way
 With that one beneath the clay :
 Weeping not, because that one,
 The only one who would have said,
 "Cease to weep, beloved !" has gone
 Whence returneth comfort none.
 The silence breaketh suddenly,—
 "Earth, I praise thee !" crieth he,
 "Thou hast a grave for also *me*."

VII.

Ha, a poet ! know him by
 The ecstasy-dilated eye,
 Not uncharged with tears that ran
 Upward from his heart of man ;
 By the cheek, from hour to hour,
 Kindled bright, or sunken wan,
 With a sense of lonely power ;
 By the brow, uplifted higher
 Than others, for more low declining :
 By the lip, which words of fire
 Overboiling have burned white,
 While they gave the nations light !

Ay, in every time and place
Ye may know the poet's face
By the shade, or shining.

VIII.

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,
Spreading his impassioned hands.
"O God's Earth!" he saith, "the sign
From the Father-soul to mine
Of all beauteous mysteries,
Of all perfect images,
Which, divine in His divine,
In my human only are
Very excellent and fair!
Think not, Earth, that I would raise
Weary forehead in thy praise
(Weary, that I cannot go
Farther from thy region low)
If were struck no richer meanings
From thee than thyself. The leanings
Of the close trees o'er the brim
Of a sunshine-haunted stream,
Have a sound beneath their leaves,
Not of wind, not of wind,
Which the poet's voice achieves.
The faint mountains, heaped behind,
Have a falling on their tops,
Not of dew, not of dew,
Which the poet's fancy drops.
Viewless things his eyes can view,
Driftings of his dream do light
All the skies by day and night,
And the seas that deepest roll,
Carry murmurs of his soul.
Earth, I praise thee! praise thou *me*!

God perfecteth his creation
 With this recipient poet-passion,
 And makes the beautiful to be.
 I praise thee, O belovèd sign,
 From the God-soul unto mine !
 Praise me, that I cast on thee
 The cunning sweet interpretation,
 The help and glory and dilation
 Of mine immortality ! ”

IX.

There was silence. None did dare
 To use again the spoken air
 Of that far-charming voice, until
 A Christian resting on the hill,
 With a thoughtful smile subdued
 (Seeming learnt in solitude)
 Which a weeper might have viewed
 Without new tears, did softly say,
 And looked up unto heaven alway,
 While he praised the Earth—

“ O Earth,

I count the praises thou art worth,
 By thy waves that move aloud,
 By thy hills against the cloud,
 By thy valleys warm and green,
 By the copses' elms between,
 By their birds which, like a sprite
 Scattered, by a strong delight,
 Into fragments musical,
 Stir and sing in every bush ;
 By thy silver founts that fall,
 As if to entice the stars at night
 To thine heart ; by grass and rush,

And little weeds the children pull,
Mistook for flowers !

—Oh, beautiful

Art thou, Earth, albeit worse
Than in heaven is callèd good !
Good to us, that we may know
Meekly from thy good to go ;
While the holy, crying Blood
Puts its music kind and low
'Twixt such ears as are not dull,
And thine ancient curse !

x.

“ Praisèd be the mosses soft
In thy forest pathways oft
And the thorns, which make us think
Of the thornless river-brink,
Where the ransomed tread !
Praisèd be thy sunny gleams,
And the storm, that worketh dreams
Of calm unfinished !
Praisèd be thine active days,
And thy night-time's solemn need,
When in God's dear book we read
No night shall be therein :
Praisèd be thy dwellings warm
By household faggot's cheerful blaze,
Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
Pauseth oft the merry din,
Save the babe's upon the arm,
Who croweth to the crackling wood :
Yea,—and better understood,
Praisèd be thy dwellings cold,
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,
Where the bodies of the saints

Separate from earthly taints
 Lie asleep, in blessing bound,
 Waiting for the trumpet's sound
 To free them into blessing ;—none
 Weeping more beneath the sun,
 Though dangerous words of human love
 Be graven very near, above.

XI.

“ Earth, we Christians praise thee thus,
 Even for the change that comes,
 With a grief, from thee to us !
 For thy cradles and thy tombs,
 For the pleasant corn and wine
 And summer-heat ; and also for
 The frost upon the sycamore
 And hail upon the vine ! ”

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS

But see the Virgin blest
 Hath laid her babe to rest.
 MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity*.

I.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One !
 My flesh, my Lord !—what name ? I do not know
 A name that seemeth not too high or low,
 Too far from me or Heaven.
 My Jesus, *that* is best ! that word being given
 By the majestic angel, whose command
 Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
 When I and all the earth appeared to stand
 In the great overflow
 Of light celestial from his wings and head.
 Sleep, sleep, my saving One !

II.

And art Thou come for saving, baby-browed
 And speechless Being—art Thou come for saving?
 The palm that grows beside our door is bowed
 By treadings of the low wind from the south,
 A restless shadow through the chamber waving:
 Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun;
 But Thou, with that close slumber on Thy mouth,
 Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.
 Art come for saving, O my weary One?

III.

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out the dreary
 Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy soul
 High dreams on fire with God;
 High songs that make the pathways where they roll
 More bright than stars do theirs; and visions new
 Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.
 Suffer this mother's kiss,
 Best thing that earthly is,
 To glide the music and the glory through,
 Nor narrow in Thy dream the broad upliftings
 Of any seraph wing!
 Thus noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep, my dreaming One

IV.

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
 Through *my* lips to mine heart; to all its shiftings
 Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness
 In a great calm. I feel I could lie down
 As Moses did, and die,¹—and then live most.
 I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,
 That stand with your peculiar light unlost,—

¹ It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

Each forehead with a high thought for a crown,
 Unsunned i' the sunshine ! I am 'ware. Ye throw
 No shade against the wall ! How motionless
 Ye round me with your living statuary,
 While through your whiteness, in and outwardly,
 Continual thoughts of God appear to go,
 Like light's soul in itself ! I bear, I bear,
 To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,
 Though their external shining testifies
 To that beatitude within which were
 Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.
 I fall not on my sad clay face before ye,—

I look on His. I know
 My spirit which dilateth with the woe
 Of His mortality,
 May well contain your glory.
 Yea, drop your lids more low,—
 Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me !
 Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One !

v.

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem ;
 The dumb kine from their fodder turning them,
 Softened their hornèd faces
 To almost human gazes
 Toward the newly Born.
 The simple shepherds from the star-lit brooks
 Brought visionary looks,
 As yet in their astonied hearing rung
 The strange, sweet angel-tongue.
 The magi of the East, in sandals worn,
 Knelt reverent, sweeping round,
 With long pale beards, their gifts upon the ground
 The incense, myrrh and gold,
 These baby hands were impotent to hold

So, let all earthlies and celestials wait
 Upon Thy royal state !
 Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

VI.

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest
 New meeknesses to hear such utterance rest
 On mortal lips,—“ I am not proud ” —*not proud !*
 Albeit in my flesh God sent His Son,
 Albeit over Him my head is bowed,
 As others bow before Him, still mine heart
 Bows lower than their knees. O centuries
 That roll, in vision, your futurities
 My future grave athwart,—
 Whose murmurs seem to reach me while I keep
 Watch o'er this sleep,—
 Say of me as the Heavenly said—“ Thou art
 The blesseddest of women ! ” —blessedest,
 Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,
 Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame,
 When I sit meek in heaven !

 For me—for me—
 God knows that I am feeble like the rest !
 I often wandered forth, more child than maiden,
 Among the midnight hills of Galilee,
 Whose summits looked heaven-laden ;
 Listening to silence, as it seemed to be
 God's voice, so soft yet strong—so fain to press
 Upon my heart, as Heaven did on the height,
 And waken up its shadows by a light,
 And show its vileness by a holiness.
 Then I knelt down, most silent like the night,
 Too self-renounced for fears,
 Raising my small face to the boundless blue

Whose stars did mix and tremble in my tears :
 God heard *them* falling after—with His dew.

VII.

So, seeing my corruption, can I see
 This Incorruptible now born of me—
 This fair new Innocence, no sun did chance
 To shine on (for even Adam was no child)
 Created from my nature all defiled,—
 This mystery, from out mine ignorance,—
 Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption, more
 Than others do, or *I* did heretofore?—
 Can hands wherein such burden pure has been,
 Not open with the cry “unclean, unclean!”
 More oft than any else beneath the skies?

Ah King, ah Christ, ah son !

The kine, the shepherds, the abasèd wise
 Must all less lowly wait
 Than I, upon Thy state !—
 Sleep, sleep, my kingly One !

VIII.

Art Thou a King, then? Come, His universe,
 Come, crown me Him a King !
 Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling
 Their light where fell a curse,
 And make a crowning for this kingly brow !—
 What is my word?—Each empyreal star
 Sits in a sphere afar
 In shining ambushade :
 ‘The child-brow, crowned by none,
 Keeps its unchildlike shade.
 Sleep, sleep, my crownless One

IX.

Unchildlike shade!—No other babe doth wear
 An aspect very sorrowful, as Thou.—
 No small babe-smiles my watching heart has seen,
 To float like speech the speechless lips between ;
 No dovelike cooing in the golden air,
 No quick short joys of leaping babyhood.

Alas, our earthly good
 In heaven thought evil, seems too good for Thee :
 Yet, sleep, my weary One !

X.

And then the drear sharp tongue of prophecy,
 With the dread sense of things which shall be done,
 Doth smite me inly, like a sword—a sword?—
That " smites the Shepherd ! " Then, I think aloud
 The words " despised, "—" rejected, "—every word
 Recoiling into darkness as I view

The DARLING on my knee.
 Bright angels,—move not !—lest ye stir the cloud
 Betwixt my soul and His futurity !
 I must not die, with mother's work to do,
 And could not live—and see,

XI.

It is enough to bear
 This image still and fair—
 This holier in sleep,
 Than a saint at prayer :
 This aspect of a child
 Who never sinned or smiled,—
 This Presence in an infant's face ;
 This sadness most like love,
 This love than love more deep,

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

This weakness like omnipotence,
 It is so strong to move!
 Awful is this watching place,
 Awful what I see from hence—
 A king, without regalia,
 A God, without the thunder,
 A child, without the heart for play;
 Ay, a Creator rent asunder
 From His first glory and cast away
 On His own world, for me alone
 To hold in hands created, crying—SON!

XII.

That tear fell not on THEE,
 Beloved, yet Thou stirrest in thy slumber!
 THOU, stirring not for glad sounds out of number
 Which through the vibratory palm-trees run
 From summer wind and bird,
 So quickly hast Thou heard
 A tear fall silently?—
 Wak'st Thou, O loving One?—

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

*Ἡδὴ νοερούς
 Μετασαι τάρσους.*—SYNESIUS.

I.

I DWELL amid the city ever.
 The great humanity which beats
 Its life along the stony streets,
 Like a strong and unsunned river
 In a self-made course,
 I sit and hearken while it rolls.
 Very sad and very hoarse

Certes is the flow of souls ;
 Infinitest tendencies,
 By the finite, prest and pent,—
 In the finite, turbulent.
 How we tremble in surprise,
 When sometimes, with an awful sound,
 God's great plummet strikes the ground !

II.

The champ of the steeds on the silver bit,
 As they whirl the rich man's carriage by ;
 The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—
 But it goes too fast for charity.
 The trail, on the street, of the poor man's broom,
 That the lady who walks to her palace-home,
 On her silken skirt may catch no dust ;
 The tread of the business-men who must
 Count their per cents. by the paces they take ;
 The cry of the babe, unheard of its mother,
 Though it lie on her breast, while she thinks of the other
 Laid yesterday where it will not wake.
 The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses and pinks,
 Held out in the smoke, like stars by day ;
 The gin-door's oath that hollowly chinks
 Guilt upon grief, and wrong upon hate ;
 The cabman's cry to get out of the way ;
 The dustman's call down the area-grate ;
 The young maid's jest, and the old wife's scold,
 The haggling talk of the boys at a stall ;
 The fight in the street, which is backed for gold,—
 The plea of the lawyers in Westminster Hall ;
 The drop on the stones of the blind man's staff,
 As he trades in his own grief's sacredness ;
 The brothel shriek, and the Newgate laugh,
 The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's grinding,

(The grinder's face being nevertheless
 Dry and vacant of even woe,
 While the children's hearts are leaping so
 At the merry music's winding) ;
 The black-plumed funeral's creeping train,
 Long and slow (and yet they will go
 As fast as Life, though it hurry and strain !)
 Creeping the populous houses through,
 And nodding their plumes at either side,—
 At many a house where an infant, new
 To the sunshiny world, has just struggled and cried,—
 At many a house where sitteth a bride
 Trying to-morrow's coronals,
 With a scarlet blush, to-day.—

Slowly creep the funerals,
 As none should hear the noise and say,
 The living, the living must go away
 To multiply the dead !

Hark ! an upward shout is sent !
 In grave strong joy from tower to steeple
 The bells ring out—

The trumpets sound, the people shout,
 The young Queen goes to her parliament.
 She turneth round her large blue eyes,
 More bright with childish memories
 Than royal hopes, upon the people ;
 On either side she bows her head

Lowly, with a queen'y grace,
 And smile most trusting-innocent,
 As if she smiled upon her mother !
 The thousands press before each other
 To bless her to her face ;
 And booms the deep majestic voice
 Through trump and drum,—“ May the Queen rejoice
 In the people's liberties ! ”

III.

I dwell amid the city,
 And hear the flow of souls in act and speech,
 For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly :
 I hear the confluence and sum of each,
 And that is melancholy !—
 Thy voice is a complaint, O crownèd city,
 The blue sky covering thee, like God's great pity.

IV.

O blue sky ! it mindeth me
 Of places where I used to see
 Its vast unbroken circle thrown
 From the far pale-peakèd hill
 Out to the last verge of ocean—
 As by God's arm it were done
 Then for the first time, with the emotion
 Of that first impulse on it still.
 Oh, we spirits fly at will,
 Faster than the wingèd steed
 Whereof in old book we read,
 With the sunlight foaming back
 From his flanks to a misty wrack,
 And his nostril reddening proud
 As he breasteth the steep thundercloud !—
 Smoother than Sabrina's chair
 Gilding up from wave to air,
 While she smileth debonair
 Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,
 Like her own mooned waters nightly,
 Through her dripping hair.

V.

Very fast and smooth we fly,
 Spirits, though the flesh be by.

All looks feed not from the eye,
 Nor all hearings from the ear ;
 We can hearken and espy
 Without either ; we can journey,
 Bold and gay, as knight to tourney ;
 And, though we wear no visor down
 To dark our countenance, the foe
 Shall never chafe us as we go.

VI.

I am gone from peopled town !
 It passeth its street-thunder round
 My body which yet hears no sound,
 For now another sound, another
 Vision, my soul's senses have.
 O'er a hundred valleys deep,
 Where the hills' green shadows sleep,
 Scarce known, because the valley-trees
 Cross those upland images,
 O'er a hundred hills each other
 Watching to the western wave—
 I have travelled,—I have found
 The silent, lone, remembered ground.

VII.

I have found a grassy niche,
 Hollowed in a seaside hill,
 As if the ocean-grandeur, which
 Is aspectable from the place,
 Had struck the hill as with a mace
 Sudden and cleaving. You might fill
 That little nook with the little cloud
 Which sometimes lieth by the moon
 To beautify a night of June ;
 A cavelike nook, which, opening all

To the wide sea, is disallowed
 From its own earth's sweet pastoral ;
 Cavelike, but roofless overhead,
 And made of verdant banks instead
 Of any rocks, with flowerets spread,
 Instead of spar and stalactite,
 Cowslips and daisies gold and white :
 Such pretty flowers on such green sward,
 You think the sea they look toward
 Doth serve them for another sky
 As warm and blue as that on high.

VIII.

And in this hollow is a seat,
 And when you shall have crept to it,
 Slipping down the banks too steep
 To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,
 Do not think—though at your feet
 The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold
 The line where earth and ocean meet ;
 You sit too much above to view
 The solemn confluence of the two :
 You can hear them as they greet ;
 You can hear that evermore
 Distance-softened noise, more old
 Than Nereid's singing,—the tide spent
 Joining soft issues with the shore
 In harmony of discontent,—
 And when you hearken to the grave
 Lamenting of the underwave,
 You must believe in earth's communion,
 Albeit you witness not the union.

IX.

Except that sound, the place is full
 Of silences, which, when you cull

By any word, it thrills you so,
 That presently you let them grow
 To meditation's fullest length
 Across your soul with a soul's strength :
 And as they touch your soul, they borrow
 Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,—
 That deathly odour which the clay
 Leaves on its deathlessness alway.

x.

Alway ! alway ! must this be ?
 Rapid Soul from city gone,
 Dost thou carry inwardly
 What doth make the city's moan ?
 Must this deep sigh of thine own
 Haunt thee with humanity ?
 Green-visioned banks, that are too steep
 To be o'erbrowzèd by the sheep,
 May all sad thoughts adown you creep
 Without a shepherd ?—Mighty sea,
 Can we dwarf thy magnitude,
 And fit it to our straitest mood ?—
 O fair, fair Nature ! are we thus
 Impotent and querulous
 Among thy workings glorious,
 Wealth and sanctities,—that still
 Leave us vacant and defiled,
 And wailing like a soft-kissed child,
 Kissed soft against his will ?

xi.

God, God !—
 With a child's voice I cry,
 Weak, sad, confidingly—
 God, God !

Thou knowest eyelids raised not always up
Unto Thy love (as none of ours are) droop,
 As ours, o'er many a tear !
Thou knowest, though Thy universe is broad,
Two little tears suffice to cover all.
Thou knowest,—Thou who art so prodigal
Of beauty, we are oft but stricken deer
Expiring in the woods, that care for none
Of those delightsome flowers they die upon.

XII.

O blissful Mouth which breathed the mournful breath
We name our souls,—self-spoilt!—by that strong passion
Which paled Thee once with sighs,—by that strong death
Which made Thee once unbreathing—from the wrack
Themselves have called around them, call them back,
Back to Thee in continuous aspiration !

 For here, O Lord,
For here they travel vainly,—vainly pass
From city-pavement to untrodden sward,
Where the lark finds her deep nest in the grass
Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea, very vain
The greatest speed of all these souls of men,
Unless they travel upward to the throne !
Where sittest THOU, the satisfying ONE,
With help for sins and holy perfectings
For all requirements—while the archangel, raising
Unto Thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
Forgets the rush and rapture of his wings !

TO BETTINE.

TO BETTINE.

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE.

"I have the second sight, Goethe!"—*Letters of a Child.*

I.

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second sight—
 Upturning worship and delight,
 With such a loving duty,
 To his grand face, as women will,
 The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still?

II.

—Before his shrine to doom thee,
 Using the same child's smile
 That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile
 For the first time, won from thee,
 Ere star and flower grew dim and dead
 Save at his feet and o'er his head?

III.

—Digging thine heart and throwing
 Away its childhood's gold,
 That so its woman-depth might hold
 His spirit's overflowing.
 (For surging souls, no worlds can bound,
 Their channel in the heart have found.)

IV.

O child, to change appointed,
 Thou hadst not second sight!
 What eyes the future view aright
 Unless by tears anointed?

Yea, only tears themselves can show
The burning ones that have to flow.

v.

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second sight !
The star is very high and bright,
And none can see it moving.
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

vi.

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope came back to thee
Without a leaf : art laying
Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom secretly ?

vii.

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,
I have the second sight !
The stone upon his grave is white,
The funeral stone between ye ;
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood.

viii.

Where's childhood ? where is Goethe ?
The tears are in thine eyes.
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganise
Thy maidenhood of beauty
In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles and sublime in youth.

IX.

The poet's arms have wound thee,
 He breathes upon thy brow,
 He lifts thee upward in the glow
 Of his great genius round thee,—
 The childlike poet undefiled
 Preserving evermore THE CHILD.

MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day
 Did look upon the earth and say—

“Purple cloud, the hill-top binding ;
 Folded hills, the valleys wind in ;
 Valleys, with fresh streams among you ;
 Streams, with bosky trees along you ;
 Trees, with many birds and blossoms ;
 Birds, with music-trembling bosoms ;
 Blossoms, dropping dews that wreathe you
 To your fellow flowers beneath you ;
 Flowers, that constellate on earth ;
 Earth, that shakest to the mirth
 Of the merry Titan ocean,
 All his shining hair in motion !
 Why am I thus the only one
 Who can be dark beneath the sun ? ”

But when the summer day was past,
 He looked to heaven and smiled at last,
 Self-answered so—

“Because, O cloud,
 Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
 Heavily on mountain top,—
 Hills, that almost seem to drop

Stricken with a misty death
 To the valleys underneath,—
 Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—
 Waters, streaked with branches horrent,—
 Branchless trees, that shake your head
 Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
 Where the common flowers are found,—
 Flowers, with foreheads to the ground,—
 Ground, that shrieketh while the sea
 With his iron smiteth thee—
 I am, besides, the only one
 Who can be bright *without* the sun."

A SEA-SIDE WALK.

I.

WE walked beside the sea
 After a day which perished silently
 Of its own glory—like the princess weird,
 Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared,
 Uttered with burning breath, "Ho! victory!"
 And sank adown, an heap of ashes pale:
 So runs the Arab tale.

II.

The sky above us showed
 A universal and unmoving cloud,
 On which the cliffs permitted us to see
 Only the outline of their majesty,
 As master-minds, when gazed at by the crowd!
 And shining with a gloom, the water gray
 Swang in its moon-taught way.

III.

Nor moon, nor stars were out;
 They did not dare to tread so soon about,

Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun :
 The light was neither night's nor day's, but one
 Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt,
 And Silence's impassioned breathings round
 Seemed wandering into sound.

IV.

O solemn-beating heart
 Of nature! I have knowledge that thou art
 Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever ;
 And, what time they are slackened by him ever,
 So to attest his own supernal part,
 Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong
 The slackened cord along :

V.

For though we never spoke
 Of the gray water and the shaded rock,
 Dark wave and stone unconsciously were fused
 Into the plaintive speaking that we used
 Of absent friends and memories unforsook ;
 And, had we seen each other's face, we had
 Seen haply each was sad.

FELICIA HEMANS.

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER MONODY ON THE
 POETESS.

I.

THOU bay-crowned living One that o'er the bay-crowned
 Dead art bowing,
 And o'er the shadeless moveless brow the vital shadow
 throwing,

And o'er the sighless songless lips the wail and music
wedding,
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes the tears not of their
shedding!—

II.

Take music from the silent Dead, whose meaning is completer;
Reserve thy tears for living brows, where all such tears are
meeter,
And leave the violets in the grass to brighten where thou
treadest!
No flowers for her! no need of flowers, albeit "bring
flowers," thou saidest.

III.

Yes, flowers, to crown the "cup and lute," since both may
come to breaking;
Or flowers, to greet the "bride"—the heart's own beating
works its aching;
Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's" sight, from earth's
free bosom gathered,
Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it
withered!

IV.

But bring not near the solemn corse a type of human
seeming!
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming.
And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it solely,
Her spherèd soul shall look on *them* with eyes more bright
and holy.

V.

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was
mourning:
Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the
burning?—

The minstrel harp, for the strained string? the tripod, for
 the afflated
 Woe? or the vision, for those tears, in which it shone
 dilated?

VI.

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's cold hand her
 brow was wreathing,
 But never wronged that mystic breath which breathed in
 all her breathing,
 Which drew from rocky earth and man, abstractions high
 and moving—
 Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving.

VII.

Such visionings have paled in sight; the Saviour she
 descrieth,
 And little recks *who* wreathed the brow which on His
 bosom lieth:
 The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her garments
 flowing,—
 There learneth she the sweet "new song" she will not
 mourn in knowing.

VIII.

Be happy, crowned and living One! and, as thy dust
 decayeth,
 May thine own England say for thee what now for Her
 sayeth—
 "Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,
 The footfall of her parting soul is softer than her singing!"

L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.

“Do you think of me as I think of you?”

From her poem written during the voyage to the Cape.

I.

“Do you think of me as I think of you,
My friends, my friends?”—She said it from the sea,
The English minstrel in her minstrelsy;
While, under brighter skies than erst she knew,
Her heart grew dark, and groped there as the blind
To reach across the waves friends left behind—
“Do you think of me as I think of you?”

II.

It seemed not much to ask—as *I of you?*—
We all do ask the same; no eyelids cover
Within the meekest eyes that question over,—
And little in the world the Loving do
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for
The echo of their own love evermore—
“Do you think of me as I think of you?”

III.

Love-learnèd, she had sung of love and love,—
And, like a child, that, sleeping with dropt head
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
Whatever household noises round him move,
Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

IV.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,—
When knightly gestic and courtly pageantries
Were broken in her visionary eyes

By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
 Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,
 She asked not,—“Do you praise me, O my land?”
 But,—“Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?”

V.

Hers was the hand that played for many a year
 Love's silver phrase for England,—smooth and well!
 Would God her heart's more inward oracle
 In that lone moment might confirm her dear!
 For when her questioned friends in agony
 Made passionate response,—“We think of thee,”
 Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

VI.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?
 Was she content—content—with ocean's sound,
 Which dashed its mocking infinite around
 One thirsty for a little love?—beneath
 Those stars, content—where last her song had gone,—
 They, mute and cold in radiant life,—as soon
 Their singer was to be, in darksome death?¹

VII.

Bring your vain answers—cry, “We think of thee!”
 How think ye of her? warm in long ago
 Delights? or crowned with budding bays? Not so.
 None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,—
 With all her visions unfulfilled—save one,
 Her childhood's—of the palm-trees in the sun—
 And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

VIII.

“Do ye think of me as I think of you?”—
 O friends,—O kindred,—O dear brotherhood

¹ Her lyric on the polar star came home with her latest papers.

Of all the world ! what are we, that we should
 For covenants of long affection sue ?
 Why press so near each other, when the touch
 Is barred by graves ? Not much, and yet too much,
 Is this " Think of me as I think of you."

IX.

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
 A sigh to mortal issues,—verily
 Above the unshaken stars that see us die,
 A vocal pathos rolls ! and HE who drew
 All life from dust, and for all tasted death,
 By death and life and love, appealing, saith,
Do you think of Me as I think of you ?

CROWNED AND WEDDED.

I.

WHEN last before her people's face her own fair face
 she bent,
 Within the meek projection of that shade she was content
 To erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed as if
 it might
 Be still kept holy from the world to childhood still in
 sight—
 To erase it with a solemn vow, a princely vow—to rule,
 A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God the pitiful,
 A very godlike vow—to rule in right and righteousness,
 And with the law and for the land—so God the vower
 bless !

II.

The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I ween,
 And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty aisled
 scene.

The priests stood stolèd in their pomp, the sworded chiefs
in theirs,

And so, the collared knights,—and so, the civil ministers,—
And so, the waiting lords and dames—and little pages best
At holding trains—and legates so, from countries east
and west—

So, alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladies bright,
Along whose brows the Queen's, now crowned, flashed
coronets to light!—

And so, the people at the gates, with priestly hands on high,
Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty!

And so, the DEAD—who lie in rows beneath the minster
floor,

There, verily an awful state maintaining evermore—
The statesman whose clean palm will kiss no bribe whate'er
it be—

The courtier who for no fair queen will rise up to his
knee—

The court-dame who for no court-tire will leave her shroud
behind—

The laureate who no courtlier rhyme than “dust to dust”
can find,

The kings and queens who having made that vow and
worn that crown,

Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown!
Dieu et mon droit—what is 't to them? what meaning can
it have?—

The King of kings, the right of death—God's judgment
and the grave!

And when betwixt the quick and dead the young fair queen
had vowed,

The living shouted “May she live! Victoria, live!” aloud—
And as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed between.

“The blessings happy monarchs have, be thine, O crowned
queen!”

III.

But now before her people's face she bendeth hers anew,
 And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness thereunto.
 She vowed to rule, and in that oath her childhood put
 away—

She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love to-day.
 O lovely lady ! let her vow !—such lips become such vows,—
 And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with vernal
 brows.

O lovely lady ! let her vow !—yea, let her vow to love !—
 And though she be no less a queen—with purples hung
 above,

The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,
 And woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly to
 ground,—

Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that state,
 While loving hopes, for retinues, about her sweetness wait.
 SHE vows to love, who vowed to rule—(the chosen at her
 side)—

Let none say, God preserve the queen !—but rather, Bless
 the bride !—

None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none violate
 the dream

Wherein no monarch, but a wife, she to herself may seem.
 Or if ye say, Preserve the queen !—oh, breathe it inward
 low—

She is a *woman*, and *beloved* !—and 'tis enough but so.
 Count it enough, thou noble prince, who tak'st her by the
 hand,

And claimest for thy lady-love our lady of the land !—
 And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high
 and rare,

And true to truth and brave for truth, as some at Augsburg
 were—

We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts, and by thy poet-
mind,

Which not by glory and degree takes measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing

IV.

And now, upon our queen's last vow, what blessings shall
we pray?

None straitened to a shallow crown will suit our lips
to-day.

Behold, they must be free as love—they must be broad
as free—

Even to the borders of heaven's light and earth's humanity
Long live she!—send up loyal shouts—and true hearts pray
between,—

“The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be thine, O crowned
queen!”

CROWNED AND BURIED.

I.

NAPOLEON!—years ago, and that great word,
Compact of human breath in hate and dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—

An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword,
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

II.

Napoleon!—nations, while they cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse; and while others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame—
And dying men, on trampled battle-sods,
Near their last silence, uttered it for God's.

III.

Napoleon!—sages, with high foreheads drooped,
 Did use it for a problem; children small
 Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call;
 Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
 By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows with a moan
 Spake it, when questioned why they sate alone.

IV.

That name consumed the silence of the snows
 In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid!
 The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
 And over-rushed her mountainous repose
 In search of eyries: and the Egyptian river
 Mingled the same word with its grand "For ever."

V.

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
 Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habitants,
 Packed to humanity's significance
 Motioned it back with stillness,—shouts as idle
 As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice,
 Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

VI.

The world's face changed to hear it! kingly men
 Came down, in chidden babes' bewilderment,
 From autocratic places—each content
 With sprinkled ashes for anointing!—then
 The people laughed or wondered for the nonce,
 To see one throne a composite of thrones.

VII.

Napoleon!—even the torrid vastitude
 Of India felt, in throbbings of the air,

That name which scattered by disastrous blare
 All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood,
 Napoleon!—from the Russias west to Spain :
 And Austria trembled—till ye heard her chain.

VIII.

And Germany was 'ware ; and Italy,
 Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,
 High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked—
 Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,
 To serve a newer!—Ay! but Frenchmen cast
 A future from them nobler than her past :

IX.

For, verily, though France augustly rose
 With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
 The purple of the world,—none gave so much
 As she, in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
 Whose hands, toward freedom stretched, dropped paralysed
 To wield a sword, or fit an undersized

X.

King's crown to a great man's head! And though along
 Her Paris' streets, did float on frequent streams
 Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams
 Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
 No dream of all so won was fair to see
 As the lost vision of her liberty.

XI.

Napoleon!—'twas a high name lifted high :
 It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
 Our compassing and covering atmosphere,
 And open a clear sight beyond the sky
 Of supreme empire! this of Earth's was done—
 And kings crept out again to feel the sun!

XII.

The kings crept out—the peoples sate at home,—
 And finding the long-invoked peace
 (A pall embroidered with worn images
 Of rights divine) too scant to cover doom
 Such as they suffered,—cursed the corn that grew
 Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo !

XIII.

A deep gloom centered in the deep repose :—
 The nations stood up mute to count their dead—
 And he who owned the NAME which vibrated
 Through silence,—trusting to his noblest foes
 When earth was all too gray for chivalry—
 Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea.

XIV.

O wild St. Helen ! very still she kept him,
 With a green willow for all pyramid,—
 Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
 A little more, if pilgrims overwept him,
 Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay
 Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

XV.

Nay, not so long !—France kept her old affection
 As deeply as the sepulchre the corse ;
 Until, dilated by such love's remorse
 To a new angel of the resurrection,
 She cried, “ Behold, thou England ! I would have
 The dead whereof thou wottest, from that grave.”

XVI.

And England answered in the courtesy
 Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit,—

“Take back thy dead! and when thou buriest it,
 Throw in all former strifes ’twixt thee and me.”
 Amen, mine England! ’tis a courteous claim—
 But ask a little room too—for thy shame!

XVII.

Because it was not well, it was not well,
 Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
 Among the Oceanides,—that Heart
 To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.
 I would, my noble England! men might seek
 All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek!

XVIII.

I would that hostile fleets had scarred Torbay,
 Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
 Until thy princely purpose was assured,
 Then left a shadow, not to pass away—
 Not for to-night’s moon, nor to-morrow’s sun:
 Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done!

XIX.

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust,
 We fain would pay back something of our debt
 To France, if not to honour, and forget
 How through much fear we falsified the trust
 Of a fallen foe and exile!—We return
 Orestes to Electra—in his urn!

XX.

A little urn—a little dust inside,
 Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
 To-day, a four-years child might carry it,
 Sleek-browed and smiling, “Let the burden ’bide!”

Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down,

XXI.

And run back in the chariot-marks of Time,
When all the people shall come forth to meet
The passive victor death-still in the street
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime
And martial music,—under eagles which
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz!

XXII.

Napoleon! he hath come again—borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
Majestically moaning. Give him room!—
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded column!¹

XXIII.

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
From roar of fields,—provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts!—and this he may: for, dispossessed
Of any godship, lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm!

XXIV.

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world! and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a French grave,—another kingdom won—
The last, of few spans—by Napoleon.

¹ It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

XXV.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth !
 But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
 Meridian light. He was a despot—granted !
 But the *avros* of his autocratic mouth
 Said yea i' the people's French ! he magnified
 The image of the freedom he denied :

XXVI.

And if they asked for rights, he made reply
 "Ye have my glory !"—and so, drawing round them
 His ample purple, glorified and bound them
 In an embrace that seemed identity.
 He ruled them like a tyrant—true ! but none
 Were ruled like slaves : each felt Napoleon.

XXVII.

I do not praise this man : the man was flawed,
 For Adam—much more, Christ !—his knee unbent—
 His hand unclean—his aspiration pent
 Within a sword-sweep—pshaw !—but since he had
 The genius to be loved, why, let him have
 The justice to be honoured in his grave.

XXVIII.

I think this nation's tears, thus poured together,
 Better than shouts ! I think this funeral
 Grandeur than crownings, though a Pope bless all.
 I think this grave stronger than thrones ! But whether
 The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
 Be worthier, I discern not—angels may.

MY DOVES.

"O Weisheit! Du red'st wie eine Taube!"—GOETHE.

My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree,
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
Or motion from the sea ;
For, ever there the sea-winds go
With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
The tropic stars looked down,
And there my little doves did sit,
With feathers softly brown,
And glittering eyes that showed their right
To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
Of murmuring waves beyond,
And green leaves round, to interpose
Their choral voices fond ;
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves
Theirs hath the calmest fashion,
Their living voice the likeliest moves
To lifeless intonation,—
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away
From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling gray,
And tempest-clouded airs ;

My little doves, who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and blue.

And now, within the city prison,
In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
For sounds of past content—
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion—
The triumph of the mart,
The gold and silver as they clash on
Man's cold metallic heart,
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
What human musings mean
(Their eyes with such a plaintive shine
Are fastened upwardly to mine !)

Soft falls their chant as on the nest
Beneath the sunny zone ;
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not aweary grown,
And 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills
With pastoral memories ;
All echoings from out the hills,
All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
 My little doves! to move
 Along the city-ways with heart
 Assured by holy love,
 And vocal with such songs as own
 A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—
 More hard, in Babel's street!
 But if the soulless creatures deem
 Their music not unmeet
 For sunless walls—let *us* begin,
 Who wear immortal wings within!

To me, fair memories belong
 Of scenes that used to bless;
 For no regret, but present song,
 And lasting thankfulness;
 And very soon to break away,
 Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
 For flowers the valley yields;
 I will have humble thoughts, instead
 Of silent, dewy fields:
 My spirit and my God shall be
 My sea-ward hill, my boundless sea!

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

I.

NINE years old! The first of any
 Seem the happiest years that come:
 Yet when *I* was nine, I said
 No such word!—I thought, instead,
 That the Greeks had used as many
 In besieging Ilium.

II.

Nine green years had scarcely brought me
 To my childhood's haunted spring ;
 I had life, like flowers and bees,
 In betwixt the country trees,
 And the sun the pleasure taught me
 Which he teacheth every thing.

III.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,—
 Little head leant on the pane,
 Little finger drawing down it
 The long trailing drops upon it,—
 And the "Rain, rain, come to-morrow,"
 Said for charm against the rain.

IV.

Such a charm was right Canidian,
 Though you meet it with a jeer !
 If I said it long enough,
 Then the rain hummed dimly off,
 And the thrush with his pure Lydian
 Was left only to the ear ;

V.

And the sun and I together
 Went a-rushing out of doors :
 We our tender spirits drew
 Over hill and dale in view,
 Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,
 In the footsteps of the showers.

VI.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
 Through the grasses wet and fair,
 Straight I sought my garden-ground,

With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear-tree oversweeping
A side-shadow of green air.

VII.

In the garden lay supinely
A huge giant wrought of spade !
Arms and legs were stretched at length
In a passive giant strength,—
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,
Round them laid and interlaid.

VIII.

Call him Hector, son of Priam !
Such his title and degree.
With my rake I smoothed his brow,
Both his cheeks I weeded through,
But a rhymer such as I am,
Scarce can sing his dignity.

IX.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
Staring, winking at the skies ;
Nose of gillyflowers and box ;
Scented grasses put for locks—
Which a little breeze, at pleasure,
Set a-waving round his eyes :

X.

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
With a glitter toward the light ;
Purple violets for the mouth,
Breathing perfumes west and south ;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
Holden ready for the fight :

XI.

And a breastplate made of daisies,
 Closely fitting, leaf on leaf
 Periwinkles interlaced,
 Drawn for belt about the waist ;
 While the brown bees, humming praises,
 Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII.

And who knows (I sometimes wondered)
 If the disembodied soul
 Of old Hector, once of Troy,
 Might not take a dreary joy
 Here to enter—if it thundered,
 Rolling up the thunder-roll ?

XIII.

Rolling this way, from Troy-ruin,
 In this body rude and rife,
 Just to enter, and take rest
 'Neath the daisies of the breast—
 They, with tender roots, renewing
 His heroic heart to life ?

XIV.

Who could know ? I sometimes started
 At a motion or a sound !
 Did his mouth speak—naming Troy,
 With an *οτοτοτοτο* ?
 Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
 Make the daisies tremble round ?

XV.

It was hard to answer, often :
 But the birds sang in the tree,
 But the little birds sang bold

In the pear-tree green and old,
 And my terror seemed to soften
 Through the courage of their glee.

XVI.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
 And white blossoms, sleek with rain !
 Oh, my garden rich with pansies !
 Oh, my childhood's bright romances !
 All revive, like Hector's body,
 And I see them stir again.

XVII.

And despite life's changes, chances,
 And despite the deathbell's toll,
 They press on me in full seeming :
 Help, some angel ! stay this dreaming !
 As the birds sang in the branches,
 Sing God's patience through my soul !

XVIII.

That no dreamer, no neglecter
 Of the present's work unsped,
 I may wake up and be doing,
 Life's heroic ends pursuing,
 Though my past is dead as Hector,
 And though Hector is twice dead.

SOUNDS.

“ Ηκουσας η ουκ ηκουσας ; — ” — ÆSCHYLUS.

I.

HEARKEN, hearken !
 The rapid river carrieth
 Many noises underneath
 The hoary ocean ;
 Teaching his solemnity,

Sounds of inland life and glee,
 Learnt beside the waving tree
 When the winds in summer prank
 Toss the shades from bank to bank,
 And the quick rains, in emotion
 Which rather gladdens earth than grieves,
 Count and visibly rehearse
 The pulses of the universe
 Upon the summer leaves—
 Learnt among the lilies straight,
 When they bow them to the weight
 Of many bees whose hidden hum
 Seemeth from themselves to come—
 Learnt among the grasses green,
 Where the rustling mice are seen,
 By the gleaming, as they run,
 Of their quick eyes in the sun ;
 And lazy sheep are browsing through,
 With their noses trailed in dew ;
 And the squirrel leaps adown,
 Holding fast the filbert brown ;
 And the lark, with more of mirth
 In his song than suits the earth,
 Droppeth some in soaring high,
 To pour the rest out in the sky ;
 While the woodland doves apart
 In the copse's leafy heart,
 Solitary, not ascetic,
 Hidden and yet vocal, seem
 Joining, in a lovely psalm,
 Man's despondence, nature's calm,
 Half mystical and half pathetic,
 Like a singing in a dream. ¹

¹ " While floating up bright forms ideal,
 Mistress, or friend, around me stream ;

All these sounds the river telleth,
Softened to an undertone
Which ever and anon he swelleth
By a burden of his own,
In the ocean's ear :

Ay, and ocean seems to hear
With an inward gentle scorn,
Smiling to his caverns worn.

II.

Hearken, hearken !

The child is shouting at his play
Just in the tramping funeral's way ;
The widow moans as she turns aside
To shun the face of the blushing bride
While, shaking the tower of the ancient church
The marriage bells do swing ;
And in the shadow of the porch
An idiot sits with his lean hands full
Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,
Laughing loud and gibbering,
Because it is so brown a thing,
While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red
In and out the senseless head,
Where all sweet fancies grew instead.
And you may hear at the self-same time
Another poet who reads his rhyme,
Low as a brook in summer air,—
Save when he droppeth his voice adown

Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
Like music mingling with a dream."

John Kenyon.

I do not doubt that the "music" of the two concluding lines mingled, though very unconsciously, with my own "dream" and gave their form and pressure to the above distich. The ideas, however, being sufficiently distinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after my verses, and with acknowledging another obligation to a valued friend to whom I already owe so many. 1844.

To dream of the amaranthine crown
His mortal brows shall wear.
And a baby cries with a feeble sound
'Neath the weary weight of the life new-found,
And an old man groans,—with his testament
Only half-signed,—for the life that's spent ;
And lovers twain do softly say,
As they sit on a grave, “ For aye, for aye ; ”
And foemen twain, while Earth their mother
Looks greenly upward, curse each other.
A schoolboy drones his task, with looks
Cast over the page to the elm-tree rooks ;
A lonely student cries aloud,
Eureka! clasping at his shroud :
A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing
To a little infant slumbering ;
A maid forgotten weeps alone,
Muffling her sobs on the trysting-stone ;
A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail ;
A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale ;
A muttering gamester shakes the dice ;
A reaper foretells goodluck from the skies ;
A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to them ;
A patriot leaving his native land to them,
Cries to the world against perjured state ;
A priest disserts upon linen skirts ;
A sinner screams for one hope more ;
A dancer's feet do palpitate
A piper's music out on the floor ;
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,
Because he cannot hear ;
And *he* who on that narrow bier
Has room enough, is closely wound
In a silence piercing more than sound.

III.

Hearken, hearken !
 God speaketh to thy soul,
 Using the súpreme voice which doth confound
 All life with consciousness of Deity,
 All senses into one,—
 As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John
 (For whom did backward roll
 The cloud-gate of the future) turned to *see*
 The Voice which spake. It speaketh now,—
 Through the regular breath of the calm creation,
 Through the moan of the creature's desolation,
 Striking, and in its stroke resembling
 The memory of a solemn vow,
 Which pierceth the din of a festival
 To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall
 The cup with a sudden trembling.

IV.

Hearken, hearken !
 God speaketh in thy soul,
 Saying, " O thou that movest
 With feeble steps across this earth of Mine,
 To break beside the fount thy golden bowl
 And spill its purple wine,—
 Look up to heaven and see how, like a scroll,
 My right hand hath thine immortality
 In an eternal grasping ! thou, that lovest
 The songful birds and grasses underfoot,
 And also what change mars and tombs pollute—
 I am the end of love !—give love to *Me* !
 O thou that sinnest, grace doth more abound
 Than all thy sin ! sit still beneath My rood,
 And count the droppings of my victim-blood,
 And seek none other sound ! "

v.

Hearken, hearken !
 Shall we hear the lapsing river
 And our brother's sighing ever,
 And not the voice of God ?

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound
 I strive and struggle to deliver right
 That music of my nature, day and night
 With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
 And inly answering all the senses round
 With octaves of a mystic depth and height,
 Which step out grandly to the infinite
 From the dark edges of the sensual ground !
 This song of soul I struggle to outbear
 Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
 And utter all myself into the air :
 But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
 Breaks its own cloud,—my flesh would perish there,
 Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET.

THE seraph sings before the manifest
 God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,
 And with the full life of consummate Heaven
 Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast
 Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest :
 The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,
 Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven
 For wronging him,—and in the darkness prest
 From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so,

Sing, seraph with the glory! Heaven is high—
 Sing, poet with the sorrow! Earth is low:
 The universe's inward voices cry
 "Amen" to either song of joy and woe:
 Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally!

BEREAVEMENT.

WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
 The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
 Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
 And I astonied fell and could not pray,—
 A thought within me to myself did say,
 "Is God less God, that *thou* art left undone?
 Rise, worship, bless Him! in this sackcloth spun,
 As in that purple!"—but I answered, Nay!
 What child his filial heart in words can loose,
 If he behold his tender father raise
 The hand that chastens sorely? Can he choose
 But sob in silence with an upward gaze?—
 And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
 Discerns in speechless tears both prayer and praise.

CONSOLATION.

ALL are not taken! there are left behind
 Living Beloveds, tender looks to bring,
 And make the daylight still a happy thing,
 And tender voices, to make soft the wind.
 But if it were not so—if I could find
 No love in all the world for comforting,
 Nor any path but hollowly did ring,
 Where "dust to dust" the love from life disjoined—
 And if, before those sepulchres unmoving

I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb
 Goes bleating up the moors in weary dearth)
 Crying, "Where are ye, O my loved and loving?"—
 I know a Voice would sound, "Daughter, I AM.
 Can I suffice for HEAVEN, and not for earth?"

TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD.

IN HER GARDEN.

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear thy feet,
 Benignant friend, I will not proudly say
 As better poets use, "These *flowers* I lay,"
 Because I would not wrong thy roses sweet,
 Blaspheming so their name. And yet, repeat
 Thou, overleaning them this springtime day,
 With heart as open to love as theirs to May,
 —"Low-rooted verse may reach some heavenly heat,
 Even like my blossoms, if as nature-true,
 Though not as precious." Thou art unperplexed,
 Dear friend, in whose dear writings drops the dew
 And blow the natural airs,—thou, who art next
 To nature's self in cheering the world's view,—
 To preach a sermon on so known a text!

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH BY B. R. HAYDON.

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud
 Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind
 Then break against the rock, and show behind
 The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
 The sense with beauty. He, with forehead bowed
 And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
 Before the sovran thought of his own mind,

And very meek with inspirations proud,—
 Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
 By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
 To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free
 Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist :
 No portrait this, with Academic air—
 This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
 On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
 Supernal Will ! I would not fain be one
 Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast
 Upon the fulness of the heart, at last
 Says no grace after meat. My wine has run
 Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
 To gather up the bread of my repast
 Scattered and trampled ;—yet I find some good
 In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
 Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
 I sit with angels before better food.
 Dear Christ ! when Thy new vintage fills my cup,
 This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day,
 And gathered there the nosegay that you see ;
 Singing within myself as bird or bee
 When such do field-work on a morn of May.
 But now I look upon my flowers,—decay
 Has met them in my hands more fatally,
 Because more warmly clasped,—and sobs are free
 To come instead of songs. What do you say,

Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
 Back straightway to the fields and gather more?
 Another, sooth, may do it,—but not I!
 My heart is very tired—my strength is low—
 My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
 Held dead within them till myself shall die.

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
 More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
 That is light grieving! lighter, none befell
 Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
 Tears! what are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,
 The mother singing; at her marriage-bell,
 The bride weeps; and before the oracle
 Of high-faned hills the poet has forgot
 Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
 Ye who weep only! If, as some have done,
 Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
 And touch but tombs,—look up! those tears will run
 Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
 And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

GRIEF.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless—
 That only men incredulous of despair,
 Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air,
 Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
 Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
 In souls, as countries, lieth silent-bare
 Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
 Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express

Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death—
 Most like a monumental statue set
 In everlasting watch and moveless woe,
 Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
 Touch it ; the marble eyelids are not wet :
 If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some beloved voice that was to you
 Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
 And silence against which you dare not cry,
 Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
 What hope ? what help ? what music will undo
 That silence to your sense ? Not friendship's sigh—
 Not reason's subtle count ; not melody
 Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew ;
 Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales
 Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress-trees
 To the clear moon ; nor yet the spheric laws
 Self-chanted,—nor the angels' sweet All hails,
 Met in the smile of God : nay, none of these.
 Speak THOU, availing Christ !—and fill this pause.

COMFORT.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
 From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
 Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
 Who art not missed by any that entreat.
 Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet !
 And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
 Let my tears drop like amber, while I go
 In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
 In humanest affection—thus, in sooth,

To lose the sense of losing ! As a child,
 Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
 Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth ;
 Till, sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
 He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician, holds
 A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
 Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
 Of God's will in His worlds, the strain unfolds
 In sad, perplexèd minors : deathly colds
 Fall on us while we hear, and countermand
 Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land
 With nightingales in visionary wolds.
 We murmur,—“Where is any certain tune
 Or measured music in such notes as these ?”
 But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
 Are not so minded ; their fine ear hath won
 The issue of completed cadences,
 And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—SWEET.

WORK.

WHAT are we set on earth for ? Say, to toil ;
 Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines
 For all the heat o' the day, till it declines,
 And Death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
 God did anoint thee with His odorous oil,
 To wrestle, not to reign ; and He assigns
 All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
 For younger fellow-workers of the soil

To wear for amulets. So others shall
 Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand,
 From thy hand and thy heart and thy brave cheer,
 And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
 The least flower, with a brimming cup may stand,
 And share its dew-drop with another near.

FUTURITY.

AND, O belovèd voices, upon which
 Ours passionately call because erelong
 Ye brake off in the middle of that song
 We sang together softly to enrich,
 The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
 The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,—
 Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
 The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
 In Heaven to hold our idols : and albeit
 He brake them to our faces and denied
 That our close kisses should impair their white,—
 I know we shall behold them raised, complete,—
 The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified
 New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS.

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
 Like pulses in the church's brow and breast ;
 And by them we find rest in our unrest
 And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat
 God's fellowship as if on heavenly seat.
 The first is, JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
 Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
 And sweetest waters on the record sweet :

And one is where the Christ, denied and scorned,
 LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render plain,
 By help of having loved a little and mourned,—
 That look of sovran love and sovran pain,
 Which HE who could not sin yet suffered, turned
 On him who could reject, but not sustain!

THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word,
 No gesture of reproach; the Heavens serene
 Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
 Their thunders that way: the forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
 What that look was, none guess; for those who have seen
 Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
 Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
 Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call.
 And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
 “I never knew this man”—did quail and fall,
 As knowing straight THAT GOD; and turned free
 And went out speechless from the face of all,
 And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—
 “Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone
 Which I at last must break My heart upon,
 For all God’s charge to His high angels may
 Guard my foot better? Did I yesterday
 Wash *thy* feet, My beloved, that they should run
 Quick to deny Me ’neath the morning sun?—
 And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?—

The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
 A late contrition, but no bootless fear !
 For when thy final need is dreariest,
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here ;
 My voice to God and angels shall attest,—
Because I KNOW this man, let him be clear."

THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
 To die alone,—with none beside thy bed
 To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said,
 And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
 Pray then alone—"O Christ, come tenderly !
 By Thy forsaken Sonship, in the red
 Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness outspread,—
 And the lone garden where Thine agony
 Fell bloody from Thy brow,—by all of those
 Permitted desolations, comfort mine !
 No earthly friend being near me, interpose
 No deathly angel 'twixt my face and Thine,
 But stoop Thyself to gather my life's rose,
 And smile away my mortal to Divine !"

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
 A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarolle ;
 She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
 Far more than of her flax ; and yet the reel
 Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
 With quick adjustment, provident control,
 The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
 Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal

To the dear Christian church—that we may do
 Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
 Thus, swift and steadfast; thus, intent and strong;
 While thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
 Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
 The better for the sweetness of our song.

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon mine heart,
 And drew around it other thoughts like bees
 For multitude and thirst of sweetnesses;
 Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
 Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
 Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
 That I might hive with me such thoughts, and please
 My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
 Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I spoke,
 The thought I called a flower grew nettle-rough,
 The thoughts, called bees, stung me to festering:
 Oh, entertain (cried Reason, as she woke,)
 Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
 And they will all prove sad enough to sting!

FLUSH OR FAUNUS.

You see this dog; it was but yesterday
 I mused, forgetful of his presence here,
 Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear
 When from the pillow where wet-cheeked I lay,
 A head as hairy as Faunus thrust its way
 Right sudden against my face,—two golden-clear
 Great eyes astonished mine,—a drooping ear
 Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray!
 I started first, as some Arcadian

Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove :
 But as the bearded vision closelier ran
 My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
 Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true PAN,
 Who, by low creatures, leads to heights of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE.

THE wind sounds only in opposing straits,
 The sea, beside the shore ; man's spirit rends
 Its quiet only up against the ends
 Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,
 Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,
 And losing by the loss it apprehends,
 The flesh rocks round and every breath it sends
 Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states
 Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah Lord,
 Make room for rest, around me ! out of sight
 Now float me, of the vexing land abhorred,
 Till in deep calms of space my soul may right
 Her nature ; shoot large sail on lengthening cord,
 And rush exultant on the Infinite.

AN APPREHENSION.

IF all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
 Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
 That still grew gentler till its pulse was less
 For life than pity,—I should yet be slow
 To bring my own heart nakedly below
 The palm of such a friend, that he should press
 Motive, condition, means, appliances,
 My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
 Out full to light and knowledge ; I should fear
 Some plait between the brows, some rougher chime

In the free voice. O angels, let your flood
 Of bitter scorn dash on me ! Do ye hear
 What *I* say who bear calmly all the time
 This everlasting face to face with God ?

DISCONTENT.

LIGHT human nature is too lightly tost
 And ruffled without cause ; complaining on—
 Restless with rest, until, being overthrown,
 It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
 Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
 Of our ripe peach ; or let the wilful sun
 Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
 A furlong's sigh as if the world were lost.
 But what time through the heart and through the brain
 God hath transfix'd us,—we, so moved before,
 Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
 We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore ;
 And hear, submissive, o'er the stormy main,
 God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.

“O DREARY life !” we cry, “O dreary life !”
 And still the generations of the birds
 Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
 Serenely live while we are keeping strife
 With Heaven's true purpose in us, as a knife
 Against which we may struggle ! Ocean girds
 Unslackened the dry land, savannah-swards
 Unweary sweep, hills watch unworn, and rife
 Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees
 To show, above, the unwasted stars that pass

In their old glory : O thou God of old,
 Grant me some smaller grace than comes to these !
 But so much patience as a blade of grass
 Grows by, contented through the heat and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
 In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
 Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
 Of yon gray blank of sky, we might grow faint
 To muse upon eternity's constraint
 Round our aspirant souls ; but since the scope
 Must widen early, is it well to droop,
 For a few days consumed in loss and taint ?
 O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted—
 And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
 Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
 Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
 To meet the flints ?—At least it may be said,
 " Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God ! "

EXAGGERATION.

WE overstate the ills of life, and take
 Imagination (given us to bring down
 The choirs of singing angels overshadowed
 By God's clear glory) down our earth to rake
 The dismal snows instead, flake following flake,
 To cover all the corn ; we walk upon
 The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
 And pant like climbers near the alderbrake
 We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
 Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.

O brothers ! let us leave the shame and sin
 Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
 The holy name of GRIEF !—holy herein
 That, by the grief of ONE came all our good.

ADEQUACY.

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
 Beloved England, doth the earth appear
 Quite good enough for men to overbear
 The will of God in, with rebellious wills !
 We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
 Ingloriously its course ; nor that the clear
 Strong stars without significance insphere
 Our habitation : we, meantime, our ills
 Heap up against this good ; and lift a cry
 Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
 As if ourselves were better certainly
 Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
 I ask Thee not my joys to multiply,—
 Only to make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
 Self-called George Sand ! whose soul, amid the lions
 Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance
 And answers roar for roar, as spirits can :
 I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
 Above the applauded circus, in appliance
 Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,
 Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
 From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
 With holier light ! That thou to woman's claim

And man's, might'st join beside the angel's grace
 Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,
 Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace
 To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman ! dost deny
 The woman's nature with a manly scorn,
 And break away the gauds and armlets worn
 By weaker women in captivity ?
 Ah, vain denial ! that revolted cry
 Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn,—
 Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,
 Floats back dishevelled strength in agony.
 Disproving thy man's name : and while before
 The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,
 We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
 Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and higher,
 Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore,
 Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire !

THE PRISONER.

I COUNT the dismal time by months and years,
 Since last I felt the green sward under foot,
 And the great breath of all things summer-mute
 Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
 As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres,
 Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at. Nature's lute
 Sounds on, behind this door so closely shut,
 A strange wild music to the prisoner's ears,
 Dilated by the distance, till the brain

Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine ;
 While ever, with a visionary pain,
 Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
 Streams, forests, glades,—and many a golden train
 Of sunlit hills transfigured to Divine.

INSUFFICIENCY.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
 Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
 Along my pulses, yearning to be free
 And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
 To the individual, true, and the universe,
 In consummation of right harmony :
 But, like a wind exposed, distorted tree,
 We are blown against for ever by the curse
 Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is weak—
 The effluence of each is false to all :
 And what we best conceive, we fail to speak.
 Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall !
 And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
 Fit peroration without let or thrall.

TWO SKETCHES.

H. B.

I.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall
 May take your memory to the perfect Greek,
 But when you front her, you would call the cheek
 Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
 That bloom it wears could leave you critical,
 And that smile reaching toward the rosy streak ;
 For one who smiles so, has no need to speak

To lead your thoughts along, as steed to stall.
 A smile that turns the sunny side o' the heart
 On all the world, as if herself did win
 By what she lavished on an open mart !
 Let no man call the liberal sweetness, sin,—
 For friends may whisper as they stand apart,
 "Methinks there's still some warmer place within.

A. B.

II.

HER azure eyes, dark lashes hold in fee ;
 Her fair superfluous ringlets, without check,
 Drop after one another down her neck,
 As many to each cheek as you might see
 Green leaves to a wild rose ; this sign outwardly,
 And a like woman-covering seems to deck
 Her inner nature, for she will not fleck
 World's sunshine with a finger. Sympathy
 Must call her in Love's name ! and then, I know,
 She rises up, and brightens as she should,
 And lights her smile for comfort, and is slow
 In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
 To smell this flower, come near it ! such can grow
 In that sole garden where Christ's brow dropped blood.

MOUNTAINEER AND POET.

THE simple goatherd between Alp and sky,
 Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,
 Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
 Esteems not his own stature larger by
 The apparent image, but more patiently
 Strikes his staff down beneath his clenching fist—

While the snow-mountains lift their amethyst
 And sapphire crowns of splendour, far and nigh,
 Into the air around him. Learn from hence
 Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue
 Your way still onward up to eminence !
 Ye are not great because creation drew
 Large revelations round your earliest sense,
 Nor bright because God's glory shines for you.

THE POET.

THE poet hath the child's sight in his breast
 And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed,
 He views with the first glory. Fair and good
 Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
 But stand before him holy and undressed
 In week-day false conventions, such as would
 Drag other men down from the altitude
 Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
 Why, God would tire of all His heavens, as soon
 As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst
 Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon !
 And therefore hath He set thee in the midst,
 Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune,
 And praise His world for ever, as thou bidst.

HIRAM POWERS' GREEK SLAVE.

THEY say Ideal beauty cannot enter
 The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
 An alien Image with enshackled hands,
 Called the Greek Slave ! as if the artist meant her
 (That passionless perfection which he lent her,
 Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)

To so confront man's crimes in different lands
 With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
 Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long
 The serfdom of this world! Appeal, fair stone,
 From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!
 Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
 East griefs but west,—and strike and shame the strong,
 By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

LIFE.

EACH creature holds an insular point in space;
 Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a sound,
 But all the multitudinous beings round
 In all the countless worlds, with time and place
 For their conditions, down to the central base,
 Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
 Life answering life across the vast profound,
 In full antiphony, by a common grace?—
 I think this sudden joyance which illumines
 A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run
 From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs:
 I think this passionate sigh, which, half-begun,
 I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes
 Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

LOVE.

We cannot live, except thus mutually
 We alternate, aware or unaware,
 The reflex act of life; and when we bear
 Our virtue outward most impulsively,
 Most full of invocation, and to be
 Most instantly compellant, certes there
 We live most life, whoever breathes most air

And counts his dying years by sun and sea :
 But when a soul, by choice and conscience, doth
 Throw out her full force on another soul,
 The conscience and the concentration both
 Make mere life, Love. For Life in perfect whole
 And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,
 As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.

HEAVEN AND EARTH.

"And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour!"
Revelation

GOD, who, with thunders and great voices kept
 Beneath Thy throne, and stars most silver-paced
 Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced
 Melodious angels round,—canst intercept
 Music with music,—yet, at will, hast swept
 All back, all back (said he in Patmos placed),
 To fill the heavens with silence of the waste
 Which lasted half an hour!—Lo, I, who have wept
 All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,
 And by that dread response of curse and groan
 Men alternate across these hemispheres,
 Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,
 In compensation for our stormy years :
 As heaven has paused from song, let earth from moan.

THE PROSPECT.

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,
 Leaning their faces on the window-pane
 To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain
 And shut the sky and landscape from their view :
 And thus, alas ! since God the maker drew

A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,
 The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,
 We miss the prospect which we are called unto,
 By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,
 O man, my brother! hold thy sobbing breath,
 And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong;
 That so, as life's appointment issueth,
 Thy vision may be clear to watch along
 The sunset consummation-lights of death.

HUGH STUART BOYD.¹

HIS BLINDNESS.

GOD would not let the spheric lights accost
 This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off
 With all her beckoning hills whose golden stuff
 Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.
 Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—
 Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,
 To catch fair visions rendered full enough
 By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—
 Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,
 Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's spring,
 And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eyes:
 Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seemed one thing,
 Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves
 Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on the wing.

¹ To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of "Cyprus Wine." There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848; Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier in this than the absent), fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sate by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS DEATH, 1848.

BELOVED friend, who living many years
 With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,
 Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune
 To visible nature's elemental cheers !
 God has not caught thee to new hemispheres
 Because thou wast weary of this one ;—
 I think thine angel's patience first was done,
 And that he spake out with celestial tears,
 " Is it enough, dear God ? then lighten so
 This soul that smiles in darkness ! "

Steadfast friend,
 Who never didst my heart or life misknow,
 Nor either's faults too keenly apprehend,—
 How can I wonder when I see thee go
 To join the Dead found faithful to the end ?

HUGH STUART BOYD.

LEGACIES.

THREE gifts the Dying left me,—Æschylus,
 And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock
 Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock
 Of stars, whose motion is melodious.
 The books were those I used to read from, thus
 Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
 The darkness of his eyes ! now, mine they mock,
 Blinded in turn by tears ; now, murmurous
 Sad echoes of my young voice, years ago
 Entoning, from these leaves, the Grecian phrase,
 Return and choke my utterance. Books, lie down

In silence on the shelf there, within gaze !
 And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
 Chime in the day which ends these parting-days !

A SONG AGAINST SINGING.

TO E. J. H.

I.

THEY bid me sing to thee,
 Thou golden-haired and silver-voicèd child—
 With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's defiled —
 With eyes unknowing how tears dim the sight,
 And feet all trembling at the new delight
 Treaders of earth to be !

II.

Ah no ! the lark may bring
 A song to thee from out the morning cloud ;
 The merry river from its lilies bowed ;
 The brisk rain from the trees ; the lucky wind
 That half doth make its music, half doth find,—
 But *I*—*I* may not sing.

III.

How could I think it right,
 New-comer on our earth as, Sweet, thou art,
 To bring a verse from out an human heart
 Made heavy with accumulated tears,
 And cross with such amount of weary years
 Thy day-sum of delight ?

IV.

Even if the verse were said,
 Thou, who wouldst clap thy tiny hands to hear

The wind or rain, gay bird or river clear,
 Wouldst, at that sound of sad humanities,
 Upturn thy bright uncomprehending eyes
 And bid me play instead.

v.

Therefore no song of mine,—
 But prayer in place of singing; prayer that would
 Commend thee to the new-creating God
 Whose gift is childhood's heart without its stain
 Of weakness, ignorance, and changing vain—
 That gift of God be thine!

vi.

So wilt thou aye be young,
 In lovelier childhood than thy shining brow
 And pretty winning accents make thee now!
 Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate sound
 (How sweet!) of "father," "mother," shall be found
 The ABBA on thy tongue.

vii.

And so, as years shall chase
 Each other's shadows, thou wilt less resemble
 Thy fellows of the earth who toil and tremble,
 Than him thou seest not, thine angel bold
 Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold
 The Ever-loving's face.

WINE OF CYPRUS.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR OF "SELECT
PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK FATHERS," ETC.,

TO WHOM THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

I.

IF old Bacchus were the speaker
He would tell you with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker
I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By queen Juno brushed aside, a
Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

II.

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler
When the drink is so divine,
And some deep-mouthed Greek exemplar
Would become your Cyprus wine :
Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright in,
While his one eye over-leered—
Nor too large were mouth of Titan
Drinking rivers down his beard.

III.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
That his ears alone pricked out ;
Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,
Each one pointing to his throat !
While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry, " O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
Springs to keep, of such a taste ! "

IV.

But for me, I am not worthy
 After gods and Greeks to drink ;
 And my lips are pale and earthy,
 To go bathing from this brink !
 Since you heard them speak the last time,
 They have faded from their blooms,
 And the laughter of my pastime
 Has learned silence at the tombs.

V.

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers
 Crowned the cup and crowned the brow.
 Can I answer the old thinkers
 In the forms they thought of, now ?
 Who will fetch from garden-closes,
 Some new garlands while I speak
 That the forehead, crowned with roses,
 May strike scarlet down the cheek ?

VI.

Do not mock me! with my mortal,
 Suits no wreath again, indeed ;
 I am sad-voiced as the turtle
 Which Anacreon used to feed :
 Yet as that same bird demurely
 Wet her beak in cup of his,—
 So, without a garland, surely
 I may touch the brim of this.

VII.

Go!—let others praise the Chian!
 This is soft as Muses' string,

This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
 This is rapid as his spring,
 Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
 Light as ever trod her feet ;
 And the brown bees of Hymettus
 Make their honey not so sweet.

VIII.

Very copious are my praises,
 Though I sip it like a fly!—
 Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
 Change before me suddenly—
 As Ulysses' old libation
 Drew the ghosts from every part,
 So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
 Stirs the Hades of my heart.

IX.

And I think of those long mornings
 Which my thought goes far to seek,
 When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
 Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek.
 Past the pane the mountain spreading,
 Swept the sheep's-bell's tinkling noise,
 While a girlish voice was reading,—
 Somewhat low for αι's and α's.

X.

Then, what golden hours were for us!
 While we sate together there,
 How the white vests of the chorus
 Seemed to wave up a live air!
 How the cothurns trod majestic
 Down the deep iambic lines,

And the rolling anapæstic
 Curled like vapour over shrines !

XI.

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous,
 How he drove the bolted breath
 Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
 In the gnarlèd oak beneath !
 Oh, our Sophocles, the royal !
 Who was born to monarch's place—
 And who made the whole world loyal,
 Less by kingly power than grace !

XII.

Our Euripides, the human,
 With his droppings of warm tears,
 And his touches of things common
 Till they rose to touch the spheres !
 Our Theocritus, our Bion,
 And our Pindar's shining goals !—
 These were cup-bearers undying,
 Of the wine that's meant for souls.

XIII.

And my Plato, the ðivine one,—
 If men know the gods aright
 By their motions as they shine on
 With a glorious trail of light !
 And your noble Christian bishops,
 Who mouthed grandly the last Greek !
 Though the sponges on their hyssops
 Were distent with wine—too weak.

XIV.

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him
As a liberal mouth of gold ;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old :
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies,—
Who forged first his linkèd stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

XV.

And we both praised your Synesius
For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propitious,
As he whistled dogs and gods.
And we both praised Nazianzen
For the fervid heart and speech :
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

XVI.

Do you mind that deed of Atè
Which you bound me to so fast,—
Reading "De Virginitate,"
From the first line to the last ?
How I said at ending, solemn
As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do ?

XVII.

For we sometimes gently wrangled,
Very gently, be it said;

Since our thoughts were disentangled
 By no breaking of the thread !
 And I charged you with extortions
 On the nobler fames of old—
 Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
 Stained the purple they would fold.

XVIII.

For the rest—a mystic moaning,
 Kept Cassandra at the gate,
 With wild eyes the vision shone in,
 And wide nostrils scenting fate.
 And Prometheus, bound in passion
 By brute Force to the blind stone,
 Showed us looks of invocation
 Turned to ocean and the sun.

XIX.

And Medea we saw burning
 At her nature's planted stake :
 And proud Œdipus fate-scorning
 While the cloud came on to break—
 While the cloud came on slow—slower,
 Till he stood discrowned, resigned !—
 But the reader's voice dropped lowe.
 When the poet called him BLIND.

XX.

Ah, my gossip ! you were older,
 And more learned, and a man !—
 Yet that shadow, the enfolder
 Of your quiet eyelids, ran
 Both our spirits to one level ;
 And I turned from hill and lea

And the summer-sun's green revel,
To your eyes that could not see.

XXI.

Now Christ bless you with the one light
Which goes shining night and day!
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
Shed their fragrance in your way!
Is it not right to remember
All your kindness, friend of mine,—
When we two sate in the chamber,
And the poets poured us wine?

XXII.

So, to come back to the drinking
Of this Cyprus,—it is well—
But those memories, to my thinking,
Make a better œnomel;
And whoever be the speaker,
None can murmur with a sigh
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
I am sipping like a fly.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

"Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath."

POEMS ON MAN, BY CORNELIUS MATTHEWS.¹

I.

We are borne into life—it is sweet, it is strange.
We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery
Which smiles with a change;
But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces.

¹A small volume, by an American poet—as remarkable in thought and manner
for a vital sinewy vigour, as the right arm of Pathfinder. 1844.

The Heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,
 And we think we could touch all the stars that we see ;
 And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth ;
 And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
 The apple of Life which another has found ;
 It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
 And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four.

O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore !

II.

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther ;
 We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
 And the lilies look large as the trees ;
 And as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees,
 And the birds sing like angels, so mystical-fine,
 And the cedars are brushing the archangels' feet,
 And time is eternity,—love is divine,
 And the world is complete.

Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond !
 O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

III.

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,
 And the earth rings again ;
 And we breathe out, " O beauty ! " we cry out, " O truth ! "
 And the bloom of our lips drops with wine,
 And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline ;
 The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the brain,—
 What is this exultation ? and what this despair ?—
 The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,
 And we drop from the Fair as we climb to the Fair,
 And we lie in a trance at its feet ;

And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
 Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon,
 And we think him so near he is this side the sun!
 And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
 O life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

IV.

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
 Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
 Till the soul lies within in a circle of pleasures
 Which hideth the soul!
 And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
 And we swim with the fish through the broad water-course,
 And we strike with the falcon, and hunt with the hound,
 And the joy which is in us flies out by a wound.
 And we shout so aloud, "We exult, we rejoice,"
 That we lose the low moan of our brothers around:
 And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
 We are deaf to God's voice.
 And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears
 Yet we are not ashamed,
 And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
 Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.
 Help us, God! trust us, man! love us, woman! "I hold
 Thy small head in my hands,—with its grapelets of gold
 Growing bright through my fingers,—like altar for oath,
 'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
 That watch the eternity strong in the troth—
 I love thee, I leave thee,
 Live for thee, die for thee!
 I prove thee, deceive thee,
 Undo evermore thee!
 Help me, God! slay me, man!—one is mourning for both."
 And we stand up, though young, near the funeral-sheet

Which covers old Cæsar and Pharamond old :
 And death is so nigh us, life cools from its heat.

O life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair, *art* thou sweet?

v.

Then we act to a purpose—we spring up erect—
 We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds ;
 We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked ;
 We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,—
 Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
 Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole.
 Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll !
 “ While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
 Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn ?

Let us sit on the thrones
 In a purple sublimity,
 And grind down men's bones
 To a pale unanimity.

Speed me, God ! serve me, man ! I am god over men !
 When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again ;

'Neath the stripe and the bond,
 Lie and mourn at my feet ! ”

O Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

vi.

Then we grow into thought, and with inward ascensions

Touch the bounds of our Being.

We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
 With our sensual relations and social conventions,
 Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound

Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—

Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides,
 With its infinite tides

About and above us,—until the strong arch
 Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
 And through the dim rolling we hear the sweet calling
 Of spirits that speak, in a soft under-tongue,
 The sense of the mystical march :
 And we cry to them softly, "Come nearer, come nearer
 And lift up the lap of this dark, and speak clearer,
 And teach us the song that ye sung !"
 And we smile in our thought as they answer or no,
 For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know.

 Wonders breathe in our face

 And we ask not their name ;

 Love takes all the blame

 Of the world's prison-place ;

And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud,

And we send up the lark of our music that cuts

 Untired through the cloud

To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts ;

Yet the angels look down, and the mortals look up,

 As the little wings beat,

And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.

'Twixt the heavens and the earth *can* a poet despond ?

 O Life, O Beyond,

 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

VII.

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,

And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken ;

And bringing our lives to the level of others

Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length.

"Help me, God ! love me, man ! I am man among men,—

 And my life is a pledge

 Of the ease of another's !"

From the fire and the water we drive out the steam,

With a rush and a roar and the speed of a dream ;

And the car without horses, the car without wings,
 Roars onward and flies
 On its gray iron edge,

'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes—
 And our hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,
 Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies,
 And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,
 Draws under the world with its turmoils and pothers ;
 While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms
 By humanity's hum at the root of the springs.

And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the deeps
 Of the souls of our brothers,

We teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,
 " God," " Liberty," " Truth,"—which they hearken and think
 And work into harmony, link upon link,
 Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
 Shedding sparks of electric responding intense
 On the dark of eclipse.

Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
 As from shores of a star

In aphelion,—the new generations that cry
 Disenthralled by our voice to harmonious reply.

" God," " Liberty," " Truth !"

We are glorious forsooth,

And our name has a seat,

Though the shroud should be donned.

O Life, O Beyond,

Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

VIII.

Help me, God ! help me, man ! I am low, I am weak—
 Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins ;

My body is cleft by these wedges of pains

From my spirit's serene,

And I feel the externe and insensate creep in

On my organised clay ;
 I sob not, nor shriek,
 Yet I faint fast away :

I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-eyed,—
 I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,
 On the heaven-heights of truth.

Oh, the soul keeps its youth
 But the body faints sore, it is tried in the race,—
 It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal ;
 It is weak, it is cold,
 The rein drops from its hold,
 It sinks back, with the death in its face.

On, chariot ! on, soul !
 Ye are all the more fleet—
 Be alone at the goal
 Of the strange and the sweet !

IX.

Love us, God ! love us, man ! we believe, we achieve :
 Let us love, let us live,
 For the acts correspond ;
 We are glorious, and DIE !
 And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
 That smiles with a change,
 Here we lie.

O DEATH, O BEYOND,
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange !

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

———"discordance that can accord."

ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE.

A ROSE once grew within
 A garden April-green,

In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
On a tall bough and straight :
Early comer, early comer,
Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneliness, in her loneliness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

“ For if I wait,” said she,
“ Till time for roses be,—
For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,—

“ What glory then for me
In such a company?—
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty !

“ Nay, let me in,” said she,
“ Before the rest are free,—
In my loneliness, in my loneliness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

“ For I would lonely stand,
Uplifting my white hand,—
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision.

“ Upon which lifted sign,
What worship will be mine !
What addressing, what caressing,
And what thanks and praise and blessing !

“A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

“Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn as to a brightness,—

“And every moth and bee
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

“Three larks shall leave a cloud,
To my whiter beauty vowed—
Singing gladly all the moontide,
Never waiting for the suntide.

“Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,—
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

“I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When below on earth they see me
With my starry aspect dreamy !

“And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors,—
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling
To give grace to my foretelling.”

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah!—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green;
Scarcely having, scarcely having,
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,—
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so;
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses!

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas:
Guess him in the happy islands,
Learning music from the silence!

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both,
Doing honour, doing honour
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down
As on a royal crown;
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose, "Ha, Snow!
And art thou fallen so?
Thou, who wast enthronèd stately
All along my mountains lately?

"Holla, thou world-wide Snow!
And art thou wasted so,
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee?"

—Poor Rose, to be misknown!
Would she had ne'er been blown,
In her liveness, in her liveness,
All the sadder for that oneness!

Some word she tried to say—
Some *no* . . . ah, wellaway!
But the passion did o'ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her.

—Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet's foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said, "Verily and thus
It chances too with *us*
Poets singing sweetest snatches,
While that deaf men keep the watches:

"Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore,

In a lonesness, in a lonesness,
And the nobler for that oneness!

“Holy in voice and heart,—
To high ends, set apart :
All unmated, all unmated,
Just because so consecrated !

“But if alone we be,
Where is our empery?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can mete our lofty nature ?

“What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimèd ringing ?

“What angel, but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim?
And without assimilation,
Vain is inter-penetration.

“And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unpreparedè season ?

“Drop, leaf!—be silent, song!—
Cold things we come among :
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

“Howbeit” (here his face
Lightened around the place,—
So to mark the outward turning
Of its spirit’s inward burning)—

“ Something it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty.

“ Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be, in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow !

“ Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us !

“ Though none us deign to bless,
Blessed are we, nathless ;
Blessed still and consecrated
In that, rose, we were created.

“ Oh, shame to poet's lays
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that *obolum da mihi!*

“ Shame, shame to poet's soul
Pining for such a dole,
When Heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit !

“ Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones !
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass unchallenged by you.

“ Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.

Self-contentedly approve you
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

“ In prayers—that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount,
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you,—

“ In faith—that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission,
With an unfulfilled fruition !

“ In hope—that apprehends
An end beyond these ends,
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly !

“ In thanks—for all the good
By poets understood,
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

“ For sights of things away
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven,—

“ For life, so lovely-vain,—
For death, which breaks the chain,—
For this sense of present sweetness,
And this yearning to completeness ! ”

THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

I.

SAID a people to a poet—"Go out from among us straightway!

While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine:

There's a little fair brown nightingale, who, sitting in the gateway,

Makes fitter music to our ear than any song of thine!"

II.

The poet went out weeping; the nightingale ceased chanting:

"Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done?"

—"I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,

Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun."

III.

The poet went out weeping, and died abroad, bereft there—

The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand wails!—

And when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there

Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's!

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

I.

"THERE is no God," the foolish saith,—
But none, "There is no sorrow,"

And nature oft the cry of faith,
 In bitter need will borrow :
 Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
 By wayside graves are raised,
 And lips say, " God be pitiful,"
 Who ne'er said, " God be praisedè."
 Be pitiful, O God !

II.

The tempest stretches from the steep
 The shadow of its coming ;
 The beasts grow tame and near us creep,
 As help were in the human ;
 Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and grind,
 We spirits tremble under—
 The hills have echoes, but we find
 No answer for the thunder.
 Be pitiful, O God !

III.

The battle hurtles on the plains ;
 Earth feels new scythes upon her ;
 We reap our brothers for the wains,
 And call the harvest—honour :
 Draw face to face, front line to line,
 One image all inherit,—
 Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
 Clay—clay, and spirit—spirit.
 Be pitiful, O God !

IV.

The plague runs festering through the town,
 And never a bell is tolling,—
 And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
 Nod to the dead-cart's rolling !

The young child calleth for the cup,
 The strong man brings it weeping ;
 The mother from her babe looks up,
 And shrieks away its sleeping.
 Be pitiful, O God !

v.

The plague of gold strikes far and near,—
 And deep and strong it enters ;
 This purple chimar which we wear,
 Makes madder than the centaur's.
 Our thoughts grow blank, our words grow strange,
 We cheer the pale gold-diggers—
 Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
 And marked, like sheep, with figures.
 Be pitiful, O God !

VI.

The curse of gold upon the land
 The lack of bread enforces ;
 The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,
 Like more of Death's White Horses !
 The rich preach "rights" and "future days,"
 And hear no angel scoffing :
 The poor die mute—with starving gaze
 On corn-ships in the offing.
 Be pitiful, O God !

VII.

We meet together at the feast —
 To private mirth betake us ;
 We stare down in the winecup, lest
 Some vacant chair should shake us !
 We name delight, and pledge it round—
 "It shall be ours to-morrow !"

God's seraphs ! do your voices sound
As sad, in naming sorrow ?

Be pitiful, O God !

VIII.

We sit together, with the skies,
The steadfast skies, above us :
We look into each other's eyes,
" And how long will you love us ? "
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices, low and breathless,—
" Till death us part ! "—O words, to be
Our *best* for love the deathless !

Be pitiful, O God !

IX.

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed :
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night, " Be stronger-hearted ! "
O God,—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely !—
To see a light upon such brows,
Which is the daylight only !

Be pitiful, O God !

X.

The happy children come to us,
And look up in our faces ;
They ask us—" Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places ? "—
We cannot speak ;—we see anew
The hills we used to live in,
And feel our mother's smile press through
The kisses she is giving.

Be pitiful, O God !

XI.

We pray together at the kirk
 For mercy, mercy, solely :
 Hands weary with the evil work,
 We lift them to the Holy !
 The corpse is calm below our knee,
 Its spirit, bright before Thee—
 Between them, worse than either, we—
 Without the rest or glory !
 Be pitiful, O God !

XII.

We leave the communing of men,
 The murmur of the passions,
 And live alone, to live again
 With endless generations.
 Are we so brave ?—The sea and sky
 In silence lift their mirrors ;
 And, glassed therein, our spirits high
 Recoil from their own terrors.
 Be pitiful, O God !

XIII.

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
 Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding :
 The sun strikes through the farthest mist
 The city's spire to golden.
 The city's golden spire it was,
 When hope and health were strongest,
 But now it is the churchyard grass
 We look upon the longest.
 Be pitiful, O God !

XIV.

And soon all vision waxeth dull—
 Men whisper, " He is dying ; "

We cry no more "Be pitiful!"

We have no strength for crying :
 No strength, no need. Then, Soul of mine,
 Look up and triumph rather—
 Lo ! in the depth of God's Divine,
 The Son adjures the Father,

BE PITIFUL, O GOD !

CONFESSIONS.

I.

FACE to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her?
 God and she and I only, there I sate down to draw her
 Soul through the clefts of confession,—“Speak, I am hold-
 ing thee fast,

As the angel of resurrection shall do it at the last !”

“My cup is blood-red

With my sin,” she said,

“And I pour it out to the bitter lees,

As if the angels of judgment stood over me strong at the last.

Or as thou wert as these.”

II.

When God smote His hands together, and struck out thy
 soul as a spark

Into the organised glory of things, from deeps of the dark,—
 Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn, didst thou honour
 the power in the form,

As the star does at night, or the fire-fly, or even the little
 ground-worm

“I have sinned,” she said,

“For my seed-light shed

Has smouldered away from His first decrees.

The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the ground-leaf praiseth
the worm ;

I am viler than these."

III.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not trample thee
straight,

With His wild rains beating and drenching thy light found
inadequate ;

When He only sent thee the north-wind, a little searching
and chill,

To quicken thy flame—didst thou kindle and flash to the
heights of His will ?

" I have sinned," she said,

" Unquickened, unspread,

My fire dropt down, and I wept on my knees :

I only said of His winds of the north as I shrank from their
chill,

What delight is in these ? "

IV.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not meet it as such,
But tempered the wind to thy uses, and softened the world
to thy touch ;

At least thou wast moved in thy soul, though unable to prove
it afar,

Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel, not giving it out
like a star ?

" I have sinned," she said,

" And not merited

The gift He gives, by the grace He sees !

The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the hill-side praiseth the
star ;

I am viler than these."

v.

Then I cried aloud in my passion,—Unthankful and impotent
 creature,
 To throw up thy scorn unto God through the rents in thy
 beggarly nature !
 If He, the all-giving and loving, is served so unduly, what
 then
 Hast thou done to the weak and the false and the chang-
 ing,—thy fellows of men
 “ I have *loved*,” she said,
 (Words bowing her head
 As the wind the wet acacia-trees)
 “ I saw God sitting above me,—but I . . . I sate among men,
 And I have loved these.”

vi.

Again with a lifted voice, like a choral trumpet that takes
 The lowest note of a viol that trembles, and triumphing
 breaks
 On the air with it, solemn and clear,—“ Behold ! I have
 sinned not in this !
 Where I loved, I have loved much and well,—I have verily
 loved not amiss.
 Let the living,” she said,
 “ Inquire of the Dead,
 In the house of the pale-fronted images :
 My own true Dead will answer for me, that I have not loved
 amiss
 In my love for all these.

vii.

“ The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep it by
 day and by night ;
 Their least step on the stair at the door still throbs through
 me, if ever so light ;

Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, far off in
the long-ago years,
Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and seen through the
crystals of tears.

 Dig the snow," she said,

 " For my churchyard bed,

Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,

If one only of these my beloveds, shall love me with heart-
warm tears,

 As I have loved these !

VIII.

" If I angered any among them, from thenceforth my own
life was sore ;

If I fell by chance from their presence, I clung to their
memory more :

Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I sometimes called
sweet ;

And whenever their heart has refused me, I fell down
straight at their feet.

 I have loved," she said, —

 " Man is weak, God is dread,

Yet the weak man dies with his spirit at ease,

Having poured such an unguent of love but once on the
Saviour's feet,

 As I lavished for these."

IX.

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the Human, and left the
Divine !

Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee their wild
berry-wine ?

Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers
approached thee with blame,

Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and loved thee the same?

But she shrunk and said,

“God, over my head,

Must sweep in the wrath of His judgment-seas,
If *He* shall deal with me sinning, but only indeed the same
And no gentler than these!”

LOVED ONCE.

I.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
Earth's lamentable sounds,—the welladay,
The jarring yea and nay,
The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller,—
But all did leaven the air
With a less bitter leaven of sure despair
Than these words—“I loved ONCE.”

II.

And who saith, “I loved ONCE”?
Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love, love foresee,
Love, through eternity,
And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
Not God, called LOVE, His noble crown-name—casting
A light too broad for blasting:
The great God, changing not from everlasting,
Saith never, “I loved ONCE.”

III.

Oh, never is “Loved ONCE”
Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, misprizèd friend!
Thy cross and curse may rend,
But having loved Thou lovest to the end!

This is man's saying—man's : too weak to move
 One spherèd star above,
 Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
 By his No More, and Once.

IV.

How say ye, " We loved once,"
 Blasphemers ? Is your earth not cold enow,
 Mourners, without that snow ?
 Ah, friends, and would ye wrong each other so ?
 And could ye say of some, whose love is known,
 Whose prayers have met your own,
 Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shone
 So long,— " We loved them ONCE " ?

V.

Could ye, " We loved her once,"
 Say calm of me, sweet friends, when out of sight ?
 When hearts of better right
 Stand in between me and your happy light ?
 Or when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
 Ye find my colours fade,
 And all that is not love in me, decayed ?
 Such words—Ye loved me ONCE !

VI.

Could ye, " We loved her once,"
 Say cold of me when further put away
 In earth's sepulchral clay,
 When mute the lips which deprecate to-day ?
 Not so ! not then—least then ! When life is shriven
 And death's full joy is given,—
 Of those who sit and love you up in Heaven,
 Say not, " We loved them once."

VII.

Say never, ye loved ONCE !
 God is too near above, the grave, beneath,
 And all our moments breathe
 Too quick in mysteries of life and death
 For such a word. The eternities avenge
 Affections light of range.
 There comes no change to justify that change,
 Whatever comes—Loved ONCE !

VIII.

And yet that same word ONCE
 Is humanly acceptive. Kings have said,
 Shaking a discrowned head,
 "We ruled once,"—dotards, "We once taught and led,"
 Cripples once danced i' the vines—and bards approved
 Were once by scornings moved !
 But love strikes one hour—LOVE ! Those *never* loved
 Who dream that they loved ONCE.

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

I.

I WOULD build a cloudy House
 For my thoughts to live in,
 When for earth too fancy-loose,
 And too low for Heaven !
 Hush ! I talk my dream aloud—
 I build it bright to see,—
 I build it on the moonlit cloud,
 To which I looked with *thee*.

II.

Cloud-walls of the morning's gray,
 Faced with amber column,

Crowned with crimson cupola
 From a sunset solemn !
 May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
 Pale and glimmering,
 With a sunbeam hid in each,
 And a smell of spring.

III.

Build the entrance high and proud,
 Darkening and then brightening,—
 Of a riven thunder-cloud,
 Veined by the lightning !
 Use one with an iris-stain
 For the door so thin,
 Turning to a sound like rain
 As I enter in.

IV.

Build a spacious hall thereby
 Boldly, never fearing ;
 Use the blue place of the sky
 Which the wind is clearing :
 Branched with corridors sublime,
 Flecked with winding stairs—
 Such as children wish to climb
 Following their own prayers.

V.

In the mutest of the house,
 I will have my chamber ;
 Silence at the door shall use
 Evening's light of amber,
 Solemnising every mood,
 Softening in degree,
 Turning sadness into good
 As I turn the key.

VI.

Be my chamber tapestried
 With the showers of summer,
 Close, but soundless—glorified
 When the sunbeams come here—
 Wandering harpers, harping on
 Waters stringed for such,—
 Drawing colour, for a tune,
 With a vibrant touch.

VII.

Bring a shadow green and still
 From the chestnut-forest,
 Bring a purple from the hill,
 When the heat is sorest ;
 Spread them out from wall to wall,
 Carpet-wove around,
 Whereupon the foot shall fall
 In light instead of sound.

VIII.

Bring fantastic cloudlets home
 From the noontide zenith,
 Ranged for sculptures round the room,—
 Named as Fancy weeneth ;
 Some be Junos, without eyes,
 Naiads, without sources,
 Some be birds of paradise,
 Some, Olympian horses.

IX.

Bring the dews the birds shake off,
 Waking in the hedges,—
 Those too, perfumed for a proof,
 From the lilies' edges :

From our England's field and moor,
 Bring them calm and white in,—
 Whence to form a mirror pure
 For Love's self-delighting!

x.

Bring a gray cloud from the east
 Where the lark is singing,—
 Something of the song at least
 Unlost in the bringing :
 That shall be a morning-chair,
 Poet-dream may sit in
 When it leans out on the air,
 Unrhymed and unwritten.

xi.

Bring the red cloud from the sun,
 While he sinketh, catch it ;
 That shall be a couch,—with one
 Sidelong star to watch it,—
 Fit for Poet's finest thought,
 At the curfew-sounding ;
 Things unseen being nearer brought
 Than the seen, around him.

xii.

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh.
 'Las, they come together !
 Cloudy walls divide and fly,
 As in April weather !
 Cupola and column proud,
 Structure bright to see—
 Gone ! except that moonlit cloud
 To which I looked with *thee*.

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

XIII.

Let them! Wipe such visionings
 From the Fancy's cartel—
 Love secures some fairer things
 Dowered with his immortal!
 The sun may darken, heaven be bowed,
 But still unchanged shall be,—
 Here, in my soul,—that moonlit cloud
 To which I looked with THEE!

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

I.

My lonely chamber next the sea,
 Is full of many flowers set free
 By summer's earliest duty:
 Dear friends upon the garden-walk
 Might stop amid their fondest talk
 To pull the least in beauty.

II.

A thousand flowers—each seeming one
 That learnt, by gazing on the sun,
 To counterfeit his shining;
 Within whose leaves the holy dew
 That falls from heaven has won anew
 A glory, in declining.

III.

Red roses, used to praises long,
 Contented with the poet's song,
 The nightingale's being over;
 And lilies white, prepared to touch
 The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
 Of dreamer turned to lover.

IV.

Deep violets, you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
Without a thought disloyal ;
And cactuses, a queen might don
If weary of a golden crown,
And still appear as royal !

V.

Pansies for ladies all,—I wis
That none who wear such brooches, miss
A jewel in the mirror ;
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer.

VI.

Love's language may be talked with these ;
To work out choicest sentences,
No blossoms can be meeter ;
And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
Young maids may wonder if the flowers
Or meanings be the sweeter.

VII.

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
Their longer bloom decreeing !
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the ground
Too earnestly—for seeing.

VIII.

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there may have
A type which seemeth worthy

Of that fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
Then perished as the earthy.

IX.

And such being wreathed for worldly feast,
Across the brimming cup some guest
Their rainbow colours viewing,
May feel them,—with a silent start,—
The covenant, his childish heart
With nature made, renewing.

X.

No flowers our gardened England hath
To match with these, in bloom and breath,
Which from the world are hiding
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nunnery of cloistered hills,—
The elements presiding.

XI.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
That meet one gifted lady's care
With prodigal rewarding
(For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
To light her through the garden).

XII.

But here, all summers are comprised—
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
Before the priestly moonshine!
And every wind with stolèd feet,
In wandering down the alleys sweet,
Steps lightly on the sunshine,

XIII.

And (having promised Harpocrate
 Among the nodding roses, that
 No harm shall touch his daughters)
 Gives quite away the rushing sound,
 He dares not use upon such ground,
 To ever-trickling waters.

XIV.

Yet, sun and wind! what can ye do
 But make the leaves more brightly show
 In posies newly gathered?—
 I look away from all your best,
 To one poor flower unlike the rest,
 A little flower half-withered.

XV.

I do not think it ever was
 A pretty flower,—to make the grass
 Look greener where it reddened;
 And now it seems ashamed to be
 Alone, in all this company,
 Of aspect shrunk and saddened!

XVI.

A chamber-window was the spot
 It grew in, from a garden-pot,
 Among the city shadows:
 If any, tending it, might seem
 To smile, 'twas only in a dream
 Of nature in the meadows.

XVII.

How coldly on its head did fall
 The sunshine, from the city wall
 In pale refraction driven!

THE MASK.

How sadly plashed upon its leaves
 The raindrops, losing in the eaves
 The first sweet news of Heaven !

XVIII.

And those who planted, gathered it
 In gamesome or in loving fit,
 And sent it as a token
 Of what their city pleasures be,—
 For one, in Devon by the sea
 And garden-blooms, to look on.

XIX.

But SHE, for whom the jest was meant,
 With a grave passion innocent
 Receiving what was given,—
 Oh ! if her face she turned then,
 Let none say 'twas to gaze again
 Upon the flowers of Devon !

XX.

Because, whatever virtue dwells
 In genial skies, warm oracles
 For gardens brightly springing,—
 The flower which grew beneath your eyes,
 Belovèd friends, to mine supplies
 A beauty worthier singing !

THE MASK.

I.

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
 I have a jest for all I meet ;
 I have a garland for my head,
 And all its flowers are sweet,—
 And so you call me gay, she said.

II.

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
 And Wrong did teach this jesting bold ;
 These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
 While a death-chime was tolled—
 And what now will you say?—she said.

III.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
 Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
 Live captives so uncomforted,
 As souls behind a smile.
 God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV.

I know my face is bright, she said, —
 Such brightness dying suns diffuse !
 I bear upon my forehead shed
 The sign of what I lose, —
 The ending of my day, she said.

V.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
 And take a moan upon my mouth,
 And tie a cypress round my head,
 And let my tears run smooth, —
 It were the happier way, she said.

VI.

And since that must not be, she said,
 I fain your bitter world would leave.
 How calmly, calmly, smile the Dead,
 Who do not, therefore grieve !
 The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

VII.

But in your bitter world, she said,
 Face-joy 's a costly mask to wear ;
 'Tis bought with pangs long nourishèd,
 And rounded to despair :
 Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

VIII.

Ye weep for those who weep ? she said—
 Ah fools ! I bid you pass them by.
 Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled,
 What time their eyes were dry !
 Whom sadder can I say ? she said.

CALLS ON THE HEART.

I.

FREE Heart, that singest to-day
 Like a bird on the first green spray,
 Wilt thou go forth to the world
 Where the hawk hath his wing unfurled
 To follow, perhaps, thy way ?
 Where the tamer thine own will bind,
 And, to make thee sing, will blind,—
 While the little hip grows for the free behind ?
 Heart, wilt thou go ?
 —“ No, no !
 Free hearts are better so.”

II.

The world, thou hast heard it told,
 Has counted its robber-gold,
 And the pieces stick to the hand.

The world goes riding it fair and grand,
 While the truth is bought and sold!
 World-voices east, world-voices west,
 They call thee, Heart, from thine early rest,
 "Come hither, come hither and be our guest."
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —"No, no!
 Good hearts are calmer so."

III.

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's Strife,
 With a golden heft to his knife;
 World's Mirth, with a finger fine
 That draws on a board in wine
 Her blood-red plans of life;
 World's Gain, with a brow knit down;
 World's Fame, with a laurel crown
 Which rustles most as the leaves turn brown:
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —"No, no!
 Calm hearts are wiser so."

IV.

Hast heard that Proserpina
 (Once fooling) was snatched away
 To partake the dark king's seat,
 And the tears ran fast on her feet,
 To think how the sun shone yesterday?
 With her ankles sunken in asphodel
 She wept for the roses of earth which fell
 From her lap, when the wild car drave to hell.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —"No, no!
 Wise hearts are warmer so."

v.

And what is this place not seen,
 Where Hearts may hide serene?
 "'Tis a fair still house well-kept,
 Which humble thoughts have swept,
 And holy prayers made clean.
 There, I sit with Love in the sun,
 And we two never have done
 Singing sweeter songs than are guessed by *one*."
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —"No, no!
 Warm hearts are fuller so."

vi.

O Heart, O Love,—I fear
 That Love may be kept too near.
 Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,
 How Love may be false and frail
 To a Heart once holden dear?
 —"But this true Love of mine
 Clings fast as the clinging vine,
 And mingles pure as the grapes in wine."
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —"No, no!
 Full hearts beat higher so."

vii.

O Heart, O Love, beware!—
 Look up, and boast not there,
 For who has twirled at the pin?
 'Tis the World, between Death and Sin,—
 The World and the World's Despair!
 And Death has quickened his pace
 To the hearth, with a mocking face,

Familiar as Love, in Love's own place.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“ Still, no!
 High hearts must grieve even so.”

VIII.

The house is waste to-day,—
 The leaf has dropt from the spray,
 The thorn, prickt through to the song:
 If summer doeth no wrong,
 The winter will, they say.
 Sing, Heart! what heart replies?
 In vain we were calm and wise,
 If the tears un-kissed stand on in our eyes.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“ Ah, no!
 Grieved hearts must break even so.”

IX.

Howbeit all is not lost:
 The warm noon ends in frost,
 And worldly tongues of promise,
 Like sheep-bells, die off from us
 On the desert hills cloud-crossed!
 Yet, through the silence, shall
 Pierce the death-angel's call,
 And “ Come up hither,” recover all.
 Heart, wilt thou go?
 —“ I go!
 Broken hearts triumph so. ”

WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

I.

If I were thou, O butterfly,
 And poised my purple wing to spy
 The sweetest flowers that live and die,—

II.

I would not waste my strength on those,
 As thou,—for summer has a close,
 And pansies bloom not in the snows.

III.

If I were thou, O working bee,
 And all that honey-gold I see,
 Could delve from roses easily ;

IV.

I would not hive it at man's door,
 As thou,—that heirdom of my store
 Should make him rich and leave me poor.

V.

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
 And screamed the thunder back aloud,
 And faced the lightning from the cloud ;

VI.

I would not build my eyrie-throne,
 As thou,—upon a crumbling stone,
 Which the next storm may trample down.

VII.

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
 With pawing hoof and dancing head,
 And eye outrunning thine own speed ;

VIII.

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain.

IX.

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut-up window heard,
Like Love's sweet Yes too long deferred ;

X.

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight
Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI.

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade
As thus, methought, an angel said,—

XII.

“ If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others, and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong ;

XIII.

“ I would not waste my cares, and choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

XIV.

“ I would not work where none can win,
As *thou*,—halfway 'twixt grief and sin,
But look above and judge within.

XV.

“I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*,—towards fame’s regality,
Nor yet in love’s great jeopardy.

XVI.

“I would not champ the hard cold bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks fit,—
But take God’s freedom, using it.

XVII.

“I would not play earth’s winter out,
As *thou*,—but gird my soul about,
And live for life past death and doubt.

XVIII.

“Then sing, O singer!—but allow
Beast, fly, and bird, called foolish now,
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as thou!”

MEMORY AND HOPE.

I.

BACK-LOOKING Memory

And prophet Hope both sprang from out the ground,
One, where the flashing of Cherubic sword
Fell sad in Eden sward,
And one, from Eden earth within the sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,
What time the promise after curse was said—
“Thy seed shall bruise his head.”

II.

Poor Memory's brain is wild,
As moonstruck by that flaming atmosphere
When she was born ; her deep eyes shine and shone
 With light that conquereth sun
And stars to wanner paleness year by year :
With odorous gums she mixeth things defiled ;
She trampleth down earth's grasses green and sweet
 With her far-wandering feet.

III.

She plucketh many flowers,
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness killing ;
She teacheth every melancholy sound
 To winds and waters round ;
She droppeth tears with seed, where man is tilling
The rugged soil in his exhausted hours ;
She smileth—ah me ! in her smile doth go
 A mood of deeper woe.

IV.

Hope tripped on out of sight,
Crowned with an Eden wreath she saw not wither,
And went a-nodding through the wilderness,
 With brow that shone no less
Than a sea-gull's wing, brought nearer by rough weather,—
Searching the treeless rock for fruits of light ;
Her fair quick feet being armed from stones and cold,
 By slippers of pure gold.

V.

Memory did Hope much wrong
And, while she dreamed, her slippers stole away ;
But still she wended on with mirth unheeding,
 Although her feet were bleeding,

Till Memory tracked her on a certain day,
 And with most evil eyes did search her long
 And cruelly, whereat she sank to ground
 In a stark deadly swound.

VI.

And so my Hope were slain,
 Had it not been that THOU wast standing near
 Oh Thou who saidest "live," to creatures lying
 In their own blood, and dying !
 For Thou her forehead to Thine heart didst rear
 And make its silent pulses sing again,—
 Pouring a new light o'er her darkened eyne
 With tender tears from Thine !

VII.

Therefore my Hope arose
 From out her swound, and gazed upon Thy face ;
 And, meeting there that soft subduing look
 Which Peter's spirit shook,
 Sank downward in a rapture to embrace
 Thy piercèd hands and feet with kisses close,
 And prayed Thee to assist her evermore
 To "reach the things before."

VIII.

Then gavest Thou the smile
 Whence angel-wings thrill quick like summer lightning,
 Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where she never
 From Love and Faith may sever ;
 Whereat the Eden crown she saw not whitening
 A time ago, though whitening all the while,
 Reddened with life, to hear the Voice which talked
 To Adam as he walked.

HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY.

I.

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
We build the house where we may rest,
And then, at moments, suddenly
We look up to the great wide sky,
Inquiring wherefore we were born,
For earnest or for jest ?

II.

The senses folding thick and dark
About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond ;
We strike out blindly to a mark
Believed in, but not seen.

III.

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twine about God's seat !
While, freshening upward to His feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
Expands from world to world.

IV.

And, in the tumult and excess
Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
Through all things that are done.

v.

God keeps His holy mysteries
 Just on the outside of man's dream !
 In diapason slow, we think
 To hear their pinions rise and sink,
 While they float pure beneath His eyes,
 Like swans adown a stream.

vi.

Abstractions, are they, from the forms
 Of His great beauty?—exaltations
 From His great glory?—strong previsions
 Of what we shall be?—intuitions
 Of what we are—in calms and storms,
 Beyond our peace and passions?

vii.

Things nameless ! which, in passing so,
 Do stroke us with a subtle grace.
 We say, " Who passes ?"—they are dumb ;
 We cannot see them go or come,
 Their touches fall soft—cold—as snow
 Upon a blind man's face.

viii.

Yet, touching so, they draw above
 Our common thoughts to Heaven's unknown ;
 Our daily joy and pain, advance
 To a divine significance,—
 Our human love—O mortal love,
 That light is not its own !

ix.

And sometimes horror chills our blood
 To be so near such mystic Things,

And we wrap round us, for defence,
 Our purple manners, moods of sense—
 As angels from the face of God
 Stand hidden in their wings.

x.

And sometimes through life's heavy swound
 We grope for them!—with strangled breath
 We stretch our hands abroad and try
 To reach them in our agony;
 And widen, so, the broad life-wound
 Soon large enough for death.

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.

I.

THEY say that God lives very high;
 But if you look above the pines
 You cannot see our God; and why?

II.

And if you dig down in the mines
 You never see Him in the gold;
 Though from Him all that's glory shines.

III.

God is so good, He wears a fold
 Of heaven and earth across His face—
 Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

IV.

But still I feel that His embrace
 Slides down, by thrills, through all things made,
 Through sight and sound of every place.

v.

As if my tender mother laid
 On my shut lips her kisses' pressure,
 Half-waking me at night ; and said,
 " Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser ? "

THE CLAIM.

I.

GRIEF sate upon a rock and sighed one day
 (Sighing is all her rest)
 " Wellaway, wellaway, ah wellaway ! "
 As ocean beat the stone, did she her breast,
 " Ah wellaway ! ah me ! alas, ah me ! "
 Such sighing uttered she.

II.

A Cloud spake out of heaven, as soft as rain
 That falls on water,—" Lo,
 The winds have wandered from me ! I remain
 Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot go
 To lean my whiteness on the mountain blue,
 Till wanted for more dew.

III.

" The sun has struck my brain to weary peace,
 Whereby, constrained and pale,
 I spin for him a larger golden fleece
 Than Jason's, yearning for as full a sail.
 Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighèd to thy mind,
 Give me a sigh for wind,—

IV.

And let it carry me adown the west."
 But Love, who, prostrated,

Lay at Grief's foot, his lifted eyes possessed
 Of her full image, answered in her stead ;
 "Now nay, now nay ! she shall not give away
 What is my wealth, for any Cloud that flieth :
 Where Grief makes moan,
 Love claims his own !
 And therefore do I lie here night and day,
 And eke my life out with the breath she sigheth."

SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO.

(From Achilles Tatius.)

If Zeus chose us a King of the flowers in his mirth,
 He would call to the rose and would royally crown it ;
 For the rose, ho, the rose ! is the grace of the earth,
 Is the light of the plants that are growing upon it :
 For the rose, ho, the rose ! is the eye of the flowers,
 Is the blush of the meadows that feel themselves fair,—
 Is the lightning of beauty that strikes through the bowers
 On pale lovers who sit in the glow unaware.
 Ho, the rose breathes of love ! ho, the rose lifts the cup
 To the red lips of Cypris invoked for a guest !
 Ho, the rose, having curled its sweet leaves for the world,
 Takes delight in the motion its petals keep up,
 As they laugh to the Wind as it laughs from the west !

A DEAD ROSE.

I.

O ROSE ! who dares to name thee ?
 No longer roseate now, nor soft nor sweet,
 But pale and hard and dry as stubble wheat,—
 Kept seven years in a drawer—thy titles shame thee.

II.

The breeze that used to blow thee
 Between the hedge-row thorns, and take away
 An odour up the lane to last all day,—
 If breathing now,—unsweetened would forgo thee.

III.

The sun that used to smite thee,
 And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn
 Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower to burn,—
 If shining now,—with not a hue would light thee.

IV.

The dew that used to wet thee,
 And, white first, grow incarnadined, because
 It lay upon thee where the crimson was,—
 If dropping now,—would darken where it met thee.

V.

The fly that lit upon thee,
 To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet,
 Along thy leaf's pure edges, after heat,—
 If 'lighting now, would coldly overrun thee.

VI.

The bee that once did suck thee,
 And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,
 And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,—
 If passing now,—would blindly overlook thee.

VII.

The heart doth recognise thee,
 Alone, alone! The heart doth smell thee sweet,
 Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete—
 Perceiving all those changes that disguise thee.

VIII.

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
 More love, dead rose, than to any roses bold
 Which Julia wears at dances, smiling cold!—
 Lie still upon this heart—which breaks below thee!

THE EXILE'S RETURN.

I.

WHEN from thee, weeping I removed,
 And from my land for years,
 I thought not to return, Beloved,
 With those same parting tears.
 I come again to hill and lea,
 Weeping for thee.

II.

I clasped thine hand when standing last
 Upon the shore in sight.
 The land is green, the ship is fast,
 I shall be there to-night.
 I shall be there—no longer *we*—
 No more with thee!

III.

Had I beheld thee dead and still,
 I might more clearly know
 How heart of thine could turn as chill
 As hearts by nature so;
 How change could touch the falsehood-free
 And changeless *thee*.

IV.

But now thy fervid looks last-seen
 Within my soul remain,

'Tis hard to think that *they* have been,
 To be no more again—
 That I shall vainly wait—ah me !
 A word from thee.

v.

I could not bear to look upon
 That mound of funeral clay,
 Where one sweet voice is silence—one
 Æthereal brow, decay ;
 Where all thy mortal I may see,
 But never thee.

vi.

For thou art where all friends are gone,
 Whose parting pain is o'er ;
 And I, who love and weep alone,
 Where thou wilt weep no more,
 Weep bitterly and selfishly
 For *me*, not *thee*.

vii.

I know, Beloved, thou canst not know
 That I endure this pain ;
 For saints in Heaven, the Scriptures show,
 Can never grieve again :
 And grief known mine, even there, would be
 Still shared by thee !

THE MEASURE.

"He comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure" (שׁוֹלֵשׁ).—*Isaiah xl.*
 "Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure" (שׁוֹלֵשׁ).—*Psalms lxxx.*

I.

GOD, the Creator, with a pulseless hand
 Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
 The dust of earth and tears of man in one
 Measure, and by one weight :
 So saith His holy book.

II.

Shall we, then, who have issued from the dust,
 And there return,—shall we, who toil for dust,
 And wrap our winnings in this dusty life,
 Say, "No more tears, Lord God !
 The measure runneth o'er" ?

III.

Oh, Holder of the balance, laughest Thou ?
 Nay, Lord ! be gentler to our foolishness,
 For His sake who assumed our dust, and turns
 On Thee pathetic eyes,
 Still moistened with our tears.

IV.

And teach us, O our Father, while we weep,
 To look in patience upon earth, and learn—
 Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at last
 These tearful eyes be filled
 With the dry dust of death.

¹ I believe that the word occurs in no other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

COWPER'S GRAVE.

I.

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's
decaying ;

It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their
praying :

Yet let the grief and humbleness, as low as silence, languish :
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave
her anguish.

II.

O poets ! from a maniac's tongue was poured the death-
less singing !

O Christians ! at your cross of hope a hopeless hand
was clinging !

O men ! this man in brotherhood, your weary paths
beguiling,

Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while
ye were smiling !

III.

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming
tears his story,

How discord on the music fell and darkness on the glory,
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering
lights departed,

He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted ;

IV.

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration ;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken ;
Named softly, as the household name of one whom God
hath taken.

V.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon
him,
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven
hath won him—
Who suffered once the madness-cloud to His own love
to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird
could find him ;

VI.

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick
poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious
influences !
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within its
number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a
slumber.

VII.

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share his
home-caresses,
Uplinking to his human eyes with sylvan tenderesses :
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's
ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and
loving.

VIII.

And though, in blindness, he remained unconscious of
that guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of
providing,
He testified this solemn truth, white phrenzy desolated,
—Nor man nor nature satisfies whom only God created.

IX.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she
 blesses
 And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her
 kisses,—
 That turns his fevered eyes around—"My mother! where's
 my mother?"—
 As if such tender words and deeds could come from any
 other!—

X.

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending
 o'er him;
 Her face all pale from watchful love, the unwearied love she
 bore him!—
 Thus woke the poet from the dream his life's long fever
 gave him,
 Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes which closed in death to
 save him!

XI.

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth can image that
 awaking,
 Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round him
 breaking,
 Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted;
 But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—"*My Saviour!* *not*
 deserted!"

XII.

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when the cross in dark-
 ness rested
 Upon the Victim's hidden face, no love was manifested?
 What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning drops
 averted?
 What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one*
 should be deserted?

XIII.

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence
 rather;
 And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son and
 Father:
 Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry His universe hath
 shaken—
 It went up single, echoless, "My God, I am forsaken!"

XIV.

It went up from the Holy's lips amid His lost creation,
 That, of the lost, no son should use those words of
 desolation!
 That earth's worst phrenzies, marring hope, should mar
 not hope's fruition,
 And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in a
 vision!

THE WEAKEST THING.

I.

WHICH is the weakest thing of all
 Mine heart can ponder?
 The sun, a little cloud can pall
 With darkness yonder?
 The cloud, a little wind can move
 Where'er it listeth?
 The wind, a little leaf above,
 Though sere, resisteth?

II.

What time that yellow leaf was green,
 My days were gladder;
 But now, whatever Spring may mean,
 I must grow sadder.

THE MOURNING MOTHER.

Ah me! a *leaf* with sighs can wring
 My lips asunder—
 Then is mine heart the weakest thing
 Itself can ponder.

III.

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are pined,
 And drop together,
 And at a blast which is not wind,
 The forests wither,
 Thou, from the darkening deathly curse,
 To glory breakest,—
 The Strongest of the universe
 Guarding the weakest!

THE MOURNING MOTHER.

(OF THE DEAD BLIND.)

I.

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,
 For thy blind boy in grave?
 That no more with each other
 Sweet counsel ye can have?
 That he, left dark by nature,
 Can never more be led
 By thee, maternal creature,
 Along smooth paths instead?
 That thou canst no more show him
 The sunshine, by the heat;
 The river's silver flowing,
 By murmurs at his feet?
 The foliage, by its coolness;
 The roses, by their smell;

And all creation's fulness,
By Love's invisible?
Weepest thou to behold not
His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorways which were folded,
And prayed against in vain—
And under which, sate smiling
The child-mouth evermore,
As one who watcheth, wiling
The time by, at a door?
And weepest thou to feel not
His clinging hand on thine—
Which now, at dream-time, will not
Its cold touch disentwine?
And weepest thou still oft,
Oh, never more to mark
His low soft words, made softer
By speaking in the dark?
Weep on, thou mourning mother!

II.

But since to him, when living,
Thou wast both sun and moon,
Look o'er his grave, surviving,
From a high sphere alone:
Sustain that exaltation—
Expand that tender light,
And hold in mother-passion
Thy Blessed in thy sight.
See how he went out straightway
From the dark world he knew,—
No twilight in the gateway
To mediate 'twixt the two,—
Into the sudden glory,
Out of the dark he trod,

Departing from before thee
At once to light and GOD!—
For the first face, beholding
The Christ's in its divine,—
For the first place, the golden
And tideless hyaline ;
With trees, at lasting summer,
That rock to songful sound,
While angels the new-comer
Wrap a still smile around !
Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
His happy voice he tries,—
Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
Than others, o'er his eyes !
Yet still, in all the singing,
Thinks haply of thy song
Which, in his life's first springing,
Sang to him all night long ;
And wishes it beside him,
With kissing lips that cool
And soft did overglide him,—
To make the sweetness full.
Look up, O mourning mother !
Thy blind boy walks in light :
Ye wait for one another
Before God's infinite.
But thou art now the darkest,
Thou mother left below—
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,
Content that it be so,—
Until ye two have meeting
Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
As once thou leddest *his*.
Wait on, thou mourning mother !

A VALEDICTION.

I.

GOD be with thee, my beloved,—GOD be with thee!
 Else alone thou goest forth,
 Thy face unto the north,—
 Moor and pleasance all around thee and beneath thee,
 Looking equal in one snow;
 While I who try to reach thee,
 Vainly follow, vainly follow
 With the farewell and the hollo,
 And cannot reach thee so.
 Alas, I can but teach thee!
 GOD be with thee, my beloved,—GOD be with thee!

II.

Can I teach thee, my beloved,—can I teach thee?
 If I said, "Go left or right,"
 The counsel would be light,—
 The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich thee!
 My right would show like left;
 My raising would depress thee,—
 My choice of light would blind thee,—
 Of way, would leave behind thee,—
 Of end, would leave bereft.
 Alas, I can but bless thee!
 May GOD teach thee, my beloved,—may GOD teach thee!

III.

Can I bless thee, my beloved,—can I bless thee?
 What blessing word can I
 From mine own tears keep dry?
 What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress thee?

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

My good reverts to ill ;
 My calmnesses would move thee,—
 My softnesses would prick thee,—
 My bindings up would break thee,—
 My crownings, curse and kill,
 Alas, I can but love thee !

May GOD bless thee, my beloved,—may GOD bless thee !

IV.

Can I love thee, my beloved,—can I love thee ?
 And is *this* like love, to stand
 With no help in my hand,
 When strong as death I fain would watch above thee ?
 My love-kiss can deny
 No tear that falls beneath it ;
 Mine oath of love can swear thee
 From no ill that comes near thee,—
 And thou diest while I breathe it,
 And *I*—I can but die !

May GOD love thee, my beloved,—may GOD love thee !

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

"To win the secret of a weed's plain heart,"—LOWELL.

I.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever-golden !
 Cankered not the whole year long !
 Do ye teach us to be strong,
 Howsoever pricked and holden
 Like your thorny blooms, and so
 Trodden on by rain and snow,
 Up the hillside of this life, as bleak as where ye grow ?

II.

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms!
 Do ye teach us to be glad
 When no summer can be had,
 Blooming in our inward bosoms?
 Ye, whom God preserveth still,
 Set as lights upon a hill,
 Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty liveth still!

III.

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
 From that academic chair,
 Canopied with azure air,
 That the wisest word man reaches
 Is the humblest he can speak?
 Ye, who live on mountain peak,
 Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek!

IV.

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus
 Knelt beside you on the sod,
 For your beauty thanking God,—
 For your teaching, ye should see us
 Bowing in prostration new!
 Whence arisen,—if one or two
 Drops be on our cheeks—O world! they are not tears
 but dew.

THE LADY'S YES.

I.

“YES!” I answered you last night;
 “No!” this morning, sir, I say!
 Colours seen by candle-light
 Will not look the same by day.

II.

When the viols played their best,
 Lamps above and laughs below—
Love me sounded like a jest,
 Fit for *Yes* or fit for *No!*

III.

Call me false or call me free—
 Vow, whatever light may shine,—
 No man on your face shall see
 Any grief for change on mine.

IV.

Yet the sin is on us both ;
 Time to dance is not to woo ;
 Wooing light makes fickle troth,
 Scorn of *me* recoils on *you!*

V.

Learn to win a lady's faith
 Nobly, as the thing is high ;
 Bravely, as for life and death—
 With a loyal gravity.

VI.

Lead her from the festive boards,
 Point her to the starry skies,
 Guard her, by your truthful words,
 Pure from courtship's flatteries.

VII.

By your truth she shall be true—
 Ever true, as wives of yore—
 And her *Yes*, once said to you,
 SHALL be *Yes* for evermore.

A YEAR'S SPINNING.

I.

He listened at the porch that day,
 To hear the wheel go on, and on ;
 And then it stopped—ran back away—
 While through the door he brought the sun.
 But now my spinning is all done.

II.

He sate beside me, with an oath
 That love ne'er ended, once begun :
 I smiled—believing for us both,
 What was the truth for only one.
 And now my spinning is all done.

III.

My mother cursed me that I heard
 A young man's wooing as I spun :
 Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,—
 For I have, since, a harder known !
 And now my spinning is all done.

IV.

I thought—O God!—my first-born's cry
 Both voices to mine ear would drown :
 I listened in mine agony—
 It was the *silence* made me groan !
 And now my spinning is all done.

V.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave
 (Who cursed me on her death-bed lone)

CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

And my dead baby's (God it save !)
 Who, not to bless me, would not moan,
 And now my spinning is all done.

VI.

A stone upon my heart and head,
 But no name written on the stone !
 Sweet neighbours ! whisper low instead,
 " This sinner was a loving one—
 And now her spinning is all done."

VII.

And let the door ajar remain,
 In case he should pass by anon ;
 And leave the wheel out very plain,—
 That HE, when passing in the sun,
 May see the spinning is all done.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

I.

FIVE months ago, the stream did flow,
 The lilies bloomed within the sedge,
 And we were lingering to and fro,
 Where none will track thee in this snow,
 Along the stream, beside the hedge.
 Ah, Sweet, be free to love and go !
 For if I do not hear thy foot,
 The frozen river is as mute,—
 The flowers have dried down to the root :
 And why, since these be changed since May,
 Shouldst *thou* change less than *they* ?

II.

And slow, slow as the winter snow,
 The tears have drifted to mine eyes ;
 And my poor cheeks, five months ago,
 Set blushing at thy praises so,
 Put paleness on for a disguise.
 Ah, Sweet, be free to praise and go !
 For if my face is turned too pale,
 It was thine oath that first did fail,—
 It was thy love proved false and frail !
 And why, since these be changed enow,
 Should *I* change less than *thou* ?

THAT DAY.

I.

I STAND by the river where both of us stood,
 And there is but one shadow to darken the flood ;
 And the path leading to it, where both used to pass,
 Has the step but of one, to take dew from the grass,—
 One forlorn since that day.

II.

The flowers of the margin are many to see ;
 None stoops at my bidding to pluck them for me.
 The bird in the alder sings loudly and long,—
 My low sound of weeping disturbs not his song,
 As thy vow did, that day.

III.

I stand by the river—I think of the vow—
 Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker, be thou !
 I leave the flower growing—the bird unproved,—
 Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*, my beloved,—
 And my lover that *day* ?

IV.

Go! be sure of my love, by that treason forgiven ;
 Of my prayers, by the blessings they win thee from Heaven ;
 Of my grief —(guess the length of the sword by the sheath's)
 By the silence of life, more pathetic than death's!

Go,—be clear of that day!

A REED.

I.

I AM no trumpet, but a reed ;
 No flattering breath shall from me lead
 A silver sound, a hollow sound :
 I will not ring, for priest or king,
 One blast that, in re-echoing,
 Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

II.

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
 A broken reed, the wind indeed
 Left flat upon a dismal shore ;
 Yet if a little maid or child
 Should sigh within it, earnest-mild,
 This reed will answer evermore.

III.

I am no trumpet, but a reed ;
 Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
 Their nets along the river's edge,
 I will not tear their nets at all,
 Nor pierce their hands—if they should fall :
 Then let them leave me in the sedge.

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.

A. A. E. C.

BORN, JULY, 1848. DIED, NOVEMBER, 1849.

I.

OF English blood, of Tuscan birth,
What country should we give her?
Instead of any on the earth,
The civic Heavens receive her.

II.

And here, among the English tombs,
In Tuscan ground we lay her,
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
Our English words of prayer.

III.

A little child!—how long she lived,
By months, not years, is reckoned:
Born in one July, she survived
Alone to see a second.

IV.

Bright-featured, as the July sun
Her little face still played in,
And splendours, with her birth begun,
Had had no time for fading.

V.

So, LILY, from those July hours,
No wonder we should call her;
She looked such kinship to the flowers,
Was but a little taller.

VI.

A Tuscan Lily,—only white,
As Dante, in abhorrence
Of red corruption, wished aright
The lilies of his Florence.

VII.

We could not wish her whiter,—her
Who perfumed with pure blossom
The house—a lovely thing to wear
Upon a mother's bosom !

VIII.

This July creature thought, perhaps,
Our speech not worth assuming ;
She sate upon her parents' laps,
And mimicked the gnat's humming ;

IX.

Said " Father," " Mother "—then left off,
For tongues celestial, fitter :
Her hair had grown just long enough
To catch Heaven's jasper-glitter.

X.

Babes ! Love could always hear and see
Behind the cloud that hid them.
" Let little children come to Me,
And do not thou forbid them."

XI.

So, unforbidding, have we met,
And gently here have laid her ;
Though winter is no time to get
The flowers that should o'er-spread her :

XII.

We should bring pansies quick with spring,
 Rose, violet, daffodilly,
 And also, above everything,
 White lilies for our Lily.

XIII.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave exacts,—
 Glad, grateful attestations
 Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,—
 With calm renunciations.

XIV.

Her very mother with light feet
 Should leave the place too earthy,
 Saying, "The angels have thee, Sweet,
 Because we are not worthy."

XV.

But winter kills the orange-buds,—
 The gardens in the frost are,
 And all the heart dissolves in floods,
 Remembering we have lost her.

XVI.

Poor earth, poor heart,—too weak, too weak!
 To miss the July shining!
 Poor heart!—what bitter words we speak,
 When God speaks of resigning!

XVII.

Sustain this heart in us that faints,
 Thou God, the self-existent!
 We catch up wild at parting saints,
 And feel Thy Heaven too distant!

XVIII.

The wind that swept them out of sin,
 Has ruffled all our vesture :
 On the shut door that let them in,
 We beat with frantic gesture,—

XIX.

To us, us also—open straight !
 The outer life is chilly ;
 Are *we* too, like the earth, to wait
 Till next year for our Lily ?

XX.

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
 My leaping, dimpled treasure,—
 At every word I write like these,
 Clasped close with stronger pressure !

XXI.

Too well my own heart understands,—
 At every word beats fuller—
 My little feet, my little hands,
 And hair of Lily's colour !

XXII.

But God gives patience, Love learns strength,
 And Faith remembers promise,
 And Hope itself can smile at length
 On other hopes gone from us.

XXIII.

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer Death,
 Through struggle, made more glorious :
 This mother stills her sobbing breath,
 Renouncing yet victorious.

XXIV.

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts
With spirit unbereaven,—
“God will not all take back His gifts;
My Lily's mine in Heaven.

XXV.

“Still mine! maternal rights serene
Not given to another!
The crystal bars shine faint between
The souls of child and mother.

XXVI.

“Meanwhile,” the mother cries, “content!
Our love was well divided:
Its sweetness following where she went,
Its anguish stayed where I did.

XXVII.

“Well done of God, to halve the lot,
And give her all the sweetness!
To us, the empty room and cot,—
To her, the Heaven's completeness.

XXVIII.

“To us, this grave,—to her, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in;
To us, the silence in the house,—
To her the choral singing!

XXIX.

“For her, to gladden in God's view,
For us, to hope and bear on!
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
Beside the Rose of Sharon!

CATARINA TO CAMOENS.

XXX.

“Grow fast in Heaven, sweet Lily clipped,
 In love more calm than this is,—
 And may the angels dewy-lipped
 Remind thee of our kisses !

XXXI.

“While none shall tell thee of our tears,
 These human tears now falling,
 Till, after a few patient years,
 One home shall take us all in.

XXXII.

“Child, father, mother—who, left out ?
 Not mother, and not father !—
 And when, our dying couch about,
 The natural mists shall gather,

XXXIII.

“Some smiling angel close shall stand
 In old Correggio’s fashion,
 And bear a LILY in his hand,
 For death’s ANNUNCIATION.”

CATARINA TO CAMOENS :

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO THE
 POEM IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF
 HER EYES.

I.

ON the door you will not enter,
 I have gazed too long—adieu !
 Hope withdraws her peradventure ;
 Death is near me,—and not *you* !

Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

II.

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but hearkened that of yours—
Only saying
In heart-playing,
"Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
If the sweetest, HIS have seen!"

III.

But all changes! At this vesper,
Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper
"Love, I love you," as before,—
Death pervading
Now, and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest ever seen?

IV.

Yes! I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,—
Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there, looking down,
You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,—
"Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

V.

And if *you* looked down upon them,
 And if *they* looked up to *you*,
 All the light which has foregone them
 Would be gathered back anew :
 They would truly
 Be as duly
 Love-transformed to Beauty's sheen,
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

VI.

But, ah me ! you only see me,
 In your thoughts of loving man,
 Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
 Through the wavings of my fan,—
 And unweeting
 Go repeating,
 In your reverie serene,
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen—"

VII.

While my spirit leans and reaches
 From my body still and pale,
 Fain to hear what tender speech is
 In your love to help my bale.
 O my poet,
 Come and show it !
 Come, of latest love, to glean
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

VIII.

O my poet, O my prophet,
 When you praised their sweetness so,
 Did you think, in singing of it,
 That it might be near to go ?

Had you fancies
 From their glances,
 That the grave would quickly screen
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?"

IX.

No reply. The fountain's warble
 In the courtyard sounds alone.
 As the water to the marble
 So my heart falls with a moan,
 From love-sighing
 To this dying.
 Death forerunneth Love, to win
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

X.

Will you come? When I'm departed
 Where all sweetnesses are hid—
 Where thy voice, my tender-hearted,
 Will not lift up either lid.
 Cry, O lover,
 Love is over!
 Cry, beneath the cypress green—
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!"

XI.

When the angelus is ringing,
 Near the convent will you walk,
 And recall the choral singing
 Which brought angels down our talk?
 Spirit-shriven
 I viewed Heaven,
 Till you smiled—"Is earth unclean,
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?"

XII.

When beneath the palace-lattice
 You ride slow as you have done,
 And you see a face there—that is
 Not the old familiar one,—
 Will you oftly
 Murmur softly,
 “Here ye watched me morn and e’en
 Sweetest eyes, were ever seen !”

XIII.

When the palace-ladies, sitting
 Round your gittern, shall have said,
 “Poet, sing those verses written
 For the lady who is dead,”—
 Will you tremble,
 Yet dissemble,—
 Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
 “Sweetest eyes, were ever seen ?”

XIV.

“Sweetest eyes ! how sweet in flowings
 The repeated cadence is !
 Though you sang a hundred poems,
 Still the best one would be this.
 I can hear it
 ’Twixt my spirit
 And the earth-noise intervene—
 “Sweetest eyes, were ever seen !”

XV.

But the priest waits for the praying,
 And the choir are on their knees,—
 And the soul must pass away in
 Strains more solemn-high than these !

Miserere

For the weary !
 Oh, no longer for Catrine,
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

XVI.

Keep my riband ! take and keep it,—
 I have loosed it from my hair ; †
 Feeling, while you overweep it,
 Not alone in your despair,—
 Since with saintly
 Watch, unfaintly,
 Out of Heaven shall o'er you lean
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

XVII.

But—but *now*—yet unremoved
 Up to Heaven, they glisten fast—
 You may cast away, Beloved,
 In your future all my past :
 Such old phrases
 May be praises
 For some fairer bosom-queen—
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen !"

XVIII.

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing ?
 Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss,
 If a tear be of your showing,
 Dropt for any hope of HIS !
 Death has boldness
 Besides coldness,

† She left him the riband from her hair.

LIFE AND LOVE.

If unworthy tears demean
 "Sweetest eyes, were ever seen."

XIX.

I will look out to his future—
 I will bless it till it shine !
 Should he ever be a suitor
 Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
 Sunshine gild them,
 Angels shield them,
 Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest HIS have seen !

LIFE AND LOVE.

I.

FAST this Life of mine was dying
 Blind already and calm as death ;
 Snowflakes on her bosom lying,
 Scarcely heaving with her breath.

II.

Love came by, and having known her
 In a dream of fabled lands,
 Gently stooped, and laid upon her
 Mystic chrism of holy hands ;

III.

Drew his smile across her folded
 Eyelids, as the swallow dips ;
 Breathed as finely as the cold did,
 Through the locking of her lips.

IV.

So, when Life looked upward, being
 Warmed and breathed on from above,
 What sight could she have for seeing,
 Evermore . . . but only LOVE?

A DENIAL.

I.

WE have met late—it is too late to meet,
 O friend, not more than friend!
 Death's forecome shroud is tangled round my feet,
 And if I step or stir, I touch the end.
 In this last jeopardy
 Can I approach thee, I, who cannot move?
 How shall I answer thy request for love?
 Look in my face and see.

II.

I love thee not, I dare not love thee! go
 In silence; drop my hand.
 If thou seek roses, seek them where they blow
 In garden-alleys, not in desert-sand.
 Can life and death agree,
 That thou shouldst stoop thy song to my complaint?
 I cannot love thee. If the word is faint,
 Look in my face and see.

III.

I might have loved thee in some former days.
 Oh, then, my spirits had leapt
 As now they sink, at hearing thy love-praise!

Before these faded cheeks were overwept,
 Had this been asked of me,
 To love thee with my whole strong heart and head,—
 I should have said still . . . yes, but *smiled* and said,
 "Look in my face and see!"

IV.

But now . . . God sees me, God, who took my heart
 And drowned it in life's surge.
 In all your wide warm earth I have no part—
 A light song overcomes me like a dirge.
 Could Love's great harmony
 The saints keep step to when their bonds are loose,
 Not weigh me down? am *I* a wife to choose?
 Look in my face and see—

V.

While I behold, as plain as one who dreams,
 Some woman of full worth,
 Whose voice, as cadenced as a silver stream's,
 Shall prove the fountain-soul which sends it forth;
 One younger, more thought-free
 And fair and gay, than I, thou must forget,
 With brighter eyes than these . . . which are not wet . . .
 Look in my face and see!

VI.

So farewell thou, whom I have known too late
 To let thee come so near.
 Be counted happy while men call thee great,
 And one beloved woman feels thee dear!—
 Not I!—that cannot be.
 I am lost, I am changed,—I must go farther, where
 The change shall take me worse, and no one dare
 Look in my face and see.

VII.

Meantime I bless thee. By these thoughts of mine
 I bless thee from all such !
 I bless thy lamp to oil, thy cup to wine,
 Thy hearth to joy, thy hand to an equal touch
 Of loyal troth. For me,
 I love thee not, I love thee not !—away !
 Here's no more courage in my soul to say
 " Look in my face and see."

PROOF AND DISPROOF.

I.

Dost thou love me, my Belovèd ?
 Who shall answer yes or no ?
 What is provèd or disprovèd
 When my soul inquireth so,
 Dost thou love me, my Belovèd ?

II.

I have seen thy heart to-day,
 Never open to the crowd,
 While to love me aye and aye
 Was the vow as it was vowed
 By thine eyes of steadfast gray.

III.

Now I sit alone, alone—
 And the hot tears break and burn.
 Now, Belovèd, thou art gone,
 Doubt and terror have their turn.
 Is it love that I have known !

IV.

I have known some bitter things,—
 Anguish, anger, solitude.
 Year by year an evil brings,
 Year by year denies a good ;
 March winds violate my springs.

V.

I have known how sickness bends,
 I have known how sorrow breaks,—
 How quick hopes have sudden ends,
 How the heart thinks till it aches
 Of the smile of buried friends.

VI.

Last, I have known *thee*, my brave
 Noble thinker, lover, doer !
 The best knowledge last I have.
 But thou comest as the thrower
 Of fresh flowers upon a grave.

VII.

Count what feelings used to move me !
 Can this love assort with those !
 Thou, who art so far above me,
 Wilt thou stoop so, for repose ?
 Is it true that thou canst love me ?

VIII.

Do not blame me if I doubt *thee*.
 I can call love by its name

When thine arm is wrapt about me :
 But even love seems not the same,
 When I sit alone, without thee.

IX.

In thy clear eyes I descried
 Many a proof of love, to-day ;
 But to-night, those unbelied
 Speechful eyes being gone away,
 There's the proof to seek, beside.

X.

Dost thou love me, my Belovèd !
 Only *thou* canst answer yes !
 And, thou gone, the proof's disprovèd,
 And the cry rings answerless—
 Dost thou love me, my Belovèd !

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

I.

Love you seek for, presupposes
 Summer heat and sunny glow.
 Tell me, do you find moss-roses
 Budding, blooming in the snow ?
 Snow might kill the rose-tree's root—
 Shake it quickly from your foot,
 Lest it harm you as you go.

II.

From the ivy where it dapples
 A gray ruin, stone by stone,

Do you look for grapes or apples,
 Or for sad green leaves alone?
 Pluck the leaves off, two or three—
 Keep them for morality
 When you shall be safe and gone.

INCLUSIONS.

I.

OH, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to lie along in thine?
 As a little stone in a running stream, it seems to lie and
 pine.
 Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, unfit to plight with
 thine.

II.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear, drawn closer to
 thine own?
 My cheek is white, my cheek is worn, by many a tear run
 down.
 Now leave a little space, Dear, lest it should wet thine
 own.

III.

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, commingled with thy
 soul?—
 Red grows the cheek, and warm the hand; the part is in
 the whole:
 Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate, when soul is joined
 to soul.

INSUFFICIENCY.

I.

THERE is no one beside thee, and no one above thee ;
Thou standest alone, as the nightingale sings !
Yet my words that would praise thee, are impotent things,
For none can express thee, though all should approve thee !
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can love thee.

II.

Say, what can I do for thee? . . . weary thee . . . grieve
thee ?
Lean on thy shoulder . . . new burdens to add ? . . .
Weep my tears over thee . . . making thee sad ?
Oh, hold me not—love me not ! let me retrieve thee !
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can leave thee.

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THIS poem contains the impressions of the writer upon events in Tuscany of which she was a witness. "From a window," the critic may demur. She bows to the objection in the very title of her work. No continuous narrative nor exposition of political philosophy is attempted by her. It is a simple story of personal impressions, whose only value is in the intensity with which they were received, as proving her warm affection for a beautiful and unfortunate country, and the sincerity with which they are related, as indicating her own good faith and freedom from partisanship.

Of the two parts of this poem, the first was written nearly three years ago, while the second resumes the actual situation of 1851. The discrepancy between the two parts is a sufficient guarantee to the public of the truthfulness of the writer, who, though she certainly escaped the epidemic "falling sickness," of enthusiasm for Pio Nono, takes shame upon herself that she believed, like a woman, some royal oaths, and lost sight of the probable consequences of some obvious popular defects. If the discrepancy should be painful to the reader, let him understand that to the writer it has been more so. But such discrepancies we are called upon to accept at every hour by the conditions of our nature, implying the interval between aspiration and performance, between faith and disillusion, between hope and fact.

"O trusted broken prophecy,
O richest fortune sourly crost,
Born for the future, to the future lost!"

Nay, not lost to the future in this case. The future of Italy shall not be disinherited.

FLORENCE, 1851.

PART I.

I HEARD last night a little child go singing
 'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the church,
O bella libertà, O bella!—stringing
 The same words still on notes he went in search
 So high for, you concluded the upspringing
 Of such a nimble bird to sky from perch
 Must leave the whole bush in a tremble green,
 And that the heart of Italy must beat,
 While such a voice had leave to rise serene
 'Twixt church and palace of a Florence street :
 A little child, too, who not long had been
 By mother's finger steadied on his feet,
 And still *O bella libertà* he sang.

Then I thought, musing, of the innumerable
 Sweet songs which still for Italy outrang
 From older singers' lips who sang not thus
 Exultingly and purely, yet, with pang
 Fast sheathed in music, touched the heart of us
 So finely that the pity scarcely pained.
 I thought how Filicaja led on others,
 Bewailers for their Italy enchained,
 And how they called her childless among mothers,
 Widow of empires, ay, and scarce refrained
 Cursing her beauty to her face, as brothers
 Might a shamed sister's,—"Had she been less fair
 She were less wretched;"—how, evoking so
 From congregated wrong and heaped despair
 Of men and women writhing under blow,
 Harrowed and hideous in a filthy lair,
 Some personating Image wherein woe
 Was wrapt in beauty from offending much,

They called it Cybele, or Niobe,
 Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for such,
 Where all the world might drop for Italy
 Those cadenced tears which burn not where they
 touch,—

“Juliet of nations, canst thou die as we?

And was the violet crown that crowned thy head
 So over-large, though new buds made it rough,

It slipped down and across thine eyelids dead,
 O sweet, fair Juliet?” Of such songs enough,

Too many of such complaints! behold, instead,
 Void at Verona, Juliet’s marble trough:¹

As void as that is, are all images

Men set between themselves and actual wrong,

To catch the weight of pity, meet the stress
 Of conscience,—since ’tis easier to gaze long

On mournful masks and sad effigies

Than on real, live, weak creatures crushed by strong.

For me who stand in Italy to-day

Where worthier poets stood and sang before,

I kiss their footsteps yet their words gainsay.

I can but muse in hope upon this shore

Of golden Arno as it shoots away

Through Florence’ heart beneath her bridges four:

Bent bridges, seeming to strain off like bows,

And tremble while the arrowy undertide

Shoots on and cleaves the marble as it goes,

And strikes up palace-walls on either side,

And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,

With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,

And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon all,

By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out

From any lattice there, the same would fall

¹ They show at Verona, as the tomb of Juliet, an empty trough or stone.

Into the river underneath, no doubt,

It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall and wall.

How beautiful! the mountains from without

In silence listen for the word said next.

What word will men say,—here where Giotto planted

His campanile like an unperplexed

Fine question Heaven-ward, touching the things granted

A noble people who, being greatly vexed

In act, in aspiration keep undaunted?

What word will God say? Michel's Night and Day

And Dawn and Twilight wait in marble scorn¹

Like dogs upon a dunghill, couched on clay

From whence the Medicean stamp's outworn,

The final putting off of all such sway

By all such hands, and freeing of the unborn

In Florence and the great world outside Florence.

Three hundred years his patient statues wait

In that small chapel of the dim Saint Lawrence:

Day's eyes are breaking bold and passionate

Over his shoulder, and will flash abhorrence

On darkness and with level looks meet fate,

When once loose from that marble film of theirs;

The Night has wild dreams in her sleep, the Dawn

Is haggard as the sleepless, Twilight wears

A sort of horror; as the veil withdrawn

'Twixt the artist's soul and works had left them heirs

Of speechless thoughts which would not quail nor fawn,

Of angers and contempts, of hope and love:

For not without a meaning did he place

The princely Urbino on the seat above

With everlasting shadow on his face,

While the slow dawns and twilights disapprove

¹ These famous statues recline in the Sagrestia Nuova, on the tombs of Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Lorenzo of Urbino, his grandson. Strozzi's epigram on the Night, with Michel Angelo's rejoinder, is well known.

The ashes of his long-extinguished race
 Which never more shall clog the feet of men.
 I do believe, divinest Angelo,
 That winter-hour in Via Larga, when
 They bade thee build a statue up in snow ¹
 And straight that marvel of thine art again
 Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian glow,
 Thine eyes, dilated with the plastic passion,
 Thawing too in drops of wounded manhood, since,
 To mock alike thine art and indignation,
 Laughed at the palace-window the new prince—
 ("Aha! this genius needs for exaltation,
 When all's said and howe'er the proud may wince,
 A little marble from our princely mines!")
 I do believe that hour thou laughedst too
 For the whole sad world and for thy Florentines
 After those few tears, which were only few!
 That as, beneath the sun, the grand white lines
 Of thy snow-statue trembled and withdrew,—
 The head, erect as Jove's, being palsied first,
 The eyelids flattened, the full brow turned blank,
 The right-hand, raised but now as if it cursed,
 Dropt, a mere snowball (till the people sank
 Their voices, though a louder laughter burst
 From the royal window)—thou couldst proudly thank
 God and the prince for promise and presage,
 And laugh the laugh back, I think verily,
 Thine eyes being purged by tears of righteous rage
 To read a wrong into a prophecy,
 And measure a true great man's heritage
 Against a mere great-duke's posterity.
 I think thy soul said then, "I do not need
 A principedom and its quarries, after all;

¹This mocking task was set by Pietro, the unworthy successor of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

For if I write, paint, carve a word, indeed,
 On book or board or dust, on floor or wall,
 The same is kept of God who taketh heed
 That not a letter of the meaning fall
 Or ere it touch and teach His world's deep heart,
 Outlasting, therefore, all your lordships, sir!
 So keep your stone, beseech you, for your part,
 To cover up your grave-place and refer
 The proper titles ; *I* live by my art.
 The thought I threw into this snow shall stir
 This gazing people when their gaze is done ;
 And the tradition of your act and mine,
 When all the snow is melted in the sun,
 Shall gather up, for unborn men, a sign
 Of what is the true princedom,—ay, and none
 Shall laugh that day, except the drunk with wine."

Amen, great Angelo ! the day's at hand.
 If many laugh not on it shall we weep ?
 Much more we must not, let us understand.
 Through rhymers sonnetearing in their sleep
 And archaists mumbling dry bones up the land
 And sketchers lauding ruined towns a-heap,—
 Through all that drowsy hum of voices smooth,
 The hopeful bird mounts carolling from brake,
 The hopeful child, with leaps to catch his growth,
 Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweet sake :
 And I, a singer also from my youth,
 Prefer to sing with these who are awake,
 With birds, with babes, with men who will not fear
 The baptism of the holy morning dew
 (And many of such wakers now are here,
 Complete in their anointed manhood, who
 Will greatly dare and greatlier persevere),
 Than join those old thin voices with my new,

And sigh for Italy with some safe sigh
 Cooped up in music 'twixt an oh and ah,—
 Nay, hand in hand with that young child, will I
 Go singing rather, "*Bella libertà*,"
 Than, with those poets, croon the dead or cry
 "*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia!*"

"Less wretched if less fair." Perhaps a truth
 Is so far plain in this, that Italy,
 Long trammelled with the purple of her youth
 Against her age's ripe activity,
 Sits still upon her tombs, without death's ruth
 But also without life's brave energy.

"Now tell us what is Italy?" men ask:
 And others answer, "Virgil, Cicero,
 Catullus, Cæsar." What beside? to task
 The memory closer—"Why, Boccaccio,
 Dante, Petrarca,"—and if still the flask
 Appears to yield its wine by drops too slow,—
 "Angelo, Raffael, Pergolese,"—all
 Whose strong hearts beat through stone, or charged
 again

The paints with fire of souls electrical,
 Or broke up heaven for music. What more then?
 Why, then, no more. The chaplet's last beads fall
 In naming the last saintship within ken
 And, after that, none prayeth in the land.
 Alas, this Italy has too long swept
 Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand;
 Of her own past, impassioned nympholept!
 Consenting to be nailed here by the hand
 To the very bay-tree under which she stopt
 A queen of old, and plucked a leafy branch:
 And, licensing the world too long indeed
 To use her broad phylacteries to staunch

And stop her bloody lips, she takes no heed
 How one clear word would draw an avalanche
 Of living sons around her, to succeed
 The vanished generations. Can she count
 These oil-eaters with large live mobile mouths
 Agape for macaroni, in the amount
 Of consecrated heroes of her south's
 Bright rosary? The pitcher at the fount,
 The gift of gods, being broken, she much loathes
 To let the ground-leaves of the place confer
 A natural bowl. So henceforth she would seem
 No nation, but the poet's pensioner,
 With alms from every land of song and dream,
 While aye her pipers sadly pipe of her
 Until their proper breaths, in that extreme
 Of sighing, split the reed on which they played :
 Of which, no more. But never say "no more"
 To Italy's life! Her memories undismayed
 Still argue "evermore;" her graves implore
 Her future to be strong and not afraid;
 Her very statues send their looks before.

We do not serve the dead—the past is past.
 God lives, and lifts His glorious mornings up
 Before the eyes of men awake at last,
 Who put away the meats they used to sup,
 And down upon the dust of earth outcast
 The dregs remaining of the ancient cup,
 Then turn to wakeful prayer and worthy act.
 The Dead, upon their awful 'vantage ground,
 The sun not in their faces, shall abstract
 No more our strength; we will not be discrowned
 As guardians of their crowns, nor deign transact
 A barter of the present, for a sound
 Of good so counted in the foregone days.

O Dead, ye shall no longer cling to us
 With rigid hands of desiccating praise,
 And drag us backward by the garment thus,
 To stand and laud you in long-drawn virelays !
 We will not henceforth be oblivious
 Of our own lives, because ye lived before,
 Nor of our acts, because ye acted well.
 We thank you that ye first unlatched the door,
 But will not make it inaccessible
 By thankings on the threshold any more.
 We hurry onward to extinguish hell
 With our fresh souls, our younger hope, and
 God's
 Maturity of purpose. Soon shall we
 Die also ! and, that then our periods
 Of life may round themselves to memory
 As smoothly as on our graves the burial-sods,
 We now must look to it to excel as ye,
 And bear our age as far, unlimited
 By the last mind-mark ; so, to be invoked
 By future generations, as their Dead.

'Tis true that when the dust of death has choked
 A great man's voice, the common words he said
 Turn oracles, the common thoughts he yoked
 Like horses, draw like griffins : this is true
 And acceptable. I, too, should desire,
 When men make record, with the flowers they
 strew,
 " Savonarola's soul went out in fire
 Upon our Grand-duke's piazza,¹ and burned through

¹ Savonarola was burnt for his testimony against papal corruptions as early as March, 1498 : and, as late as our own day, it has been a custom in Florence to strew with violets the pavement where he suffered, in grateful recognition of the anniversary.





“Cimabue smiled upon the lad,
At the first stroke which passed what he could do.”

A moment first, or ere he did expire,
 The veil betwixt the right and wrong, and showed
 How near God sate and judged the judges there,—”
 Upon the self-same pavement overstrewed
 To cast my violets with as reverent care,
 And prove that all the winters which have snowed
 Cannot snow out the scent from stones and air,
 Of a sincere man's virtues. This was he,
 Savonarola, who, while Peter sank
 With his whole boat-load, called courageously
 “Wake Christ, wake Christ!”—who, having tried the
 tank
 Of old church-waters used for baptistry
 Ere Luther came to spill them, swore they stank ;
 Who also by a princely deathbed cried,
 “Loose Florence, or God will not loose thy soul !”
 Then fell back the Magnificent and died
 Beneath the star-look shooting from the cowl,
 Which turned to wormwood-bitterness the wide
 Deep sea of his ambitions. It were foul
 To grudge Savonarola and the rest
 Their violets : rather pay them quick and fresh
 The emphasis of death makes manifest
 The eloquence of action in our flesh ;
 And men who, living, were but dimly guessed,
 When once free from their life's entangled mesh,
 Show their full length in graves, or oft indeed
 Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,
 To noble admirations which exceed
 Most nobly, yet will calculate in that
 But accurately. We, who are the seed
 Of buried creatures, if we turned and spat
 Upon our antecedents, we were vile.
 Bring violets rather. If these had not walked
 Their furlong, could we hope to walk our mile ?

Therefore bring violets. Yet if we self-baulked
 Stand still, a-strewing violets all the while,
 These moved in vain, of whom we have vainly talked.
 So rise up henceforth with a cheerful smile,
 And having strewn the violets, reap the corn,
 And having reaped and garnered, bring the plough
 And draw new furrows 'neath the healthy morn,
 And plant the great Hereafter in this Now.

Of old 'twas so. How step by step was worn,
 As each man gained on each securely!—how
 Each by his own strength sought his own Ideal,—
 The ultimate Perfection leaning bright
 From out the sun and stars to bless the leal
 And earnest search of all for Fair and Right
 Through doubtful forms by earth accounted real!
 Because old Jubal blew into delight
 The souls of men with clear-piped melodies,
 If youthful Asaph were content at most
 To draw from Jubal's grave, with listening eyes,
 Traditionary music's floating ghost
 Into the grass-grown silence, were it wise?
 And was't not wiser, Jubal's breath being lost,
 That Miriam clashed her cymbals to surprise
 The sun between her white arms flung apart,
 With new glad golden sounds? that David's strings
 O'erflowed his hand with music from his heart?
 So harmony grows full from many springs,
 And happy accident turns holy art.

You enter, in your Florence wanderings,
 The church of Saint Maria Novella. Pass
 The left stair, where at plague-time Machiavel¹
 Saw One with set fair face as in a glass,

¹ See his description of the plague in Florence.

Dressed out against the fear of death and hell,
 Rustling her silks in pauses of the mass,
 To keep the thought off how her husband fell,
 When she left home, stark dead across her feet—
 The stair leads up to what the Orgagnas save
 Of Dante's dæmons ; you, in passing it,
 Ascend the right stair from the farther nave
 To muse in a small chapel scarcely lit
 By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and brave,
 That picture was accounted, mark, of old :
 A king stood bare before its sovran grace,¹
 A reverent people shouted to behold
 The picture, not the king, and even the place
 Containing such a miracle grew bold,
 Named the Glad Borgo from that beauteous face
 Which thrilled the artist, after work, to think
 His own ideal Mary-smile should stand
 So very near him,—he, within the brink
 Of all that glory, let in by his hand
 With too divine a rashness! Yet none shrink
 Who come to gaze here now; albeit 'twas planned
 Sublimely in the thought's simplicity :
 The Lady, throned in empyreal state,
 Minds only the young Babe upon her knee,
 While sidelong angels bear the royal weight,
 Prostrated meekly, smiling tenderly
 Oblivion of their wings ; the Child thereat
 Stretching its hand like God. If any should,
 Because of some stiff draperies and loose joints,
 Gaze scorn down from the heights of Raffaelhood
 On Cimabue's picture,—Heaven anoints

¹ Charles of Anjou, in his passage through Florence, was permitted to see this picture while yet in Cimabue's "bottega." The populace followed the royal visitor, and, from the universal delight and admiration, the quarter of the city in which the artist lived was called "Borgo Allegri." The picture was carried in triumph to the church, and deposited there.

The head of no such critic, and his blood
 The poet's curse strikes full on and appoints
 To ague and cold spasms for evermore.
 A noble picture ! worthy of the shout
 Wherewith along the streets the people bore
 Its cherub-faces which the sun threw out
 Until they stooped and entered the church door.
 Yet rightly was young Giotto talked about,
 Whom Cimabue found among the sheep,¹
 And knew, as gods know gods, and carried home
 To paint the things he had painted, with a deep
 And fuller insight, and so overcome
 His chapel-Lady with a heavenlier sweep
 Of light : for thus we mount into the sun
 Of great things known or acted. I hold, too,
 That Cimabue smiled upon the lad
 At the first stroke which passed what he could do,
 Or else his Virgin's smile had never had
 Such sweetness in 't. All great men who foreknew
 Their heirs in art, for art's sake have been glad,
 And bent their old white heads as if uncrowned,
 Fanatics of their pure Ideals still
 Far more than of their triumphs, which were found
 With some less vehement struggle of the will.
 If old Margheritone trembled, swooned
 And died despairing at the open sill
 Of other men's achievements (who achieved,
 By loving art beyond the master), he
 Was old Margheritone, and conceived
 Never, at first youth and most ecstasy,
 A Virgin like that dream of one, which heaved
 The death-sigh from his heart. If wistfully

¹ How Cimabue found Giotto, the shepherd-boy, sketching a ram of his flock upon a stone, is prettily told by Vasari, — who also relates that the elder artist Margheritone died "infastidito" of the successes of the new school.

Margheritone sickened at the smell
 Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go !
 For Cimabue stood up very well
 In spite of Giotto's, and Angelico
 The artist-saint kept smiling in his cell
 The smile with which he welcomed the sweet slow
 Inbreak of angels (whitening through the dim
 That he might paint them), while the sudden sense
 Of Raffael's future was revealed to him
 By force of his own fair works' competence.

The same blue waters where the dolphins swim
 Suggest the tritons. Through the blue Immense
 Strike out, all swimmers ! cling not in the way
 Of one another, so to sink ; but learn

The strong man's impulse, catch the freshening spray
 He throws up in his motions, and discern
 By his clear westering eye, the time of day.
 Thou, God, hast set us worthy gifts to earn
 Besides Thy heaven and Thee ! and when I say
 There's room here for the weakest man alive
 To live and die, there's room too, I repeat,
 For all the strongest to live well, and strive
 Their own way, by their individual heat,—
 Like some new bee-swarm leaving the old hive,
 Despite the wax which tempts so violet-sweet.
 Then let the living live, the dead retain
 Their grave-cold flowers !—though honour's best
 supplied
 By bringing actions, to prove theirs not vain.

Cold graves, we say ? it shall be testified
 That living men who burn in heart and brain,
 Without the dead were colder. It we tried
 To sink the past beneath our feet, be sure
 The future would not stand. Precipitate

This old roof from the shrine, and, insecure,
 The nesting swallows fly off, mate from mate.
 How scant the gardens, if the graves were fewer !
 The tall green poplars grew no longer straight
 Whose tops not looked to Troy. Would any fight
 For Athens, and not swear by Marathon ?
 Who dared build temples, without tombs in sight ?
 Or live, without some dead man's benison ?
 Or seek truth, hope for good, and strive for right,
 If, looking up, he saw not in the sun
 Some angel of the martyrs all day long
 Standing and waiting ? Your last rhythm will need
 Your earliest key-note. Could I sing this song,
 If my dead masters had not taken heed
 To help the heavens and earth to make me strong,
 As the wind ever will find out some reed
 And touch it to such issues as belong
 To such a frail thing ? None may grudge the Dead,
 Libations from full cups. Unless we choose
 To look back to the hills behind us spread,
 The plains before us sadden and confuse ;
 If orphaned, we are disinherited.

I would but turn these lachrymals to use,
 And pour fresh oil in from the olive-grove,
 To furnish them as new lamps. Shall I say
 What made my heart beat with exulting love
 A few weeks back ?—

The day was such a day,
 As Florence owes the sun. The sky above,
 Its weight upon the mountains seemed to lay
 And palpitate in glory, like a dove
 Who has flown too fast, full-hearted—take away
 The image ! for the heart of man beat higher
 That day in Florence, flooding all her streets

And piazzas with a tumult and desire.
The people, with accumulated heats
And faces turned one way, as if one fire
Both drew and flushed them, left their ancient beats
And went up toward the palace-Pitti wall
To thank their Grand-duke who, not quite of course,
Had graciously permitted, at their call,
The citizens to use their civic force
To guard their civic homes. So, one and all,
The Tuscan cities streamed up to the source
Of this new good at Florence, taking it
As good so far, presageful of more good,—
The first torch of Italian freedom, lit
To toss in the next tiger's face who should
Approach too near them in a greedy fit —
The first pulse of an even flow of blood
To prove the level of Italian veins
Towards rights perceived and granted. How we gazed
From Casa Guidi windows while, in trains
Of orderly procession—banners raised,
And intermittent bursts of martial strains
Which died upon the shout as if amazed,
By gladness beyond music—they passed on!
The Magistracy, with insignia, passed,—
And all the people shouted in the sun,
And all the thousand windows which had cast
A ripple of silks in blue and scarlet down
(As if the houses overflowed at last),
Seemed growing larger with fair heads and eyes.
The Lawyers passed,—and still arose the shout,
And hands broke from the windows to surprise
Those grave calm brows with bay-tree leaves thrown out.
The Priesthood passed,—the friars with worldly-wise
Keen sidelong glances from their beards about
The street to see who shouted ; many a monk

Who takes a long rope in the waist, was there :
 Whereat the popular exultation drunk
 With indrawn "vivas" the whole sunny air,
 While through the murmuring windows rose and sunk
 A cloud of kerchiefed hands,— "The church makes fair
 Her welcome in the new Pope's name." Ensued
 The black sign of the "Martyrs"—(name no name,
 But count the graves in silence). Next were viewed
 The Artists ; next, the Trades ; and after came
 The People,—flag and sign, and rights as good—
 And very loud the shout was for that same
 Motto, "Il popolo." IL POPOLO,—
 The word means dukedom, empire, majesty,
 And kings in such an hour might read it so.
 And next, with banners, each in his degree,
 Deputed representatives a-row
 Of every separate state of Tuscany :
 Siena's she-wolf, bristling on the fold
 Of the first flag, preceded Pisa's hare,
 And Massa's lion floated calm in gold,
 Pienza's following with his silver stare,
 Arezzo's steed pranced clear from bridle-hold,—
 And well might shout our Florence, greeting there
 These, and more brethren. Last, the world had sent
 The various children of her teeming flanks—
 Greeks, English, French—as if to a parliament
 Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,
 Each bearing its land's symbol reverent ;
 At which the stones seemed breaking into thanks
 And rattling up the sky, such sounds in proof
 Arose ; the very house-walls seemed to bend ;
 The very windows, up from door to roof,
 Flashed out a rapture of bright heads, to mend
 With passionate looks the gesture's whirling off
 A hurricane of leaves. Three hours did end

While all these passed ; and ever in the crowd,
Rude men, unconscious of the tears that kept
Their beards moist, shouted ; some few laughed aloud,
And none asked any why they laughed and wept :
Friends kissed each other's cheeks, and foes long vowed
More warmly did it ; two-months' babies leapt
Right upward in their mother's arms, whose black
Wide glittering eyes looked elsewhere ; lovers pressed
Each before either, neither glancing back ;
And peasant maidens smoothly 'tired and tressed
Forgot to finger on their throats the slack
Great pearl-strings ; while old blind men would not rest,
But pattered with their staves and slid their shoes
Along the stones, and smiled as if they saw.
O heaven, I think that day had noble use
Among God's days ! So near stood Right and Law,
Both mutually forborne ! Law would not bruise,
Nor Right deny, and each in reverent awe
Honoured the other. And if, ne'ertheless
That good day's sun delivered to the vines
No charta, and the liberal Duke's excess
Did scarce exceed a Guelf's or Ghibelline's
In any special actual righteousness
Of what that day he granted, still the signs
Are good and full of promise, we must say,
When multitudes approach their kings with prayers
And kings concede their people's right to pray,
Both in one sunshine. Grievings are not despairs,
So uttered, nor can royal claims dismay
When men from humble homes and ducal chairs,
Hate wrong together. It was well to view
Those banners ruffled in a ruler's face
Inscribed, " Live freedom, union, and all true
Brave patriots who are aided by God's grace ! "
Nor was it ill when Leopoldo drew

His little children to the window-place

He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest
They too should govern as the people willed.

What a cry rose then ! some, who saw the best,
 Declared his eyes filled up and overfilled

With good warm human tears which unrepressed
 Ran down. I like his face ; the forehead's build

Has no capacious genius, yet perhaps
 Sufficient comprehension,—mild and sad,

And careful nobly,—not with care that wraps
 Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make mad,

But careful with the care that shuns a lapse
 Of faith and duty, studious not to add

A burden in the gathering of a gain.
 And so, God save the Duke, I say with those

Who that day shouted it ; and while dukes reign
 May all wear in the visible overflows

Of spirit, such a look of careful pain !
 For God must love it better than repose.

And all the people who went up to let

Their hearts out to that Duke, as has been told—
 Where guess ye that the living people met,

Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose leaders, first unrolled
 Their banners ?

In the Loggia ? where is set
 Cellini's godlike Perseus, bronze or gold
 (How name the metal, when the statue flings
 Its soul so in your eyes ?), with brow and sword
 Superbly calm, as all opposing things,
 Slain with the Gorgon, were no more abhorred
 Since ended ?

No, the people sought no wings
 From Perseus in the Loggia, nor implored
 An inspiration in the place beside

From that dim bust of Brutus, jagged and grand,
Where Buonarroto passionately tried

From out the close-clenched marble to demand
The head of Rome's sublimest homicide,

Then dropt the quivering mallet from his hand,
Despairing he could find no model-stuff

Of Brutus in all Florence where he found
The gods and gladiators thick enough.

Nor there! the people chose still holier ground:
The people, who are simple, blind and rough,

Know their own angels, after looking round.
Whom chose they then? where met they?

On the stone

Called Dante's,—a plain flat stone scarce discerned
From others in the pavement,—whereupon

He used to bring his quiet chair out, turned
To Brunelleschi's church, and pour alone

The lava of his spirit when it burned:
It is not cold to-day. O passionate

Poor Dante who, a banished Florentine,
Didst sit austere at banquets of the great

And muse upon this far-off stone of thine
And think how oft some passer used to wait

A moment, in the golden day's decline,
With "Good night, dearest Dante!"—well, good
night!

I muse now, Dante, and think verily,
Though chapelled in the byeway out of sight,

Ravenna's bones would thrill with ecstasy,
Couldst know thy favourite stone's elected right

As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to foresee
Their earliest chartas from. Good-night, good-morn,

Henceforward, Dante! now my soul is sure
That thine is better comforted of scorn,

And looks down earthward in completer cure
 Than when, in Santa Croce church forlorn
 Of any corpse, the architect and hewer
 Did pile the empty marbles as thy tomb.¹
 For now thou art no longer exiled, now
 Best honoured : we salute thee who art come
 Back to the old stone with a softer brow
 Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for some
 Good lovers of our age to track and plough²
 Their way to, through time's ordures stratified,
 And startle broad awake into the dull
 Bargello chamber : now thou'rt milder-eyed,—
 Now Beatrix may leap up glad to cull
 Thy first smile, even in heaven and at her side,
 Like that which, nine years old, looked beautiful
 At May-game. What do I say? I only meant
 That tender Dante loved his Florence well,
 While Florence, now, to love him is content ;
 And, mark ye, that the piercingest sweet smell
 Of love's dear incense by the living sent
 To find the dead, is not accessible
 To lazy livers—no narcotic,—not
 Swung in a censer to a sleepy tune,—
 But trod out in the morning air by hot
 Quick spirits who tread firm to ends foreshown,
 And use the name of greatness unforgot,
 To meditate what greatness may be done.
 For Dante sits in heaven and ye stand here,
 And more remains for doing, all must feel,
 Than trysting on his stone from year to year
 To shift processions, civic toe to heel,
 The town's thanks to the Pitti. Are ye freer

¹ The Florentines, to whom the Ravennese refused the body of Dante (demanded of them "in a late remorse of love"), have given a cenotaph in this church to their divine poet. Something less than a grave!

² In allusion to Mr. Kirkup's discovery of Giotto's fresco portrait of Dante.

For what was felt that day? a chariot-wheel
May spin fast, yet the chariot never roll.

But if that day suggested something good,
And bettered, with one purpose, soul by soul,—

Better means freer. A land's brotherhood
Is most puissant : men, upon the whole,
Are what they can be,—nations, what they would.

Will therefore, to be strong, thou Italy!

Will to be noble! Austrian Metternich
Can fix no yoke unless the neck agree;

And thine is like the lion's when the thick
Dews shudder from it, and no man would be

The stroker of his mane, much less would prick
His nostril with a reed. When nations roar

Like lions, who shall tame them and defraud
Of the due pasture by the river-shore?

Roar, therefore! shake your dew-laps dry abroad :
The amphitheatre with open door

Leads back upon the benchers who applaud
The last spear-thruster.

Yet the Heavens forbid

That we should call on passion to confront
The brutal with the brutal and amid

This ripening world, suggest a lion-hunt
And lion's-vengeance for the wrongs men did

And do now, though the spears are getting blunt.
We only call, because the sight and proof

Of lion-strength hurts nothing; and to show
A lion-heart, and measure paw with hoof,

Helps something, even, and will instruct a foe
As well as the onslaught, how to stand aloof :

Or else the world gets past the mere brute blow
Or given or taken. Children use the fist

Until they are of age to use the brain ;
 And so we needed Cæsars to assist
 Man's justice, and Napoleons to explain
 God's counsel, when a point was nearly missed,
 Until our generations should attain
 Christ's stature nearer. Not that we, alas,
 Attain already ; but a single inch
 Will raise to look down on the swordsman's pass.
 As knightly Roland on the coward's flinch :
 And, after chloroform and ether-gas,
 We find out slowly what the bee and finch
 Have ready found, through Nature's lamp in each,
 How to our races we may justify
 Our individual claims and, as we reach
 Our own grapes, bend the top-vines to supply
 The children's uses,—how to fill a breach
 With olive-branches,—how to quench a lie
 With truth, and smite a foe upon the cheek
 With Christ's most conquering kiss. Why, these are
 things
 Worth a great nation's finding, to prove weak
 The " glorious arms " of military kings.
 And so with wide embrace, my England, seek
 To stifle the bad heat and flickerings
 Of this world's false and nearly expended fire !
 Draw palpitating arrows to the wood,
 And twang abroad thy high hopes and thy higher
 Resolves, from that most virtuous altitude !
 Till nations shall unconsciously aspire
 By looking up to thee, and learn that good
 And glory are not different. Announce law
 By freedom ; exalt chivalry by peace ;
 Instruct how clear calm eyes can overawe,
 And how pure hands, stretched simply to release
 A bond-slave, will not need a sword to draw

To be held dreadful. O my England, cease
 Thy purple with no alien agonies ;
 No struggles toward encroachment, no vile war !
 Disband thy captains, change thy victories,
 Be henceforth prosperous as the angels are,
 Helping, not humbling.

Drums and battle-cries

Go out in music of the morning-star—
 And soon we shall have thinkers in the place
 Of fighters, each found able as a man
 To strike electric influence through a race,
 Unstayed by city-wall and barbican.
 The poet shall look grander in the face
 Than even of old (when he of Greece began
 To sing "that Achillean wrath which slew
 So many heroes")—seeing he shall treat
 The deeds of souls heroic toward the true,
 The oracles of life, previsions sweet
 And awful like divine swans gliding through
 White arms of Ledas, which will leave the heat
 Of their escaping godship to endure
 The human medium with a heavenly flush.

Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want
 Not popular passion, to arise and crush,
 But popular conscience, which may covenant
 For what it knows. Concede without a blush,
 To grant the "civic guard" is not to grant
 The civic spirit, living and awake :
 Those lappets on your shoulders citizens,
 Your eyes strain after sideways till they ache
 (While still, in admirations and amens,
 The crowd comes up on festa-days to take
 The great sight in)—are not intelligence,

Not courage even—alas, if not the sign
 Of something very noble, they are nought ;
 For every day ye dress your sallow kine
 With fringes down their cheeks, though unbesought
 They loll their heavy heads and drag the wine
 And bear the wooden yoke as they were taught
 The first day. What ye want is light—indeed
 Not sunlight—(ye may well look up surprised
 To those unfathomable heavens that feed
 Your purple hills) — but God's light organised
 In some high soul, crowned capable to lead
 The conscious people, conscious and advised,—
 For if we lift a people like mere clay,
 It falls the same. We want thee, O unfound
 And sovran teacher ! if thy beard be gray
 Or black, we bid thee rise up from the ground
 And speak the word God giveth thee to say,
 Inspiring into all this people round,
 Instead of passion, thought, which pioneers
 All generous passion, purifies from sin,
 And strikes the hour for. Rise up, teacher ! here's
 A crowd to make a nation !—best begin
 By making each a man, till all be peers
 Of earth's true patriots and pure martyrs in
 Knowing and daring. Best unbar the doors
 Which Peter's heirs keep locked so overclose
 They only let the mice across the floors,
 While every churchman dangles, as he goes,
 The great key at his girdle, and abhors
 In Christ's name, meekly. Open wide the house,
 Concede the entrance with Christ's liberal mind,
 And set the tables with His wine and bread.
 What ! " commune in both kinds ? " In every kind—
 Wine, wafer, love, hope, truth, unlimited,
 Nothing kept back. For when a man is blind