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MRS. BROWNING



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Elizabeth Barrett Browning



Asp. Hood
1921

THE

POETICAL WORKS

ELIZABETH BARRETT BARRING

COMPILED BY

FROM THE LAST EDITION

NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL & CO.



A. S. P. Hoodless
1922.

THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING,

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION.

NEW YORK

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DEDICATION.

TO MY FATHER.

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

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

Your

E. B. B.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS edition, including my earlier and later writings, I have endeavoured to render as little unworthy as possible of the indulgence of the public. Several poems I would willingly have withdrawn, if it were not almost impossible to extricate what has been once caught and involved in the machinery of the press. The alternative is a request to the generous reader that he may use the weakness of those earlier verses, which no subsequent revision has succeeded in strengthening, less as a reproach to the writer, than as a means of marking some progress in her other attempts.

E. B. B.

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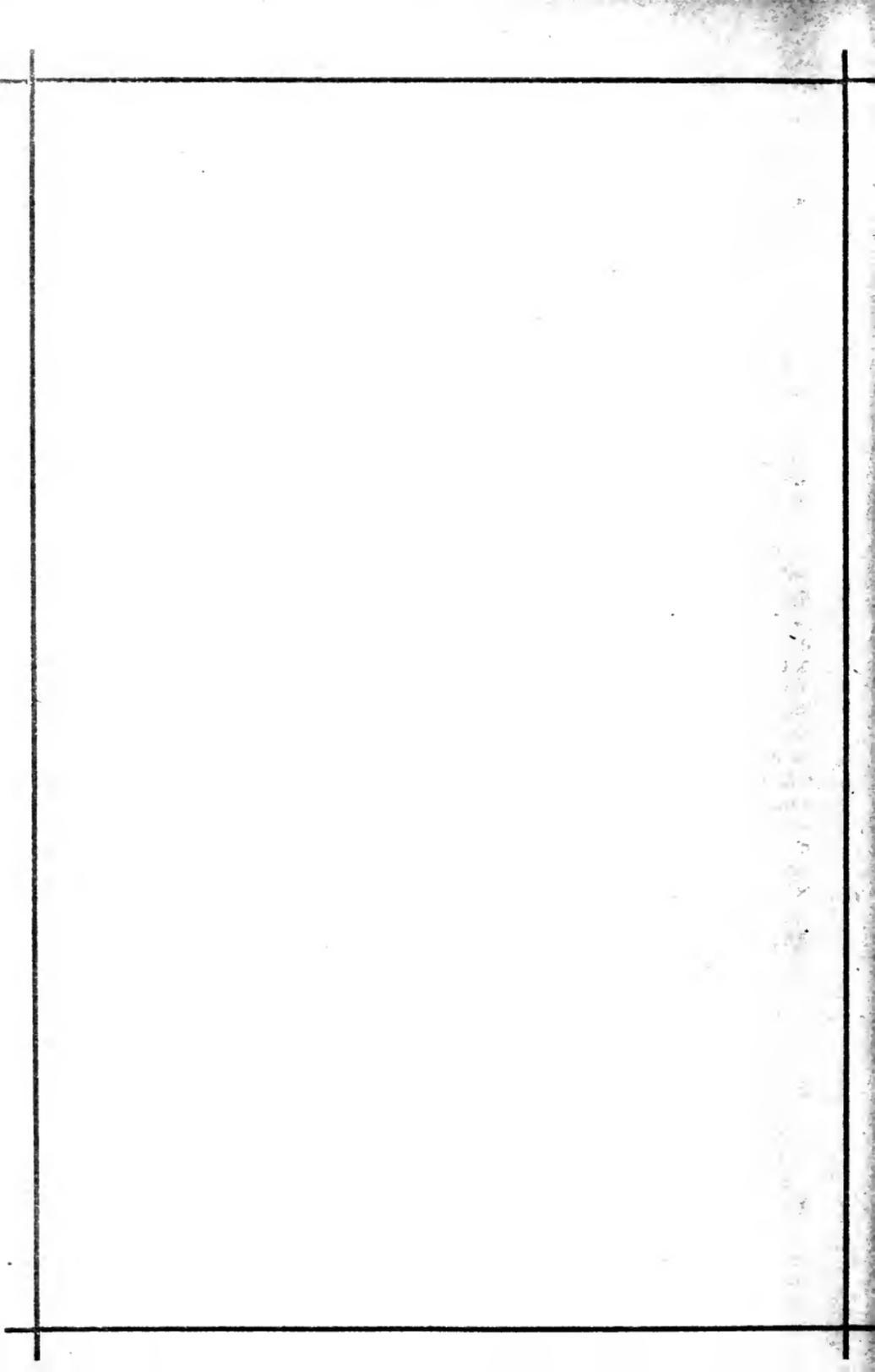
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POEMS.

THE SERAPHIM.

PART THE FIRST.

It is the time of the Crucifixion; and the angels of heaven have departed towards the earth, except the two Seraphim, Ador the Strong and Zerah the Bright One.

The place is the outer side of the shut heavenly gate.

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

Zerah. Of Heaven!

Ador. Our brother hosts are gone—

Zerah. Are gone before.

Ador. And the golden harps the angels bore.

To help the songs of their desire,
Still burning from their bands of fire,

Lie without touch or tone
Upon the glass-sea shore.

Zerah. Silent upon the glass-sea shore!

Ador. There the shadow from the throne—

Formless with infinity,
Hovers o'er the crystal sea;
Awfuller than light derived,
And red with those primæval heats
Whereby all life has lived.

Zerah. Our visible God, our heavenly seats!

Ador. Beneath us sinks the pomp angelical, [virtues, all,—
Cherub and seraph, powers and
The roar of whose descent has died

To a still sound, as thunder into rain. [nified
Immeasurable space spreads mag-

With that thick life, along the plane

The worlds slid out on. What a fall
And eddy of wings innumerable,
crossed

By trailing curls that have not lost
The glitter of the God-smile shed
On every prostrate angel's head!
What gleaming up of hands that fling

Their homage in retorted rays,
From high instinct of worshipping,
And habitude of praise.

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

Awakened at our feet.

Ador. Zerah, do not wait for seeing.
His voice, it is, that thrills us so
As we our harpstrings, uttered *Go*,
Behold the Holy in his woe—

And all are gone, save thee and—

Zerah. Thee!

Ador. I stood the nearest to the throne

In hierarchical degree,
What time the Voice said *Go*.
And whether I was moved alone
By the storm-pathos of the tone
Which swept through Heaven the
alien name of *woe*,

Or whether the subtle glory broke
Through my strong and shielding
wings,
Bearing to my finite essence
Incapacious of their presence,
Infinite imaginings,
None knoweth save the Throned
who spoke ;

But I, who, at creation, stood upright
And heard the God-Breath move,
Shaping the words that lightened,
'Be there light,'

Nor trembled but with love,
Now fell down shudderingly,
My face upon the pavement whence
I had towered,
As if in mine immortal overpowered
By God's eternity.

Zerah. Let me wait!--let me wait!--
Ador. Nay, gaze not backward
through the gate. [solitude

God fills our heaven with God's own
Till all the pavements glow :
His Godhead being no more sub-
dued

By itself, to glories low
Which seraphs can sustain,
What if thou, in gazing so,
Should behold but only one
Attribute, the veil undone—
And that to which we dare to press
Nearest, for its gentleness—
Ay, His love !

How the deep ecstatic pain
Thy being's strength would cap-
ture !

Without language for the rapture,
Without music strong to come
And set the adoration free,
For ever, ever, wouldst thou be
Amid the general chorus dumb,
God-stricken to seraphic agony !—
Or, brother, what if on thine eyes
In vision bare should rise

The life-fount whence His hand did
gather

With solitary force
Our immortalities !

Straightway how thine own would
wither,

Falter like a human breath,
And shrink into a point like death,
By gazing on its source !

My words have imaged dread.
Meekly hast thou bent thine head.
And dropt thy wings in languish-
ment

Overclouding foot and face ;
As if God's throne were eminent
Before thee, in the place.

Yet not—not so,
O loving spirit and meek, dost thou
fulfil

The Supreme Will,
Not for obeisance but obedience,
Give motion to thy wings. Depart
from hence.

The voice said 'Go.'
Zerah. Beloved, I depart.
His will is as a spirit within my spirit.
A portion of the being I inherit.
His will is mine obedience. I re-
semble

A flame all undefiled though it
tremble ; [loved
I go and tremble. Love me, O be-
O thou, who stronger art,
And standest ever near the Infinite.
Pale with the light of Light !
Love me, beloved ! me, more newly
made,

More feeble, more afraid ;
And let me hear with mine thy pin-
ions moved,

As close and gentle as the loving are,
That love being near, heaven may
not seem so far.

Ador. I am near thee, and I love
thee.

Where I loveless, from thee gone,
Love is round, beneath, above
thee,

God the omnipresent One.
Spread the wing, and lift the brow
Well-beloved, what fearest thou ?

Zerah. I fear, I fear—

Ador. What fear?

Zerah. The fear of earth.

Ador. Of earth, the God-created and
God-praised

In the hour of birth?

Where every night, the moon in light

Doth lead the waters, silver-faced?

Where every day, the sun doth lay

A rapture to the heart of all

The leafy and reeded pastoral,

As if the joyous shout which burst

From angel lips to see him first,

Had left a silent echo in his ray?

Zerah. Of earth—the God-created
and God-curst,

Where man is, and the thorn.

Where sun and moon have borne

No lights to souls forlorn.

Where Eden's tree of life no more

uprears

Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but

instead [head,

The yew-tree bows its melancholy

And all the undergrasses kills and

seres.

Ador. Of earth the weak,

Made and unmade,

Where men that faint, do strive for
crowns that fade?

Where, having won the profit which
they seek, [gold

They lie beside the sceptre and the

With fleshless hands that cannot
wield or hold,

And the stars shine in their un-
winking eyes?

Zerah. Of earth the bold:

Where the blind matter wrings

An awful potency out of impotence,
Bowing the spiritual things

To the things of sense.

Where the human will replies

With ay and no, [or slow.

Because the human pulse is quick

Where Love succumbs to Change,

With only his own memories, for
revenge,

And the fearful mystery—

Ador. Called Death?

Zerah. Nay, death is fearful—
but who saith

'To die,' is comprehensible.

What's fearfuller, thou knowest
well, [thee,

Though the utterance be not for

Lest it blanch thy lips from glory—

Ay! the cursed thing that moved

A shadow of ill, long times ago,

Across our heaven's own shining
floor, [were

And when it vanished, some who

On thrones of holy empire there,

Did reign—were seen—were—nev-
er more.

Come nearer, O beloved!

Ador. I am near thee. Didst thou
bear thee

Ever to this earth?

Zerah. Before,

When thrilling from His hand

along [song.

Its lustrous path with spheric

The earth was deathless, sorrow-
less. [press

Unfearing, then, pure feet might

The grasses brightening with
their feet, [sound

For God's own voice did mix its
In a solemn confluence oft

With the rivers' flowing round

And the life-tree's waving soft.

Beautiful new earth, and strange!

Ador. Hast thou seen it since—
the change?

Zerah. Nay, or wherefore should I
fear

To look upon it now?

I have beheld the ruined things
Only in depicturings [sion,—

Of angels from an earthly mis-

Strong one, even upon thy brow,

When, with task completed, given

Back to us in that transition,

I have beheld thee silent stand,

Abstracted in the seraph band,

Without a smile in heaven.

Ador. Then thou wert not one of those

Whom the loving Father chose
In visionary pomp to sweep
O'er Judæa's grassy places,
O'er the shepherds and the sheep,
Though thou art so tender?—
dimming

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

While deep response from earth's
own mountains ran,

'Peace upon earth—goodwill to
man.'

Zerah. "Glory to God!"—I said
Amen afar.

And those who from that earthly
mission are,

Within mine ears have told

That the seven everlasting Spirits
did hold

With such a sweet and prodigal
constraint, [song.

The meaning yet the mystery of the
What time they sang it, on their
natures strong;

That, gazing down on earth's dark
steadfastness, [promises,

And speaking the new peace in
The love and pity made their voices
faint [ing

Into the low and tender music, keep—
The place in heaven, of what on
earth is weeping.

Ador. Peace upon earth! Come
down to it.

Zerah. Ah me!
I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.

Peace where the tempest—where
the sighing is—

And worship of the idol. 'stead of
His?

Ador. Yea, peace, where *He* is.

Zerah. Say it again. *He!*

Ador. Say it again.

Ador. Where *He* is.

Zerah. Can it be
That earth retains a tree

Whose leaves like Eden foliage, can
be swayed

By the breathing of His voice, nor
shrink and fade?

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

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

For He, the crowned Son,

Has left his crown and throne,

Walks earth in Adam's clay,

Eve's snake to bruise and slay—

Zerah. Walks earth in clay?

Ador. And walking in the clay which
He created,

He through it shall touch death.

What do I utter? what, conceive?

Did breath

Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?

Or was it mine own voice, informed,
dilated

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

Who said man's victim was his
deity?

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

Thine eyes are rolling a tempest-
uous light

Above, below, around,

As putting thunder-questions with-
out cloud,

Reverberate without sound,

To universal nature's depth and
height. [thought

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

aloud,
O'erruns the awful curving of thy
lips:

And while thine hands are
stretched above

As newly they had caught

Some lightning from the Throne—
or showed the Lord

Some retributive sword—

Thy brows do alternate with wild
eclipse

And radiance—with contrasted
wrath and love—

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

With a man's quailing heart.

Ador. O heart—O heart of man!

O ta'en from human clay,

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

Made holy in the taking,

And yet unseparate

From death's perpetual ban,
And human feelings sad and pas-
sionate!

Still subject to the treacherous for-
Of other hearts, and its own stead-
fast pain.

O heart of man—of God! which God
From out the dust, with its humanity

Mournful and weak yet innocent
around it,

And bade its many pulses beating
Beside that incommunicable stir

Of Deity wherewith He interwound
it.

O man! and is thy nature so defiled,
That all that holy Heart's devout
lawkeeping,

And low pathetic beat in deserts
wild,

And gushings pitiful of tender weep-
For traitors who consigned it to
such woe—

That all could cleanse thee not—
without the flow

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

O earth the thundercleft, wind-
shaken! where

The louder voice of "blood and
blood" doth rise—

Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice?
O heaven—O vacant throne!

O crowned hierarchies, that wear
your crown

When His is put away!

Are ye unshamed, that He cannot
dim

Your alien brightness to be liker
Assume a human passion—and

down-lay
Your sweet secureness for congen-
ial fears—

And teach your cloudless ever-burn-
ing eyes

The mystery of His tears?
Zerah. I am strong, I am strong.

Were I never to see my heaven
again,

I would wheel to earth like the
tempest rain

Which sweeps there with an exul-
tant sound

To lose its life as it reaches the
I am strong, I am strong!

Away from mine inward vision
swim

The shining seats of my heavenly
I see but His, I see but Him—

The Maker's steps on His cruel
earth.

Will the bitter herbs of earth grow
To me, as trodden by His feet?

Will the vexed, accurst humanity,
As worn by Him, beg'n to be

A blessed, yea, a sacred thing,
For love, and awe, and ministering?

I am strong, I am strong!
By our angel ken shall we survey

His loving smile through his woe-
ful clay?

I am swift, I am strong—
The love is bearing me along.

Ador. One love is bearing us along.

PART THE SECOND.

MID air, above Judæa. *Ador* and *Zerah*
are a little apart from the visible Angelic
Hosts.

Ador. BELOVED! dost thou see?—
Zerah. Thee,—thee.

Thy burning eyes already are
Grown wild and mournful as a

star

Whose occupation is for aye
To look upon the place of clay

Whereon thou lookest now!

The crown is fainting on thy
brow

To the likeness of a cloud—

The forehead's self a little bowed

From its aspect high and holy,

As it would in meekness meet

Some seraphic melancholy,

Thy very wings that lately flung

An outline clear, do flicker here,

And wear to each a shadow hung

Dropped across thy feet.

In these strange contrasting
glooms,

Stagnant with the scent of tombs,

Seraph faces, O my brother,

Show awfully to one another.

Ador. Dost thou see?

Zerah. Even so—I see

Our empyreal company; [ness

Alone the memory of their bright-

Left in them, as in thee:

The circle upon circle, tier on tier--

Piling earth's hemisphere

With heavenly infiniteness;

Above us and around,

Straining the blue horizon like a
bow: [all sound;

Their songful lips divorced from
A darkness gliding down their sil-
very glances,—

Bowing their steadfast solemn coun-
tenances,

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

Ador. Look downward! dost thou
see?

Zerah. And wouldst thou press
this vision on my words?

Doth not earth speak enough

Of change and of undoing,

Without a seraph's witness?

Oceans rough

With tempest, pastoral swards

Displaced by fiery deserts, moun-
tains ruing

The bolt fallen yesterday,

That shake their piney heads, as

who would say [decay.

'We are too beautiful for our

Shall seraphs speak of these things?

Let alone

Earth to her earthly moan.

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

Ador. Hearest thou the attesta-
tion

Of the roused Universe,

Like a desert lion shaking

Dews of silence from its mane?

With an irrepressive passion

Uprising at once,

Rising up and forsaking [suns

Its solemn state in the circle of

To attest the pain

Of Him who stands (O patience
sweet!)

In his own hand-prints of creation,
With human feet?

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

Zerah. Forms, Spaces, Motions
wide,

O meek, insensate things,

O congregated matters! who in-
herit

Instead of vital powers,

Impulsions, God-supplied;

Instead of influent spirit,

A clear informing beauty—

Instead of creature-duty,

Submission calm as rest!

Lights, without feet or wings,

In golden courses sliding!

Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,

Whose lustrous heart away was
prest

Into the argent stars!

Ye crystal, firmamental bars,

That hold the skyey waters free

From tide or tempest's ecstasy!

Airs universal! thunders lorn,

That wait your lightnings in
cloud-cave

Hewn out by the winds! O
brave

And subtle Elements! the Holy
Hath charged me by your voice
with folly.* [wound.

Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its
Return ye to your silences inborn,
Or to your inarticulated sound!

Ador. Zerah.

Zerah. Wilt thou rebuke?

God hath rebuked me, brother.—I
am weak.

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

Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.

Zerah. Thy look
Is fixed on earth, as mine upon
thy face!

Where shall I seek *Him*?—

I have thrown
One look upon earth—but one—
Over the blue mountain-lines,
Over the forests of palms and
pines;

Over the harvest-lands golden;
Over the valleys that fold in
The gardens and vines—

He is not there!

All these are unworthy
His footsteps to bear;

Before which, bowing down
I would fain quench the stars of
my crown

In the dark of the earthy.

Where shall I seek *Him*?

No reply?
Hath language left thy lips, to
place

Its vocal in thine eye?
Ador, Ador! are we come
To a double portent, that
Dumb matter grows articulate
And songful spirits dumb?

Ador, Ador!

Ador. I constrain

The passion of my silence.
None

Of those places gazed upon
Are gloomy enow to fit His pain.
Unto Him whose forming word
Gave to Nature flower and sward
She hath given back again,

For the myrtle, the thorn;
For the sylvan calm, the human
scorn. [beneath!

Still, still, reluctant Seraph, gaze
There is a city—

Zerah. Temple and tower,
Palace and purple would droop like
a flower.

(Or a cloud at our breath)
If He neared in His state
The outermost gate.

Ador. Ah me, not so
In the state of a King, did the vic-
tim go! [speech

And THOU who hankest mute of
'Twixt heaven and earth, with
forehead yet

Stained by the bloody sweat—
God! man! Thou hast foregone
thy throne in each!

Zerah. Thine eyes behold *Him*?

Ador. Yea, below:

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

Seest thou yet, beloved?

Zerah. I see
Beyond the city, crosses three,
And mortals three that hang
thereon,

'Ghast and silent to the sun:
And round them blacken and welter
and press

Staring multitudes, whose father
Adam was—whose brows are
dark

With his Cain's corroded mark;
Who curse with looks. Nay—
let me rather

Turn unto the wilderness.

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

Ador. Turn not. God dwells with men.

Zerah. Above
He dwells with angels; and they love.

Can these love? With the living's
They stare at those who die,—who hang
In their sight and die. They bear
Of the crosses' shadow, black not wide,

To fall on their heads, as it swerves
When the victims' pang
Makes the dry wood creak.

Ador. The cross—the cross!

Zerah. A woman kneels

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

Ador. Weep? Weep blood,
All women, all men!

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

Of salt curses, whose foam is the
darkness, on roll

Forward, on from the strand of the
storm-beaten years,

And back from the rocks of the
horrid hereafter,

And up, in a coil, from the present's
wrath-spring,

Yea, down from the windows of
Heaven opening,—

Deep calling to deep as they meet on
His soul,—

And men weep only tears?

Zerah. Little drops in the lapse!

And yet, Ador, perhaps

It is all that they can.
Tears! the lovingest man
Has no better bestowed
Upon man.

Ador. Nor on God.

Zerah. Do all givers need gifts?
If the Giver said 'Give,' the first
motion would slay
Our Immortals: the echo would ruin
The same worlds which he made.

Why, what angel uplifts

Such a music, so clear,

It may seem in God's ear

Worth more than a woman's hoarse
weeping? And thus,

Pity tender as tears, I above thee
would speak,

Thou woman that weepst! weep
unscorned of us!

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

Ador. Speak low, my brother, low.
—and not of love,

Or human or angelic! Rather
stand

Before the throne of that Supreme
In whose infinitude the secrecies

Of thine own being lie hid, and lift
thine hand

Exultant, saying 'Lord God I am
Than utter *here*, 'I love.'

Zerah. And yet thine eyes
Do utter it. They melt in tender

light—

The tears of Heaven.

Ador. Of Heaven. Ah me!

Zerah. Ador!

Ador. Say on.

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

Ador. Unlike.

Zerah. For one
Is as a man who sinned, and still

Doth wear the wicked will—

The hard malign life-energy,
Tossed outward, in the parting

soul's disdain,
On brow and lip that cannot change

Ador. And one—

Zerah. Has also sinned.

And yet, (O marvel!) doth the spirit-wind

Blow white those waters?—Death upon his face

Is rather shine than shade,

A tender shine by looks beloved made.

He seemeth dying in a quiet place,
And less by iron wounds in hands and feet

Than heart-broke by new joy too sudden and sweet.

Ador. And ONE!—

Zerah. And ONE—

Ador. Why dost thou pause?

Zerah. God! God!

Spirit of my spirit! who movest
Through seraph veins in burning deity,

To light the quenchless pulses!—

Ador. But hast trod
The depth of love in thy peculiar nature; [and lovest

And not in any Thou hast made
In narrow seraph hearts!—

Zerah. Above, Creator!
Within, upholder!

Ador. And below, below,
The creature's and the upholden's sacrifice!

Zerah. Why do I pause?—

Ador. There is a silentness
That answers thee enow;
That, like a brazen sound

Excluding others, doth ensheathe us round; [skies

Hear it! It is not from the visible
Though they are very still,

Unconscious that their own dropped dews express

The light of heaven on every earthly hill. [and bare

It is not from the hills; though calm
They, since the first creation,

Through midnight cloud or morn-
ing's glittering air

Or the deep deluge blindness, toward the place

Whence thrilled the mystic word's creative grace,

And whence again shall come

The word that uncreates;

Have lift their brows in voiceless expectation. [tomb

It is not from the places that en-
Man's dead—though common Silence there dilates

Her soul to grand proportions,
worthily

To fill life's vacant room.

Not there—not there!

Not yet within those chambers lieth
He, [His south

A dead One in His living world!
And west winds blowing over earth

and sea; [Mouth!
And not a breath on that creating

But now,—a silence keeps

(Not death's, nor sleep's)

The lips whose whispered word
Might roll the thunder round reverberated.

Silent art Thou, O my Lord,

Bowing down Thy stricken head!

Fearest Thou, a groan of thine
Would make the pulse of thy creation fail [the veil

As thine own pulse?—would rend
Of visible things, and let the flood

Of the unseen Light, the essential God,

Rush in to overwhelm the undivine?—
Thy silence, to my thinking, is as

dead!

Zerah. O silence!

Ador. Doth it say to thee the
NAME,

Slow-learning Seraph?

Zerah. I have learnt.

Ador. The flame
Perishes in thine eyes.

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

Ador. Their agony?

Zerah. Their love. God's depth is in them.

From his brows
White, terrible in meekness, didst thou see

The uplifted eyes unclose?
He is God, seraph! Look no more on me,
O God; I am not God.

Ador. The loving is
Sublimed within them by the sorrowful.

In heaven we could sustain them.

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

In fluent, refluant motion,
Along the crystal ocean;
The springing of the golden harps between

The bowery wings, in fountains of sweet sound;

The winding, wandering music that returns

Upon itself, exultingly self-bound
In the great spheric round

Of everlasting praises:

The God-thoughts in our midst that intervene, [throne,

Visibly flashing from the supreme
Full in seraphic faces.

Till each astonishes the other,
grown [delight!

More beautiful with worship and
My heaven! my home of heaven!

my infinite
Heaven-choirs! what are ye to this

dust and death,
This cloud, this cold, these tears,

this failing breath,
Where God's immortal love now

issueth
In this MAN'S woe?

Ador. His eyes are very deep yet
calm—

Zerah. No more
On me Jehovah-man—

Ador. Calm-deep. They show
A passion which is tranquil! They are seeing

No earth, no heaven: no men that slay and curse—

No seraphs that adore.
Their gaze is on the invisible, the dread—

The things we cannot view or think or speak, [weak;

Because we are too happy, or too
The sea of ill, for which the uni-

verse
With all its pilèd space, can find no

shore, [tread.
With all its life, no living foot to

But He, accomplished in Jehovah-being,

Sustains the gaze adown,
Conceives the vast despair,

And feels the billowy griefs come up to drown,

Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails till all be finished.

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

And undiminishable God!--My
God!

The echoes are still tremulous along
The heavenly mountains, of the

latest song
Thy manifested glory swept abroad

In rushing past our lips! They echo
aye

"Creator, Thou art strong!--
Creator, Thou art blessed over all."

By what new utterance shall I now
recall,

Unteaching the heaven-echoes?
Dare I say,

"Creator, Thou art feebler than
Thy work!

Creator, Thou art sadder than thy
creature!

A worm, and not a man,
Yea, no worm—but a curse?"

I dare not, so, mine heavenly phrase
reverse.

Albeit the piercing thorn and this-
tle-fork

(Whose seed disordered ran
From Eve's hand trembling when
the curse did reach her)
Be garnered darklier in thy soul!
the rod'

That smites Thee never blossoming,
and Thou,
Grief-bearer for thy world, with un-
kinged brow—

I leave to men their song of Icha-
bod! [but praise.

I have an angel-tongue—I know
Ador. Hereafter shall the blood-
bought captives raise
The passion-song of blood.

Zerah. And *we*, extend
Our holy vacant hands toward the
Throne,

Crying "We have no music!"

Ador. Rather, blend
Both musics into one!

The sanctities and sanctified above
Shall each to each, with lifted looks
serene,

Their shining faces lean,
And mix the adoring breath
And breathe the full thanksgiving.

Zerah. But the love—
The love, mine *Ador!*

Ador. Do we love not?

Zerah. Yea,
But not as man shall! not with
life for death,
New-throbbing through the startled
being! not

With strange astonished smiles,
that ever may
Gush passionate like tears, and fill
their place:

Nor yet with speechless memories
of what [the green
Earth's winters were, everduring
Of every heavenly palm
Whose windless, shadeless calm
Moves only at the breath of the
Unseen.

Oh, not with this blood on us—and
this face,— [it bore

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

Nor yet with these forgiving hands
upraising [to bless!

Their unreprouchful wounds, alone
Alas, Creator! shall we love Thee
less

Than mortals shall?

Ador. Amen! so let it be.

We love in our proportion—to the
bound

Thine infinite our finite, set around,
And that is finitely,—Thou, infinite
And worthy infinite love! And our
delight

Is watching the dear love poured
out to Thee, [they,

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

Viewing that love which shall ex-
ceed even this, [bliss.

And winning in the sight, a double
For all so lost in love's supremacy'
The bliss is better. Only on the
sad

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

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

Than sinless seraphs can.

Zerah. Yea, love Him more.

Voices of the angelic multitude.
Yea, more!

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

For Silence hath no deepness in
her heart

Where love's low name low breath'd
would not be heard

By angels, clear as thunder.

Angelic voices. Love him more!

Ador. Sweet voices, swooning o'er
The music which ye make!

Albeit to love there were not ever
given

A mournful sound when uttered
out of heaven, [take.

That angel-sadness ye would fitly
Of love, be silent now! we gaze
adown [no crown.

Upon the incarnate love who wears
Zerah. No crown! the woe instead

Is heavy on His head,
Pressing inward on His brain,

With a hot and clinging pain,
Till all tears are prest away,

And clear and calm His vision may
Peruse the black abyss.

No rod, no sceptre is

Holden in His fingers pale:

They close instead upon the nail,

Concealing the sharp dole—

Never stirring to put by

The fair hair peaked with blood,

Drooping forward from the rood

Helplessly—heavily—

On the cheek that waxeth colder,

Whiter ever,—and the shoulder

Where the government was laid.

His glory made the Heavens afraid;

Will He not unearth this cross from
its hole?

His pity makes His piteous state:

Will He be uncompassionate

Alone to his proper soul?

Yea, will He not lift up

His lips from the bitter cup,

His brows from the dreary weight,

His hands from the clenching
cross—

Crying 'My Father, give to me

Again the joy I had with Thee,

Or ere this earth was made for loss?'
No stir—no sound—

The love and woe being interwound

He cleaveth to the woe;

And putteth forth heaven's strength
below—

To bear.

Ador. And that creates His an-
guish now,

Which made His glory there.

Zerah. Shall it indeed be so?

Awake, thou Earth! behold!

Thou, uttered forth of old

In all thy life-emotion,

In all thy vernal noises;

In the rollings of thine ocean,

Leaping founts, and rivers run-
ning;

In thy woods' prophetic heav-
ing

Ere the rains a stroke have
given;

In thy winds' exultant voices

When they feel the hills anear:

In the firmamental sunning,

And the tempest which r-
joices

Thy full heart with an awful
cheer!

Thou, uttered forth of old

And with all thy musics, rolled

In a breath abroad

By the breathing God!

Awake! He is here! behold!

Even thou—

Beseems it good

To thy vacant vision dim,

That the deathly-ruin should,

For thy sake encompass Him?

That the master-word should lie

A mere silence—while His own,

Processive harmony—

The faintest echo of His lightest
tone

Is sweeping in a choral triumph by?

Awake! emit a cry!

And say, albeit used

From Ad's ancient years

To fall on acrid tears,

To frequent sighs unloosed,

Caught back to press again

On bosoms wined with pain—

To corses still and sullen

The shine and music dulling

With closed eyes and ears

That nothing sweet can enter—
 Commoving thee no less
 With that forced quietness,
 Than the earthquake in thy
 centre—
 Thou hast not learnt to bear
 This new divine despair!
 These tears that sink into thee,
 These dying eyes that view thee,
 This dropping blood from lifted
 rood,
 They darken and undo thee!
 Thou canst not, presently, sustain
 this corse!
 Cry, cry, thou hast not force!
 Cry, thou wouldst fainer keep
 Thy hopeless channels deep—
 Thyself a general tomb—
 Where the first and second Death
 Sit gazing face to face
 And mar each other's breath,
 While silent bones through all the
 place, [glisten,
 'Neath sun and moon do faintly
 And seem to lie and listen
 For the tramp of the coming Doom.
 Is it not meet
 That they who erst the Eden fruit
 did eat,
 Should champ the ashes?
 That they who wrapt them in the
 thunder-cloud,
 Should wear it as a shroud,
 Perishing by its flashes?
 That they who vexed the lion,
 should be rent?
 Cry, cry—'I will sustain my
 punishment,
 The sin being mine! but take
 away from me
 This visioned Dread—this Man
 —this Deity.'

The Earth. I have groaned—I
 have travailed—
 I am weary—
 I am blind with my own grief, and
 cannot see, [agony:
 As clear-eyed angels can, His

And what I see I also can sustain,
 Because His power protects me
 from His pain.
 I have groaned—I have travailed—
 I am dreary,
 Harkening the thick sobs of my
 children's heart:
 And I can say 'Depart'
 To that Atoner making calm and
 free?
 Am I a God as He,
 To lay down peace and power as
 willingly?
Ador. He looked for some to pity.
 There is none. [Him:
 All pity is within Him, and not for
 His earth is iron under Him, and
 o'er Him
 His skies are brass:
 His seraphs cry 'Alas'
 With hallelujah voice that cannot
 weep;
 And man, for whom the dreadful
 work is done—
Scornful voices from the Earth.
 If verily this be the Eternal's son—
Ador. Thou hearest: man is grate-
 ful!
Zerah. Can I hear,
 Nor darken into man nor cease for
 ever
 My seraph-smile to wear?
 Was it for such,
 It pleased Him to overleap
 His glory with His love, and sever
 From the God-light and the
 throne
 And all angels bowing down,
 From whom His every look did
 touch [worn string
 New notes of joy from the un-
 Of an eternal worshipping!
 For such He left His heaven?
 There, though never bought
 by blood
 And tears, we gave Him grati-
 tude! [forgiven!
 We loved Him there, though un-

Ador. The light is riven
Above, around,
And down in lurid fragments flung,
That catch the mountain-peak and
stream

With momentary gleam,
Then perish in the water and the
ground.

River and waterfall,
Forest and wilderness,
Mountain and city, are together
wrung [lessness ;
Into one shape, and that is shape—
The darkness stands for all.

Zerah. The pathos hath the day
undone :

The death-look of His eyes
Hath overcome the sun,
And made it sicken in its narrow
skies.

Ador. Is it to death? He dieth,
Zerah. Through the dark,
He still, He only, is discernible—
The naked hands and feet trans-
fixed stark,

The countenance of patient an-
guish white,
Do make themselves a light
More dreadful than the glooms
which round them dwell,
And therein do they shine.

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

Uplift the lids of inward Deity,
Flashing abroad
Thy burning infinite!
Light up this dark, where there is
nought to see,
Except the unimagined agony
Upon the sinless forehead of the
Son.

Zerah. God, tarry not! Behold,
enow
Hath He-wandered as a stranger,
Sorrowed as a victim. Thou
Appeared for Him, O Father!
Appear for Him, Avenger!

Appear for Him, just One and holy
One,

For He is holy and just!
At once the darkness and dishonor
rather [rake,
To the ragged jaws of hungry chaos
And hurl aback to ancient dust
These mortals that make blas-
phemies

With their made breath! this
earth and skies

That only grow a little dim,
Seeing their curse on Him!
But Him, of all forsaken,
Of creature and of brother,
Never wilt Thou forsake!

Thy living and Thy loving cannot
slacken [other—

Their firm essential hold upon each
And well Thou dost remember how
His part [be
Was still to lie upon Thy breast, and
Partaker of the light that dwelt in
Thee

Ere sun or seraph shone ;
And how while silence trembled
round the throne

Thou countedst by the beatings of
His heart, [nity!
The moments of Thine own eter-
Awaken,

O right Hand with the lightnings!
Again gather
His glory to thy glory! What es-
tranger— [thrust
What ill supreme in evil, can be
Between the faithful Father and the
Son?

Appear for Him, O Father!
Appear for Him, Avenger!
Appear for Him, just One and holy
One!

For He is holy and just.
Ador. Thy face, upturned toward
the throne, is dark—
Thou hast no answer, *Zerah.*

Zerah. No reply.
O unforsaking Father?—

Ador. Hark!
 Instead of downward voice, a cry
 Is uttered from beneath!
Zerah. And by a sharper sound than
 death,
 Mine immortality is riven.
 The heavy darkness which doth
 tent the sky, [wind—
 Floats backward as by a sudden
 But I see no light behind:
 But I feel the farthest stars are all
 Stricken and shaken,
 And I know a shadow sad and
 broad,
 Doth fall—doth fall
 On our vacant thrones in heaven.
Voice from the Cross. MY GOD, MY
 GOD,
 WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN?
The Earth. Ah me, ah me, ah me!
 the dreadful why!
 My sin is on Thee, sinless One!
 Thou art
 God-orphaned, for my burden on
 Thy head. [ance dread!
 Dark sin! white innocence! endure—
 Be still, within your shrouds, my
 buried dead—
 Nor work with this quick horror
 round mine heart! [perish—
Zerah. He hath forsaken Him! I
Ador. Hold
 Upon His name! We perish not.
 Of old
 His will— [phim!
Zerah. I seek His will. Seek, Sera-
 My God, my God! where is it?
 Doth that curse [universe?
 Reverberate spare us, seraph or
He hath forsaken Him.
Ador. He cannot fail.
Angel voices. We faint—we droop—
 Our love doth tremble like fear—
Voices of Fallen Angels from the
Earth. Do we prevail?
 Or are we lost?—Hath not the ill
 we did
 Been heretofore our good?

Is it not ill that One, all sinless,
 should [cross?
 Hang heavy with all curses on a
 Nathless, *that cry!*—with huddled
 faces hid [did scoop
 Within the empty graves which men
 To hold more damnèd dead, we
 shudder through
 What shall exalt us or undo,—
 Our triumph, or—our loss.
Voice from the Cross. IT IS FIN-
 ISHED.
Zerah. Hark, again!
 Like a victor, speaks the Slain—
Angel voices. Finished be the trem-
 bling vain! [Son,
Ador. Upward, like a well-loved
 Looketh He, the orphaned One—
Angel voices. Finished is the mystic
 pain!
Voices of Fallen Angels. His death-
 ly forehead at the word,
 Gleameth like a seraph sword.
Angel voices. Finished is the demon
 reign!
Ador. His breath, as living God,
 createth— [eth.
 His breath, as dying man, complet-
Angel voices. Finished work His
 hands sustain!
The Earth. In mine ancient sepul-
 chres
 Where my kings and prophets
 freeze, [years,
 Adam dead four thousand
 Unwakened by the universe's
 Everlasting moan, [ing—
 Aye his ghastly silence, mock-
 Unwakened by his children's
 knocking
 At his old sepulchral stone—
 'Adam, Adam! all this curse is
 Thine and on us yet!'—
 Unwakened by the ceaseless tears
 Wherewith they made his cere-
 ment wet— [main?—
 'Adam, must thy curse re-
 Starts with sudden life, and hears

Through the slow dripping of the
caverned eaves,—

Angel voices. Finished is his bane!
Voice from the Cross. FATHER!
MY SPIRIT TO THINE HANDS IS
GIVEN!

Ador. Hear the wailing winds that
be

By wings of unclean Spirits made!
They, in that last look, surveyed
The love they lost in losing heaven,

And passionately flee,
With a desolate cry that cleaves
The natural storms—though *they*
are lifting

God's strong cedar-roots like leaves;
And the earthquake and the thun-
der,

Neither keeping neither under,
Roar and hurtle through the
glooms,—

And a few pale stars are drifting
Past the Dark, to disappear,
What time, from the splitting tombs,
Gleamingly the Dead arise,
Viewing with their death-calmned
eyes.

The elemental strategies,
To witness, victory is the Lord's!
Hear the wail o' the spirits! hear.

Zerah. I hear alone the memory of
His words.

THE EPILOGUE.

I.

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

II.

I see no more Thy cross, O holy
Slain! [coil
I hear no more the horror and the
Of the great world's turmoil,

Feeling thy countenance *too still*,—
nor yell [prison.
Of demons sweeping past it to their
The skies, that turned to darkness
with Thy pain,

Make now a summer's day,—
And on my changèd ear, that sab-
bath bell

Records how CHRIST IS RISEN.

III.

And I—ah! what am I
To counterfeit, with faculty earth-
darkened

Seraphic brows of light
And seraph language never used
nor harkened?

Ah me! what word that Seraphs
say, could come [soon to lie
From mouth so used to sighs—so
Sightless, because then breathless,
in the tomb?

IV.

Bright ministers of God and grace!
—of grace

Because of God!—whether ye bow
adown [ing face

In your own heaven, before the liv-
Of Him who died, and deathless
wears the crown—

Or whether at this hour, ye haply
are

Anear, around me, hiding in the
night [light,

Of this permitted ignorance your
This feebleness to spare,—

Forgive me, that mine earthly heart
should dare

Shape images of unincarnate spirits,
And lay upon their burning lips a

thought [earth inherits;
Cold with the weeping which mine

And though ye find in such hoarse
music wrought

To copy yours, a cadence all the
while [smile!—

Of sin and sorrow—only pitying
Ye know to pity, well.

V.

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

THE POET'S VOW.

PART THE FIRST.

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW
 WAS MADE.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

The peasant's wife hath looked with-
 out
 Her cottage door and smiled ;
 For there the peasant drops his
 spade
 To clasp his youngest child
 Which hath no speech, but its hands
 can reach
 And stroke his forehead mild.

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

None gazed within the poet's face—
 The poet gazed in none :
 He threw a lonely shadow straih.
 Before the moon and sun,
 Affronting nature's heaven-dwell-
 ing creatures,
 With wrong to nature done.

IX.

Because this poet daringly,
 The nature at his heart,

And that quick tune along his veins
 He could not change by art,
 Had vowed his blood of brotherhood
 To a stagnant place apart.

x.

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,
 Or grief's fantastic whim ;
 But, weights and shows of sensual
 things

Too closely crossing him,
 On his soul's eyelid the pressure slid
 And made its vision dim.

xi.

And darkening in the dark he strove
 'Twixt earth and sun and sky,
 To lose in shadow, wave and cloud,
 His brother's haunting cry.

The winds were welcome as they
 swept : [cept,
 God's five-day work he would ac-
 But let the rest go by.

xii.

He cried—' O touching, patient
 Earth,

That weepst in thy glee,
 Whom God created very good,
 And very mournful, we !
 Thy voice of moan doth reach His
 throne,
 As Abel's rose from thee.

xiii.

' Poor crystal sky, with stars astray ;
 Mad winds, that howling go
 From east to west ; perplexed seas,
 That stagger from their blow !
 O motion wild ! O wave defiled !
 Our curse hath made you so.

xiv.

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

xv.

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

xvi.

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

xvii.

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

xviii.

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

xix.

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

xx.

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

PART THE SECOND.

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW
WAS DECLARED.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

He said—' My friends have wended
forth
With farewells smooth and kind.
Mine oldest friend, my plighted
bride,
Ye need not stay behind.
Friend, wed my fair bride for my
sake,
And let my lands ancestral make
A dower for Rosalind.

IV.

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

V.

She looked upon him silently,
With her large, doubting eyes,
Like a child that never knew but
love,

Whom words of wrath surprise ;
Till the rose did break from either
cheek,
And the sudden tears did rise.

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

And thou, O distant, sinful heart,
 That climbest up so high,
 To wrap and blind thee with the
 snows
 That cause to dream and die—
 What blessing can from lips of man,
 Approach thee with his sigh?

XV.

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

XVI.

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

XVII.

'And now HE pleadeth up in heaven
 For our humanities, [wings
 Till the ruddy light on seraph's
 In pale emotion dies.
 They can better bear his Godhead's
 glare,
 Than the pathos of his eyes.

XVIII.

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

XIX.

'So, for the blood's sake, shed by
 Him,
 Whom angels God declare,
 Tears, like it, moist and warm with
 love
 Thy reverent eyes shall wear,
 To see i' the face of Adam's race
 The nature God doth share.'

XX.

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

XXI.

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

XXII.

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

PART THE THIRD.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS
KEPT.

I.

HE dwelt alone, and sun and moon
Were witness that he made
Rejection of his humanness
Until they seemed to fade.
His face did so; for he did grow
Of his own soul afraid.

II.

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

III.

An awful thing that feared itself
While many years did roll.
A lonely man, a feeble man,
A part beneath the whole—

He bore by day, he bore by night
That pressure of God's infinite
Upon his finite soul.

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

PART THE FOURTH.

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED
BY THE KEEPING OF THE VOW.

I.

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

II.

The old nurse started when she
saw

Her sudden look of woe!

But the quick wan tremblings round
her mouth

In a meek smile did go;

And calm she said, 'When I am
dead,

Dear nurse, it shall be so.

III.

'Till then, shut out those sights
and sounds,

And pray God pardon me,

That I without this pain, no more
His blessed works can see!

And lean beside me, loving nurse,
That thou mayst hear, ere I am

worse,

What thy last love should be.'

IV.

The loving nurse leant over her,

As white she lay beneath;

The old eyes searching, dim with
life,

The young ones dim with death,

To read their look if sound forsook
The trying, trembling breath.—

V.

'When all this feeble breath is
done,

And I on bier am laid, [feast,

My tresses smothered for never a
My body in shroud arrayed;

Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,
As if that still I prayed.

VI.

And heap beneath mine head
the flowers

You stoop so low to pull;

The little white flowers from the
wood,

Which grow there in the cool;

Which *he* and I. in childhood's
games,

Went plucking, knowing not their
names,

And filled thine apron full.

VII.

Weep not! I weep not. Death is
strong;

The eyes of Death are dry;

But lay this scroll upon my breast

When hushed its heavings lie;

And wait awhile for the corpse's
smile

Which shineth presently.

VIII.

'And when it shineth, straightway
call

Thy youngest children dear,

And bid them gently carry me

All barefaced on the bier—

But bid them pass my kirkyard
grass

That waveth long anear.

IX.

'And up the bank where I used to
sit,

And dream what life would be,

Along the brook, with its sunny
look

Akin to living glee;

O'er the windy hill, through the
forest still,

Let them gently carry me.

X.

'And through the piney forest still,

And down the open moorland—

Round where the sea beats mistily
And blindly on the foreland—

And let them chant that hymn I
know,

Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,
To the old hall of Courland.

XI.

'And when withal they near the
hall,

In silence let them lay

My bier before the bolted door,
 And leave it for a day;
 For I have vowed, though I am
 proud,
 To go there as a guest in shroud,
 And not be turned away.'

XII.

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

PART THE FIFTH.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS
 BROKEN.

I.

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

II.

They shine upon the steadfast hills,
 Upon the swinging tide;
 Upon the narrow track of beach,

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

III.

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

IV.

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

THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S
 SCROLL.

'I LEFT thee last, a child at heart,
 A woman scarce in years:
 I come to thee a solemn corpse,
 Which neither feels nor fears.
 I have no breath to use in sighs;
 They laid the death-weights on
 mine eyes
 To seal them safe from tears.
 'Look on me with thine own kind
 look—
 I meet it calm as thou!
 No look of thine can change *this*
 smile,
 Or break thy sinful vow.
 I tell thee that my poor scorned
 heart
 Is of thine earth . . . thine earth—a
 part—
 It cannot vex thee now,

'But out, alas! those words are writ

By a living, loving one,
Adown whose cheeks the proofs
of life,

The warm quick tears, do run.
Ah, let the unloved corpse control
Thy scorn back from the loving
soul

Whose place of rest is won.

'I have prayed for thee with bursting
sobs,

When passion's course was free ;
I have prayed for thee with silent
lips,

In the anguish none could see !
They whispered oft, 'She sleepeth
soft'—

But I only prayed for thee.

'Go to! I pray for thee no more—

The corpse's tongue is still :
Its folded fingers point to heaven,
But point there stiff and chill :
No farther wrong, no farther woe
Hath license from the sin below
Its tranquil heart to thrill.

'I charge thee, by the living's
prayer,

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

v.

Bow lower down before the throne,
Triumphant Rosalind !

He boweth on thy corpse his face,
And weepeth as the blind.

'Twas a dread sight to see them
so—

For the senseless corpse rocked to
and fro

With the living wail of his mind.

VI.

But dreader sight, could such be
seen,

His inward mind did lie ;
Whose long-subjected humanness
Gave out its lion cry, ...
And fiercely rent its tenement
In a mortal agony.

VII.

I tell you, friends, had you heard
his wail, [mart,

'Twould haunt you in court and
And in merry feast, until you set
Your cup down to depart—
That weeping wild of a reckless
child

From a proud man's broken
heart.

VIII.

O broken heart ! O broken vow,
That wore so proud a feature !
God, grasping as a thunderbolt
The man's rejected nature,
Smote him therewith—i' the pres-
ence high

Of his so worshipped earth and sky
That looked on all indifferently—
A wailing human creature.

IX.

A human creature found too weak
To bear his human pain—
(May Heaven's dear grace have
spoken peace

To his dying heart and brain !)
For when they came at dawn of day
To lift the lady's corpse away,
Her bier was holding twain.

X.

They dug beneath the kirkyard
grass

For both one dwelling deep :
To which, when years have mossed
the stone,

Sir Roland brought his little son
To watch the funeral heap.

And when the happy boy would
rather
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see
The wood-doves nodding from the
tree—

‘Nay, boy, look downward,’ said
his father,

‘Upon this human dust asleep :
And hold it in thy constant ken
That God’s own unity compresses
One into one, the human many.
And that His everlastingness is
The bond which is not loosed by
any.

For thou and I this law must
keep,

If not in love, in sorrow then ;
Though smiling not like other men,
Still like them we must weep.’

THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.

Can my questions find out nothing best,
But still and still remove ?

QUARLES.

I.

I PLANT a tree whose leaf
The yew-tree leaf will suit ;
But when its shade is o’er you laid,
Turn round and pluck the
fruit !
Now reach my harp from off the
wall

Where shines the sun aslant :
The sun may shine and we be cold—
O hearken, loving hearts and bold,
Unto my wild romaunt,
Margret, Margret.

II.

Sitteth the fair ladye
Close to the river side,
Which runneth on with a merry
tone,
Her merry thoughts to guide.

It runneth through the trees,
It runneth by the hill,
Nathless the lady’s thoughts have
found

A way more pleasant still.
Margret, Margret.

III.

The night is in her hair
And giveth shade to shade,
And the pale moonlight on her fore-
head white

Like a spirit’s hand is laid :
Her lips part with a smile
Instead of speakings done—
I ween, she thinketh of a voice,
Albeit uttering none.

Margret, Margret.

IV.

All little birds do sit
With heads beneath their
wings :
Nature doth seem in a mystic
dream,
Absorbed from her living
things.

That dream by that ladye
Is certes unpartook,
For she looketh to the high cold
stars

With a tender human look.
Margret, Margret.

V.

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

Margret, Margret.

VI.

The lady doth not move,
The lady doth not dream,

Yet she seeth her shade no longer
laid
In rest upon the stream !
It shaketh without wind ;
It parteth from the tide ;
It standeth upright in the cleft
moonlight—
It sitteth at her side.
Margret, Margret.

VII.

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

VIII.

' Am I not like to thee ? '—
The voice was calm and low—
And between each word you might
have heard
The silent forests grow.
'The like may sway the like !
By which mysterious law
Mine eyes from thine and my lips
from thine
The light and breath may draw.
Margret, Margret.

IX.

' My lips do need thy breath,
My lips do need thy smile,
And my pallid eyne, that light in
thine
Which met the stars erewhile ;
Yet go with light and life,
If that thou lovest one
In all the earth, who loveth thee
As truly as the sun,
Margret, Margret.'

X.

Her cheek had waxèd white
Like cloud at fall of snow ;

Then like to one at set of sun,
It waxèd red also ;
For love's name maketh bold,
As if the loved were near.
And then she sighed the deep long
sigh
Which cometh after fear.
Margret, Margret.

XI.

' Now, sooth, I fear thee not—
Shall never fear thee now ! '—
(And a noble sight was the sudden
light
Which lit her lifted brow.)
' Can earth be dry of streams,
Or hearts of love ? ' she said—
' Who doubteth love, can know not
love :
He is already dead.'
Margret, Margret.

XII.

' I have ' . . . and here her lips
Some word in pause did keep,
And gave the while a quiet smile,
As if they paused in sleep ;—
' I have . . . a brother dear,
A knight of knightly fame !
I broidered him a knightly scarf
With letters of my name.
Margret, Margret.

XIII.

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

XIV.

IT trembled on the grass,
With a low, shadowy laughter

The sounding river which rolled
 forever,
 Stood dumb and stagnant after.
 ' Brave knight thy brother is ;
 But better loveth he
 Thy chaliced wine than thy chanted
 song,
 And better both than thee,
 Margret, Margret.

XV.

The lady did not heed
 The river's silence while
 Her own thoughts still ran at their
 will,
 And calm was still her smile.
 ' My little sister wears
 The look our mother wore :
 I smooth her locks with a golden
 comb—
 I bless her evermore,'
 Margret, Margret.

XVI.

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

XVII.

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

XVIII.

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

XIX.

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

XX.

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

XXI.

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

XXII.

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

XXIII.

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

XXIV.

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

XXV.

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

XXVI.

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

XXVII.

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

ISOBEL'S CHILD.

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

I.

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

II.

Then wearily the nurse did throw
Her pallet in the darkest place
Of that sick room, and slept and
 dreamed.
And as the gusty wind did blow
The night-lamp's flare across her
 face,

She saw or seemed to see but dream-
ed,

That the poplars tall on the op-
posite hill,

The seven tall poplars on the hill,
Did clasp the setting sun until
His rays dropped from him, pined
and still

As blossoms in frost :

'Till he waned and paled, so weirdly
crossed,

To the colour of moonlight which
doth pass

Over the dank ridged churchyard
grass.

The poplars held the sun, and he
The eyes of the nurse that they
should not see,

Not for a moment, the babe on
her knee,

Though she shuddered to feel that
it grew to be

Too chill, and lay too heavily.

III.

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

IV.

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

She knew not that she smiled.
Against the lattice, dull and wild
Drive the heavy droning drops,
Drop by drop, the sound being
one—

As momentarily time's segments fall
On the ear of God who hears
through all

Eternity's unbroken monotone.
And more and more smiled Isobel
To see the baby sleep so well.—

She knew not that she smiled.

The wind in intermission stops
Down in the beechen forest,

Then cries aloud

As one at the sorest,

Self-stung, self-driven,

And rises up to its very tops,
Stiffening erect the branches bow-
ed ;

Dilating with a tempest soul
The trees that with their dark
hands break

Through their own outline and
heavily roll

Shadows as massive as clouds in
heaven,

Across the castle lake.

And more and more smiled Iso-
bel

To see the baby sleep so well ;

She knew not that she smiled—

She knew not that the storm was
wild.

Through the uproar drear she could
not hear

The castle clock which struck
anear—

She heard the low, light breathing
of her child.

V.

O sight for wondering look !
While the external nature broke

Into such abandonment ;

While the very mist heart-rent
By the lightning, seemed to eddy

Against nature, with a din—

A sense of silence and of steady

Natural calm appeared to come
From things without, and enter in

The human creature's room.

VI.

So motionless she sate,

The babe asleep upon her knees,
You might have dreamed their

souls had gone

Away to things inanimate,

In such to live, in such to moan ;

And that their bodies had ta'en back

In mystic change, all silences
That cross the sky in cloudy rack,
Or dwell beneath the reedy ground
In waters safe from their own sound.

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

VII.

In sooth the smile that then was
keeping

Watch upon the baby sleeping,
Floated with its tender light
Downward, from the drooping eyes,
Upward, from the lips apart,
Over cheeks which had grown white

With an eight-day weeping.
All smiles come in such a wise,
Where tears shall fall or have of old—
Like northern lights that fill the
heart

Of heaven in sign of cold.

VIII.

Motionless she sate :
Her hair had fallen by its weight
On each side of her smile, and lay
Very blackly on the arm
Where the baby nestled warm ;
Pale as baby carved in stone
Seen by glimpses of the moon

Up a dark cathedral aisle :
But, through the storm, no moon-
beam fell

Upon the child of Isobel—
Perhaps you saw it by the ray
Alone of her still smile.

IX.

A solemn thing it is to me
To look upon a babe that sleeps—
Wearing in its spirit-deeps
The undeveloped mystery
Of its Adam's taint and woe,
Which, when they developed be,

Will not let it slumber so ;
Lying new in life beneath
The shadow of the coming death,
With that soft, low, quiet breath,
As if it felt the sun !

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

The little mouth so slumber-bound.
All which broken sentiency
And conclusion incomplete,
Will gather and unite and climb
To an immortality

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

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

Lifting up those sleeping eyes
Dilated by great destinies,
To an endless waking ? Thrones
and seraphim,

Through the long ranks of their
solemnities,
Sunning thee with calm looks of
Heaven's surprise—

But thine alone on *Him* ?—
Or else, self-willed, to tread the god-
less place,
(God keep thy will !) feel thine own
energies

Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead
man's clasp,
The sleepless deathless life within
thee, grasp ;
While myriad faces, like one change-
less face,

With woe *not love's*, shall glass thee
everywhere,
And overcome thee with thine
own despair?

X.

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

O God, I am so young, so young—
I am not used to tears at nights
Instead of slumber—nor to prayer
With sobbing lips and hands out-
wring :
Thou knowest all my prayings were
'I bless thee, God, for past de-
lights—
Thank God !' I am not used to
bear
Hard thoughts of death. The earth
doth cover
No face from me of friend or lover :
And must the first who teachest me
The forms of shrouds and funerals,
be
Mine own first-born beloved ? he
Who taught me first this mother
love ?
Dear Lord, who spreadest out above
Thy loving transpierced hands to
meet
All lifted hearts with blessings
sweet,—
Pierce not my heart, my tender
heart, [art
Thou madest tender ! Thou who
So happy in thy heaven away,
Take not mine only bliss away !'

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

XV.

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

XVI.

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

XVII.

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

XVIII.

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

XIX.

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

XX.

'Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter
To be eloquent and wise?
One upon whose lips the air
Turns to solemn verities,
For men to breathe anew, and win
A deeper-seated life within?
Wilt be a philosopher,
By whose voice the earth and skies
Shall speak to the unborn?
Or a poet, broadly spreading

The golden immortalities
 Of thy soul on natures lorn
 And poor of such, them all to guard
 From their decay? beneath thy
 treading,
 Earth's flowers recovering hues of
 Eden; [looks
 And stars, drawn downward by thy
 To shine ascendant in thy books?'

XXI.

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

XXII.

'But, O my babe, thy lids are laid
 Close, fast upon thy cheek!
 And not a dream of power and
 sheen
 Can make a passage up between:
 Thy heart is of thy mother's made,
 Thy looks are very meek!
 And it will be their chosen place
 To rest on some beloved face,
 As these on thine—and let the noise
 Of the whole world go on, nor
 drown
 The tender silence of thy joys;
 Or when that silence shall have
 grown
 Too tender for itself, the same
 Yearning for sound,—to look above
 And utter its one meaning, LOVE,
 That *He* may hear His name!'

XXIII.

No wind—no rain—no thunder!
 The waters had trickled not slowly,
 The thunder was not spent,
 Nor the wind near finishing.
 Who would have said that the storm
 was diminishing?
 No wind—no rain—no thunder!
 Their noises dropped asunder

From the earth and firmament,
 From the towers and the lattices,
 Abrupt and echoless
 As ripe fruits on the ground un-
 shaken wholly—
 As life in death;
 And sudden and solemn the silence
 fell,
 Startling the heart of Isobel
 As the tempest could not!
 Against the door went panting the
 breath
 Of the lady's hound whose cry was
 still—
 And *she*, constrained howe'er she
 would not,
 Did lift her eyes, and saw the moon
 Looking out of heaven alone
 Upon the poplared hill,—
 A calm of God, made visible
 That men might bless it at their
 will.

XXIV.

The moonshine on the baby's face
 Falleth clear and cold.
 The mother's looks have fallen back
 To the same place:
 Because no moon with silver rack,
 Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies
 Have power to hold
 Our loving eyes,
 Which still revert, as ever must
 Wonder and Hope, to gaze on
 the dust.

XXV.

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

XXVI.

The babe hath awakened from sleep,
 And unto the gaze of its mother
 Bent over it, lifted another !
 Not the baby looks that go
 Unaimingly to and fro :
 But an earnest gazing deep,
 Such as soul gives soul at length,
 When, by work and wail of years,
 It winneth a solemn strength,
 And mourneth as it wears !
 A strong man could not brook
 With pulse unhurried by fears,
 To meet that baby's look
 O'er glazed by manhood's tears—
 The tears of the man full grown,
 With the power to wring our own,
 In the eyes all undefiled
 Of a little three-months' child !
 To see that babe-brow wrought
 By the witnessing of thought,
 To judgment's prodigy ;
 And the small soft mouth un-
 weaned,
 By mother's kiss o'erleaned
 (Putting the sound of loving
 Where no sound else was moving,
 Except the speechless cry)
 Quickened to mind's expression,
 Shaped to articulation—
 Yea, uttering words—yea, naming
 woe
 In tones that with it strangely went,
 Because so baby-innocent,
 As the child spake out to the mother
 so !—

XXVII.

O mother, mother, loose thy pray-
 er !
 Christ's name hath made it
 strong !
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me
 With its most loving cruelty,
 From floating my new soul along
 The happy heavenly air !
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me

In all this dark, upon this dull
 Low earth, by only weepers trod !—
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me !—
 Mine angel looketh sorrowful
 ' Upon the face of God. *

XXVIII.

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

XXIX.

' Oh, the dream within the dream !
 I saw celestial places even.
 Oh, the vistas of high palms,
 Making finites of delight
 Through the heavenly infinite—
 Lifting up their green still tops
 To the heaven of Heaven !
 Oh, the sweet life-tree that drops
 Shade like light across the river
 Glorified in its for ever
 Flowing from the Throne !
 Oh the shining holiness
 Of the thousand, thousand faces
 God-sunned by the throned ONE !
 And made intense with such a love
 That though I saw them turned
 above,
 Each loving seemed for also me !
 And, oh, the Unspeakable ! the HE.
 The manifest in secrecies,

* For I say unto you, that in Heaven their
 Angels do always behold the face of my
 Father which is in Heaven.—*Matt.* ch. xviii
 ver. 10.

Yet of mine own heart partaker !
 With the overcoming look
 Of one who hath been once forsook,
 And blesseth the forsaker.
 Mother, mother, let me go
 Towards the face that looketh so.
 Through the mystic, wingèd Four
 Whose are inward, outward eyes
 Dark with light of mysteries,
 And the restless evermore
 'Holy, holy, holy'—through
 The sevenfold Lamps that burn in
 view
 Of cherubim and seraphim ;
 Through the four-and-twenty
 crowned
 Stately elders, white around,
 Suffer me to go to Him !

XXX.

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

XXXI.

Can your poet make an Eden
 No winter will undo ? [ing
 And light a starry fire while heed-
 His hearth's is burning too ?
 Drown in music the earth's din ?
 And keep his own wild soul within

The law of his own harmony ?—
 Mother ! albeit this be so,
 Let me to my Heaven go !
 A little harp me waits thereby—
 A harp whose strings are golden
 all,
 And tuned to music spherical,
 Hanging on the green life-tree
 Where no willows ever be.
 Shall I miss that harp of mine ?
 Mother, no !—the Eye divine
 Turned upon it, makes it shine—
 And when I touch it, poems sweet
 Like separate souls shall fly from
 it,
 Each to an immortal fytte.
 We shall all be poets there,
 Gazing on the chiefest Fair !

XXXII.

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

XXXIII.

The nurse awakes in the morning
 sun,
 And starts to see beside her bed
 The lady with a grandeur spread
 Like pathos o'er her face ; as one
 God-satisfied and earth-undone :
 The babe upon her arm was
 dead !

And the nurse could utter forth
no cry,—
She was awed by the calm in the
mother's eye.

XXXIV.

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

XXXV.

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

XXXVI.

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

And a sense of tune,
A satisfied love meanwhile
Which nothing earthly could de-
spoil,
Sang on within her soul.

XXXVII.

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

ROMANCE OF THE GANGES.

I.

SEVEN maidens 'neath the mid-
night,
Stand near the river-sea,
Whose water sweepeth white
around
The shadow of the tree. [face,
The moon and earth are face to
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 mid-
night,
Beside the river-sea?
They bring that human heart
wherein
No nightly calm can be,—
That droppeth never with the wind,
Nor dryeth 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 a 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 maidens are sure that love
will endure,
But love will fail with light.
The river floweth on.

V.

Why, all the stars are ready
To symbolize the soul,
The stars untroubled by the wind,
Unwearing 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 wander-
ed ?
She riseth from her knee,
She holds her dark, wet locks
away—
There is no light to see !

She cries a quick and bitter cry—
' Nuleeni, launch me thine !
We must have light abroad • to-
night,
For all the wreck of mine.'
The river floweth on.

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

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

* The Hindoo heaven is localized on the summit of Mount Meru—one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmeleh, 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,*
Thy cuckoo in the grove ; [thee
And all the three broad worlds, for
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.

XV.

She knelt beside the water,
She lighted up the flame, [calm
And o'er her youthful forehead's
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 did 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—
Outspake she bitterly :
'By the symbol light that lasts to-
night,
Wilt vow a vow to me ?'—
Nuleeni gazeth up her face—
Soft answer maketh she :
'By loves that last when lights are
past,
I vow that vow to thee !'

The river floweth on.

XVIII.

An earthly look had Luti
Though her voice was deep as
prayer :
'The rice is gathered from the plains
To cast upon thine hair !*
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,
When 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,

* Hamadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, ruckoo, and gentle breezes.

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

Press deeper down thy mother-smile

His glossy curls among—
View deep his pretty childish eyes,
And whisper,—*There is none denies,*

*When 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 voice 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.

XXI.

'Thou flowest still, O river,
Thou flowest 'neath the moon—
The lily hath not changed a leaf,*

Thy charmed lute a tune ! [*his*
He mixed his voice with thine—and
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.

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

Oh, give me back the dying look
My father gave thy water !
Give back !—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.

AN ISLAND.

All goeth but Goddis will.
OLD POET.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
And harmless leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
And sheep unruled by shepherds :
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers,
mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butter-
flies.

XIV.

And birds that live there in a crowd—

Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks proud,

Self-sphered in those grand tails ;
All creatures glad and safe, I deem :
No guns nor springes in my dream !

XV.

The island's edges are a-wing
With trees that overbranch
The sea with song-birds welcoming

The curlews to green change.
And doves from half-closed lids espy

The red and purple fish go by.

XVI.

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

XVII.

My sanguine soul bounds forward

To meet the bounding waves !
Beside them straightway I repair,
To live within the caves ;

And near me two or three may dwell

Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

XVIII.

Long winding caverns ! glittering far

Into a crystal distance ;
Through clefts of which, shall many a star

Shine clear without resistance,
And carry down its rays the smell
Of flowers above invisible.

XIX.

I said that two or three might choose
Their dwelling near mine own :

Those who would change man's voice and use

For Nature's way and tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,

For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

XX.

Ourselves to meet her faithfulness,
Shall play a faithful part ;

Her beautiful shall ne'er address
The monstrous at our heart ;

Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such.

XXI.

Yet shall she not our mistress live
As doth the moon of ocean ;

Though gently as the moon she give
Our thoughts a light and motion,

More like a harp of many lays,
Moving its master while he plays.

XXII.

No sod in all that island doth
Yawn open for the dead ;

No wind hath borne a traitor's oath ;
No earth, a mourner's tread ;

We cannot say by stream or shade,
'I suffered *here*—was *here* betrayed.'

XXIII.

Our only 'farewell' we shall laugh
To shifting cloud or hour ;

And use our only epitaph
To some bud turned a flower ;

Our only tears shall serve to prove
Excess in pleasure or in love.

XXIV.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch

From fairest island birds, [hatch
Whose eggs let young ones out at
Born singing ! then our words

Unconsciously shall take the dyes
Of these prodigious fantasies.

XXV.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
Our smile turned lips shall reach :
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in
youth

Shall glide into our speech—
(What music certes can you find
As soft as voices which are kind ?)

XXVI.

And often by the joy without
And in us, overcome,
We through our musing shall let
float

Such poems,—sitting dumb,—
As Pindar might have writ, if he
Had tended sheep in Arcady ;

XXVII.

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
He died in, longer knowing ;
Our Homer, had men's sins and
shields

Been lost in Meles flowing ;
Our poet Plato, had the undim
Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

XXVIII.

Choose me the cave most worthy
choice,

To make a place for prayer ;
And I will choose a praying voice
To pour our spirits there.
How silverly the echoes run—
Thy will be done - Thy will be done.

XXIX.

Gently yet strangely uttered
words !—

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

XXX.

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

THE DESERTED GARDEN. *

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

it needs to come even than we expect
In a poet whose verse was always har-
monious this effect might be ~~disputed~~ but here
authorward phrase THE DESERTED GARDEN 51
out a stanza here & there is ~~more~~

THE DESERTED GARDEN

Some Lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the
voice

That linkened her to such.

Or these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and
twined;

Half-smiling as it came to mind
That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that Lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white
rose,

When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for
shroud!—

Nor thought that gardener, (full of
scorns [phrase,])

For men unlearned and simple
A child would bring it all its praise,
By creeping through the thorns!

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses
sent

Of science or love's compliment,
I wren they smelt as sweet.

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

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

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

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms
white—

How should I know but roses might
Lead lives as glad as mine ?

To make my hermit-house complete
I brought clear water from the
spring

Praised in its own low murmuring—
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought my likeness
grew

Without the melancholy tale)
To 'gentle hermit of the dale.'
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories! till the
breeze

Made sounds poetic in the trees,—
And then I shut the book.

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

My childhood from my life is parted
My footstep from the moss which
drew

Its fairy circle round : anew
The garden is deserted.

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

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

And still I laughed and did not
fear

But that, whene'er was past away
The childish time, some happier
play

My womanhood would cheer.

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

The time *is* past :—and now that
grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
As well as the white rose,—
When graver, meeker thoughts are
given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest
place
The colour draws from heaven,—
It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for Heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
That happy child again.

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

Ἦδη νοερούς
Πετᾶσαι 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 harken 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 sil-
ver bit,
As they whirl the rich man's car-
riage 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 cry 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 West-
minster Hall :
The drop on the stone of the blind
man's staff
As he trades in his own grief's sa-
credness ;
The brothel shriek and the New-
gate laugh,
The hum upon 'Change, and the
organ's grinding, [less
The grinder's face being neverthe-
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 the morrow's coronals
 With a scarlet blush to-day.
 Slowly creep the funerals,
 As none should hear the noise and say,
 The living, the living, must go away
 To multiply the dead !
 Hark ! an upward shout is sent !
 In grave strong joy from tower to steeple
 The bells ring out—
 The trumpets sound, the people shout,
 The young Queen goes to her parliament.
 She turneth round her large blue eyes
 More bright with childish memories
 Than royal hopes, upon the people :
 On either side she bows her head
 Lowly, with a Queenly grace,
 And smile most trusting-innocent,
 As if she smiled upon her mother !
 The thousands press before each other
 To bless her to her face :
 And booms the deep majestic voice
 Through trump and drum,—‘ May the Queen rejoice
 In the people's liberties ! ’—

III.

I dwell amid the city,
 And hear the flow of souls in act
 and speech,
 For pomp or trade, for merrymake
 or folly : [each,
 I hear the confluence and sum of
 And that is melancholy !—
 Thy voice is a complaint, O crown-
 ed 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 thunder-
 cloud !
 Smoother than Sabrina's chair
 Gliding up from wave to air,
 Which 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 cark 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 pas-
toral ;
Cavelike, but roofless overhead,
And made of verdant banks in-
stead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread,
Instead of spar and stalactite . . .
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'erbrowzed by the sheep,
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliff's disrupt—you shall be-
hold
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 com-
munion,
Albeit you witness not the union.

IX.

Except the 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 sor-
row,
That deathly colour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness away.

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

SOUNDS.

Ἡκουσας 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 pulse 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 that suits the earth,
 Droppeth some in soaring high,
 To pour the rest out in the sky :
 While the woodland doves, apart
 In the copse's leafy heart,
 Solitary, not ascetic,
 Hidden and yet vocal seem
 Joining in a lovely psalm,
 Man's despondence, nature's calm,
 Half mystical and half pathetic,
 Like a sighing in a dream.*
 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,

* " While floating up bright forms ideal,
 Mistress, or friend, around me stream ;
 Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
 Like music mingling with a dream."
John 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 the valued friend to whom I already owe so many,

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 in-
 stead,
 And you may hear, at the self-same
 time,
 Another poet who reads his rhyme,
 Low as a brook in the summer air,—
 Save when he droppeth his voice
 adown,
 To dream of the amaranthine crown
 His mortal brows shall wear.
 And a baby cries with a feeble
 sound
 'Neath the weary weight of the life
 new found ; [tament
 An old man groans,—with his tes-
 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 [other.
 Looks greenly upward, curse each
 A school-boy 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 ; [tale ;
 A gossip coughs in her thrice told

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 enow, is closely wound

In a silence piercing more than sound.

III.

Hearken, hearken !

God speaketh to thy soul ;

Using the supreme voice which doth confound

All life with consciousness of Deity,

All senses into one ;

As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John,

For whom did backward roll

The cloud-gate of the future, turned to *see*

The Voice which spake. It speaketh now—

Through the regular breath of the calm creation,

Through the moan of the creature's desolation

Striking, and in its stroke resembling

The memory of a solemn vow,

Which pierceth the din of a festival

To one in the midst,—and he 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 immortal

In an eternal grasping ! Thou, that lovest

The songful birds and grasses un-

And also what change mars and tombs pollute—

I am the end of love !—give love to 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 ?

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? [game?
 Where, thy dances, mixed with
 Where, thy festive companies,
 Moonèd 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 fancies 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 of mad heights;
 Of achievements, less descried
 By a dear few, than magnified;
 Of praises, from the many earned,
 When praise from love was undis-
 cerned;
 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, dear memories!—
 Of voices—whereof but to speak,
 Maketh mine 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 *ai ai* 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. [sied hold.
The sceptre slanteth from her pal-
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 mel-
ancholy!

Thou art so spoiled, we should for-
get we had [so sad."

An Eden in thee,—wert thou not
Sweet children, I am old! ye, every
one, [sun:

Do keep me from a portion of my
Give praise in change for bright-
ness!

That I may shake my hills in infi-
niteness [mirth,
Of breezy laughter, as in youthful
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 said,
'I will praise thee presently;
Not to-day; I have no breath!
I have hunted squirrels three—
Two ran down in the furzy hollow
Where I could not see nor follow

One sits at the top of the filbert tree,
With a yellow nut, and a mock at
me.

Presently it shall be done.

When I see which way those two
have run; [bert top
When the mocking one at the fil-
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 thy 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, [*thee!*]
'I would praise . . . nay, nay—not

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 crossed knees,
And a wrinkle deeply thrid
Through his lowering brow,
Caused by making proofs enow
That Plato in 'Parmenides'
Meant the same Spinosa did;
Or, that an hundred of the groping
Like himself, had made one Homer.

Homer being a misnomer.
What hath *he* to do with praise
Of Earth, or aught? when'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 declin-
ing;

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 lean-
ings

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 dreams do light
All the skies by day and night :
And the seas that deepest roll,
Carry murmurs of his soul. [*me!*

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

IX.

There was silence. None did dare
To use again the spoken air
Of that far-charming voice, until
A Christian resting on the hill,
With a thoughtful smile subdued
(Seeming learnt in solitude)
Which a weeper might have viewed
Without new tears, did softly say,
And looked up unto heaven away
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 thy copses' elms between ;
By their birds which, like a sprite
Scattered by a strong delight
Into fragments musical,
Stir and sing in every bush ;
By thy silver founts that fall,
As if to entice the stars at night
To thine heart ; by grass and rush,
And little weeds the children pull,
Mistook for flowers!

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

X.

' Praised be the mosses soft
In thy forest pathways oft,
And the thorns, which make us
think

Of the thornless river-brink,
Where the ransomed tread!
Praised be thy sunny gleams,
And the storm, that worketh dreams
Of calm unfinished!

Praised be thine active days,
And thy night-time's solemn need,
When in God's dear book we read
No night shall be therein.

Praised be thy dwellings warm,
By household fagot's cheerful blaze
Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
Pauseth oft the merry din,
Save the babe's upon the arm,
Who croweth to the crackling wood.
Yea,—and better understood,
Praised be thy dwellings cold,
Hid beneath the churchyard mould.

Where the bodies of the saints,
Separate from earthly taints,
Lie asleep, in blessing bound,
Waiting for the trumpet's sound
To free them into blessing;—none
Weeping more beneath the sun,
Though dangerous words of hu-
man 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 [mand
By the majestic angel whose com-
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: [sun;
Upon its bough a bird sings in the
But Thou, with that close slumber
on thy mouth,
Dost seem of wind and sun already
weary. [One?
Art come for saving, O my weary

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 path-
ways where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs:
and visions new [abode.
Of Thine eternal Nature's old
Suffer this mother's kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To guide 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 [ness
Of sensual life, bring contrarious-
In a great calm. I feel, I could lie
down
As Moses did, and die,*—and then
live most. [ences,
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Pres-

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

That stand with your peculiar light
 unlost,
 Each forehead with a high thought
 for a crown,
 Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am
 'ware. Yet throw
 No shade against the wall! How
 motionless [uary,
 Ye round me with your living stat-
 While through your whiteness, in
 and outwardly, [to go,
 Continual thoughts of God appear
 Like light's soul in itself! I bear,
 I bear, [eyes,
 To look upon the dropt lids of your
 Though their external shining tes-
 tifies [were
 To that beatitude within, which
 Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.
 I fall not on my sad clay face be-
 fore ye;
 I look on His. I know [woe
 My spirit which dilateth with the
 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 Beth-
 lehem.
 The dumb kine from their fodder
 turning them,
 Softened their horned faces
 To almost human gazes
 Towards the newly Born.
 The simple shepherds from the
 star-lit brooks
 Brought visionary looks, [rung
 As yet in their astonished hearing
 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. [wait
 So, let all earthlies and celestials
 Upon thy royal state!
 Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

VI.

I am not proud—meek angels, ye
 invest [ance rest
 New meeknesses to hear such utter-
 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 [centuries
 Bows lower than their knees. O
 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 [edest,
 The blesseddest of women!'—bless-
 Not holiest, not noblest,—no high
 name,
 Whose height misplaced may pierce
 me like a shame,
 When I sit meek in heaven!

VII.

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; [be
 Listening to silence as it seemed to
 God's voice, so soft yet strong—so
 fain to press [the height,
 Upon my heart as Heaven did on
 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 bound-
less blue [my tears.
Whose stars did mix and tremble in
God heard *them* falling after—with
His dew.

VIII.

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 igno-
rance— [tion, more

Nor feel the blindness, stain, corrup-
Than others do, or *I* did hereto-
fore?—

Can hands wherein such burden
pure has been,

Not open with the cry 'unclean, un-
clean!' [skies?

More oft than any else beneath the
Ah King, ah Christ, ah son!

The kine, the shepherds, the abased
wise,

Must all less lowly wait
Than I, upon thy state!—
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

IX.

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 king-
ly brow!—

What is my word?—Each empyreal
star

Sits in a sphere afar

In shining ambuscade:

The child-brow, crowned by none,
Keeps its unchildlike shade.

Sleep, sleep, my crownless One!

X.

Unchildlike shade!—no other babe
doth wear [Thou.—

An aspect very sorrowful, as
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 baby-
hood.

Alas, our earthly good
In heaven thought evil, seems too
good for Thee:

Yet, sleep, my weary One!

XI.

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 angles,—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.

XII.

It is enough to bear
This image still and fair—

This holier in sleep,
Than a saint at prayer:

This aspect of a child
Who never sinned or smiled—

This presence in an infant's face:
This sadness most like love,

This love than love more deep,
This weakness like omnipotence,

It is so strong to move!

Awful is this watching place,
 Awful what I see from hence—
 A king, without regalia,
 A God, without the thunder,
 A child, without the heart for play ;
 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 !

XIII.

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

MEMORY AND HOPE.

I.

BACK-LOOKING Memory
 And prophet Hope both sprang
 from out the ground :
 One, where the flashing of Cheru-
 bic sword
 Fell sad, in Eden's ward ;
 And one, from Eden earth, within
 the sound
 Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,
 What time the promise after curse
 was said—
 ' Thy seed shall bruise his head.'

II.

Poor Memory's brain is wild,
 As moonstruck by that flaming at-
 mosphere
 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 cold-
 ness 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 slip-
 pers stole away ;
 But still she wended on with mirth
 unheeding,
 Although her feet were bleeding ;
 Till Memory tracked her on a cer-
 tain day,
 And with most evil eyes did search
 her long [ground
 And cruelly, whereat she sank to
 In a stark deadly swound.

VI.

And so my Hope was slain,
 Had it not been that THOU wert
 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 [again,—
 And make its silent pulses sing
 Pouring a new light o'er her dark-
 ened eyne,
 With tender tears from Thine!

VII.

Therefore my Hope arose
 From out her swoond, and gazed
 upon Thy face;
 And, meeting there that soft sub-
 duing look
 Which Peter's spirit shook,
 Sank downward in a rapture to
 embrace
 Thy piercèd hands and feet with
 kisses close, [more
 And prayed Thee to assist her ever-
 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 [the while,
 A time ago, though whitening all
 Reddened with life, to hear the
 Voice which talked
 To Adam as he walked.

A PORTRAIT.

"One name is Elizabeth."—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her:
 Ten times have the lilies blown,
 Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear—
 Lily-shaped, and drooped in duty
 To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encolored faintly,
 Which a trail of golden hair
 Keeps from fading off to air:

And a forehead fair and saintly,
 Which two blue eyes undershine,
 Like meek prayers before a shrine.

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

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
 Frank, obedient,—waiting still
 On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things—
 As young birds, or early wheat
 When the wind blows over it.

Only free from flutterings
 Of loud mirth that scorneth
 measure— [ure:
 Taking love for her chief pleas-

Choosing pleasures (for the rest)
 Which come softly—just as *she*,
 When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
 In a bower of gentle looks,—
 Watering flowers, or reading
 books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
 As a silver stream may run,
 Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
 As if drawn from thoughts more
 fair
 Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
 He would sing of her with falls
 Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round her hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper—' You have
done a
Consecrated little Una !'

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would ex-
claim,
' 'Tis my angel, with a name !'

And a stranger,—when he sees her
In the street even—smileth stilly,
Just as *you* would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
Softens, sleeken every word,
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth whereon she
passes,
With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, ' God love
her !'
Ay, and always, in good sooth,
We may all be sure HE DOTH.

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 in-
stead

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-mor-
row,'
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,—
And the 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 ; [through :
 Both his cheeks I weeded
 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 by leaf ;
 Periwinkles interlaced
 Drawn for belt around the waist ;
 While the brown bees, humming
 praises,
 Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII.

And who knows (I sometimes won-
 dered,)
 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

He might 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 *ototototoi* ?
 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 roman-
 ces !
 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

A VALEDICTION.

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 !

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 !

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 ?
 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 !

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 tears that fall 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 !

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 [sure,
 On my shut lids her kisses' pres-
 Half-waking me at night ; and said
 'Who kissed you through the
 dark, dear guesser ?'

THE SLEEP,

He giveth His beloved sleep.—*Psalm*
cxxvii. 2.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

'Sleep soft, beloved!' we some-
times say,
But have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eye-
lids creep.
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
'He giveth *His* beloved, sleep.'

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

Ay, men may wonder while they
scan
A living, thinking, feeling man,
Confirmed in such a rest to keep;
But angels say, and through the
word
I think their happy smile is *heard*—
'He giveth His beloved, sleep!'

VIII.

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

IX.

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

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 ; [soms ;

Birds, with music-trembling blossoms dropping dews that wreath you

To your fellow flowers beneath you ;
Flowers, that constellate on earth ;
Earth, that shakest to the mirth
Of the merry Titan ocean,
All his shining hair in motion !

Why am I thus the only one
Who can be dark beneath the sun ?
But when the summer day was past,
He looked to heaven and smiled at last.

Self answered so—

‘ Because, O cloud,
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
Heavily on mountain top ;

Hills that almost seem to drop,
Stricken with a misty death
To the valleys underneath ;

Valleys, sighing with the torrent ;
Waters, streaked with branches
horrent ; [head

Branchless trees, that shake your
Wildly o’er your blossoms spread
Where the common flowers are
found ; [ground ;

Flowers, with foreheads to the
Ground, that shriekest while the sea
With his iron smiteth thee—

I am, besides, the only one
Who can be bright *without* the sun.’

A 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 ! ’ [pale.

And sank adown an heap of ashes
So runs the Arab tale.

II.

The sky above us showed
An universal and unmoving cloud.
On which the cliffs permitted us to
see

Only the outline of their majesty,
As master minds, when gazed at by
the crowd !

And, shining with a gloom, the
water grey
Swang in its moon-taught way.

III.

Nor moon, nor stars were out.
They did not dare to tread so soon
about,

Though trembling, in the footsteps
of the sun.

The light was neither night’s nor
day’s, but one [doubt :
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its
And Silence’s impassioned breath-
ings 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 can-
not sever—

And, what time they are slackened
by him ever,

So to attest his own supernal part,
Still runneth thy vibration fast and
strong,

The slackened cord along.

V.

For though we never spoke
Of the grey water and the shaded
rock,

Dark wave and stone unconsciously
were fused [used

Into the plaintive speaking that we
Of absent friends and memories un-
forsook ; [we had

And, had we seen each other’s face,
Seen haply, each was sad.

THE SEA-MEW.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

TO M. E. H.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

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 sun-lit 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 likest moves
To lifeless intonation,
Their 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 grey,
And tempest-clouded airs.
My little doves !—who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and
blue !

And now, within the city prison,
In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they
listen

For sounds of past content—
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of pas-
sion—

The triumph of the mart—
The gold and silver as they clash on
Man's cold and 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 !

TO MARY RUSSELL MIT-
FORD.

IN HER GARDEN.

WHAT time I lay these rhymes a-
near thy feet,
Benignant friend ! I will not proud-
ly say [I lay,
As better poets use, ' These flowers
Because I would not wrong thy
roses sweet,

Blaspheming so their name. And
 yet, repeat
 Thou, overleaning them this spring-
 time day,
 With heart as open to love as theirs
 to May,
 'Low-rooted verse may reach some
 heavenly heat, [true,
 Even like my blossoms, if as nature-
 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, [a text!
 To preach a sermon on so known

THE EXILE'S RETURN.

I.

WHEN from thee, weeping, I re-
 moved,
 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 thy 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 false-
 hood-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, [one
 Where one sweet voice is silence,—
 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!

A SONG AGAINST SINGING

TO E. J. H.

I.

THEY bid me sing to thee,
 Thou golden-haired and silver-
 voiced child,
 With lips by no worse sigh than
 sleep's defiled;

With eyes unknowing how tears
dim the sight ;
With 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 morn-
ing cloud ; [bowed ;
The merry river from its lilies
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, [heart
To bring a verse from out a human
Made heavy with accumulated tears,
And cross with such amount of
weary years
The day-sum of delight ?

IV.

E'en 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 hu-
manities,
Uprun thy bright uncomprehend-
ing eyes
And bid me play instead.

V.

Therefore no song of mine !
But prayer in place of singing !
prayer that would [God,
Commend thee to the new-creating
Whose gift in childhood's heart
without its stain
Of weakness, ignorance, and chang-
ing vain—
That gift of God be thine !

VI.

So wilt thou aye be young,
In lovelier childhood than thy shin-
ing brow [thee now!
And pretty winning accents make
Yea, sweeter than this scarce artic-
ulate sound
(How sweet !) of ' father,' ' mother,'
shall be found
The ABBA on thy tongue.

VII.

And so, as years shall chase
Each others' shadows, thou wilt less
resemble [and tremble,
Thy fellows of the earth, who toil
Than him thou seest not, thine
angel bold [behold
Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes
The Ever-loving's face.

COWPER'S GRAVE.

I.

IT is a place where poets crowned
may feel the heart's decaying.
It is a place where happy saints
may weep amid their praying :
Yet let the grief and humbleness, as
low as silence languish !
Earth surely now may give her calm
to whom she gave her anguish.

II.

O poets ! from a maniac's tongue
was poured the deathless singing !
O Christians ! at your cross of hope,
a hopeless hand was clinging !
O men ! this man in brotherhood
your weary paths beguiling,
Groaned 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 de-
parted,

He wore no less a loving face be-
cause so brokenhearted ;

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-ca-
resses,

Uplooking to his human eyes with
sylvan tendernesses :

The very world, by God's con-
straint, from falsehood's ways
removing,

Its women and its men became be-
side him, true and loving.

VIII.

But though in blindness he remained
unconscious of that guiding,

And things provided came without
the sweet sense of providing,

He testified this solemn truth, while
phrenzy desolated—

Nor man nor nature satisfy whom
only God created !

IX.

Like a sick child that knoweth not
his mother while she blesses

And drops upon his burning brow
the coolness of her kisses ;

That turns his fevered eyes around--
'My mother ! where's my moth-
er ?'—

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 darkness
rested,

Upon the Victim's hidden face, no
love was manifested ?

What frantic hands outstretched
Have e'er the atoning drops avert-
ed,

What tears have washed them from
the soul, that *one* should be des-
serted?

XIII.

Deserted! God could separate from
His own essence rather:

And Adam's sins *have* swept be-
tween 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, mar-
ring hope, should mar not hope's
fruition,

And I, on Cowper's grave, should
see his rapture in a vision!

THE MEASURE.

"He comprehended the dust of the earth
in a measure (שליש)."—*Isaiah xl.*

"Thou givest them tears to drink in a
measure (שליש)."—*—*Psalms lxxx.*

GOD, the Creator, with pulseless
hand [weighed

Of unoriginated power, hath
The dust of earth and tears of man
in one

Measure and by one weight:

So saith His holy book.

Shall *we*, then, who have issued
from the dust,

And there return—shall *we*, who
toil for dust,

* I believe that the word occurs in no
other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

And wrap our winnings in this dusty
life,

Say, 'No more tears, Lord God!
The measure runneth o'er?'

Oh, holder of the balance, laughest
Thou?

Nay, Lord! be gentler to our fool-
ishness,

For His sake who assumed our dust
and turns

On Thee pathetic eyes

Still moistened with our tears!

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!

THE WEAKEST THING.

I.

WHICH is the weakest thing of all
Mine heart can ponder?

The sun, a little cloud can pall

With darkness yonder?

The cloud, a little wind can move

Where'er it listeth?

The wind, a little leaf above,

Though sere, resisteth?

II.

What time that yellow leaf was
green,

My days were gladder;

But now, whatever Spring may
mean,

I must grow sadder.

Ah me! a *leaf* with sighs can wring

My lips asunder—

Then is mine heart the weakest
thing

Itself can ponder.

III.

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are
 pined
 And drop together,
 And at a blast which is not wind,
 The forests wither,
 Thou from the darkening deathly
 curse,
 To glory breakest,—
 The Strongest of the Universe
 Guarding the weakest!

THE PET-NAME.

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

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

LOVING friend, the gift of one
 Who her own true faith hath run,
 Through thy lower nature ;*
 Be my benediction said
 With my hand upon thy head,
 Gentle fellow-creature !

* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars,—the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown.

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
 Flow thine silken ears adown
 Either side demurely
 Of thy silver-suited breast
 Shining out from all the rest
 Of thy body purely.

Darkly, brown thy body is,
 Till the sunshine striking this
 Alchemise its dullness ;
 When the sleek curls manifold
 Flash all over into gold,
 With a burnished fulness.

Underneath my stroking hand,
 Startled eyes of hazel bland
 Kindling, growing larger,
 Up thou leapest with a spring,
 Full of prank and curvetting,
 Leaping like a charger.

Leap ! thy broad tail waves a light ;
 Leap ! thy slender feet are bright,
 Canopied in fringes.
 Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
 Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
 Down their golden inches.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
 Little is 't to such an end
 That I praise thy rareness !
 Other dogs may be thy peers
 Haply in those drooping ears,
 And this glossy fairness.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
 This dog watched beside a bed
 Day and night unwearied,—
 Watched within a curtained room,
 Where no sunbeam brake the
 gloom
 Round the sick and dreary.

Roses gathered for a vase,
 In that chamber died apace,
 Beam and breeze resigning—
 This dog only, waited on,
 Knowing that when light is gone,
 Love remains for shining.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed
through

Sunny moor or meadow—
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
Sharing in the shadow.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
Up the woodside hying—
This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
Or a louder sighing.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
Or a sigh came double,—
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
In a tender trouble.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After,—platforming his chin
On the palm left open.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Called him now to blither choice
Than such a chamber-keeping,
'Come out!' praying from the
door,—
Presseth backward as before,
Up against me leaping.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
Render praise and favor:
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said,
Therefore, and forever.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
Often, man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
Leaning from my Human.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail—
Hands of gentle motion fail
Nevermore to pat thee!

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
Sunshine help thy sleeping!
No fly's buzzing wake thee up—
No man break thy purple cup,
Set for drinking deep in.

Whiskered cats aointed flee—
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
Cologne distillations;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
Turn to daily rations!

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
Thou art made so straightly,
Blessing needs must straighten
too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
Thou who lovest *greatly*.

Yet be blessed to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature,
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature!

SONNETS.

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 astonished fell, and could
not pray, [say,
A thought within me to myself did
'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 [bring,
Living Beloveds, tender looks to
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 com-
forting,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring,
Where 'dust to dust' the love from
life disjoined—

And if before these sepulchres un-
moving [lamb
I stood alone, (as some forsaken
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 ?'

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

WITH stammering lips and insuf-
ficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and
night
With dream and thought and feel-
ing interwound, [round
And inly answering all the senses
With octaves of a mystic depth and
height [finite
Which step out grandly to the in-
From the dark edges of the sensual
ground ! [bear
This song of soul I struggle to out-
Through portals of the sense, sub-
lime 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, [soul.
Before that dread apocalypse of

THE SERAPH AND POET.

THE seraph sings before the mani-
fest [Seven,
God-one, and in the burning of the
And with the full life of consum-
mate Heaven
Heaving beneath him like a moth-
er'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 dark-
 ness prest
 From his own soul by worldly
 weights. Even so,
 Sing, seraph with the glory! Heav-
 en 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.

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDS-
 WORTH BY R. B. HAYDON.

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn!
 Let the cloud [wind,
 Ebb audibly along the mountain-
 Then break against the rock, and
 show behind [crowd
 The lowland valleys floating up to
 The sense with beauty. *He*, with
 forehead bowed
 And humble-lidded eyes, as one in-
 clined
 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 [fast
 Who, satisfying thirst and breaking
 Upon the fulness of the heart, at last
 Says no grace after meat. My wine
 hath run [none
 Indeed out of my cup, and there is
 To gather up the bread of my repast
 Scattered and trampled;—yet I find
 some good
 In earth's green herbs and springs
 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 [fatally
 Has met them in my hands more
 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? [not I:
 Another, sooth, may do it,—but
 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 mar-
riage bell [oracle
The bride weeps; and before the
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, [place,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert
And touch but tombs,—look up!
Those tears will run [face,
Soon in long rivers down the lifted
And leave the vision clear for stars
and sun.

GRIEF.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is pas-
sionless— [spair,
That only men incredulous of de-
Half-taught in anguish, through the
midnight air
Beat upward to God's throne in
loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full
desertness [bare
In souls as countries, lieth silent-
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
wo, [neath.
Till itself crumble to the dust be-
Touch it: the marble eyelids are
not wet— [go.
If it could weep, it could arise and

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 dis-
ease and new—
What hope? what help? what mu-
sic will undo
That silence to your sense? Not
friendship's sigh— [melody
Nor reason's subtle count! Not
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus
blew— [gales,
Not songs of poets, nor of nightin-
Whose hearts leap upward through
the cypress trees
To the clear moon; nor yet the
spheric laws
Self-chanted, nor the angel's 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 [low,
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss
thee so
Who art not missed by any that en-
treat.

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-re-
 conciled,
 He sleeps the faster that he wept
 before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician,
 holds
 A dulcimer of patience in his hand
 Whence harmonies we cannot
 understand,
 Of God's will in His worlds, the
 strain unfolds
 In sad perplexed minors. Deathly
 colds
 Fall on us while we hear and coun-
 termend
 Our sanguine heart back from the
 fancyland
 With nightingales in visionary
 wolds.
 We murmur,—‘Where is any cer-
 tain tune
 Of measured music, in such notes
 as these?’—
 But angels, leaning from the gold-
 en seat,
 Are not so minded: their fine ear
 hath won
 The issue of complete 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, [clines,
 For all the heat o' day, till it de-
 And Death's mild curfew shall from
 work assoil.
 God did anoint thee with his odor-
 ous oil,
 To wrestle, not to reign; and He
 assigns [lines,
 All thy tears over, like pure crystal-
 For younger fellow-workers of the
 soil
 To wear for amulets. So others
 shall
 Take patience, labor, 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 an-
 other near.

FUTURITY.

AND, O beloved voices, upon which
 Ours passionately call, because ere
 long
 Ye brake off in the middle of that
 song
 We sang together softly, to enrich
 The poor world with the sense of
 love, and witch
 The heart out of things evil,—I am
 strong,
 Knowing ye are not lost for 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 [seat.
 God's fellowship, as if on heavenly
 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 sov-
 ran 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 for-
 saken 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 judg-
 ment-call.
 And Peter, from the height of blas-
 phemy— [and fall,
 ' I never knew this man ' did quail
 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 com-
 mon stone [upon,
 Which I at last must break my heart
 For all God's charge to His high
 angels may
 Guard my foot better ? Did I yes-
 terday
 Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that
 they should run
 Quick to deny me 'neath the morn-
 ing sun. [tray ?
 And do thy kisses, like the rest, be-
 The cock crows coldly.—Go and
 manifest
 A late contrition, but no bootless
 fear !
 For when thy final need's dreariest,
 Thou shalt not be denied, as I am
 here
 My voice, to God and angels, shall
 attest,
 ' Because I KNOW *this man*, let him
 be clear.'

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY
DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
To die alone,—with none beside
thy bed

To ruffle round with sobs thy last
word said,

And mark with tears the pulses ebb
from thee,—

Pray then alone—'O Christ, come
tenderly!

By thy forsaken Sonship in the red
Drear wine-press,—by the wilder-
ness 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 CONTEMPLA-
TION.

THE woman singeth at her spin-
ning wheel [rolle;

A pleasant chant, ballad or barca-
She thinketh of her song, upon the
whole,

Far more than of the flax; and yet
the reel

Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident
control,

The lines, too subtly twisted to un-
roll,

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 in-
tent 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 [nesses;

For multitude and thirst of sweet-
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 coun-
terpart

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.

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 [below
 To bring my own heart nakedly
 The palm of such a friend, that he
 should press [ances,
 Motive, condition, means, appli-
 My false ideal joy and fickle wo,
 Out full to light and knowledge.
 I should fear
 Some plait between the brows—
 some rougher chime
 In the free voice O angels,
 let the flood
 Of bitter scorn dash on me! Do ye
 hear
 What *I* say, who bear calmly all
 the time [GOD?
 This everlasting face to face with

DISCONTENT.

LIGHT human nature is too lightly
 tost
 And ruffled without cause; com-
 plaining on—
 Restless with rest—until, being
 overthrown,
 It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
 Or a small wasp have crept to the
 innermost [sun
 Of our ripe peach: or let the wilful
 Shine westward of our window—
 straight we run
 A furlong's sigh as if the world
 were lost
 But what time through the heart
 and through the brain
 God hath transfixed us,—we, so
 moved before,
 Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering
 weights of pain, [from shore;
 We anchor in deep waters, safe
 And hear, submissive, o'er the
 stormy main,
 God's chartered judgments walk
 forevermore.

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 [strife
 Serenely live while we are keeping
 With Heaven's true purpose in us,
 as a knife
 Against which we may struggle.
 Ocean girds
 Unslackened the dry land: savan-
 nah-swards
 Unweary sweep: hills watch, un-
 worn; and rife
 Meek leaves drop yearly from the
 forest trees,
 To show above the unwasted stars
 that pass [old!
 In their old glory. O thou God of
 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 [slope
 Indeed beyond the zenith and the
 Of yon grey bank of sky, we might
 be 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? [forted,—
 O pusillanimous Heart, be com-
 And, like a cheerful traveller, take
 the road,

Singing beside the hedge. What
 if the bread [shod
 Be bitter in thine inn, and thou un-
 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 [down
 'magination, given us to bring
 The choirs of singing angels over-
 shone
 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 thou-
 sand hills,
 Beloved England,—doth the earth
 appear
 Quite good enough for men to over-
 bear
 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 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 : [ran
 I would some miraculous thunder
 Above the applauded circus, in ap-
 pliance
 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 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 [scorn,
 Thy woman's nature with a manly
 And break away the gauds and arm-
 lets 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 [fire,
 The world thou burnest in a poet
 We see thy woman's heart beat
 evermore
 Through the large flame. Beat
 purer, heart, and higher,
 Till God unsex thee on the heav-
 enly shore,
 Where unincarnate spirits purely
 aspire.

THE PRISONER.

I COUNT the dismal time by months
 and years,
 Since last I felt the green sward un-
 der foot,
 And the great breath of all things
 summer-mute [appears
 Met mine upon my lips. Now earth
 As strange to me as dreams of dis-
 tant spheres,
 Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at.
 Nature's lute
 Sounds on behind this door so close-
 ly shut,
 A strange wild music to the pris-
 oner'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 Di-
 vine.

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, high-
 er rehearse,
 To the individual, true, and the
 universe,
 In consummation of right harmony.
 But, like a wind-exposed, distorted
 tree, [the curse
 We are blown against for ever by
 Which breathes through nature.
 O, 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 gar-
 ments fall ! [and seek
 And then resume thy broken strains
 Fit peroration, without let or thrall

FLUSH OR FAUNUS.

YOU see this dog. It was but yes-
 terday [here,
 I mused forgetful of his presence
 Till thought on thought drew down-
 ward tear on tear ;
 When from the pillow, where wet-
 checked I lay, [its way
 A head as hairy as Faunus, thrust
 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 : [ran
 But as my bearded vision closelier
 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
 straights,
 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 pas-
 sionate debates,
 And losing by the loss it apprehends
 The flesh rocks round, and every
 breath it sends, [states
 Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured
 Suppose a straightened place. Je-
 hovah Lord,
 Make room for rest, around me !
 Out of sight [abhorred,
 Now float me, of the vexing land
 Till, in deep calms of space, my
 soul may right
 Her nature : shoot large sail on
 lengthening cord,
 And rush exultant on the Infinite.

TWO SKETCHES.

I.

THE shadow of her face upon the
 wall
 May take your memory to the per-
 fect 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 [win
 On all the world, as if herself did
 By what she lavished on an open
 mart :—
 Let no man call the liberal sweet-
 ness, sin,—
 While friends may whisper, as they
 stand apart,
 “ Methinks there's still some warm-
 er place within.”

II.

Her azure eyes, dark lashes hold in
 fee :
 Her fair superfluous ringlets, with-
 out 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 [patiently
The apparent image, but more
Strikes his staff down beneath his
clenching fist—
While the snow-mountains lift their
amethyst
And sapphire crowns of splendor,
far and nigh,
Into the air around him. Learn
from hence
Meek morals, all ye poets that pur-
sue
Your way still onward up to emi-
nence!
Ye are not great, because creation
drew
Large revelations round your earli-
est sense,
Nor bright, because God's glory
shines for you.

X 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 [best,
Pall never on him, at the fairest,
But stand before him holy and un-
dressed
In week-day false conventions, such
as would [altitude
Drag other men down from the
Of primal types, too early dis-
possessed.
Why, God would tire of all his
heaven 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 [hands,
An alien Image with ensnaked
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, over-
thrown.

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 re-
 bound,
 Life answering life across the vast
 profound,
 In full antiphony, by a common
 grace !
 I think, this sudden joyaunce which
 illumes
 A child's mouth sleeping, unaware
 may run
 From some soul newly loosened
 from earth's tombs :
 I think, this passionate sigh, which
 half-begun
 I stifle back, may reach and stir the
 plumes
 Of God's calm angel standing in
 the sun.

LOVE.

WE cannot live, except thus mu-
 tually
 We alternate, aware or unaware,
 The reflex act of life : and when
 we bear
 Our virtue onward 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 concentra-
 tion 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 oper-
 faced
 Melodious angels round ;—canst in-
 tercept
 Music with music ;—yet, at will,
 has swept
 All back, all back, (said he in Pat-
 mos 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 [spheres,
 Men alternate across these hemi-
 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 chil-
 dren 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 mak-
 er drew [twain,
 A mystic separation 'twixt those
 The life beyond us, and our souls
 in pain,
 We miss the prospect which we're
 called unto

By grief we're fools to use. Be still
and strong,
O man, my brother! hold thy sob-
bing breath,
And keep thy soul's large window
pure from wrong,— [sueth,
That so, as life's appointment is-
Thy vision may be clear to watch
along
The sunset consummation-lights of
death.

HUGH STUART BOYD.*

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 [crossed.
Under the feet of the royal sun is
Yet such things were to him not
wholly lost,—
Permitted, with his wandering eyes
light-proof, [enough
To have fair visions rendered full
By many a ministrant accomplished
ghost:
And seeing, to sounds of softly
turned book-leaves,
Sappho's crown-rose, and Mel-
eager's spring,
And Gregory's starlight on Greek-
burnished eyes:
Till Sensuous and Unsensuous
seem one thing

* 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 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 double filial duty as she sat by the death bed of her father's friend and hers.

Viewed from one level;—earth's
reapers at the sheaves
Scarce plainer than Heaven's an-
gels on the wing!

HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS DEATH, 1848.

BELOVED friend, who living many
years
With sightless eyes raised vainly to
the sun,
Didst learn to keep thy patient soul
in tune [cheers!
To visible nature's elemental
God has not caught thee to new
hemispheres
Because thou wast aware of this
one:—
I think thine angel's patience first
was done,
And that he spake out with celest-
tial 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 appre-
hend,— [go
How can I wonder when I see thee
To join the Dead found faithful to
the end?

HUGH STUART BOYD.

LEGACIES.

THREE gifts the Dying left me;
Æschylus, [clock
And Gregory Nazianzen, and a
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, mur-
murous
Sad echoes of my young voice,
years ago
Entoning from these leaves the
Græcian phrase,
Return and choke my utterance.
Books, lie down [gaze!
In silence on the shelf there, within
And thou, clock, striking the hour's
pulses on,
Chime in the day which ends these
parting days!

LOVED ONCE.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
Earth's lamentable sounds; the
well-a-day,
The jarring yea and nay, [clay,
The fall of kisses on unanswering
The sobbed farewell, the welcome
mournfuller;—
But all did leaven the air
With a less bitter leaven of sure de-
spair,
Than these words—'I loved
ONCE.'

And who saith 'I loved ONCE?'
Not angels, whose clear eyes, love,
love foresee,
Love through eternity, [Be.
And by To Love do apprehend To
Not God, called LOVE, his no-
ble crown-name,—casting
A light too broad for blasting!
The great God changing not from
everlasting,
Saith never, 'I loved ONCE.'

Oh, never is 'Loved ONCE,'
Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, mis-
prized friend
Thy cross and curse may rend;
But having loved Thou lovest to
the end!

It is man's saying—man's. Too
weak to move
One sphered star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-
word, Love
With his No More, and Once.

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?'

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 hap-
py light?
And when, as flowers kept too long
in the shade,
Ye find my colors fade,
And all that is not love in me, de-
cayed?
Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

Could ye, 'We loved her once,'
Say cold of me when further put
away
In earth's sepulchral clay?
When mute the lips which depre-
cate 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.'

Say never, ye loved ONCE !
 God is too near above, the grave, be-
 neath,
 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 !

And yet that same word ONCE
 Is humanly acceptable ! 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.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

"Fill all the stops of life with tuneful
 breath."

*Poems on Man, by Cornelius Matthews.**

WE are borne into life—it is sweet,
 it is strange !
 We lie still on the knee of a mild
 Mystery,
 Which smiles with a change !
 But we doubt not of changes, we
 know not of spaces ;
 The Heavens seem as near as our
 own mother's face is,
 And we think we could touch all
 the stars that we see ;

* A small volume, by an American poet
 —as remarkable, in thought and manner,
 for a vital sinewy vigor, as the right arm of
 Pathfinder.

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.

Then all things look strange in the
 pure golden æther :

We walk through the gardens with
 hands linked together, [trees :

And the lilies look large as the
 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
 archangel's 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.

Then we leap on the earth with the
 armor 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 [swoon ;
 Breathes fresh on our faces in
 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 !

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 watercourse,
 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 crea-
 tion'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 run-
 neth 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
 with waning 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 the Cæsar and old
 Pharamond ;

And death is so nigh us, Life cools
 from its heat—

O Life, O Beyond,
 Art thou fair,—art thou sweet ?

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, over-
 coming 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 burn-
 ing the corn ?

Let us sit on the thrones
 In a purple sublimity,
 And grind down men's bones
 To a pale unanimity !

Speed me, God !—serve me, man !
 —I am god over men !

When I speak in my cloud, none
 shall answer again—

'Neath the stripe and the bond,
 Lie and mourn at my feet !'—

O thou Life, O Beyond,
 Thou art strange, thou art
 sweet !

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 so-
cial 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 un-
der-tongue

The sense of the mystical march :
And we cry to them softly, 'Come
nearer, come nearer,
And lift up the lap of this Dark,
and speak clearer,

And teach us the song that ye
sung.'

And we smile in our thought if
they answer or no,
For to dream of a sweetness is sweet
as to know !

Wonders breathe in our face
And we ask not their name ;
Love takes all the blame
Of the world's prison-place.

And we sing back the songs as we
guess them, aloud ;

And we send up the lark of our
music that cuts

Untired through the cloud.
To beat with its wings at the lattice
Heaven shuts :

Yet the angels look down and the
mortals look up

As the little wings beat,
And the poet is blest 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 !

Then we wring from our souls their
applicative strength.

And bend to the cord the strong
bow of our ken, [of others
And bringing our lives to the level
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 grey iron edge,
'Neath the heat of a Thought sit-
ting still in our eyes—

And the 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 tur-
moils and poters ;

While the swans float on softly,
untouched in their calms

By Humanity's hum at the root of
the springs !

And with teachings of Thought we
reach down to the deeps

Of the souls of our brothers,
And teach them full words with
our slow-moving lips,—

'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth,'—which
they hearken and think [link,

And work into harmony, link upon
Till the silver meets round the earth
gelid and dense,

Shedding sparks of electric response
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!

Help me, God—help me, man! I
am low, I am weak—

Death loosens my sinews and
creeps in my veins;

My body is cleft by these wedges
of pains

From my spirit's serene;

And I feel the externe and insensate
creep in

On my organized clay.

I sob not, nor shriek,

Yet I faint fast away!

I am strong in the spirit,—deep-
thoughted, clear eyed,—

I could walk, step for step, with an
angel beside,

On the Heaven-heights of Truth!

Oh, the soul keeps its youth—

But the body faints sore, it is tired
in the race,

It sinks from the chariot ere reach-
ing 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!

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!

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

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*.

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey,

Faced with amber column,

Crowned with crimson cupola

From a sunset solemn!

May-mists, for the casements, fetch,

Pale and glimmering;

With a sunbeam hid in each,

And a smell of spring.

Build the entrance high and proud,

Darkening and then brightening.

Of a riven thunder-cloud,

Veined by the lightning.

Use one with an iris-stain

For the door within;

Turning to a sound like rain

As we enter in.

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.

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.

Be my chamber tapestried
With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless,—glorified
When the sunbeams come here ;
Wandering harper, harping on
Waters stringed for such,
Drawing colour for a tune,
With a vibrant touch.

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.

Bring the fantastic cloudlets home
From the noontide zenith ;
Range 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.

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.

Bring a grey cloud from the east
Where the lark is singing ;
Something of the song at least,
Unlost in the bringing :

That shall be a morning chair,
Poet-dream may sit in.
When it leans out on the air,
Unrhymed and unwritten.

Bring the red cloud from the sur ;
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.

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* !

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* !

CATARINA TO CAMOENS.

*Dying in his absence abroad, and
referring to the poem in which
he recorded the sweetness of her
eyes.*

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.'

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!'

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?

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 therèin,—
 'Sweetest eyes were ever seen.'

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.'

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.'

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.'

O my poet, O my prophet,
 When you praised their sweet-
 ness 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?'

No reply! The fountain's warble
 In the court-yard sounds alone:
 As the water to the marble

So my heart falls with a moan,
 From love-sighing
 To this dying!

Death forerunneth Love, to win
 'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

Will you come? when I'm de-
 parted

Where all the sweetnesses are hid—
 When 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.'

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?'

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 !'

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 ?'

Sweetest eyes ! How sweet in flow-
ings,

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.'

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 !'

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.'

But—but *now*—yet unremoved
Up to Heaven, they glisten fast :
You may cast away, Beloved,
In your future all my past ;

* She left him the riband from her hair.

Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen !'
Eyes of mine, what are ye doing ?
Faithless, faithless--praised amiss
If a tear be of your showing,
Drop for any hope of HIS !
Death hath boldness
Besides coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'
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 !

WINE OF CYPRUS.

*Given to me by H. S. Boyd, Esq.,
author of "Select Passages from
the Greek Fathers," etc., to whom
these stanzas are addressed.*

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.

Sooth, the drinking should be am-
pler
When the drink is so divine ;
And some deep-mouthed Greek ex-
emplar

Would become your Cyprus wine,
Cyclops' mouth would plunge a-
right in,

While his one eye over-leered—
Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
Drinking rivers down his beard.

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 !’

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, [blooms ;
They have faded from their
And the laughter of my pastime
Has learnt silence at the tombs.

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 ?

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.

Go !—let others praise the Chian !—
This is soft as Muses’ string—
This is tawny as Rhea’s lion,
This is rapid as its 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.

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 Græcian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

And I think of those long mornings,
Which my Thought goes far to
seek,

When, betwixt the folio’s turnings,
Solemn flow’d the rhythmic Greek
Past the pane the mountain spread-
ing, [noise,
Swept the sheep-bell’s tinkling
While a girlish voice was reading,
Somewhat low for *ai*’s and *oi*’s.

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 vapor over shrines !

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous !
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it
ponderous

In the gnarled oak beneath.
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
Who was born to monarch’s
place— [loyal,
And who made the whole world
Less by kingly power than grace.

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.

boot
worn
magic
act

And my Plato, the divine one,
 If men know the gods aright
 By their motions as they shine on
 With a glorious trail of light!
 And your noble Christian bishops,
 Who mouthed grandly the last
 Greek : [sops

Though the sponges on their hys-
 Were distent with wine—too
 weak.

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised
 him

As a liberal mouth of gold ;
 And your Basil, you upraised him
 To the height of speakers old :
 And we both praised Heliodorus
 For his secret of pure lies ;—
 Who forged first his linked stories
 In the heat of lady's eyes.

And we both praised your Synesius,
 For the fire shot up his odes :
 Though the Church was scarce prop-
 itious

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.

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?

For we sometimes gently wrangled,
 Very gently, be it said,
 For 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.

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.

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, re-
 signed!

But the reader's voice dropped
 lower

When the poet called him BLIND!

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-suns green revel,
 To your eyes that *could not see*.

Now Christ bless you with the one
 light

Which goes shining night and
 day! [sunlight
 May the flowers which grow in
 Shed their fragrance in your
 way!

Is it not right to remember
 All your kindness, friend of mine,
 When we two sat in the chamber,
 And the poets poured us wine?

So, to come back to the drinking
 Of this Cyprus!—it is well—
 But those memories, to my thinking,
 Make a better œnomet :

And whoever be the speaker,
 None can murmur with a sigh
 That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
 I am sipping like a fly.

THE DEAD PAN.

Excited by Schiller's 'Götter Griechenlands,' and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch, ('De Oraculorum Defectu,') according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of 'Great Pan is dead!' swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners, —and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller, that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonoring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude.

GODS of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating is-
lands,

With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead.

In what revels are ye sunken,
In old Ethiopia? [en
Have the Pygmies made you drunk-
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan is dead.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corpses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the
sun?—

While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you wel-
ters?

Great Pan is dead.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Said the old Hellenic tongue!
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poet's songs the sweetest sung,
Have ye grown deaf in a day?
Can ye speak not yea or nay—

Since Pan is dead?

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All along, O Naiades, [in
While your drenched locks dry slow
This cold feeble sun and breeze?
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye.
For Pan is dead.

From the gloaming of the oak wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunderstroke, would
No sob tremble through the tree?—
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye.
For Pan is dead.

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills
Of the everlasting hills.
Pan, Pan is dead.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,—
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings!
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities—
Now Pan is dead!

Jove, that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail;
While in idiocy of godhead
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.
Pan, Pan is dead.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread!
Will they lay, for evermore, thee,
On thy dim, straight golden bed?

Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid?

Pan, Pan is dead.

Ha, Apollo! Floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands;
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild
hands?

'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!

Pan, Pan is dead.

Shall the casque with its brown
iron

Pallas' broad blue eyes eclipse,
And no hero take inspiring
From the God-Greek of her lips?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it?

Pan, Pan is dead.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
He swoons,—bound with his own
vines!

And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,
'Evohe—ah—evohe—!'

Ah, Pan is dead.

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone:
And old Pluto deaf and silent
Is cast out into the sun.

Ceres smileth stern thereat,
'We *all* now are desolate—'

Now Pan is dead.

Aphrodite! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art,
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thy heart!
Ai Adonis! At that shriek

Not a tear runs down her cheek—

Pan, Pan is dead.

And the Loves we used to know
from

One another,—huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly,—

As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.

Pan, Pan is dead.

What, and Hermes! Time en-
thralleth

All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus!

Hast thou no new message for
us,

Full of thunder and Jove-glories?

Nay, Pan is dead.

Crowned Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head:
Roar the lions of her chariot
Towards the wilderness, unfed:
Scornful children are not mute,—
'Mother, mother, walk a-foot—

Since Pan is dead!

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!

For Pan is dead.

Gods! we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign:
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine!

Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie!

Pan, Pan is dead,

Even that Greece who took your
wages,

Calls the obolus outworn;
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn—
And the Poets do disclaim you,
Or grow colder if they name you—

And Pan is dead.

Gods bereaved, gods belated,
With your purples rent asunder!
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder!

Now, the goats may climb and
 crop

The soft grass on Ida's top—
 Now Pan is dead.

Calm, of old, the bark went on-
 ward,

When a cry more loud than wind,
 Rose up, deepened, and swept sun-
 ward,

From the pilèd Dark behind :
 And the sun shrank and grew pale,
 Breathed against by the great wail—
 Pan, Pan is dead.

And the rowers from the benches
 Fell,—each shuddering on his face—
 While departing influences [place :
 Struck a cold back through the
 And the shadow of the ship
 Reeled along the passive deep—
 Pan, Pan is dead.

And that dismal cry rose slowly,
 And sank slowly through the air ;
 Full of spirit's melancholy
 And eternity's despair !
 And they heard the words it said—
 PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS
 DEAD—

PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
 Hung for love's sake on a cross—
 When His brow was chill with
 dying,

And His soul was faint with loss ;
 When his priestly blood dropped
 downward,

And His kingly eyes looked throne-
 ward—

Then, Pan was dead.

By the love He stood alone in,
 His sole Godhead stood complete :
 And the false gods fell down moan-
 ing,

Each from off his golden seat—
 All the false Gods with a cry
 Rendered up their deity—

Pan, Pan was dead.

Wailing wide across the islands,
 They rent, vest-like, their Divine !
 And their darkness and a silence
 Quenched the light of every shrine :
 And Dodona's oak swang lonely
 Henceforth, to the tempest only.

Pan, Pan was dead.

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her
 Her lost god's forsaking look !
 Straight her eye-balls filmed with
 horror,

And fier' crispy fillets shook—
 And her lips gasped through their
 foam,

For a word that did not come.

Pan, Pan was dead.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
 Ye are silent evermore !
 And I dash down this old chalice,
 Whence libations ran of yore.
 See ! the wine crawls in the dust
 Wormlike—as your glories must !
 Since Pan is dead.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
 By a common doom and track !
 Let no Schiller from the portals
 Of that Hades, call you back,
 Or instruct us to weep all
 At your antique funeral.

Pan, Pan is dead.

By your beauty, which confesses
 Some chief Beauty conquering
 you,—

By our grand heroic guesses,
 Through your falsehood, at the
 True,— [shall roll

We will weep *not . . . !* earth
 Heir to each god's aureole—

And Pan is dead.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
 Sung beside her in her youth :
 And those debonaire romances
 Sound but dull beside the truth.
 Phœbus' chariot-course is run !
 Look up, poets, to the sun !

Pan, Pan is dead.

Christ hath sent us down the
 angels;
 And the whole earth and the skies
 Are illumed by altar candles
 Lit for blessed mysteries:
 And a Priest's Hand through crea-
 tion,
 Waveth calm and consecration—
 And Pan is dead.

Truth is fair: should we forego it?
 Can we sigh right for a wrong?
 God Himself is the best Poet,
 And the Real is His song.
 Sing his Truth out fair and full,
 And secure his beautiful.
 Let Pan be dead.

Truth is large. Our aspiration
 Scarce embraces half we be,
 Shame! to stand in His creation
 And doubt Truth's sufficiency!
 To think God's song unexcelling
 The poor tales of our own telling—
 When Pan is dead.

What is true and just and honest,
 What is lovely, what is pure—
 All of praise that hath admonish'd—
 All of virtue shall endure,—
 These are themes for poets' uses,
 Stirring nobler than the Muses,
 Ere Pan was dead.

O brave poets, keep back nothing;
 Nor mix falsehood with the whole!
 Look up Godward! speak the
 truth in
 Worthy song from earnest soul:
 Hold, in high poetic duty,
 Truest Truth the fairest Beauty!
 Pan, Pan is dead.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

SLEEP on, Baby, on the floor,
 Tired of all the playing,
 Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That you dropped away in!

On your curls' full roundness,
 stand
 Golden lights serenely—
 One cheek, pushed out by the
 hand,
 Folds the dimple inly:
 Little head and little foot
 Heavy laid for pleasure,
 Underneath the lids half shut,
 Slants the shining azure;—
 Open-soul in noonday sun,
 So, you lie and slumber!
 Nothing evil having done,
 Nothing can encumber.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
 Shall I sigh to view you?
 Or sigh further to foretell
 All that may undo you?
 Nay, keep smiling, little child,
 Ere the sorrow neareth.
I will smile too! Patience mild
 Pleasure's token wearth,
 Nay, keep sleeping before loss;
I shall sleep though losing!
 As by cradle, so by cross,
 Sure is the reposing.

And God knows who sees us
 twain,
 Child at childish leisure,
 I am near as tired of pain
 As you seem of pleasure;
 Very soon too, by His grace
 Gently wrapt around me,
 Shall I show as calm a face,
 Shall I sleep as soundly!
 Differing in this, that *you*
 Clasp your playthings sleeping,
 While my hand shall drop the few
 Given to my keeping;
 Differing in this, that *I*
 Sleeping shall be colder,
 And in waking presently,
 Brighter to beholder!
 Differing in this beside
 (Sleep, have you heard me?
 Do you move, and open wide
 Eyes of wonder towards me?)—

That while you, I thus recall
From your sleep,—I solely,
Me from mine an angel shall,
With reveille holy!

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

'To win the secret of a weed's plain heart.'
LOWELL.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever golden!
Cankered not the whole year
long!

Do you teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden
Like your thorny blooms, and
so

Trodden on by rain and snow
Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak
as where ye grow?

Mountain blossoms, shining blos-
soms!

Do ye teach us to be glad
When no summer can be had,
Blooming in our inward bosoms?
Ye, whom God preserveth still,
Set as lights upon a hill

Tokens to the wintry earth that
Beauty liveth still!

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, be-
side the grasses meek!

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 CLAIM.

I.

GRIEF sate upon a rock and sighed
one day:

(Sighing is all her rest!)

'Wellaway, wellaway, ah, wella-
way!'

As ocean beat the stone, did she
her breast. . . [me!]

'Ah, wellaway! . . . ah me! alas, ah
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 [not go

Alone in the sky-waste, and can-
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! [to thy mind,

Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighed
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 [her stead:

Of her full image, . . . answered in
'Now nay, now nay! she shall not
give away [that flieth.

What is my wealth for any Cloud
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.'

A SABBATH MORNING
AT SEA.

I.

THE ship went on with solemn
face: [deep.
To meet the darkness on the
The solemn ship went onward.
I bowed down weary in the place;
For parting tears and present
sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids
downward.

II.

Thick sleep which shut all dreams
from me,
And kept my inner self apart
And quiet from emotion,
Then brake away and left me free,
Made conscious of a human
heart
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

III.

The new sight, the new wondrous
sight!
The waters round me turbulent,
The skies impassive o'er me,
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,
Half glorified by that intent
Of holding the day-glory!

IV.

Two pale thin clouds did stand
upon
The meeting line of sea and sky,
With aspect still and mystic.
I think they did foresee the sun,
And rested on their prophecy
In quietude majestic;

V.

Then flushed to radiance where
they stood,
Like statues by the open tomb
Of shining saints half risen.—
The sun!—he came up to be
viewed; [room
And sky and sea made mighty
To inaugurate the vision!

VI.

I oft had seen the dawnlight run,
As red wine, through the hills,
and break
Through many a mist's inurn-
ing:
But, here, no earth profaned the
sun!
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
The sacrament of morning.

VII.

Away with thoughts fantastical!
I would be humble to my worth,
Self-guarded as self-doubted.
Though here no earthly shadows
fall,
I, joying, grieving without earth,
May desecrate without it.

VIII.

God's Sabbath morning sweeps the
waves: [high,
I would not praise the pageant
Yet miss the dedicature:
I, carried towards the sunless
graves
By force of natural things,—
should I
Exult in only nature?

IX.

And could I bear to sit alone
'Mid nature's fixed benignities,
While my warm pulse was
moving?
Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
To satisfy the loving.

X.

It seems a better lot than so,
To sit with friends beneath the
beech, [er;
And call them dear and dear—
Or follow children as they go
In pretty pairs, with softened
speech [nearer.
As the church-bells ring

STANZAS.

I MAY sing ; but minstrel's singing
 Ever ceaseth with his playing.
 I may smile ; but time is bring-
 ing
 Thoughts for smiles to wear away
 in.
 I may view thee, mutely loving ;
 But *shall* view thee so in dying !
 I may sigh ; but life's removing,
 And with breathing endeth sighing !
 Be it so !

When no song of mine comes near
 thee,
 Will its memory fail to soften ?
 When no smile of mine can cheer
 thee,
 Will thy smile be used as often ?
 When my looks the darkness bound-
 eth,
 Will thine own be lighted after ?
 When my sigh no longer sound-
 eth,
 Wilt thou list another's laughter ?
 Be it so !

THE YOUNG QUEEN.

This awful responsibility is imposed upon me so suddenly and at so early a period of my life, that I should feel myself utterly oppressed by the burden, were I not sustained by the hope that Divine Providence, which has called me to this work, will give me strength for the performance of it.

THE QUEEN'S DECLARATION IN COUNCIL.

THE shroud is yet unspread
 To wrap our crownèd dead ;
 His soul hath scarcely hearkened
 for the thrilling word of doom ;
 And death that makes serene
 Ev'n brows where crowns have
 been,
 Hath scarcely time to meeten his,
 for silence of the tomb.

St. Paul's king-dirging note
 The city's heart hath smote—

The city's heart is struck with
 thought more solemn than the
 tone !

A shadow sweeps apace
 Before the Nation's face,
 Confusing in a shapeless blot, the
 sepulchre and throne.

The palace sounds with wail—
 The courtly dames are pale—
 A widow o'er the purple bows, and
 weeps its splendor dim :
 And we who hold the boon,
 A king for freedom won,
 Do feel eternity rise up between
 our thanks and him.

And while things express
 All glory's nothingness,
 A royal maiden treadeth firm where
that departed trod !
 The deathly-scented crown
 Weighs her shining ringlets down ;
 But calm she lifts her trusting face,
 and calleth upon God.

Her thoughts are deep within her :
 No outward pageants win her
 From memories that in her soul are
 rolling wave on wave—
 Her palace walls enring
 The dust that was a king—
 And very cold beneath her feet, she
 feels her father's grave.

And One, as fair as she,
 Can scarce forgotten be,—
 Who clasped a little infant dead,
 for all a kingdom's worth !
 The mournèd, blessèd One,
 Who views Jehovah's throne,
 Aye smiling to the angels, that she
 lost a throne on earth.

Perhaps our youthful Queen
 Remembers what has been—
 Her childhood's rest by loving heart,
 and sport on grassy sod—
 Alas ! can others wear
 A mother's heart for her ?
 But calm she lifts her trusting face,
 and calleth upon God.

Yea ! on God, thou maiden
Of spirit nobly laden,
And leave such happy days behind,
for happy-making years !
A nation looks to thee
For steadfast sympathy :
Make room within thy bright clear
eyes, for all its gathered tears.

And so the grateful isles
Shall give thee back their
smiles,
And as thy mother joys in thee, in
them shalt *thou* rejoice ;
Rejoice to meekly bow
A somewhat paler brow,
While the King of kings shall bless
thee by the British people's
voice !

VICTORIA'S TEARS.

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

LANDER'S *Gebir*.

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

They decked her courtly halls ;
They reined her hundred steeds ;
They shouted at her palace gate,
" A noble Queen succeeds !"
Her name has stirred the mountain's
sleep
Her praise has filled the town !

And mourners God had stricken
weep,
Looked hearkening up, and did not
weep,
Alone she wept,
Who wept, to wear a crown !

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

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

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

ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S
NEST.

So the dreams depart,
So the fading phantoms flee,
And the sharp reality
Now must act its part.

WESTWOOD'S 'BEADS FROM A ROSARY.'

LITTLE Ellie sits alone
Mid the beeches of a meadow,
By a stream-side on the grass ;
And the trees are showering
down

Doubles of their leaves in shadow,
On her shining hair and face.

She has thrown her bonnet by ;
And her feet she has been dipping
In the shallow water's flow—
Now she holds them nakedly
In her hands, all sleek and dripping
While she rocketh to and fro.

Little Ellie sits alone,
And the smile she softly uses,
Fills the silence like a speech ;
While she thinks what shall be
done,—

And the sweetest pleasure chooses,
For her future within reach.

Little Ellie in her smile
Chooseth . . . ' I will have a lover,
Riding on a steed of steeds !
He shall love me without guile ;
And to *him* I will discover
That swan's nest among the reeds.

' And the steed shall be red-roan
And the lover shall be noble,
With an eye that takes the breath,
And the lute he plays upon
Shall strike ladies into trouble,
As his sword strikes men to death.

' And the steed it shall be shod
All in silver, housed in azure,
And the mane shall swim the
wind :

And the hoofs along the sod
Shall flash onward and keep meas-
ure,
Till the shepherds look behind.

' But my lover will not prize
All the glory that he rides in,
When he gazes in my face.
He will say, " O Love, thine eyes
Build the shrine my soul abides in ;
And I kneel here for thy grace." '

' Then, ay, then—he shall kneel
low,
With the red-roan steed anear him
Which shall seem to understand,
Till I answer, " Rise and go !
For the world must love and fear
him,
Whom I gift with heart and
hand." '

' Then he will arise so pale,
I shall feel my own lips tremble
With a *yes* I must not say—
Nathless maiden-brave, " Fare-
well,"
I will utter and dissemble—
" Light to-morrow with to-day." '

' Then he'll ride among the hills
To the wide world past the river,
There to put away all wrong :
To make straight distorted wills,
And to empty the broad quiver
Which the wicked bear along.

' Three times shall a young foot-
page [mountain
Swim the stream and climb the
And kneel down beside my feet—
" Lo ! my master sends this gage,
Lady, for thy pity's counting !
What wilt thou exchange for it ? "

' And the first time, I will send
A white rose-bud for a guerdon,—
And the second time a glove :
But the third time—I may bend
From my pride, and answer—" Par-
don—
If he comes to take my love." '

' Then the young foot-page will
run—
Then my lover will ride faster,
Till he kneeleth at my knee :

" I am a duke's eldest son !
 Thousand serfs do call me master,—
 But, O Love, I love but *thee* ! "

' He will kiss me on the mouth
 Then ; and lead me as a lover,
 Through the crowds that praise
 his deeds :
 And, when soul-tied by one troth,
 Unto *him* I will discover
 That swan's nest among the
 reeds.'

Little Ellie, with her smile
 Not yet ended, rose up gayly,
 Tied the bonnet, donned the
 shoe—
 And went homeward, round a
 mile,
 Just to see, as she did daily,
 What more eggs were with the
two.

Pushing through the elm-tree
 copse
 Winding by the stream, light-heart-
 ed,
 Where the osier pathway leads—
 Past the boughs she stoops—and
 stops !
 Lo ! the wild swan had deserted—
 And a rat had gnawed the reeds.

Ellie went home sad and slow :
 If she found the lover ever,
 With his red-roan steed of steeds,
 Sooth I know not ! but I know
 She could never show him—never,
 That swan's nest among the
 reeds !

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS.

I.

LOVE me, sweet, with all thou art,
 Feeling, thinking, seeing,—
 Love me in the lightest part,
 Love me in full being.

II.

Love me with thine open youth
 In its frank surrender ;
 With the vowing of thy mouth,
 With its silence tender.

III.

Love me with thine azure eyes,
 Made for earnest granting !
 Taking color from the skies,
 Can Heaven's truth be wanting ?

IV.

Love me with their lids, that fall
 Snow-like at first meeting :
 Love me with thine heart, that all
 The neighbors then see beating.

V.

Love me with thine hand stretched
 out
 Freely—open-minded :
 Love me with thy loitering foot,—
 Hearing one behind it.

VI.

Love me with thy voice, that turns
 Sudden faint above me ;
 Love me with thy blush that burns
 When I murmur ' Love me ! '

VII.

Love me with thy thinking soul—
 Break it to love-sighing .
 Love me with thy thoughts that roll
 On through living—dying.

VIII.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
 When the world has crowned
 thee !
 Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
 With the angels round thee.

IX.

Love me pure, as musers do,
 Up the woodlands shady :
 Love me gaily, fast, and true,
 As a winsome lady.

X.

Through all hopes that keep us
brave,
Further off or nigher,
Love me for the house and grave,—
And for something higher.

XI.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee*—half-a-year—
As a man is able.

PROMETHEUS BOUND.

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 with-
out man,
And now, Hephæstus, thou must
needs fulfil
The mandate of our father, and
with links
Indissoluble of adamantine chains,
Fasten against this beetling preci-
pice
This guilty god! Because he filch-
ed away
Thine own bright flower, the glory
of plastic fire, [a sin
And gifted mortals with it,—such
It doth behove he expiate to the
gods, [Zeus,
Learning to accept the empery of
And leave off his old trick of loving
man.

Hephæstus. O Strength and
Force,—for you, or Zeus's will
Presents a deed for doing.—No
more!—but *I*,
I lack your daring, up this storm-
rent chasm [god,
To fix with violent hands a kindred
Howbeit necessity compels me so

That I must dare it,—and our Zeus
commands [thou!
With a most inevitable word. Ho,
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 retriect beams the
morning frosts;
And 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!—for in thee,
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?

Hephaestus. An awful thing
Is kinship joined to friendship.

Strength. Grant it be;

Is disobedience to the Father's
word

A possible thing? Dost quail not
more for *that*?

Hephaestus. *Thou*, at least, art
a stern one! ever bold!

Strength. Why, if I wept, it
were no remedy. [air

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

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

Strength. Why hate
Thy craft most plainly innocent of
all

These pending ills?

Hephaestus. I would some other
hand

Were here to work it!

Strength. All work hath its
pain,

Except to rule the Gods. There is
none free

Except King Zeus.

Hephaestus. I know it very well:
I argue not against it.

Strength. Why not, then,
Make haste and lock the fetters over

HIM,

Lest Zeus behold thee lagging?

Hephaestus. Here be chains.
Zeus may behold these.

Strength. Seize him,—strike
again!

Strike with the hammer on each
side his hands—

Rivet him to the rock.

Hephaestus. The work is done,
And thoroughly done.

Strength. Still faster grapple
him,—

Wedge him in deeper,—leave no
inch to stir!

He's terrible for finding a way out
From the irremediable.

Hephaestus. Here's an arm, at
least,

Grappled past freeing.

Strength. Now, then, buckle me
The other securely. Let this wise
one learn

He's duller than our Zeus.

Hephaestus. Oh, none but he
Accuse me justly!

Strength. Now, straight through
the chest,

Take him and bite him with the
clenching tooth

Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet
him.

Hephaestus. Alas, Prometheus!
what thou sufferest here

I sorrow over.

Strength. Dost thou flinch again,
And breathe groans for the ene-
mies of Zeus? [out.

Beware lest thine own pity find thee

Hephaestus. 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.

Hephaestus. 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 again 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 honors, 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 Demons gave thee a wrong name,
Prometheus, which means Providence—because
Thou dost thyself need providence to see [doom.
Thy roll and ruin from the top of *Prometheus alone*. O holy Æther, and swift winged Winds,
And River-wells, and laughter innumerable
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 [gave
In silence or in speech. Because I Honor 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 [between,
Of a god, or a mortal, or nature
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! [tion I hear,
 Alas me! what a murmur and mo-
 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 mal-
 leted 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 Oce-
 anus,—he
 Coiling still around earth with per-
 petual 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.

Chorus, 1st Antistrophe.

I behold thee, Prometheus—yet
 now, yet now,
 A terrible cloud whose rain is tears

Sweeps over mine eyes that wit-
 ness how

Thy body appears
 Hung awaste on the rocks by in-
 frangible chains!

For new is the hand and the rud-
 der 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, fast-
 ened thus

In the knotted chain with the sav-
 age 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 [hang—

The hurtling chains wherein I
 And I, in my naked sorrows, make

Much mirth for my enemy.

Chorus, 2d 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 govern-
ment.

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 ring my secret out withal
And learn by whom his sceptre
shall [first,

Be filched from him—as was, at
His heavenly fire !

But he never shall enchant me
With his honey-lipped persua-
sion ;

Never, never shall he daunt me
With the oath and threat of pas-
sion,

Into speaking as they want me,
Till he loose this savage chain,

And accept the expiation
Of my sorrow, in his pain.

Chorus, 2d Antistrophe.

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,
Dnd, 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 [more.

And unmoved in his heart ever—
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,— [vaunt

And curbing his unconquerable

He shall rush on in fear to meet
with me [agony,
Who rush to meet with him in
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 dishonorable
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 forever,—I, who
brought

The counsel I thought meetest,
could not move

The Titans, children of the Heaven
and Earth,

What time disdainng in their rug-
ged souls [sumed

My subtle machinations, they as-
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, [names,)

(Her single beauty joys in many
Did teach me with reiterant proph-

ecy

What future should be,—and how
conquering gods

Should not prevail by strength and
violence,

But by guile only. When I told them so
 They would not deign to contemplate the truth
 On all sides round; whereat I deemed it best
 To lead my willing mother upwardly,
 And set my Themis face to face with Zeus
 As willing to receive her! Tartarus,
 With its abysmal cloister of the Dark, [up
 Because I gave that counsel, covers
 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,— [ask,
 Distrust in friendship. Do ye also
 What crime it is for which he tortures me—
 That shall be clear before you.
 When at first [stantly
 He filled his father's throne, he in-
 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 [death.
 My mortals from premeditating
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, [sin—

I freely sinned—I will confess my
And helping mortals, found mine
own despair!

I did not think indeed that I should
pine

Beneath such pangs against such
skyeey rocks,

Doomed to this drear hill and no
neighboring [griefs

Of any life!—but mourn not *ye* for
I bear to-day!—hear rather, drop-
ping 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 [air,

From the rushing car and the holy
The track of birds—

And I drop to the rugged ground
and there

Await the tale of thy despair.

Enter OCEANUS.

Oceanus. I reach the bourne of
my weary road,
Where I may see and answer thee,

Prometheus, in thine agony!
On the back of the quick-winged
bird I glode,

And I bridled him in
With the will of a god,
Behold thy sorrow aches in me,

Constrained by the force of kin.
Nay, though that tie were all un-
done,

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 out worn sense,

Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely waits

On lips that speak too proudly!—thou, meantime, [a jot

Art none the meeker, nor dost yield 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,— [cruelty

Seeing that who reigns, reigns by Instead of right. And now, I go

from hence, [mine And will endeavor if a power of

Can break thy fetters through. For thee,—be calm,

And smooth thy words from passion. Knowest thou not

Of perfect knowledge, thou who knowest too much,

That where the tongue wags, ruin never lags?

Prometheus. I gratulate thee who hast shared and dared

All things with me, except their penalty!

Enough so! leave these thoughts!

It cannot be That thou shouldst move HIM. HE may *not* be moved!

And *thou*, beware of sorrow on this road.

Oceanus. Ay! ever wiser for another's use

Than thine! the event, and not the prophecy, [I rush,

Attests it to me. Yet where now 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 good-will. 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,— [west,

My brother Atlas, standing in the Shouldering the column of the heav-

en and earth, [seen, A difficult burden! I have also

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,) [the gods,

Typhon the fierce, who did resist And, hissing slaughter from his

dreadful jaws, [eyes, Flash out ferocious glory from his

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 [soul

Of exultation! Through the very
It struck him, and his strength was
withered up

To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now,
he lies

A helpless trunk supinely, at full
length [into

Beside the strait of ocean, spurred
By roots of Etna,—high upon
whose tops

Hephæstus sits and strikes the
flashing ore.

From thence the rivers of fire shall
burst away [jaws

Hereafter, and devour with savage
The equal plains of fruitful Sicily!

Such passion he shall boil back in
hot darts [flame,

Of an insatiate fury and sough of
Fallen Typhon;—howsoever struck
and charred [thee,

By Zeus's bolted thunder! But for
Thou art not so unlearned as to
need [save thyself.

My teaching—let thy knowledge
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. What 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! [wise
Since it is profitable that one who is
Should seem not wise at all.

Prometheus. And such would
seem
My very crime.

Oceanus. In truth thine argu-
ment
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 abso-
lute throne?

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

Oceanus. Thy doom, Prome-
theus, 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 pin-
ions, glad

To bend his knee at home in the
ocean-stall. [*Exit* OCEANUS.

Chorus, 1st Strophe.

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,
Prometheus! From my eyes too
tender,

Drop after drop incessantly, [der,
The tears of my heart's pity ren-
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
 Near the holy Asia,
 Are a dirge entoning
 For thine honor and thy brother's,
 Once majestic beyond others
 In the old belief,—
 Now are groaning in the groaning
 Of thy deep-voiced grief.

2d Strophe.

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

2d Antistrophe.

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

But one other before, have I seen
 to remain,
 By invincible pain

Bound and vanquished,—one Titan!
 —'twas Atlas who bears,
 In a curse from the gods, by that
 strength of his own

Which he evermore wears,
 The weight of the heaven on his
 shoulder alone,

While he sighs up the stars!
 And the tides of the ocean wail
 bursting their bars,—

Murmurs still the profound,—
 And black Hades roars up through
 the chasm of the ground,—

And the fountains of pure-running
 rivers moan low

In a pathos of woe.

Prometheus. Beseech you,
 think not I am silent thus

Through pride or scorn! I only
 gnaw my heart

With meditation, seeing myself so
 wronged.

For so—their honors 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 know-
 ledge to you,

If I spake aught. List rather to the
 deeds

I did for mortals,—how, being fools
 before,

I made them wise and true in aim
 of soul.

And let me tell you—not as taunt-
 ing 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 wood-
 craft 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 philoso-
 phies,

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 heirloom of man's burdens on their backs!
 I joined the chariots, steeds, that love the bit
 They champ at—the chief pomp of golden ease,
 And none but I, originated ships,
 The seaman's chariots, wandering on the brine
 With linen wings! And I—oh, miserable!—
 Who did devise for mortals all these arts,
 Have no device left now to save myself
 From the woe I suffer.

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

Prometheus. Harken the rest,
 And marvel further—what more arts and means
 I did invent,—this, greatest!—if a man
 Fell sick, there was no cure, nor esculent
 Nor chrism nor liquid, but for lack of drugs
 Men pined and wasted, till I showed them all
 Those mixtures of emollient remedies
 Whereby they might be rescued from disease.
 I fixed the various rules of mantic art.

Discerned the vision from the common dream,
 Instructed them in vocal auguries
 Hard to interpret, and defined as plain
 The wayside omens,—flights of crook-clawed birds,—
 Showed which are, by their nature, fortunate,
 And which not so, and what the food of each,
 And what the hates, affections, social needs,
 Of all to one another,—taught what sign
 Of visceral lightness, coloured to a shade,
 May charm the genial gods, and what fair spots
 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 under-ground,
 The iron and the brass, silver and gold,
 Can any dare affirm he found them out
 Before me? None, I know! Unless he choose
 To lie in his vaunt. In one word learn the whole,—
 That all arts came to mortals from Prometheus.
Chorus. Give mortals now no inexpedient help,
 Neglecting thine own sorrow! I have hope still
 To see thee, breaking from the fetter here,
 Stand up as strong as Zeus.

Prometheus. This ends not thus,
The oracular Fate ordains. I must
be bowed
By infinite woes and pangs, to es-
cape 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 se-
cret kept

I 'scape this chain's dishonor 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 antagonize mine!
Nor let me delay
As I bend on my way
Toward the gods of the shrine,
Where the altar is full
Of the blood of the bull,
Near the tossing brine
Of Ocean my father.

May no sin be sped in the word
that is said,

But my vow to be rather
Consummated,
Nor evermore fall, nor ever-
more 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,
Forever 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 peo-
ple 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?

And 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

When my soul descries

The 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— [deep,
And along the sands of the siding

All famine-worn, he follows me,
And his waxen reed doth under-

sound

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, Sat-
urn'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,

Where 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 frenzied maiden?—Inachus's
child?—

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

By Here's hate, along the unending
ways?

Io. Who taught thee to articu-
late 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? [that came

And callest too by name, the curse
From Here unaware,

To waste and pierce me with the
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! [pain,

Are any of those who have tasted
Alas!—as wretched as I? [main

Now tell me plain, doth aught re-
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, [cause
O miserable Prometheus,—for what
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 which 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
Does expiate so?

Prometheus. I have told enough
for thee,
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 the
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!
Certainly, 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 befel
the maid,—

Her own voice telling her own
wasting woes! [await
The sequence of that anguish shall
The teaching of thy lips.

Prometheus. It doth behove
That thou, maid *Io*, shouldst vouch-
safe to these

The grace they pray; the more, be-
cause they are called [out
Thy father's sisters; since to open
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, wan-
dering went [me

The nightly visions which entreated
With syllabled smooth sweetness.—

'Blessed maid,

Why lengthen out thy maiden hours
 when fate [world?
 Permits the noblest spousal in the
 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, [eye
 Until the passion of the heavenly
 Be quenched in sight.' Such dreams
 did all night long
 Constrain me—me, unhappy!—till
 I dared [dark
 To tell my father how they trod the
 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 re-
 sponse,
 Dark to interpret; but at last there
 came [clear,—
 To Inachus an answer that was
 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 [not,
 Of all the earth—or, if he willed it
 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 vio-
 lent 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 im-
 mitigable
 Of wrath, did find me out, and
 track me out
 With countless eyes, yet staring at
 my steps!—
 And though an unexpected sudden
 doom
 Drew him from life—I, curse-tor-
 mented still,
 And driven from land to land be-
 fore 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 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 Herè!—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 wagons under
 woven roofs,
 And twang the rapid arrow past
 the bow—
 Approach them not; but siding in
 thy course,
 The rugged shore-rocks resonant
 to the sea,
 Depart that country. On the left
 hand dwell
 The iron-workers, called the Chal-
 ybes,
 Of whom beware! for certes they
 are uncouth,

And nowise bland to strangers.
 Reaching so
 The stream Hybristes, (well the
scorner called), [pass.
 Attempt no passage;—it is hard to
 Or ere thou come to Caucasus it-
 self,
 The highest of mountains,—where
 the river leaps
 The precipice in his strength!—
 thou must toil up
 Those mountain-tops that neighbor
 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 [provide
 Doth gnash at Salmydessa and
 A cruel host to seamen, and to
 ships
 A stepdame. They, with unreluct-
 ant hand,
 Shall lead thee on and on, till thou
 arrive
 Just where the ocean gates show
 narrowest
 On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leav-
 ing which,
 Behoves thee swim with fortitude
 of soul [more
 The strait Mæotis. Ay! and ever-
 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 [tinent.
 From Europe's plain to Asia's con-
 How think ye, nymphs? the king
 of gods appears [hold
 Impartial in ferocious deeds? Be-
 The god desirous of this mortal's
 love
 Hath cursed her with these wan-
 derings. Ah, fair child,

Thou hast met a bitter groom for
bridal troth !

For all thou yet hast heard, can
only prove

The incompleted prelude of thy
doom.

Io. Ah, ah !

Prometheus. Is't thy turn, now,
to shriek and moan ?

How wilt thou when thou hast
hearkened what remains ?

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

Prometheus. A sea—of fore-
doomed evil worked to storm.

Io. What boots my life, then ?
why not cast myself

Down headlong from this misera-
ble 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 hu-
man ? 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 genera-
tions, 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 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
Dishonored 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 it.

Prometheus. Since ye will,
Of absolute will, this knowledge, I
will set [back
No contrary against it, nor keep
A word of all ye ask for. Io, first
To thee I must relate thy wander-
ing course [down
Far winding; as I tell it, write it
In thy soul's book of memories.

When thou hast past
The refluent bound that parts two
continents, [sun
Track on the footsteps of the orient
In his own fire—across the roar of
seas,

Fly till thou hast reached the Gor-
gonean flats [des,
Beside Cisthene—there the Phorci-
Three ancient maidens, live, with
shape of swan,
One tooth between them, and one
common eye, [at all
On whom the sun doth never look
With all his rays, nor evermore the
moon,

When she looks through the night.
A near to whom
Are the Gorgon sisters three, en-
clothed with wings,
With twisted snakes for ringlets,
man-aborred. [face,
There is no mortal gazes in their

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 Arimasian host [side
Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting be-
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 [Sun,
Of dwellers at the fountain of the
Whence flows the river Æthiops!—
wind along [tracts,
Its banks and turn off at the cata-
Just as the Nile pours from the Byb-
line hills,

His holy and sweet wave! his
course shall guide
Thine own to that triangular Nile-
ground [thine
Where, Io, is ordained for thee and
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.

<p>But that she may be certain not to have heard All vainly, I will speak what she endured [past Ere coming hither, and invoke the To prove my prescience true. And so to leave [once A multitude of words, and pass at To the subject of thy course!— When thou hadst gone To those Molossian plains which sweep around Dodona shouldering Heaven, where by the fane Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle, And wonder, past belief, where oaks do wave [same Articulate adjurations—(ay, the Saluted thee in no perplexed phrase, But clear with glory, noble wife of Zeus That shouldst be, there, some sweetness took thy sense!) Thou didst rush further onward,—stung along The ocean-shore,—toward Rhea's mighty bay, And, tost back from it, was tost to it again In stormy evolution!—and, know well, [sea In coming time that hollow of the Shall bear the name Ionian, and present [through, A monument of Io's passage 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,</p>	<p>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, [race, Full fifty maidens, a fair woman— 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, [love Shall follow, hunting at a quarry of 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</p>
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To choose the lesser evil—shame
 on her cheeks,
 The 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, [ess,
 My mother Themis, that old Titan—
 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 spurn-
 ing 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 frenzy all madly
 inwound—
 And my mouth is unbridled for an-
 guish and hate,
 And my words beat in vain, in wild
 storms of unrest,
 On the sea of my desolate fate.

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 Here,—driven
 On wanderings dread and drear!

Epode.

Nay, grant an equal troth instead
 Of nuptial troth 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 [fall,
 His father Chronos muttered in his

As he fell from his ancient throne
and cursed,

Shall be accomplished wholly—no
escape [Zeus

From all that ruin shall the filial
Find granted to him from any of
his gods, [know,

Unless I teach him. I, the refuge,
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 pa-
tience.—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, [fist

With power to shatter in Poseidon's
The trident spear, which, while it
plagues the sea,

Doth shake the shores around it.
Ay, and Zeus, [length

Precipitated thus, shall learn at
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 sorrow
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 dreder 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, [your Zeus

Whenever reigning—but for me,
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! [Zeus,

But lo! I see that courier-god of
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 and adjure thee! Zeus
requires [rite

Thy declaration of what marriage-
Thou moves thy vaunt and shall
hereafter cause

His fall from empire. Do not wrap
thy speech [Never cast

In riddles, but speak clearly!
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 [dart
Ye dwell in towers too high for any
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? [depart,
Far be it from me!—For thyself 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 [rocks
It is a nobler thing to serve these Than live a faithful slave to father Zeus— [scorn.
Thus upon scorners I retort their

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—I hear thee 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 Doth teach 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 dost thou mock me, Titan, as I stood
A child before thy face.

Prometheus. No child, forsooth, But yet more foolish than a foolish child, [aught

If thou expect that I should answer Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from his hand,

Nor any machination in the world Shall force my 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,—pre-
counselled of.

Hermes. Vain god, take right-
eous courage!—dare for once
To apprehend and front thine ag-
onies

With a just prudence!

Prometheus. Vainly dost thou
chafe [sea
My soul with exhortation, as yonder
Goes beating on the rock. Oh!
think no more

That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a
woman's mind,

Will supplicate him, loathed as he is
With feminine upliftings of my
hands,

To break these chains! Far from
me be the thought!

Hermes. I have indeed, me-
thinks, 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,— [all,
Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of
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 wing-
ed hound,

The strong carnivorous eagle, shall
wheel down

To meet thee,—self-called to a dai-
ly feast,

And set his fierce beak in thee, and
tear off

The long rags of thy flesh, and bat-
ten deep

Upon thy dusky liver! Do not look
For any end moreover to this curse,

Or ere some god appear, to accept
thy pangs [scend

On his own head vicarious, and de-
With unreluctant step the darks of

hell [tarus!
And gloomy abysses around Tar-

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 fore-
knower, this mandate of

power

He cries, to reveal it.
What's strange in my fate, if I suffer from hate

At the hour that I feel it?
Let the locks of the lightning, all
bristling and whitening,
Flash, coiling me round!

While the ether goes surging 'neath
thunder and 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 it driven in the face
Of the stars up in heaven, as they
walk to and fro!

Let him hurl me anon, into Tartarus—on—

To the blackest degree,
With Necessity's vortices strangling
me down! [meant for *me*!

But he cannot join death to a fate
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. [him,

Then depart ye who groan with
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, in-
deed 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 an-
guish foretold!

I recoil from the traitor in hate and
disdain,— [treason is worse
And I know that the curse of the
Than the pang of the chain.

Hermes. Then remember, O
nymphs, what I tell you before,
Nor, when pierced by the arrows
that Atè 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 Atè, 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
fires in my face,

And the whirlwinds are whirling
the dust round and round—

And the blasts of the winds uni-
versal, 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 man-
ifest 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 thou see how I suffer this
wrong?

A LAMENT FOR ADONIS.

FROM 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 transfixed his white thigh;

Cytherea grows mad at his thin gasping breath,

While the black blood drips down on the pale ivory,

And his eye-balls lie quenched with the weight of his brows,

The rose fades from his lips, and upon them just parted

The kiss dies the goddess consents not to lose,

Though the kiss of the Dead cannot make her glad-hearted—

He knows not who kisses him dead in the dews.

III.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.

Deep, deep in the thigh, is Adonis's wound:

But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom presenting—

The youth lieth dead while his dogs howl around,

And the nymphs weep aloud from the mists of the hill,

And the poor Aphrodite, with tresses unbound,

All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks mournful and shrill

Through the dusk of the groves.

The thorns, tearing her feet,

Gather up the red flower of her blood which is holy,

Each footstep she takes; and the valleys repeat

The sharp cry she utters, and draw it out slowly.

She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian; on him

Her own youth; while the dark blood spreads over his body—

The chest taking hue from the gash in the limb,

And the bosom once ivory, turning to ruddy.

IV.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! the Loves are lamenting:

She lost her fair spouse, and so lost her fair smile—

When he lived she was fair by the whole world's consenting,

Whose fairness is dead with him! woe worth the while!

All the mountains above and the oak-lands below

Murmur, ah, ah Adonis! the streams overflow

Aphrodite'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! un-
 happy 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 Perse-
 phone, 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 de-
 spair 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 apining,
 For the myrrh of his life from thy
 keeping is sweet!—

—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 Dione's ;

The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis, Adonis,

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

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

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

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

BERTHA IN THE LANE.

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.

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.

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.

Thou art younger by seven years—

Ah !—so bashful at my gaze,

That the lashes, nung 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 ?

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 !

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 !

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.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof
One hour longer from my soul—
For I still am thinking of |dole :
Earth's warm-beating joy and
On my finger is a ring
Which I still see glittering,
When the night hides everything.

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.

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.

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.

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 pauses out—or oft
Bleatings took them, from the
croft.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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

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—

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.

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.

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,

Do not weep so—Dear—heart-warm !

It was best as it befell !
If I say he did me harm,

I speak it wild,—I am not well.
All his words were kind and good—

He esteemed me ! Only blood
Runs so faint in womanhood.

Then I always was too grave,—
Liked the saddest ballads 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.

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.

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*.

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.

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 [road,
Stand off clear from deathly
Not to cross the sight of God.

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.

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.

On that grave, drop not a tear!
 Else, though fathom-deep the
 place,

Through the woollen shroud I wear
 I shall feel it on my face.
 Rather smile there, blessed one,
 Thinking of me in the sun—
 Or forget me—smiling on!

Art thou near me? nearer? so.
 Kiss me close upon the eyes,
 That the earthly light may go
 Sweetly as it used to rise,
 When I watch'd the morning-gray
 Strike, betwixt the hills, the way
 He was sure to come that day.

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!

Jesus, Victim, comprehending
 Love's divine self-abnegation,
 Cleanse my love in 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!

THAT DAY.

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.

The flowers of the margin are many
 to see,
 For none stoops at my bidding to
 pluck them for me;
 The bird in the alder sings loudly
 and long,
 For my low sound of weeping dis-
 turbs not his song,
 As thy vow did that day.

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?

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!

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 the 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, [ing,
What sight could she have for see-
Evermore. . . . but only LOVE?

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE
AT PILGRIM'S POINT.

I.

I STAND on the mark beside the
shore
Of the first white pilgrim's
bended knee.
Where exile turned to ancestor,
And God was thanked for liberty.
I have run through the night, my
skin is as dark,
I bend my knee down on this
mark . .
I look on the sky and the sea.

II.

O pilgrim souls, I speak to you !
I see you come out proud and
slow
From the land of the spirits pale as
dew . . [go !
And round me and round me you
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of
one
Who in your names works sin
and woe.

III.

And thus I thought that I would
come
And kneel here where ye knelt
before,
And feel your souls around me hum
In undertone to ocean's roar ;
And lift my black face, my black
hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this
land
Ye blessed in freedom's evermore.

IV.

I am black, I am black ;
And yet God made me, they say.
But if he did so, smiling back
He must have cast his work away
Under the feet of his white creat-
ures,
With a look of scorn,—that the
dusky features
Might be trodden again to clay.

V.

And yet He has made dark things
To be glad and merry as light.
There's a little dark bird, sits and
sings ;
There's a dark stream ripples out
of sight ;
And the dark frogs chant in the
safe morass,
And the sweetest stars are made to
pass
O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI.

But *we* who are dark, we are dark :
Ah God, we have no stars !
About our souls in care and cark
Our blackness shuts like prison-
bars :
The poor souls crouch so far be-
hind,
That never a comfort can they find
By reaching through the prison-
bars.

VII.

Indeed we live beneath the sky,
That great smooth Hand of God
stretched out
On all His children fatherly,
To save them from the dread and
doubt
Which would be, if, from this low
place,
All opened straight up to His face
Into the grand eternity,

VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His
frost, [cold,
They make us hot, they make us
And if we were not black and lost :
And the beasts and birds, in
wood and fold,
Do fear and take us for very men !
Could the weep-poor-will or the cat
of the glen
Look into my eyes and be bold ?

IX.

I am black, I am black !—
But, once I laughed in girlish
glee ;
For one of my color stood in the
track
Where the drivers drove, and
looked at me—
And tender and full was the look
he gave :
Could a slave look so at another
slave ?—
I look at the sky and the sea.

X.

And from that hour our spirits grew
As free as if unsold, unbought :
Oh, strong enough, since we were
two,
To conquer the world we
thought !
The drivers drove us day by day ;
We did not mind, we went one way
And no better a freedom sought.

XI.

In the sunny ground between the
canes,
He said 'I love you' as he
passed :
When the shingle-roof rang sharp
with the rains,
I heard how he vowed it fast :
While others shook he smiled in the
hut
As he carved me a bowl of the co-
coanut [canes.
Through the roar of the hurri-

XII.

I sang his name instead of a song ;
Over and over I sang his name—
Upward and downward I drew it
along
My various notes ; the same, the
same ! [near
I sang it low, that the slave girls
Might never guess from aught they
could hear,
It was only a name—a name.

XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea—
We were two to love, and two to
pray,—
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
Though nothing didst Thou say.
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun !
And now I cry who am but one,
Thou wilt speak to-day.—

XIV.

We were black, we were black !
We had no claim to love and
bliss :
What marvel, if each went to wrack ?
They wrung my cold hands out
of his,—
They dragged him . . . where ? . . .
I crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust ! . . .
not much,
Ye pilgrim-souls, . . . though plain
as *this* !

XV.

Wrong followed by a deeper wrong !
 Mere grief's too good for such
 as I.
 So the white men brought the shame
 ere long
 To strangle the sob of my agony.
 They would not leave me for my
 dull
 Wet eyes !—it was too merciful
 To let me weep pure tears
 and die.

XVI.

I am black, I am black !
 I wore a child upon my breast . .
 An amulet that hung too slack,
 And, in my unrest, could not
 rest :
 Thus we went moaning child and
 mother
 One to another, one to another,
 Until all ended for the best :

XVII,

For hark ! I will tell you low . . low . .
 I am black you see,—
 And the babe who lay on my bos-
 som so,
 Was far too white . . too white
 for me ;
 As white as the ladies who scorned
 to pray
 Beside me at church but yesterday :
 Though my tears had washed a
 place for my knee.

XVIII.

My own, own child ! I could not
 bear [white.
 To look in his face, it was so
 I covered him up with a kerchief
 there ; [tight ;
 I covered his face in close and
 And he moaned and struggled, as
 well might be,
 For the white child wanted his lib-
 erty— [right.
 Ha, ha ! he wanted the master

XIX.

He moaned and beat with his head
 and feet,
 His little feet that never grew—
 He struck them out, as it were meet,
 Against my heart to break it
 through. [mild—
 I might have sung and made him
 But I dared not sing to the white-
 faced child
 The only song I knew.

XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close :
 He could not see the sun, I swear
 More, then, alive, than now he does
 From between the roots of the
 mango . . . where ?
 I know where. Close ! a child
 and mother
 Do wrong to look at one another,
 When one is black and one is fair

XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had
 Of my child's face, . . I tell you
 all,
 I saw a look that made me mad . .
 The *master's* look, that used to
 fall [worse !—
 On my soul like his lash . . or
 And so, to save it from my curse,
 I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII.

And he moaned and trembled
 from foot to head,
 He shivered from head to foot ;
 Till, after a time, he lay instead
 Too suddenly still and mute.
 I felt beside a stiffening cold . .
 I dared to lift up just a fold, . .
 As in lifting a leaf of the mango-
 fruit.

XXIII.

But *my* fruit . . ha, ha !—there had
 been
 (I laugh to think on't at this
 hour ! . .)

Your fine white angels, who have
 seen [power, . . .
 Nearest the secret of God's
 And plucked my fruit to make them
 wine,
 And sucked the soul of that child
 of mine,
 As the humming-bird sucks the
 soul of the flower.

XXIV.

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white!
 They freed the white child's
 spirit so.

I said not a word, but, day and
 night,
 I carried the body to and fro;
 And it lay on my heart like a stone
 . . . as chill.

—The sun may shine out as much
 as he will:

I am cold, though it happened a
 month ago.

XXV.

From the white man's house, and
 the black man's hut,

I carried the little body on.

The forest's arms did round us shut,
 And silence through the trees
 did run:

They asked no question as I went,—
 They stood too high for astonish-
 ment,—

They could see God sit on his
 throne.

XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
 I bore it on through the forest,
 . . . on:

And when I felt it was tired at last,
 I scooped a hole beneath the
 moon. [gels far,

Through the forest-tops the an-
 With a white shape finger from
 every star,

Did point and mock at what
 was done.

XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright, . .
 Earth, 'twixt me and my baby,
 strewed, . . .

All changed to black earth, . .
 nothing white, . . [sued

A dark child in the dark,—en-
 Some comfort, and my heart grew
 young:

I sate down smiling there and sung
 The song I learnt in my maiden-
 hood.

XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled,
 The white child and black mother,
 thus:

For, as I sang it soft and wild,
 The same song, more melodious,
 Rose from the grave whereon I sate!
 It was the dead child singing that,
 To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky!
 Where the pilgrims' ships first
 anchored lay,

The free sun rideth gloriously;
 But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid
 away [morn.

Through the earliest streaks of the
 My face is black, but it glares with
 a scorn

Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX.

Ah!—in their 'stead, their hunter
 sons!

Ah, ah! they are on me—they
 hunt in a ring—

Keep off! I brave you all at once—
 I throw off your eyes like snakes
 that sting!

You have killed the black eagle at
 nest, I think:

Did you never stand still in your
 triumph, and shrink

From the stroke of her wounded
 wing?

XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared
to lift!—)

I wish you who stand there five
abreast,
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
A little corpse as safely at rest
As mine in the mangoes!—Yes,
but *she*
May keep live babies on her knee,
And sing the song she liketh best.

XXXII.

I am not mad : I am black.
I see you staring in my face—
I know you staring, shrinking back.
Ye are born of the Washington-
race :
And this land is the free America :
And this mark on my wrist . . (I
prove what I say)
Ropes tied me up here to the
flogging-place.

XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then ? Not a
sound ! [sun.
I hung, as a gourd hangs in the
I only cursed them all around,
As softly as I might have done
My very own child!—From these
sands
Up to the mountains, lift your
hands,
O slaves, and end what I begun !

XXXIV.

Whips, curses ; those must answer
those !
For in this UNION, you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
Each loathing each : and all
forget
The seven wounds in Christ's body
fair ;
While He sees gaping everywhere
Our countless wounds that pay
no debt.

XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your
white men
Are, after all, not gods indeed,
Nor able to make Christs again
Do good with bleeding. *We*
who bleed
(Stand off !) *we* help not in our loss !
We are too heavy for our cross,
And fall and crush you and your
seed.

XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon ! I look at the sky :
The clouds are breaking on my
brain ;
I am floated along as if I should die
Of liberty's exquisite pain—
In the name of the white child
waiting for me
In the death-dark where we may
kiss and agree,
White men, I leave you all curse-
free
In my broken heart's disdain !

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLOR-
ENCE.

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 en-
domes
Our English words of prayer.

III.

A little child!—how long she lived,
By months, not years, is reck-
oned:
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 be-
gun,
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 blos-
som
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 hum-
ming;

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 we have 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
exact . . .
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 under-
stands . . .
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 con-
quer 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, 'con-
tent !
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 complete-
ness :

XXVIII.

'To us, this grave—to her, the rows
The mystic palm trees spring
in :
To us, the silence in the house,—
To her, the choral singing !

XXIX.

'For her to gladden in God's
view,—
For us to hope and bear on !
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
Beside the Rose of Sharon.

XXX.

'Grow fast in Heaven, sweet Lily
clipped,
In love more calm than this is,—
And may the angels dewy-lipped
Remind thee of our kisses !

XXXI.

' While none shall tell thee of our
tears,
These human tears now falling ;
Till, after a few patient years,
One home shall take us all in ;

XXXII.

' Child, father, mother—who, left
out ?

Not mother, and not, father :—
And when, their 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.'

TRANSLATIONS.

SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

I.

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus
had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and
wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand
appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or
young :
And, as I mused it in his antique
tongue,
I saw in gradual vision through my
tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melan-
choly years,
Those of my own life, who by turns
had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway
I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape
did move
Behind me, and drew me backward
by the hair ;
And a voice said in mastery while
I strove, . .
' Guess now who holds thee ?'—
' Death !' I said. But there,
The silver answer rang . . ' Not
Death, but Love.'

II.

BUT only three in all God's uni-
verse
Have heard this word thou hast
said : Himself, beside
Thee speaking and me listening !
and replied
One of us . . *that* was God ! . . and
laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids as^e to
amerce
My sight from seeing thee,—that if
I had died,
The deathweights placed there,
would have signified
Less absolute exculsion. 'Nay' is
worse
From God than from all others, O
my friend !
Men could not part us with their
worldly jars,
Nor the seas change us, nor the
tempests bend :
Our hands would touch for all the
mountain-bars :—
And, heaven being rolled between
us at the end,
We should but vow the faster for
the stars.

III.

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely
Heart!

Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look
surprise

On one another, as they strike
athwart

Their wings in passing. Thou, be-
think thee, art [entries,

A guest for queens to social pag-
With gazes from a hundred brighter
eyes

Than tears even can make mine, to
ply thy part

Of chief musician. What hast *thou*
to do

With looking from the lattice-lights
at me,

A poor, tired, wandering singer? . .
singing through

The dark, and leaning up a cypress
tree?

The chrisam is on thine head,—on
mine, the dew,—

And death must dig the level where
these agree.

IV.

THOU hast thy calling to some pal-
ace floor,

Most gracious singer of high poems!
where

The dancers will break footing from
the care

Of watching up thy pregnant lips
for more.

And dost thou lift this house's latch
too poor

For hand of thine? and canst thou
think and bear

To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my
door?

Look up and see the casement bro-
ken in,

The bats and owlets builders in the
roof!

My cricket chirps against thy man-
dolin.

Hush! call no echo up in further
proof

Of desolation! there's a voice with-
in

That weeps . . as thou must sing .
alone aloof.

V.

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,

And looking in thine eyes, I over-
turn [see

The ashes at thy feet. Behold and
What a great heap of grief lay hid

in me,
And how the red wild sparkles

dimly burn
Through the ashen greyness. If

thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness

utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if

instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind

to blow
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels

on thine head, [so,
O My beloved, will not shield thee

That none of all the fires shall
scorch and shred

The hair beneath. Stand farther
off then! Go.

VI.

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall
stand

Henceforward in thy shadow.
Nevermore [door

Alone upon the threshold of my
Of individual life, I shall command

The uses of my soul, nor lift my
hand

Serenely in the sunshine as before.
Without the sense of that which I

forbore, . .
Thy touch upon the palm. The
widest land

Doom takes to part us, leaves thy
heart in mine
With pulses that beat double.
What I do
And what I dream include thee, as
the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And
when I sue [of thine,
God for myself, He hears that name
And sees within my eyes, the tears
of two.

VII.

THE face of all the world is changed,
I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of
thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me; as
they stole [brink
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer
Of obvious death, where I who
thought to sink
Was caught up into love and taught
the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup
of dole [drink,
God gave for baptism, I am fain to
And praise its sweetness, sweet,
with thee anear.
The name of country, heaven, are
changed away
For where thou art or shalt be,
there or here;
And this . . . this lute and song . . .
loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only
dear,
Because thy name moves right in
what they say.

VIII.

WHAT can I give thee back, O lib-
eral
And princely giver, . . . who has
brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstain-
ed, untold,
And laid them on the outside of the
wall

For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? Am I
cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most
manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back
at all?
Not so. Not cold!—but very poor
instead!
Ask God who knows! for frequent
tears have run
The colours from my life, and left so
dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly
done
To give the same as pillow to thy
head.
Go farther! Let it serve to trample
on.

IX.

CAN it be right to give what I can
give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of
tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sigh-
ing years
Re-sighing on my lips renuncia-
tive
Through those infrequent smiles
which fail to live
For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We
are not peers,
So to be lovers; and I own and
grieve
That givers of such gifts as mine
are, must
Be counted with the ungenerous.
Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my
dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy
Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love . . . which
were unjust.
Beloved I only love thee! let it
pass.

X.

YET, love, mere love, is beautiful
indeed
And worthy of acceptance. Fire
is bright,
Let temple burn, or flax! An equal
light
Leaps in the flame from cedar-
plank or weed.
And love is fire : and when I say
at need
I love thee . . . mark ! . . . I love thee !
in thy sight
I stand transfigured, glorified aright
With conscience of the new rays
that proceed
Out of my face toward thine.
There's nothing low
In love, when love the lowest :
meanest creatures
Who love God, God accepts while
loving so, [features,
And what I *feel*, across the inferior
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and
show
How that great work of Love en-
hances Nature's.

XI.

AND therefore if to love can be de-
sert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as
pale
As these you see, and trembling
knees that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy
heart,
This weary minstrel-life that once
was girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce
avail
To pipe now 'gainst the valley
nightingale
A melancholy music ! . . . why advert
To these things ? O Beloved, it is
plain
I am not of thy worth nor for thy
place :

And yet because I love thee, I ob-
tain
From that same love this vindicat-
ing grace,
To live on still in love and yet in
vain, . . .
To bless thee yet renounce thee to
thy face.

XII.

INDEED this very love which is my
boast,
And which, when rising up from
breast to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large
enow
To draw men's eyes and prove the
inner cost, . . .
This love even, all my worth, to the
uttermost, [thou
I should not love withal, unless that
Hadst set me an example, shown
me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with
mine were crossed,
And love called love. And thus, I
cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my
own.
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all
faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden
throne,—
And that I love, (O soul, we must
be meek !)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII.

AND wilt thou have me fashion in-
to speech
The love I bear thee, finding words
enough,
And hold the torch out, while the
winds are rough
Between our faces to cast light on
each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far
off

From myself . . me . . that I should
bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of
reach. [hood
Nay, let the silence of my woman-
Commend my woman-love to thy
belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, how-
ever wooed,
And rend the garment of my life
in brief, [titude,
By a most dauntless, voiceless for-
Lest one touch of this heart convey
its grief.

XIV.

IF thou must love me, let it be for
nought
Except for love's sake only. Do
not say
'I love her for her smile . . her
look . . her way
Of speaking gently, . . for a trick
of thought
That falls in well with mine, and
certes brought [day'—
A sense of pleasant ease on such a
For these things in themselves,
Beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—
and love so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither
love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my
cheeks dry ;
A creature might forget to weep,
who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love
thereby.
But love me for love's sake, that
evermore
Thou may'st love on through love's
eternity.

XV.

ACCUSE me not, beseech thee, that
I wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of
thine ;

For we two look two ways, and
cannot shine
With the same sunlight on our
brow and hair.
On me thou lookest with no doubt-
ing care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline,—
For sorrow hath shut me safe in
love's divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the
outer air
Were most impossible failure, if I
strove
To fail so. But I look on thee . .
on thee . . [love,
Beholding, besides love, the end of
Hearing oblivion beyond memory . .
As one who sits and gazes from
above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI.

AND yet, because thou overcomest
so,
Because thou art more noble and
like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears
and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart
shall grow
Too close against thine heart, hence-
forth to know
How it shook when alone. Why,
conquering
May prove as lordly and complete
a thing
In lifting upward as in crushing
low :
And as a vanquished soldier yields
his sword
To one who lifts him from the
bloody earth,—
Even so, Beloved, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite
me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my
worth.

XVII.

MY poet, thou canst touch on all
 the notes [Before,
 God set between His After and
 And strike up and strike off the
 general roar
 Of the rushing worlds, a melody
 that floats
 In a serene air purely. Antidotes
 Of medicated music, answering for
 Mankind's forlornest uses, thou
 canst pour
 From thence into their ears. God's
 will devotes
 Thine to such ends and mine to
 wait on thine!
 How, Dearest, wilt thou have me
 for most use? [fine
 A hope, to sing by gladly? . . . or a
 Sad memory, with thy songs to in-
 terfuse?
 A shade in which to sing . . . of palm
 or pine?
 A grave, on which to rest from
 singing? . . . Choose.

XVIII.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
 To a man, Dearest, except this to
 thee,
 Which now upon my fingers
 thoughtfully
 I ring out to the full brown length
 and say
 'Take it.' My day of youth went
 yesterday;
 My hair no longer bounds to my
 foot's glee; [tree,
 Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-
 As girls do, any more. It only may
 Now shade on two pale cheeks the
 mark of tears,
 Taught drooping from the head
 that hangs aside
 Through sorrow's trick. I thought
 the funeral shears
 Would take this first; but love is
 justified:

Take it thou, . . . finding pure, from
 all those years,
 The kiss my mother left here when
 she died.

XIX.

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchan-
 dise;
 I barter curl for curl upon that mart;
 And from my poet's forehead to my
 heart,
 Receive this lock which outweighs
 argosies,—
 As purple black, as erst to Pindar's
 eyes
 The dim purpureal tresses gloomed
 athwart
 The nine white Muse-brows. For
 this counterpart,
 The bay-crown's shade, Beloved, I
 surmise,
 Still lingers on thy curl, it is so
 black!
 Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing
 breath, [back,
 I tie the shadow safe from gliding
 And lay the gift where nothing hin-
 dereth.
 Here on my heart as on thy brow,
 to lack
 No natural heat till mine grows cold
 in death.

XX.

BELOVED, my Beloved, when I
 think
 That thou wast in the world a year
 ago, [snow
 What time I sate alone here in the
 And saw no footprint, heard the
 silence sink
 No moment at thy voice, . . . but link
 by link
 Went counting all my chains as if
 that so
 They never could fall off at any
 blow
 Struck by thy possible hand . . .
 why, thus I drink

Of life's great cup of wonder.
 Wonderful, [night
 Never to feel thee thrill the day or
 With personal act or speech,—nor
 ever cull
 Some prescience of thee with the
 blossoms white
 Thou sawest growing! Atheists
 are as dull,
 Who cannot guess God's presence
 out of sight.

XXI.

SAY over again and yet once over
 again
 That thou dost love me. Though
 the word repeated
 Should seem 'a cuckoo-song,' as
 thou dost treat it,
 Remember never to the hill or plain,
 Valley and wood, without her
 cuckoo-strain,
 Comes the fresh Spring in all her
 green completed! [greeted
 Beloved, I, amid the darkness
 By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that
 doubt's pain
 Cry . . . speak oncemore . . . thou lov-
 est! Who can fear
 Too many stars, though each in
 heaven shall roll—
 Too many flowers, though each
 shall crown the year?
 Say thou dost love me, love me, love
 me—toll
 The silver iterance!—only minding,
 Dear,
 To love me also in silence, with thy
 soul.

XXII.

WHEN our two souls stand up erect,
 and strong, [nigher,
 Face to face, drawing nigh and
 Until the lengthening wings break
 into fire
 At either curvèd point,—What bit-
 ter wrong

Can the earth do to us, that we
 should not long
 Be here contented? Think. In
 mounting higher,
 The angels would press on us, and
 aspire
 To drop some golden orb of per-
 fect song
 Into our deep, dear silence. Let us
 stay
 Rather on earth, Beloved,—where
 the unfit
 Contrarious moods of men recoil
 away
 And isolate pure spirits, and permit
 A place to stand and love in for a
 day,
 With darkness and the death-hour
 rounding it.

XXIII.

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
 Would'st thou miss any life in los-
 ing mine,
 And would the sun for thee more
 coldly shine,
 Because of grave-damps falling
 round my head?
 I marvelled, my Beloved, when I
 read
 Thy thought so in the letter. I am
 thine—
 But . . . so much to thee? Can I
 pour thy wine
 While my hands tremble? Then
 my soul, instead
 Of dreams of death, resumes life's
 lower range!
 Then, love me, Love! look on me . . .
 breathe on me!
 As brighter ladies do not count it
 strange,
 For love, to give up acres and de-
 gree,
 I yield the grave for thy sake, and
 exchange
 My near sweet view of Heaven, for
 earth with thee!

XXIV.

LET the world's sharpness like a
 clasping knife
 Shut in upon itself and do no harm
 In this close hand of Love, now
 soft and warm ;
 And let us hear no sound of human
 strife
 After the click of the shutting. Life
 to life
 I lean upon thee, Dear, without
 alarm,
 And feel as safe as guarded by a
 charm,
 Against the stab of worldlings who
 if rife [still
 Are weak to injure. Very whitely
 The lilies of our lives may reassure
 Their blossoms from their roots !
 accessible
 Alone to heavenly dews that drop
 not fewer ;
 Growing straight, out of man's
 reach, on the hill.
 God only, who made us rich, can
 make us poor.

XXV.

A HEAVY heart, Beloved, have I
 borne
 From year to year until I saw thy
 face.
 And sorrow after sorrow took the
 place
 Of all those natural joys as lightly
 worn
 As the stringed pearls . . each lifted
 in its turn
 By a beating heart at dance-time.
 Hopes apace
 Were changed to long despairs, . .
 till God's own grace
 Could scarcely lift above the world
 forlorn
 My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst
 bid me bring
 And let it drop adown thy calmly
 great

Deep being ! Fast it sinketh, as a
 thing [tate,
 Which its own nature doth precipi-
 While thine doth close above it
 meditating
 Betwixt the stars and the unaccom-
 plished fate.

XXVI.

I LIVED with visions for my com-
 pany [ago,
 Instead of men and women, years
 And found them gentle mates, nor
 thought to know
 A sweeter music than they played
 to me.
 But soon their trailing purple was
 not free
 Of this world's dust,—their lutes
 did silent grow,
 And I myself grew faint and blind
 below
 Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU
 didst come . . to *be*,
 Beloved, what they *seemed*. Their
 shining fronts,
 Their songs, their splendours . .
 (better, yet the same,
 As water-river, hallowed into
 founts . .)
 Met in thee, and from out thee
 overcame [wants—
 My soul with satisfaction of all
 Because God's gifts put man's best
 dreams to shame.

XXVII.

MY own Beloved, who hast lifted me
 From this drear flat of earth where
 I was thrown,
 And in betwixt the languid ringlets,
 blown [fully
 A life-breath, till the forehead hope-
 Shines out again, as all the angels
 see,
 Before thy saving kiss ! My own,
 my own,
 Who camest to me when the world
 was gone,

And I who only looked for God,
 found *thee* !
 I find thee : I am safe, and strong,
 and glad, [asphodel
 As one who stands in dewless
 Looks backward on the tedious
 time he had
 In the upper life . . . so I, with bosom-
 swell,
 Make witness here between the
 good and bad,
 That Love, as strong as Death, re-
 trieves as well.

XXVIII.

MY letters all dead paper, . . . mute
 and white !— [ing
 And yet they seem alive and quiver-
 Against my tremulous hands which
 loose the string
 And let them drop down on my
 knee to-night.
 This said, . . . He wished to have me
 in his sight
 Once, as a friend : this fixed a day
 in spring
 To come and touch my hand . . . a
 simple thing,
 Yet I wept for it !—this, . . . the pa-
 per's light . . .
 Said, *Dear, I love thee* : and I sank
 and quailed [my past :
 As if God's future thundered on
 This said *I am thine*—and so its
 ink has paled
 With lying at my heart that beat
 too fast :
 And this . . . O Love, thy words
 have ill availed,
 If, what this said, I dared repeat at
 last !

XXIX.

I THINK of thee !—my thoughts do
 twine and bud
 About thee, as wild vines about a
 tree,
 Put out broad leaves, and soon
 there's nought to see

Except the straggling green which
 hides the wood. [stood
 Yet, O my palm-tree, be it under-
 I will not have my thoughts instead
 of thee
 Who art dearer, better ! Rather
 instantly
 Renew thy presence ! As a strong
 tree should
 Rustle thy boughs and set thy
 trunk all bare,
 And let these bands of greenery
 which insphere thee
 Drop heavily down, . . . burst, shat-
 tered, everywhere !
 Because, in this deep joy to see and
 hear thee,
 And breathe within thy shadow a
 new air,
 I do not think of thee—I am too
 near thee.

XXX.

I SEE thy image through my tears
 to-night,
 And yet to-day I saw thee smiling.
 How [thou
 Refer the cause ?—Beloved, is it
 Or I ? Who makes me sad ? The
 acolyte [rite,
 Amid the chanted joy and thankful
 May so fall flat with pale insensate
 brow,
 On the altar-stair. I hear thy
 voice and vow
 Perplexed, uncertain, since thou'rt
 out of sight,
 As he, in his swooning ears, the
 choir's amen !
 Beloved, dost thou love ? or did I
 see all
 The glory as I dreamed, and fainted
 when
 Too vehement light dilated my ideal
 For my soul's eyes ? Will that
 light come again,
 As now these tears come . . . falling
 hot and real ?

XXXI.

THOU comest! all is said without
 a word. [do
 I sit beneath thy looks, as children
 In the noon-sun, with souls that
 tremble through
 Their happy eyelids from an un-
 averred
 Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold,
 I erred [not rue
 In that last doubt! and yet I can-
 The sin most, but the occasion . . .
 that we two [istered
 Should for a moment stand unmin-
 By a mutual presence. Ah, keep
 near and close,
 Thou dovelike help! and, when my
 fears would rise, [terpose!
 With thy broad heart serenely in-
 Brood down with thy divine suffi-
 ciencies
 These thoughts which tremble when
 bereft of those,
 Like callow birds left desert to the
 skies.

XXXII.

THE first time that the sun rose on
 thine oath
 To love me, I looked forward to
 the moon
 To slacken all those bonds which
 seemed too soon
 And quickly tied to make a lasting
 troth.
 Quick-loving hearts, I thought,
 may quickly loathe;
 And, looking on myself, I seemed
 not one
 For such man's love!—more like
 an out of tune
 Worn viol, a good singer would be
 wroth
 To spoil his song with, and which,
 snatched in haste, [note.
 Is laid down at the first ill-sounding
 I did not wrong myself so, but I
 placed

A wrong on thee. For perfect
 strains may float
 'Neath master-hands, from instru-
 ments defaced,—
 And great souls, at one stroke, may
 do and doat.

XXXIII.

YES, call me by my pet-name! let
 me hear [child,
 The name I used to run at, when a
 From innocent play, and leave the
 cowslips piled,
 To glance up in some face that
 proved me dear
 With the look of its eyes. I miss
 the clear
 Fond voices, which, being drawn
 and reconciled [filed,
 Into the music of Heaven's unde-
 Call me no longer. Silence on the
 bier,
 While I call God . . . call God!—So
 let thy mouth
 Be heir to those who are now exan-
 imate:
 Gather the north flowers to com-
 plete the south, [late!
 And catch the early love up in the
 Yes, call me by that name,—and I,
 in truth,
 With the same heart, will answer
 and not wait.

XXXIV.

WITH the same heart, I said, I'll an-
 swer thee
 As those, when thou shalt call me
 by my name—
 Lo, the vain promise! Is the same,
 the same, [egy?
 Perplexed and ruffled by life's strat-
 When called before, I told how
 hastily
 I dropped my flowers, or brake off
 from a game,
 To run and answer with the smile
 that came

At play last moment, and went on
with me
Through my obedience. When I
answer now,
I drop a grave thought;—break
from solitude:—
Yet still my heart goes to thee . . .
ponder how . . . [good!
Not as to a single good but all my
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and
allow
That no child's foot could run fast
as this blood.

XXXV.

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou ex-
change [miss
And *be* all to me? Shall I never
Home-talk and blessing, and the
common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor
count it strange, [range
When I look up to drop on a new
Of walls and floors . . . another
home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me
which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to
know change?
That's hardest! If to conquer love,
has tried,
To conquer grief tries more . . .
as all things prove,
For grief indeed is love and grief
beside.
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard
to love—
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open
thine heart wide,
And fold within, the wet wings of
thy dove.

XXXVI.

WHEN we first met and loved, I did
not build
Upon the event with marble. Could
it mean
To last, a love set pendulous be-
tween

Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather
thrilled,
Distrusting every light that seemed
to guild
The onward path, and feared to
overlean
A finger even. And though I have
grown serene
And strong since then, I think that
God has willed
A still renewable fear . . . O love, O
troth . . .
Lest these enclasped hands should
never hold,
This mutual kiss drop down be-
tween us both
As an unowned thing, once the lips
being cold,
And Love be false! if *he*, to keep
one oath,
Must lose one joy by his life's star
foretold.

XXXVII.

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul
should make
Of all that strong divineness which
I know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift
and break.
It is that distant years which did
not take
Thy sovranity, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to
undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly
to forsake
Thy purity of likeness, and distort
Thy worthiest love to a worthless
counterfeit.
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in
port,
His guardian sea-god to commem-
orate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise,
gills a-snort,
And vibrant tail, within the temple-
gate.

XXXVIII.

FIRST time he kissed me, he but
 only kissed
 The fingers of this hand wherewith
 I write,
 And ever since it grew more clean
 and white, . . .
 Slow to world-greetings . . quick
 with its ' Oh, list,'
 When the angels speak. A ring of
 amethyst [sight,
 I could not wear here plainer to my
 Than that first kiss. The second
 passed in height
 The first, and sought the forehead,
 and, half missed,
 Half falling on the hair. O beyond
 meed!
 That was the chrisom of love with
 love's own crown,
 With sanctifying sweetness, did
 precede. [down
 The third upon my lips was folded
 In perfect, purple state! since when,
 indeed,
 I have been proud and said, ' My
 Love, my own.'

XXXIX.

BECAUSE thou hast the power and
 own'st the grace
 To look through and behind this
 mask of me,
 (Against which years have beat thus
 blanchingly
 With their rains!) and beheld my
 soul's true face,
 The dim and dreary witness of life's
 race:—
 Because thou hast the faith and love
 to see,
 Through that same soul's distract-
 ing lethargy, [place
 The patient angel waiting for his
 In the new Heavens: because nor
 sin nor woe,
 Nor God's infliction, nor death's
 neighbourhood,

Nor all which others viewing, turn
 to go, . .
 Nor all which makes me tired of all,
 self-viewed, . .
 Nothing repels thee, . . Dearest,
 teach me so
 To pour out gratitude, as thou dost
 good!

XL.

OH, yes! they love through all this
 world of ours!
 I will not gainsay love, called love
 forsooth.
 I have heard love talked in my early
 youth,
 And since, not so long back but
 that the flowers
 Then gathered, smell still. Mussul-
 mans and Giaours
 Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have
 no ruth
 For any weeping. Polypheme's
 white tooth
 Slips on the nut, if after frequent
 showers
 The shell is oversmooth; and not
 so much
 Will turn the thing called love, aside
 to hate,
 Or else to oblivion. But thou art
 not such [wait
 A lover, my Beloved! thou canst
 Through sorrow and sickness, to
 bring souls to touch,
 And think it soon when others cry
 ' Too late.'

XLI.

I THANK all who have loved me
 in their hearts,
 With thanks and love from mine.
 Deep thanks to all [wall,
 Who paused a little near the prison-
 To hear my music in its louder
 parts,
 Ere they went onward, each one to
 the mart's
 Or temple's occupations, beyond all.

But thou, who in my voice's sink
and fall, [Art's
When the sob took it, thy divinest
Own instrument didst drop down
at thy foot,
To hearken what I said between
my tears, . . .
Instruct me how to thank thee!—
Oh, to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future
years,
That *they* should lend it utterance,
and salute
Love that endures! with Life that
disappears!

XLII.

How do I love thee? Let me
count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth
and height
My soul can reach, when feeling
out of sight [Grace.
For the ends of Being and Ideal
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-
light,
I love thee freely, as men strive for
Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from
Praise;
I love thee with the passion put to
use
In my old griefs, and with my child-
hood's faith; [lose
I love thee with a love I seemed to
With my lost saints,—I love thee
with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and,
if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after
death.

XLIII.

BELOVED, thou hast brought me
many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the sum-
mer through

And winter, and it seemed as if they
grew
In this close room, nor missed the
sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of
ours,
Take back these thoughts which
here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days
I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed,
those beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and
rue,
And wait thy weeding: yet here's
eglantine, [to do
Here's ivy!—take them as I used
Thy flowers, and keep them where
they shall not pine;
Instruct thine eyes to keep their col-
ours true,
And tell thy soul, their roots are
left in mine.

XLIV.

*My future will not copy fair my
past.*
I wrote that once; and thinking at
my side
My ministering life-angel justified
The word by his appealing look up-
cast
To the white throne of God, I
turned at last,
And there, instead, saw *thee*; not
unallied
To angels in thy soul! Then I,
long tried
By natural ills, received the comfort
fast,
While budding at thy sight, my pil-
grim's staff
Gave out green leaves with morn-
ing dews impearled.
—I seek no copy now of life's first
half!
Leave here the pages with long
musing curled,

And write me new my future's epi-
graph,
New angel mine, unhop'd for in
the world!

PARAPHRASES ON HEINE.

ROME, 1860.

I.

I.

OUT of my own great woe
I make my little songs,
Which rustle their feathers in
throgs,
And beat on her heart even so.

II.

They found their way, for their part,
Ye come again and complain,
Complain, and are not fain
To say what they saw in her heart.

II.

I.

ART thou indeed so adverse?
Art thou so changed indeed?
Against the woman who wrongs me
I cry to the world in my need.

II.

O recreant lips unthankful,
How could ye speak evil, say,
Of the man who so well has kissed
you
On many a fortunate day?

III.

I.

MY child, we were two children,
Small, merry by childhood's law;
We used to crawl to the hen-house,
And hide ourselves in the straw.

II.

We crow'd like little cocks, and
whenever
The passers near us drew—
Cock-a-doodle! they thought
'Twas a real cock that crew.

III.

The boxes about our courtyard
We carpeted to our mind,
And lived there both together—
Kept house in a noble kind.

IV.

The neighbor's old cat often
Came to pay us a visit;
We made her a bow and curtsy,
Each with a compliment in it.

V.

After her health we asked,
Our care and regard to evince—
(We have made the very same
speeches
To many an old cat since).

VI.

We also sate and wisely
Discours'd, as old folks do,
Complaining how all went better
In those good old times we knew,—

VII.

How love and truth and believing
Had left the world to itself,
And how so dear was the coffee,
And how so rare was the pelf.

VIII.

The children's games are over,
The rest is over with youth—
The world, the good games, the
good times,
The belief, and the love, and the
truth.

IV.

I.

THOU lovest me not, thou lovest
me not!

'Tis scarcely worth a sigh;
Let me look in thy face, and no king
in his place
Is a gladder man than I.

II.

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest
me well—

Thy little red mouth has told:
Let it reach me a kiss, and, how-
ever it is,
My child, I am well consoled.

V.

I.

MY own sweet Love, if thou in the
grave,

The darksome grave, wilt be,
Then will I go down by the side,
and crave
Love-room for thee and me.

II.

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,
Thou still, thou cold, thou white!

I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,
Turn to a corpse at the right.

III.

The Dead stand up, the midnight
calls

They dance in airy swarms—
We two keep still where the grave-
shade falls,
And I lie on in thine arms.

IV.

The Dead stand up, the Judgment-
day

Bids such to weal or woe—
But nought shall trouble us where
we stay
Embraced and embracing below.

VI.

I.

THE years they come and go,
The races drop in the grave,
Yet never the love doth so,
Which in my heart I have.

II.

Could I see thee but once, one day,
And sink down so on my knee,
And die in thy sight while I say,
'Lady, I love but thee!'

THESE Translations were only intended, many years ago, to accompany and explain certain Engravings after ancient Gems, in the projected work of a friend, by whose kindness they are now recovered; but as two of the original series (the "Adonis," of Bion, and "Song to the Rose," from Achilles Tatius) had already been included in these poems, it is presumed that the remainder may not improperly appear. A single recent version is added.

PARAPHRASE ON THEOCRITUS.

THE CYCLOPS.

(Idyl XI.)

AND so an easier life our Cyclops
drew,

The ancient Polyphemus, who in
youth [grew
Loved Galatea, while the manhood
Adown his cheeks and darkened
round his mouth.

No jot he cared for apples, olives,
roses;

Love made him mad: the whole
world was neglected,
The very sheep went backward to
their closes

From out the fair green pastures,
self directed.

And singing Galatea, thus, he
wore

The sunrise down along the
weedy shore,

And pined alone, and felt the cruel
 wound
 Beneath his heart, which Cypris's
 arrow bore,
 With a deep pang; but so the cure
 was found;
 And sitting on a lofty rock he cast
 His eyes upon the sea, and sang
 at last;—
 'O whitest Galatea, can it be
 That thou shouldst spurn me off
 who love thee so?
 More white than curds, my girl,
 thou art to see,
 More meek than lambs, more full
 of leaping glee
 Than kids, and brighter than the
 early glow
 On grapes that swell to ripen,—
 sour like thee!
 Thou comest to me with the fra-
 grant sleep,
 And with the fragrant sleep
 thou goest from me;
 Thou fliest . . . fliest, as a frightened
 sheep
 Flies the gray wolf!—yet Love
 did overcome me,
 So long;—I loved thee, maiden,
 first of all
 When down the hills (my mother
 fast beside thee)
 I saw thee stray to pluck the sum-
 mer-fall
 Of hyacinth bells, and went my-
 self to guide thee:
 And since my eyes have seen thee,
 they can leave thee
 No more, from that day's light!
 But thou . . . by Zeus,
 Thou wilt not care for *that* to let it
 grieve thee!
 I know thee, fair one, why thou
 springest loose
 From my arm round thee. Why?
 I tell thee, Dear!
 One shaggy eyebrow draws its
 smudging road
 Straight through my ample front,
 from ear to ear,—
 One eye rolls underneath; and
 yawning, broad
 Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too
 near.
 Yet . . . ho, ho!—I,—whatever I ap-
 pear,—
 Do feed a thousand oxen! When
 I have done,
 I milk the cows, and drink the milk
 that's best!
 I lack no cheese, while summer
 keeps the sun;
 And after, in the cold, it's ready
 prest!
 And then, I know to sing, as
 there is none [thee.
 Of all the Cyclops can, . . . a song of
 Sweet apple of my soul, on love's
 fair tree,
 And of myself who love thee . . .
 till the West
 Forgets the light, and all but I
 have rest.
 I feed for thee, besides, eleven fair
 does,
 And all in fawn; and four tame
 whelps of bears.
 Come to me, Sweet! thou shalt
 have all of those
 In change for love! I will not
 halve the shares.
 Leave the blue sea, with pure white
 arms extended
 To the dry shore; and in my
 cave's recess,
 Thou shalt be gladder for the
 moonlight ended,— [es,
 For here be laurels, spiral cypress-
 Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves
 enfold
 Most luscious grapes; and here is
 water cold,
 The wooded Ætna pours down
 through the trees
 From the white snows,—which
 gods were scarce too bold

<p>To drink in turn with nectar. Who with these Would choose the salt wave of the lukewarm seas? Nay, look on me! If I am hairy and rough, I have an oak's heart in me; there's a fire In these gray ashes which burns hot enough; And when I burn for <i>thee</i>, I grudge the pyre No fuel . . . not my soul, nor this one eye,— Most precious thing I have, because thereby [wish I see thee, Fairest! Out, alas! I My mother had borne me finned like a fish, That I might plunge down in the ocean near thee, And kiss thy glittering hand be- tween the weeds, If still thy face were turned; and I would bear thee Each lily white, and poppy fair that bleeds Its red heart down its leaves!—one gift, for hours Of summer, . . . one, for winter; since, to cheer thee, I could not bring at once all kinds of flowers. Even now, girl, now, I fain would learn to swim, If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I wis,— That I may know how sweet a thing it is To live down with you in the Deep and Dim! Come up, O Galatea, from the ocean, And having come, forget again to go! As I, who sing out here my heart's emotion, Could sit forever. Come up from below!</p>	<p>Come, keep my flocks beside me, milk my kine,— Come, press my cheese, distrain my whey and curd! Ah, mother! she alone . . . that mother of mine . . . Did wrong me sore! I blame her!—Not a word Of kindly intercession did she ad- dress Thine ear with for my sake; and ne'ertheless She saw me wasting, wasting, day by day! Both head and feet were aching, I will say, All sick for grief, as I myself was sick! O Cyclops, Cyclops, whither hast thou sent Thy soul on fluttering wings? If thou wert bent On turning bowls, or pulling green and thick The sprouts to give thy lambkins, —thou wouldst make thee A wiser Cyclops than for what we take thee. Milk dry the present! Why pur- sue too quick That future which is fugitive aright? Thy Galatea thou shalt haply find,— Or else a maiden fairer and more kind; For many girls do call me through the night, And, as they call, do laugh out silverly. I, too, am something in the world, I see!'</p> <hr style="width: 10%; margin: 10px auto;"/> <p>While thus the Cyclops love and lambs did fold, Ease came with song, he could not buy with gold.</p>
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PARAPHRASES ON
APULEIUS.

PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. IV.)

THEN Psyche, weak in body and
soul, put on

The cruelty of Fate, in place of
strength :

She raised the lamp to see what
should be done,

And seized the steel, and was a
man at length

In courage, though a woman ! Yes,
but when

The light fell on the bed whereby
she stood

To view the '*beast*' that lay there,
—certes, then,

She saw the gentlest, sweetest
beast in the wood—

Even Cupid's self, the beauteous
god : more beauteous

For that sweet sleep across his
eyelids dim !

The light, the lady carried as she
viewed,

Did blush for pleasure as it
lighted him,

The dagger trembled from its aim
unduteous ;

And *she* . . oh, *she*—amazed and
soul distraught, [a veil

And fainting in her whiteness, like
Slid down upon her knees, and,

shuddering, thought
To hide—though in her heart—the

dagger pale !
She would have done it, but her

hands did fail
To hold the guilty steel, they

shivered so,—
And feeble, exhausted, unawares

she took
To gazing on the god,—till, look by

look
Her eyes with larger life did fill
and glow.

She saw his golden head alight
with curls,—

She might have guessed their
brightness in the dark

By that ambrosial smell of heav-
enly mark !

She saw the milky brow, more pure
than pearls,

The purple of the cheeks, divinely
sundered

By the globed ringlets, as they
glided free,

Some back, some forwards,—all so
radiantly,

That, as she watched them there,
she never wondered

To see the lamplight, where it
touched them, tremble ;

On the god's shoulders, too, she
marked his wings

Shine faintly at the edges and
resemble

A flower that's near to blow. The
poet sings

And lover sighs, that Love is
fugitive ;

And certes, though these pinions
lay reposing,

The feathers on them seemed to
stir and live

As if by instinct closing and unclos-
ing.

Meantime the god's fair body
slumbered deep,

All worthy of Venus, in his shin-
ing sleep ;

While at the bed's foot lay the
quiver, bow,

And darts,—his arms of godhead.
Psyche gazed

With eyes that drank the wonders
in,—said ' Lo,

Be these my husband's arms ? '—
and straightway raised

An arrow from the quiver-case,
and tried

Its point against her finger,—trem-
bling till

She pushed it in too deeply (foolish bride!)
 And made her blood some dew-drops small distil,
 And learnt to love Love, of her own goodwill.

PSYCHE WAFTED BY ZEPHYRUS.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. IV.)

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock forsaken,
 Alone, despairing, dreading,—
 gradually
 By Zephyrus she was enwrapt and taken
 Still trembling,—like the lilies planted high,—
 Through all her fair white limbs.
 Her vesture spread,
 Her very bosom eddying with surprise,—
 He drew her slowly from the mountain-head,
 And bore her down the valleys with wet eyes, [dell
 And laid her in the lap of a green
 As soft with grass and flowers as any nest.
 With trees beside her, and a limpid well:
 Yet Love was not far off from all that Rest.

PSYCHE AND PAN.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. V.)

THE gentle river, in her Cupid's honor,
 Because he used to warm the very wave,
 Did ripple aside, instead of closing on her,
 And cast up Psyche, with a reluctance brave,
 Upon the flowery bank,—all sad and sinning.
 Then Pan, the rural god, by chance was leaning

Along the brow of the waters as they wound,
 Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank to the ground,
 And teaching, without knowledge of the meaning, [his
 To run her voice in music after
 Down many a shifting note; (the goats around,
 In wandering pasture and most leaping bliss,
 Drawn on to crop the river's flowery hair.) [there,
 And as the hoary god beheld her
 The poor, worn, fainting Psyche!—knowing all
 The grief she suffered, he did gently call
 Her name, and softly comfort her despair:—

'O wise, fair lady, I am rough and rude,
 And yet experienced through my weary age!
 And if I read aright, as soothsayer should, [age,
 Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrim—
 Thy paleness, deep as the snow we cannot see
 The roses through,—thy sighs of quick returning,
 Thine eyes that seem, themselves, two souls in mourning,—
 Thou lovest, girl, too well, and bitterly!
 But hear me: rush no more to a headlong fall:
 Seek no more deaths! leave wail lay sorrow down,
 And pray the sovran god; and use withal
 Such prayer as best may suit a tender youth,
 Well-pleased to bend to flatteries from mouth,
 And feel them stir the myrtle of his crown.'

—So spake the shepherd-god ;
and answer none
Gave Psyche in return : but silently
She did him homage with a bended
knee,
And took the onward path.—

PSYCHE PROPITIATING
CERES.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

THEN mother Ceres from afar be-
held her,
While Psyche touched, with rever-
ent fingers meek,
The temple's scythes ; and with a
cry compelled her :
'O wretched Psyche, Venus
roams to seek
Thy wandering footsteps round the
weary earth,
Anxious and maddened, and ad-
jures thee forth
To accept the imputed pang, and
let her wreak
Full vengeance with full force of
deity !
Yet *thou*, forsooth, art in my
temple here,
Touching my scythes, assuming my
degree,
And daring to have thoughts that
are not fear !'
—But Psyche clung to her feet, and
as they moved
Rained tears along their track,
tear dropped on tear,
And drew the dust on in her trail-
ing locks,
And still, with passionate prayer,
the charge disproved :—
'Now, by thy right hand's gathering
from the shocks
Of golden corn,—and by thy glad-
some rites
Of harvest,—and thy consecrated
sights

Shut safe and mute in chests,—and
by the course
Of thy slave-dragons,—and the
driving force
Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes
profound,—
By thy swift chariot,—by thy stead-
fast ground,—
By all those nuptial torches that
departed
With thy lost daughter,—and by
those that shone
Back with her, when she came again
glad-hearted,—
And by all other mysteries which
are done
In silence at Eleusis,—I beseech
thee,
O Ceres, take some pity, and ab-
stain
From giving to my soul extremer
pain
Who am the wretched Psyche !
Let me teach thee
A little mercy, and have thy leave
to spend [corn,
A few days only in thy garnered
Until that wrathful goddess, at
the end,
Shall feel her hate grow mild, the
longer bourne,—
Or till, alas !—this faintness at my
breast
Pass from me, and my spirit ap-
prehend
From life-long woe a breath-time
hour of rest !'
—But Ceres answered, 'I am mov-
ed indeed
By prayers so moist with tears,
and would defend
The poor beseecher from more ut-
ter need :
But where old oaths, anterior ties,
commend, [friend,
I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a
As Venus is to *me*. Depart with
speed !'

PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

BUT sovran Jove's rapacious bird,
the regal
High percher on the lightning, the
great eagle
Drove down with rushing wings ;
and,—thinking how, [brow
By Cupid's help, he bore from Ida's
A cup-boy for his master,—he in-
clined
To yield, in just return, an influence
kind ;
The god being honored in his lady's
woe.
And thus the bird wheeled down-
ward from the track,
Gods follow gods in, to the level low
Of that poor face of Psyche left in
wrack.
—'Now fie, thou simple girl!' the
Bird began ; [back
'For if thou think to steal and carry
A drop of holiest stream that ever
ran,
No simpler thought, methinks, were
found in man.
What ! knowest thou not these Sty-
gian waters be
Most holy, even to Jove? that as,
on earth,
Men swear by gods, and by the
thunder's worth,
Even so the heavenly gods do utter
forth
Their oaths by Styx's flowing
majesty ?
And yet, one little urnful, I agree
To grant thy need!' Whereat, all
hastily, [wave,
He takes it, fills it from the willing
And bears it in his beak, incarna-
dined
By the last Titan-prey he screamed
to have ;
And, striking calmly out, against
the wind,

Vast wings on each side,—there,
where Psyche stands,
He drops the urn down in her lifted
hands.

PSYCHE AND CERBERUS.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

A MIGHTY Dog with three colossal
necks,
And heads in grand proportion ;
vast as fear,
With jaws that bark the thunder
out that breaks
In most innocuous dread for
ghosts anear,
Who are safe in death from sorrow ;
he reclines [serpine's
Across the threshold of queen Pro-
Dark-sweeping halls, and, there, for
Pluto's spouse,
Doth guard the entrance of the
empty house.
When Psyche threw the cake to him,
once amain
He howled up wildly from his hun-
ger-pain,
And was still, after.—

PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

THEN Psyche entered in to Proser-
pine
In the dark house, and straightway
did decline
With meek denial the luxurious seat,
The liberal board for welcome
strangers spread,
But sate down lowly at the dark
queen's feet,
And told her tale, and brake her
oaten bread.
And when she had given the pyx
in humble duty,
And told how Venus did entreat
the queen
To fill it up with only one day's
beauty

She used in Hades, star-bright
and serene,
To beautify the Cyprian, who had
been
All spoilt with grief in nursing
her sick boy,— [joy,
Then Proserpine, in malice and in
Smiled in the shade, and took the
pyx, and put
A secret in it; and so, filled and
shut,
Gave it again to Psyche. Could
she tell
It held no beauty, but a dream
of hell?

PSYCHE AND VENUS.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

AND Psyche brought to Venus what
was sent [she went
By Pluto's spouse; the paler, that
So low to seek it, down the dark
descent.

MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO
OLYMPUS.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

THEN Jove commanded the god
Mercury
To float up Psyche from the
earth. And she
Sprang at the first word, as the
fountain springs,
And shot up bright and rustling
through his wings.

MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND CUPID.

(*Metamorph.*, Lib. VI.)

AND Jove's right-hand approached
the ambrosial bowl
To Pysche's lips, that scarce
dared yet to smile,—
'Drink, O my daughter, and ac-
quaint thy soul
With deathless uses, and be glad
the while!
No more shall Cupid leave thy
lovely side.

Thy marriage-joy begins for
never-ending.

While yet he spake,—the nuptial
feast supplied,—

The bridegroom on the festive
couch was bending

O'er Psyche in his bosom—Jove,
the same

On Juno, and the other deities,
Alike ranged round. The rural
cup-boy came

And poured Jove's nectar out
with shining eyes, [as much,

While Bacchus, for the others, did
And Vulcan spread the meal;

and all the Hours,
Made all things purple with a
sprinkle of flowers, [touch

Or roses chiefly, not to say the
Of their sweet fingers; and the

Graces glided
Their balm around, and the Muses,
through the air

Struck out clear voices, which
were still divided

By that divinest song Apollo there
Intoned to his lute; while Aphro-
dite fair [and play

Did float her beauty along the tune,
The notes right with her feet.

And thus, the day
Through every perfect mood of joy
was carried, [Satyrus

The Muses sang their chorus;
Did blow his pipes; Pan touched
his reed;—and thus

At last were Cupid and Psyche
married.

—————

PARAPHRASES ON NONNUS.
HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIADNE
SLEEPING.

(*Dionysiaca*, Lib. XLVII.)

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the
desolate

And sleeping Ariadne, wonder
straight

Was mixed with love in his great
golden eyes ;
He turned to his Bacchantes in sur-
prise,
And said with guarded voice,—
' Hush ! strike no more
Your brazen cymbals ; keep those
voices still
Of voice and pipe ; and since ye
stand before
Queen Cypris, let her slumber as
she will !
And yet the cestus is not here in
proof.
A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has
stolen aloof :
In which case, as morning shines
in view,
Wake this Aglaia !—yet in Naxos,
who
Would veil a Grace so ? Hush !
And if that she
Were Hebe, which of all the gods
can be
The pourer-out of wine ? or if we
think
She's like the shining moon by
ocean's brink,
The guide of herds,—why, could she
sleep without
Endymion's breath on her cheek ?
or if I doubt
Of silver-footed Thetis, used to
tread
These shores,—even *she* (in rever-
ence be it said)
Has no such rosy beauty to dress
deep
With the blue waves. The Loxian
goddess might
Repose so from her hunting-toil
aright
Beside the sea, since toil gives birth
to sleep,
But who would find her with her
tunic loose,
Thus ? Stand off, Thracian ! stand
off ! Do not leap,

Not this way ! Leave that piping,
since I choose,
O dearest Pan, and let Athene rest !
And yet if she be Pallas . . truly
guessed . .
Her lance is—where ? her helm
and ægis—where ?'
—As Bacchus closed, the miserable
Fair
Awoke at last, sprang upward from
the sands,
And gazing wild on that wild throng
that stands
Around, around her, and no The-
seus there !—
Her voice went moaning over shore
and sea,
Beside the halcyon's cry ; she call-
ed her love ;
She named her hero, and raged
maddeningly [above,
Against the brine of waters ; and
Sought the ship's track and cursed
the hours she slept ;
And still the chiefest execration
swept
Against queen Paphia, mother of
the ocean ;
And cursed and prayed by times in
her emotion
The winds all round. . . .
Her grief did make her glorious ;
her despair
Adorned her with its weight. Poor
wailing child !
She looked like Venus when the
goddess smiled
At liberty of godship, debonaire ;
Poor Ariadne ! and her eyelids fair
Hid looks beneath them lent her by
Persuasion
And every Grace, with tears of
Love's own passion.
She wept long ; then she spake :—
' Sweet sleep did come
While sweetest Theseus went. O,
glad and dumb,

<p>I wish he had left me still ! for in my sleep I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep My new bride-state within my Theseus' hall ; And heard the pomp of Hymen, and the call Of ' Ariadne, Ariadne,' sung In choral joy ; and there with joy I hung Spring-blossoms round love's altar ! —ay, and wore A wreath myself ; and felt <i>him</i> evermore, Oh, evermore beside me, with his mighty Grave head bowed down in prayer to Aphrodite ! Why, what sweet, sweet dream ! <i>He</i> went with it, And left me here unwedded where I sit ! Persuasion help me ! The dark night did make me A brideship, the fair morning takes away ; My Love had left me when the Hour did wake me ; And while I dreamed of marriage, as I say, And blest it well, my blessed Theseus left me ; And thus the sleep, I loved so, has bereft me. Speak to me, rocks, and tell my grief to-day, Who stole my love of Athens ?' . .</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(<i>Dionysiaca</i>, Lib. XLVII.)</p> <p>THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her sorrow crossed :— ' O maiden, dost thou mourn for having lost The false Athenian heart ? and dost thou still</p>	<p>Take thought of Theseus, when thou may'st at will Have Bacchus for a husband ? Bacchus bright A god in place of mortal ! Yes, and though The mortal youth be charming in thy sight, [below, That man of Athens cannot strive In beauty and valor, with my deity ! Thou'lt tell me of the labyrinthine dweller, The fierce man-bull, he slew : I pray thee, be, Fair Ariadne, the true deed's true teller, And mention thy clue's help ! be- cause, forsooth, Thine armed Athenian hero had not found A power to fight on that prodigious ground, Unless a lady in her rosy youth Had lingered near him : not to speak the truth Too definitely out till names be known— Like Paphia's—Love's—and Ariad- ne's own. Thou wilt not say that Athens can compare With Æther, nor that Minos rules like Zeus, Nor yet that Gnossus has such gold- en air [ble use As high Olympus. Ha ! for no- We came to Naxos ! Love has well intended To change thy bridegroom ! Happy thou, defended From entering in thy Theseus' earthly hall, That thou may'st hear the laughters rise and fall Instead, where Bacchus rules ! Or wilt thou choose A still, surpassing glory ?—take it all,—</p>
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A heavenly house, Kronion's self
 for kin,— [in
 A place where Cassiopea sits with-
 Inferior light, for all her daughter's
 sake,
 Since Perseus, even amid the stars,
 must take
 Andromeda in chains ætherial!
 But *I* will wreath *thee*, sweet, an
 astral crown,
 And as my queen and spouse thou
 shalt be known—
 Mine, the crown-lover's!' Thus, at
 length, he proved
 His comfort on her: and the maid
 was moved;
 And casting Theseus' memory
 down the brine,
 She straight received the troth of
 her divine
 Fair Bacchus; Love stood by to
 close the rite:
 The marriage-chorus struck up clear
 and light,
 Flowers sprouted fast about the
 chamber green,
 And with spring-garlands on their
 heads, I ween,
 The Orchomenian dancers came
 along,
 And danced their rounds in Naxos
 to the song.
 A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dit
 Right shrilly: and a Naiad sate be-
 side
 A fountain, with her bare foot shelv-
 ing it,
 And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous
 bride,
 Whom thus the god of grapes had
 deified. [wont,
 Ortygia sang out, louder than her
 An ode which Phœbus gave her to
 be tried,
 And leapt in chorus, with her stead-
 fast front,
 While prophet Love, the stars have
 called a brother,

Burnt in his crown, and twined in
 one another,
 His love-flower with the purple
 roses, given
 I 1 type of that new crown assigned
 in heaven.

PARAPHRASE ON HESIOD.

BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.

(*Theog.*, 947.)

THE golden-haired Bacchus did es-
 pouse [daughter,
 That fairest Ariadne, Minos'
 And made her wifehood blossom in
 the house;
 Where such protective gifts Kro-
 nion brought her,
 Nor Death nor Age could find her
 when they sought her.

PARAPHRASE ON EURIP-
 IDES.

ANTISTROPHE.

(*Troades*, 853.)

LOVE, Love who once didst pass the
 Dardan portals,
 Because of Heavenly passion!
 Who once didst lift up Troy in ex-
 ultation,
 To mingle in thy bond the high Im-
 mortals!—
 Love, turned from his own name
 To Zeus' shame,
 Can help no more at all.
 And Eos' self, the fair, white-steed-
 ed morning,—
Her light which blesses other lands,
 returning,
 Has changed to a gloomy pall!
 She looked across the land with
 eyes of amber,—
 She saw the city's fall,—
 She, who, in pure embraces,
 Had held there, in the hymeneal
 chamber,

Her children's father, bright Tithonus old,
Whom the four steeds with starry brows and paces
Bore on, snatched upward, on the car of gold,
And with him, all the land's full hope of joy!
The love-charms of the gods are vain for Troy.

NOTE.—Rendered after Mr. Burges's reading, in some respects—not quite all.

PARAPHRASES ON HOMER.

HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE.

(*Iliad*, Lib. VI.)

SHE rushed to meet him : the nurse following [child,
Bore on her bosom the unsaddened
A simple babe, prince Hector's well-loved son.
Like a star shining when the world is dark.
Scamandrius, Hector called him, but the rest [prince,
Named him Astyanax, the city's
Because that Hector only had saved Troy. [silently :
He, when he saw his son, smiled
While, dropping tears, Andromache pressed on,
And clung to his hand, and spake, and named his name.
'Hector, my best one,—thine own nobleness
Must needs undo thee. Pity hast thou none
For this young child, and this most sad myself,
Who soon shall be thy widow—since that soon
The Greeks will slay thee in the general rush—
And then, for me, what refuge, rest of thee,

But to go graveward? Then, no comfort more
Shall touch me, as in the old sad times thou know'st—
Grief only—grief! I have no father now,
No mother mild! Achilles the divine,
He slew my father, sacked his lofty Thebes,
Cilicia's populous city, and slew its king, [corse,
Eétion—father, did not spoil the
Because the Greek revered him in his soul,
But burnt the body with its dædal arms,
And poured the dust out gently. Round that tomb
The Oreads, daughters of the goat-nursed Zeus,
Tripped in a ring, and planted their green elms.
There were seven brothers with me in the house,
Who all went down to Hades in one day,—
For *he* slew all, Achilles the divine, Famed for his swift feet,—slain among their herds
Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking sheep!
My mother too, who queened it o'er the woods
Of Hippoplacia, he, with other spoil, Seized,—and, for golden ransom, freed too late,—
Since, as she went home, arrowy Artemis [door.
Met her and slew her at my father's
But—oh, my Hector,—thou art still to me
Father and mother!—yes, and brother dear,
O thou, who art my sweetest spouse beside!
Come now, and take me into pity'
Stay

I' the town here with us! Do not
 make thy child
 An orphan, nor a widow, thy poor
 wife! [where
 Call up the people to the fig-tree,
 The city is most accessible, the wall
 Most easy of assault!—for thrice
 thereby
 The boldest Greeks have mounted
 to the breach,—
 Both Ajaxes, the famed Idomeneus,
 Two sons of Atreus, and the noble
 one
 Of Tydeus,—whether taught by
 some wise seer,
 Or by their own souls prompted
 and inspired.'

Great Hector answered:—' Lady,
 for these things
 It is my part to care. And I fear
 most
 My Trojans, and their daughters,
 and their wives,
 Who through their long veils would
 glance scorn at me, [war.
 If, coward-like, I shunned the open
 Nor doth my own soul prompt me
 to that end!
 I learnt to be a brave man con-
 stantly,
 And to fight foremost where my
 Trojans fight,
 And vindicate my father's glory
 and mine—
 Because I know, by instinct and
 my soul,
 The day comes that our sacred
 Troy must fall,
 And Priam and his people. Know-
 ing which,
 I have no such grief for all my
 Trojans' sake, [king,
 For Hecuba's, for Priam's, our old
 Not for my brothers', who so many
 and brave
 Shall bite the dust before our ene-
 mies,—

As, sweet, for *thee*!—to think some
 mailèd Greek
 Shall lead thee weeping and deprive
 thy life
 Of the free sun-sight—that, when
 gone away
 To Argos, thou shalt throw the
 distaff there
 Not for thy uses—or shalt carry
 instead
 Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy
 a doom,
 The water of Greek wells—Messeis'
 own, [by,
 Or Hyperea's!—that some stander-
 Marking thy tears fall, shall say,
 ' This is she,
 The wife of that same Hector who
 fought best
 Of all the Trojans, when all fought
 for Troy—' [thy pang
 Ay!—and, so speaking, shall renew
 That, reft of him so named, thou
 shouldst survive
 To a slave's life! But earth shall
 hide my corse
 Ere that shriek sound, wherewith
 thou art dragged from Troy.'

Thus Hector spake, and stretched
 his arms to his child.
 Against the nurse's breast, with
 childly cry,
 The boy clung back, and shunned
 his father's face,
 And feared the glittering brass and
 waving hair [down.
 Of the high helmet, nodding horror
 The father smiled, the mother could
 not choose
 But smile too. Then he lifted from
 his brow
 The helm, and set it on the ground
 to shine:
 Then kissed his dear child—raised
 him with both arms,
 And thus invoked Zeus and the
 general gods:—

'Zeus, and all godships! grant this boy of mine
To be the Trojans' help, as I myself,— [Troy!
To live a brave life and rule well in
Till men shall say, "The son exceeds the sire
By a far glory." Let him bring home spoil
Heroic, and make glad his mother's heart.'

With which prayer, to his wife's extended arms
He gave the child; and she received him straight
To her bosom's fragrance—smiling up her tears.
Hector gazed on her till his soul was moved;
Then softly touched her with his hand and spake.
'My best one—ware of passion and excess [world
In any fear. There's no man in the
Can send me to the grave apart from fate,—
And no man. . . Sweet, I tell thee. . . can fly fate—
No good nor bad man. Doom is self-fulfilled.
But now, go home, and ply thy woman's task
Of wheel and distaff! bid thy maidens haste
Their occupation. War's a care for men—
For all men born in Troy, and chief for me.'

Thus spake the noble Hector, and resumed
His crested helmet, while his spouse went home;
But as she went, still looked back lovingly,
Dropping the tears from her reverted face.

THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS.

(*Odys.*, Lib. XX.)

AND so these daughters fair of Pandarus,
The whirlwinds took. The gods had slain their kin:
They were left orphans in their father's house.
And Aphrodite came to comfort them
With incense, luscious honey, and fragrant wine;
And Here gave them beauty of face and soul
Beyond all women; purest Artemis
Endowed them with her stature and white grace;
And Pallas taught their hands to flash along
Her famous looms. Then, bright with deity,
Toward far Olympus, Aphrodite went
To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys
And his full knowledge of man's mingled fate)
How best to crown those other gifts with love
And worthy marriage: but, what time she went,
The ravishing Harpies snatched the maids away,
And gave them up, for all their loving eyes,
To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

ANOTHER VERSION.

So the storms bore the daughters of Pandarus out into thrall—
The gods slew their parents; the orphans were left in the hall.
And there came to feed their young lives, Aphrodite divine,
With the incense, the sweet-tasting honey, the sweet-smelling wine

Here brought them her wit above
woman's, and beauty of face ;
And pure Artemis gave them her
stature, that form might have
grace :

And Athene instructed their hands
in her works of renown ;

Then afar to Olympus, divine
Aphrodite moved on :

To complete other gifts, by uniting
each girl to a mate,

She sought Zeus, who has joy in
the thunder and knowledge of
fate,

Whether mortals have good chance
or ill ! But the Harpies alate

In the storm came, and swept off
the maidens, and gave them
to wait,

With that love in their eyes, on the
Furies who constantly hate.

PARAPHRASE ON ANA- CREON.

ODE TO THE SWALLOW.

THOU indeed, little Swallow,
A sweet yearly comer,
Art building a hollow
New nest every summer,
And straight dost depart
Where no gazing can follow,
Past Memphis, down Nile !
Ay ! but love all the while
Builds his nest in my heart,
Through the cold winter-weeks :
And as one Love takes flight,
Comes another, O Swallow,
In an egg warm and white,
And another is callow.
And the large gaping beaks
Chirp all day and all night :
And the Loves who are older
Help the young and the poor
Loves,
And the young Loves grown
bolder
Increase by the score Loves—

Why, what can be done ?
If a noise comes from one,
Can I bear all this rout of a hun-
dred and more Loves ?

SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO.

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 that 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.

From Achilles Tatius.

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

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 heart-light cast before,

And, of all Beloveds, none
Standing farther than the door—

Not a name being dear to thought
With its owner beyond call,

Nor a face, unless it brought

Its own shadow to the wall,
 When the worst recorded change
 Was of apple dropt from bough,
 When love's sorrow seemed more
 strange [now ;
 Than love's treason can seem
 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.

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 *keïtai* with a cry,—
 How Ulysses left the sunlight
 For the pale eidola race
 Blank and passive through the dun
 light,
 Staring blindly on his face ;
 How that true wife said to Pœtus,
 With calm smile and wounded
 heart,
 ' Sweet, it hurts not ! '—how Adme-
 tus
 Saw his blessed one depart.

How King Arthur proved his mis-
 sion, [horn,
 And Sir Rowland wound his
 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.

Ay ! but soon ye woke up shriek-
 ing,—

As a child that wakes at night
 From a dream of sisters speaking
 In a garden's summer-light,—
 That wakes, starting up and bound-
 ing,

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 ral-
 lied

And your eye and voice grown
 bold—

Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pal-
 lid,

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 un-
 aware,—
 God's Divinest ye could utter
 With less trembling in your pray-
 ers!
 Ye have dropt adown your head,
 and it seems as if ye tread
 On your own hearts in the path
 Ye are called to in His wrath,—
 And your prayers go up in wail!
 —'Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
 O Thou agonized on cross?
 Art Thou reading all its tale?
 So, mournfully ye think upon the
 Dead.'

Pray, pray, *thou* who also weapest,
 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-tan-
 gles
 Of the wildest stranger-land:
 Trust: the blessed deathly angels
 Whisper, 'Sabbath hours at
 hand!' [gory
 By the heart's wound when most
 By the longest agony,
 Smile!—Behold, in sudden glory
 The TRANSFIGURED smiles on
thee!
 And ye lifted up your head, and it
 seemed as if He said,
 'My Beloved, is it so?
 Have ye tasted of my wo?
 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.

A DRAMA OF EXILE.

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

LUCIFER, *alone.*

REJOICE in the clefts of Gehenna.
 My exiled, my host!
 Earth has exiles as hopeless as
 when a

Heaven's empire was lost.
 Through the seams of her shaken
 foundations,
 Smoke up in great joy!
 With the smoke of your fierce exul-
 tations
 Deform and destroy!
 Smoke up with your lurid revenges,
 And darken the face
 Of the white heavens, and taunt
 them with changes
 From glory and grace.

We, in falling, while destiny stran-
gles,

Pull down with us all.

Let them look to the rest of their
angels!

Who's safe from a fall?

HE saves not. Where's Adam?

Can pardon

Requicken that sod?

Unkinged is the King of the Garden,
The image of God.

Other exiles are cast out of Eden,—
More curse has been hurled.

Come up, O my locusts, and feed in
The green of the world.

Come up! we have conquered by
evil.

Good reigns not alone.

I prevail now, and, angel or devil,
Inherit a throne.

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

Lucifer. Hail Gabriel, the keep-
er of the gate!

Now that the fruit is plucked, prince
Gabriel,

I hold that Eden is impregnable
Under thy keeping.

Gabriel. Angel of the sin,

Such as thou standest,—pale in the
drear light

Which rounds the rebel's work with
Maker's wrath,—

Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls;
A monumental melancholy gloom

Seen down all ages; whence to
mark despair

And measure out the distances from
good!

Go from us straightway.

Lucifer. Wherefore?

Gabriel. Lucifer,

Thy last step in this place trod sor-
row up.

Recoil before that sorrow, if not
this sword.

Lucifer. Angels are in the
world—wherefore not I?

Exiles are in the world—wherefore
not I?

The cursed are in the world—
wherefore not I?

Gabriel. Depart.

Lucifer. And where's the logic
of 'depart'?

Our lady Eve had half been satisfied
To obey her Maker, if I had not
learnt

To fix my postulate better. Dost
thou dream

Of guarding some monopoly in
heaven

Instead of earth? Why I can
dream with thee

To the length of thy wings.

Gabriel. I do not dream.

This is not Heaven, even in a dream,
nor earth,

As earth was once,—first breathed
among the stars, [divine,

Articulate glory from the mouth
To which the myriad spheres thrill-

ed audibly

Touched like a lute-string,—and
the sons of God

Said AMEN, singing it. I know
that this

Is earth not new created but new
cursed—

This, Eden's gate not opened but
built up

With a final cloud of sunset. Do
I dream?

Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost
By Lucifer the serpent! this the

sword

(This sword alive with justice and
with fire!) [cifer

That smote upon the forehead, Lu-
The angel! Wherefore, angel, ga

. . . depart—

Enough is sinned and suffered.

Lucifer. By no means.
 Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer on!
 It holds fast still—it cracks not under
 curse; [ently
 It holds like mine immortal. Pres-
 We'll sow it thick enough with
 graves as green
 Or greener, certes, than its knowl-
 edge-tree— [of life,
 We'll have the cypress for the tree
 More eminent for shadow—for the
 rest
 We'll build it dark with towns and
 pyramids,
 And temples, if it please you:—
 we'll have feasts [wars,
 And funerals also, merrymakes and
 Till blood and wine shall mix and
 run along
 Right o'er the edges. And, good
 Gabriel,
 (Ye like that word in Heaven!) I
 too have strength—
 Strength to behold Him and not
 worship Him;
 Strength to fall from Him and not
 cry on Him; [yet
 Strength to be in the universe and
 Neither God nor his servant. The
 red sign
 Burnt on my forehead, which you
 taunt me with, [God;
 Is God's sign that it bows not unto
 The potter's mark upon his work,
 to show
 It rings well to the striker. I and
 the earth
 Can bear more curse.

Gabriel. O miserable earth,
 O ruined angel!

Lucifer. Well! and if it be,
 I CHOSE this ruin: I elected it
 Of my will, not of service. What
 I do,
 I do volitent, not obedient,
 And overtop thy crown with my
 despair.

My sorrow crowns me. Get thee
 back to Heaven;
 And leave me to the earth, which
 is mine own
 In virtue of her ruin, as I hers
 In virtue of my revolt! turn those
 from both
 That bright, impassive, passive an-
 gel-hood; [more
 And spare to read us backward any
 Of the spent hallelujahs.

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

Lucifer Let it pass!
 No more, thou Gabriel! What if
 I stand up
 And strike my brow against the
 crystalline
 Roofing the creatures,—shall I say
 for that, [stand,—
 My stature is too high for me to
 Henceforward I must sit? Sit
 thou.

Gabriel. I kneel.

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

Gabriel. Through Heaven and
 earth
 God's will moves freely; and I fol-
 low it, [flows
 As colour follows light. He over-
 The firmamental walls with deity,
 Therefore with love; His light-
 nings go abroad,
 His pity may do so; His angels
 must
 Whene'er He gives them charges.

Lucifer. Verily,
I and my demons—who are spirits
of scorn—
Might hold this charge of standing
with a sword
'Twixt man and his inheritance, as
well
As the benignant angel of you all.
Gabriel. Thou speakest in the
shadow of thy change.
If thou hadst gazed upon the face
of God
This morning for a moment, thou
hadst known
That only pity can fitly chastise,
While hate avenges.
Lucifer. As it is, I know
Something of pity. When I reeled
in Heaven,
And my sword grew too heavy for
my grasp,
Stabbing through matter which it
could not pierce
So much as the first shell of,—to-
ward the throne ;
When I fell back, down,—staring
up as I fell,—
The lightnings holding open my
scathed lids,
And thought of the infinite of God
Hurled after to precipitate descent ;
When countless angel faces still
and stern
Pressed out upon me from the level
heavens, [fell
Adown the abysmal spaces ; and I
Trampled down by your stillness,
and struck blind
By the sight within your eyes ;—
'twas then I knew
How ye could pity, my kind angel-
hood !
Gabriel. Alas, discrowned one,
by the truth in me
Which God keeps in me, I would
give away
All,—save that truth and His love
keeping it,—

To lead thee home again into the
light, [morning stars ;
And hear thy voice chant with the
When their rays tremble round
them with much song
Sung in more gladness !
Lucifer. Sing, my morning star !
Last beautiful—last heavenly—that
I loved !
If I could drench thy golden locks
with tears,
What were it to this angel ?
Gabriel. What love is !
And now I have named God.
Lucifer. Yet, Gabriel,
By the lie in me which I keep my-
self
Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it
otherwise,
What dost thou here, vouchsafing
tender thoughts
To that earth-angel or earth-de-
mon—which
Thou and I have not solved the
problem yet
Enough to argue,—that fallen
Adam there,—
That red-clay and a breath ! who
must, forsooth,
Live in a new apocalypse of sense,
With beauty and music waving in
his trees [glad
And running in his rivers to make
His soul made perfect ; is it not for
hope,
A hope within thee deeper than
thy truth,
Of finally conducting him and his
To fill the vacant thrones of me
and mine,
Which affront heaven with their
vacuity ?
Gabriel. Angel, there are no
vacant thrones in Heaven
To suit thy empty words. Glory
and life
Fulfil their own depletions ; and if
God

Sighed you far from Him, His next
breath drew in

A compensative splendour up the
vast,

Flushing the starry arteries!

Lucifer. What a change!
So let the vacant thrones and gar-
dens too

Fill as may please you!—and be
pitiful,

As ye translate that word, to the
dethroned

And exiled, man or angel. The
fact stands,

That I, the rebel, the cast out and
down,

Am here, and will not go; while
there, along

The light to which ye flash the des-
ert out

Flies your adopted Adam! your
red clay

In two kinds, both being flawed.
Why, what is this?

Whose work is this? Whose hand
was in the work?

Against whose hand? In this last
strife, methinks,

I am not a fallen angel!

Gabriel. Dost thou know
Aught of those exiles?

Lucifer. Ay: I know they have
fled

Silent all day along the wilderness:
I know they wear for burdens on

their backs,
The thought of a shut gate of Par-
adise,

And faces of the marshalled cheru-
bim

Shining against, not for them! and
I know

They dare not look in one another's
face,

As if each were a cherub!

Gabriel. Dost thou know
Aught of their future?

Lucifer. Only as much as this:

That evil will increase and multi-
ply

Without a benediction.

Gabriel. Nothing more?

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

Gabriel. God is more.

Lucifer. Proving what?

Gabriel. That he is God,
And capable of saving. *Lucifer,*

I charge thee by the solitude He
kept [God!

Ere he created,—leave the earth to
Lucifer. My foot is on the

earth firm as my sin!

Gabriel. I charge thee by the
memory of Heaven

Ere any sin was done,—leave earth
to God!

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

Gabriel. I charge thee by the
choral song we sang

When up against the white shore
of our feet,

The depths of the creation swelled
and brake,—

And the new worlds, the beaded
foam and flower

Of all that coil, roared outward in-
to space

On thunder-edges,—leave the earth
to God.

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

Gabriel. I charge thee by that
mournful morning star

Which trembles

Lucifer. Enough spoken. As
the pine

In norland forest drops its weight
of snows

By a night's growth, so, growing to-
ward my ends, [Gabriel!

I drop thy counsels. Farewell, *Ga-*
Watch out thy service; I achieve
my will.

And peradventure in the after years,

When thoughtful men shall bend
 their spacious brows
 Upon the storm and strife seen
 everywhere,
 To ruffle their smooth manhood and
 break up [hope
 With lurid lights of intermittent
 Their human fear and wrong,—they
 may discern
 The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS.

(*Chanting from Paradise, while
 Adam and Eve fly across the
 sword-glare.*)

Harken, oh harken! let your souls
 behind you

Turn, gently moved!

Our voices feel along the Dread to
 find you,

O lost, beloved!

Through the thick-shielded and
 strong-marshalled angels,

They press and pierce:

Our requiems follow fast on our
 evangels,—

Voice throbs in verse!

We are but orphaned spirits left in
 Eden,

A time ago—

God gave us golden cups: and we
 were bidden

To feed you so!

But now our right hand hath no cup
 remaining,

No work to do;

The mystic hydromel is spilt and
 staining

The whole earth through:

Most ineradicable stains for showing
 (Not interfused!)

That brighter colours were the
 world's foregoing,

Than shall be used.

Harken, oh, oh harken ye shall
 harken surely

For years and years,

The noise beside you, dripping cold-
 ly, purely,

Of spirits' tears! [you,

The yearning to a beautiful denied
 Shall strain your powers:

Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide
 you,

Resumed from ours!

In all your music our pathetic minor
 Your ears shall cross;

And all good gifts shall mind you
 of diviner,

With sense of loss!

We shall be near you in your poet-
 languors

And wild extremes;

What time ye vex the desert with
 vain angers,

Or mock with dreams.

And when upon you, weary after
 roaming,

Death's seal is put,

By the foregone ye shall discern the
 coming,

Through eyelids shut.

Spirits of the trees:

Hark! the Eden trees are stirring,
 Slow and solemn in your hearing!

Oak and linden, palm and fir,

Tamarisk and juniper,

Each still throbbing in vibration

Since that crowning of creation,

When the God breath spake abroad,

Let us make man like to God!

And the pine stood quivering

As the awful word went by;

Like a vibrant music-string [sky!

Stretched from mountain-peak to

And the platan did expand

Slow and gradual, branch and head,

And the cedar's strong black shade

Fluttered brokenly and grand!

Grove and wood were swept aslant

In emotion jubilant.

Voice of the same, but softer.

Which divine impulsions cleaves

In dim movements to the leaves

Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted
 In the sunlight greenly sifted,—
 In the sunlight and the moonlight
 Greenly sifted through the trees.
 Ever wave the Eden trees
 In the nightlight and the noonlight,
 With a ruffling of green branches
 Shaded off to resonances ;
 Never stirred by rain or breeze !

Fare ye well, farewell !
 The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,

Expire at Eden's door !
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some murmur which ye
 heard before :

Farewell ! the trees of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

River Spirits.

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

A softer voice.

Think a little while ye hear,
 Of the banks
 Where the willows and the deer
 Crowd in intermingled ranks,
 As if all would drink at once
 Where the living water runs !
 Of the fishes' golden edges
 Flashing in and out the sedges :
 Of the swans on silver thrones,
 Floating down the winding streams
 With impassive eyes turned shore-
 ward,

And a chant of undertones,—
 And the lotos leaning forward
 To help them into dreams.

Fare ye well, farewell !
 The river-sounds, no longer audible,
 Expire at Eden's door !
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some murmur which ye
 heard before :

Farewell ! the streams of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

Bird-Spirit.

I am the nearest nightingale
 That singeth in Eden after you ;
 And I am singing loud and true,
 And sweet,—I do not fail !
 I sit upon a cypress bough,
 Close to the gate ; and I fling my
 song

Over the gate and through the mail
 Of the warden angels marshalled
 strong,—

Over the gate and after you !
 And the warden angels let it pass,
 Because the poor brown bird, alas !
 Sings in the garden sweet and true.
 And I build my song of high pure
 notes,

Note over note, height over height,
 Till I strike the arch of the Infinite
 And I bridge abysmal agonies
 With strong, clear calms of harmo-
 nies,—

And something abides, and some-
 thing floats,
 In the song which I sing after you
 Fare ye well, farewell !

The creature-sounds, no longer au-
 dible,

Expire at Eden's door !
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some cadence which ye
 heard before :
 Farewell ! the birds of Eden
 Ye shall hear nevermore.

Flower-Spirits.

We linger, we linger,
 The last of the throng !
 Like the tones of a singer
 Who loves his own song
 We are spirit-aromas
 Of blossom and bloom :
 We call your thoughts home as
 Ye breathe our perfume ;
 To the amaranth's splendour
 Afire on the slopes ;

To the lily-bells tender,
 And grey heliotropes !
 To the poppy-plains keeping
 Such dream-breath and blee
 That the angels there stepping
 Grew whiter to see !
 To the nook, set with moly,
 Ye jested one day in,
 Till your smile waxed too holy
 And left your lips praying !
 To the rose in the bower-place,
 That dripped o'er you sleeping ;
 To the asphodel flower-place,
 Ye walked ankle deep in !
 We pluck at your raiment,
 We stroke down your hair,
 We faint in our lament
 And pine into air.
 Fare ye well, farewell !
 The Eden scents, no longer sensi-
 ble,
 Expire at Eden's door !
 Each footstep of your treading
 Treads out some fragrance which
 ye knew before :
 Farewell ! the flowers of Eden
 Ye shall smell nevermore.

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

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

Adam. Pausing a moment on
 this outer edge
 Where the supernal sword-glare
 cuts in light
 The dark exterior desert,—hast thou
 strength, [gate ?
 Beloved, to look behind us to the
Eve. Have I not strength to
 look up to thy face ?
Adam. We need to be strong :
 you spectacle of cloud

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

Eve. Though we were near
 enough to see them shine,
 The shadow on thy face were aw-
 fuller,
 To me, at least,—to me—than all
 their light.

Adam. What is this, Eve ? thou
 droppest heavily
 In a heap earthward : and thy body
 heaves [hair !
 Under the golden floodings of thy
Eve. O Adam, Adam ! by that
 name of Eve—
 Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me
 little now,

Seeing that I now confess myself
thy death
And thine undoer, as the snake was
mine,— [away,
I do adjure thee, put me straight
Together with my name. Sweet,
punish me!
O Love, be just! and ere we pass
beyond
The light cast outward by the fiery
sword,
Into the dark, which earth must be
to us,
Bruise my head with thy foot,—as
the curse said
My seed shall be the first tempter's :
strike with curse,
As God struck in the garden! and
as HE, [wrath,
Being satisfied with justice and with
Did roll His thunder gentler at the
close,—
Thou, peradventure, may'st at last
recoil
To some soft need of mercy.
Strike, my lord!
I, also, after tempting, writhe on
the ground;
And I would feed on ashes from
thy hand,
As suits me, O my tempted.
Adam. My beloved,
Mine Eve and life—I have no other
name
For thee or for the sun than what
ye are, [fallen,
My utter life and light! If we have
It is that we have sinned,—we :
God is just ;
And since His curse doth compre-
hend us both,
It must be that His balance holds
the weights [What!
Of first and last sin on a level.
Shall I who had not virtue to stand
straight
Among the hills of Eden, here
assume

To mend the justice of the perfect
God,
By piling up a curse upon His curse,
Against thee—thee—
Eve. For so, perchance, thy
God
Might take thee into grace for scorn-
ing me ;
Thy wrath against the sinner giving
proof
Of inward abrogation of the sin!
And also the blessed angels might
come down
And walk with thee as erst,—I
think they would,—
Because I was not near to make
them sad, [cence.
Or soil the rustling of their inno-
Adam. They know me. I am
deepest in the guilt
If last in the transgression.
Eve. THOU!
Adam. If God
Who gave the right and joyaunce
of the world
Both unto thee and me,—gave thee
to me, [the worst,
The best gift last; the last sin was
Which sinned against more comple-
ment of gifts
And grace of giving. God! I ren-
der back
Strong benediction and perpetual
praise
From mortal feeble lips, (as incense-
smoke,
Out of a little censer, may fill heaven)
That Thou, in striking my benumb-
ed hands
And forcing them to drop all other
boons [light,—
Of beauty and dominion and de-
Hast left this well-beloved Eve—
this life
Within life—this best gift between
their palms,
In gracious compensation!
Eve. Is it thy voice?

Or some saluting angel's—calling
home

My feet into the garden?

Adam. O my God!

I, standing here between the glory
and dark,— [forth

The glory of thy wrath projected
From Eden's wall; the dark of our
distress

Which settles a step off in that
dear world—

Lift up to Thee the hands from
whence hath fallen [Thee

Only creation's sceptre,—thanking
That rather Thou hast cast me out
with *her*

Than left me lorn of her in Paradise;
With angel looks and angel songs
around

To show the absence of her eyes
and voice,

And make society full desertness,
Without her use in comfort!

Eve. Where is loss?

Am I in Eden? can another speak
Mine own love's tongue?

Adam. Because with *her*, I
stand

Upright, as far as can be in this fall,
And look away from heaven which
doth accuse,

And look away from earth which
doth convict,

Into her face; and crown my dis-
crowned brow

Out of her love; and put the
thought of her [birds;

Around me, for an Eden full of
And lift her body up—thus—to my
heart;

And with my lips upon her lips,—
thus, thus,—

Do quicken and sublimate my mor-
tal breath

Which cannot climb against the
grave's steep sides

But overtops this grief!

Eve. I am renewed:

My eyes grow with the light which
is in thine;

The silence of my heart is full of
sound.

Hold me up—so! Because I com-
prehend

This human love, I shall not be
afraid

Of any human death; and yet be-
cause

I know this strength of love, I
seem to know

Death's strength by that same sign.
Kiss on my lips,

To shut the door close on my ris-
ing soul,— [ment

Lest it pass outwards in astonish-
And leave thee lonely.

Adam. Yet thou liest, *Eve*,
Bent heavily on thyself across mine
arm,

Thy face flat to the sky.

Eve. Ay! and the tears
Running as it might seem, my life
from me;

They run so fast and warm. Let
me lie so,

And weep so,—as if in a dream or
prayer,

Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the
hard, tight thought

Which clipped my heart and show-
ed me evermore

Loathed of thy justice as I loathe
the snake,

And as the pure ones loathe our
sin. To-day,

All day, beloved, as we fled across
This desolating radiance cast by
swords

Not suns, my lips prayed soundless
to myself,

Striking against each other—O
Lord God!

('Twas so I prayed) I ask Thee by
my sin,

And by thy curse, and by thy blame-
less heavens,

Make dreadful haste to hide me
 from thy face
 And from the face of my beloved
 here,
 For whom I am no helpmate, quick
 away
 Into the new dark mystery of death !
 I will lie still there ; I will make no
 plaint ;
 I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak
 a word,
 Nor struggle to come back beneath
 the sun
 Where peradventure I might sin
 anew
 Against thy mercy and his pleasure.
 Death,
 Oh, death, whate'er it be, is good
 enough [here
 For such as I am.--While for Adam
 No voice shall say again, in heaven
 or earth,

It is not good for him to be alone.

Adam. And was it good for
 such a prayer to pass,
 My unkind Eve, betwixt our mu-
 tual lives ?

If I am exiled, must I be bereaved ?

Eve. 'Twas an ill prayer : it
 shall be prayed no more ;
 And God did use it like a foolish-
 ness,

Giving no answer. Now my heart
 has grown

Too high and strong for such a
 foolish prayer :

Love makes it strong : and since I
 was the first

In the transgression, with a steady
 foot

I will be first to tread from this
 sword-glare

Into the outer darkness of the
 waste,—

And thus I do it.

Adam. Thus I follow thee,
 As erewhile in the sin.—What
 sounds ! what sounds !

I feel a music which comes straight
 from Heaven,

As tender as a watering dew.

Eve. I think
 That angels—not those guarding
 Paradise,—

But the love-angels who came erst
 to us,

And when we said 'GOD,' fainted
 unawares

Back from our mortal presence unto
 God,

(As if he drew them inward in a
 breath)

His name being heard of them,—I
 think that they

With sliding voices lean from heav-
 enly towers,

Invisible but gracious. Hark—how
 soft !

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

(Faint and tender.)

Mortal man and woman,

Go upon your travel !

Heaven assist the human

Smoothly to unravel

All that web of pain

Wherein ye are holden.

Do ye know our voices

Chanting down the golden ?

Do ye guess our choice is,

Being un beholden,

To be harkened by you, yet
 again ?

This pure door of opal,

God hath shut between us ;

Us, his shining people,

You who once have seen us,

And are blinded new !

Yet across the doorway,

Past the silence reaching,

Farewells evermore may,

Blessing in the teaching,

Glide from us to you.

First semichorus.

Think how erst your Eden,

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

Second semichorus.

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

First semichorus.

Or oft, when Heaven-descended,
 Stood we in your wondering sight
 In a mute apocalypse !
 With dumb vibrations on our lips
 From hosannas ended ;
 And grand half-vanishings
 Of the empyreal things
 Within our eyes belated !
 Till the heavenly Infinite
 Falling off from the Created,
 Left our inward contemplation
 Opened into ministration.

Chorus.

Then upon our axle turning
 Of great joy to sympathy,
 We sang out the morning
 Broadening up the sky.
 Or we drew
 Our music through
 The noontide's hush and heat
 and shine,

Informed with our intense Divine
 Interrupted vital notes
 Palpitating hither, thither,
 Burning out into the æther,
 Sensible like fiery notes.

Or, whenever twilight drifted
 Through the cedar masses,
 The globed sun we lifted ;
 Trailing purple, trailing gold
 Out between the passes
 Of the mountains manifold,
 To anthems slowly sung !
 While he, aweary, half in swoon,
 For joy to hear our climbing tune
 Transpierce the stars, concentric
 rings,—

The burden of his glory flung
 In broken lights upon our wings.

[*The Chant dies away confusedly and LUCIFER appears.*

Lucifer. Now may all fruits be
 pleasant to thy lips,
 Beautiful Eve ! The times have
 somewhat changed
 Since thou and I had talk beneath
 a tree ;

Albeit ye are not gods yet.

Eve. Adam ! hold
 My right hand strongly. It is
 Lucifer—

And we have love to lose.

Adam. I' the name of God,
 Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer !
 And leave us to the desert thou
 hast made

Out of thy treason. Bring no ser-
 pent slime [tears,
 Athwart this path kept holy to our
 Or we may curse thee with their
 bitterness.

Lucifer. Curse freely ! curses
 thicken. Why, this Eve
 Who thought me once part worthy
 of her ear,
 And somewhat wiser than the other
 beasts,—
 Drawing together her large globes
 of eyes,

The light of which is throbbing in
and out
Their steadfast continuity of gaze,—
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard
a knot,
And, down from her white heights
of womanhood,
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce
should fear
To wager such an apple as she
plucked,
Against one riper from the tree of
life,
That she could curse too—as a
woman may—
Smooth in the vowels.

Eve. So—speak wickedly!
I like it best so. Let thy words be
wounds,—
For, so, I shall not fear thy power
to hurt;
Trench on the forms of good by
open ill—
For, so, I shall wax strong and
grand with scorn:
Scorning myself for ever trusting
thee
As far as thinking, ere a snake ate
dust,
He could speak wisdom.

Lucifer. Our new gods, it
seems,
Deal more in thunders than in
courtesies:
And, sooth, mine own Olympus,
which anon
I shall build up to loud-voiced
imagery
From all the wandering visions of
the world,
May show worse railing than our
lady Eve
Pours o'er the rounding of her ar-
gent arm.
But why should this be? Adam
pardoned Eve.

Adam. Adam loved Eve. Je-
hovah pardoned both!

Eve. Adam forgave Eve—be-
cause loving Eve.

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

[*Aside.*
Eve. Hold thy wrath,
Beloved Adam! let me answer
him;
For this time he speaks truth,
which we should hear,
And asks for mercy, which I most
should grant,
In like wise, as he tells us—in like
wise!

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

Adam. At once, go.
Lucifer Forgive! and go! Ye
images of clay,
Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—
what jest is this?
What words are these to use? By
what a thought
Conceive ye of me? Yesterday—
a snake!
To-day, what?
Adam. A strong spirit.
Eve. A sad spirit.

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

Lucifer. Who told thee, Adam?

Adam. *Thou!* The prodigy
Of thy vast brows and melancholy
eyes

Which comprehend the heights of
some great fall.

I think that thou hast one day worn
a crown

Under the eyes of God.

Lucifer. And why of God?

Adam. It were no crown else!

Verily, I think

Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yester-
day

Said it so surely; but I know to-
day

Grief by grief, sin by sin.

Lucifer. A crown by a crown.

Adam. Ay, mock me! now I
know more than I knew.

Now I know thou art fallen below
hope

Of final re-ascent.

Lucifer. Because?

Adam. Because

A spirit who expected to see God,
Though at the last point of a mill-
ion years,

Could dare no mockery of a ruined
man

Such as this Adam.

Lucifer. Who is high and
bold—

Be it said passing!—of a good red
clay

Discovered on some top of Leba-
non,

Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep
Of the black eagle's wing! A fur-
long lower

Had made a meeker king for Eden.
Soh!

Is it not possible, by sin and grief
(To give the things your names)
that spirits should rise

Instead of falling?

Adam. Most impossible.
The Highest being the Holy and
the Glad,

Whoever rises must approach de-
light

And sanctity in the act.

Lucifer. Ha, my clay king!
Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very

long

The after generations. Earth, me-
thinks,

Will disinherit thy philosophy

For a new doctrine suited to thine
heirs;

And class these present dogmas
with the rest

Of the old-world traditions—Eden
fruits

And Saurian fossils.

Eve. Speak no more with
him,

Beloved! it is not good to speak
with him.

Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no
more:

We have no pardon which thou
dost not scorn,

Nor any bliss, thou seest, for
coveting,

Nor innocence for staining. Being
bereft,

We would be alone!—Go.

Lucifer. Ah! ye talk the
same,

All of you—spirits and clay—go,
and depart!

In Heaven they said so; and at
Eden's gate,—

And here, reiterant, in the wilder-
ness!

None saith, Stay with me, for thy
face is fair!

None saith, Stay with me, for thy
voice is sweet!

And yet I was not fashioned out of
clay.

Look on me, woman! Am I beau-
tiful?

Eve. Thou hast a glorious darkness,

Lucifer. Nothing more ?

Eve. I think no more.

Lucifer. False Heart—thou thinkest more !

Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,

Unwillingly but fully, that I stand Most absolute in beauty. As yourself

Were fashioned very good at best, so we

Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word

Which thrilled behind us—God Himself being moved

When that august work of a perfect shape,

His dignities of sovran angel-hood Swept out into the universe,—divine

With thundrous movements, earnest looks of gods,

And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings. [form,

Whereof was I in motion and in A part not poorest. And yet,—yet, perhaps,

This beauty which I speak of, is not here,

As God's voice is not here ; nor even my crown—

I do not know. What is this thought or thing

Which I call beauty ? is it thought or thing ?

Is it a thought accepted for a thing ? Or both ? or neither ?—a pretext ?—

a word ? [flame

Its meaning flutters in me like a Under my own breath : my perceptions reel

For evermore around it, and fall off, As if it were too holy.

Eve. Which it is.

Adam. The essence of all beauty I call love.

The attribute, the evidence, and end, The consummation to the inward sense, [out,

Of beauty apprehended from with- I still call love. As form, when colorless,

Is nothing to the eye ; that pine tree there,

Without its black and green, being all a blank ; [cerned

So, without love, is beauty undis- In man or angel. Angel ! rather ask

What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,

And what collateral love moves on with thee ;

Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

Lucifer. Love ! what is love ? I lose it. Beauty and love !

I darken to the image. Beauty—Love !

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

Adam. Thou art pale, Eve.

Eve. The precipice of ill Down this colossal nature, dizzies me— [mote

And, hark ! the starry harmony re- Seems measuring the heights from whence he fell.

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

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

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

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

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

Adam. Now, words.

SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO
 LUCIFER.

*He fades utterly away, and van-
 ishes, as it proceeds.*

Mine orb'd image sinks
 Back from thee, back from thee,
 As thou art fallen, methinks,
 Back from me, back from me.
 O my light bearer,
 Could another fairer
 Lack to thee, lack to thee ?
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros !
 I loved thee with the fiery love of
 stars
 Who love by burning, and by loving
 move,
 Too near the throned Jehovah not
 to love.
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros !
 Their brows flash fast on me from
 gliding cars,
 Pale-passioned for my loss.
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros !

Mine orb'd heats drop cold
 Down from thee, down from thee,
 As fell thy grace of old
 Down from me, down from me,
 O my light-bearer,
 Is another fairer
 Won to thee, won to thee ?
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros,
 Great love preceded loss,

Known to thee, known to thee.
 Ah, ah !

Thou, breathing thy communicable
 grace
 Of life into my light, [face,
 Mine astral faces, from thine angel
 Hast inly fed,
 And flooded me with radiance over-
 much
 From thy pure height.

Ah, ah !

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

Ha, ha !

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

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

Thine angel glory sinks
 Down from me, down from me—
 My beauty falls, methinks,
 Down from thee, down from thee !
 O my light-bearer,
 O my path-preparer,
 Gone from me, gone from me !
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros !

I cannot kindle underneath the brow
 Of this new angel here, who is not
 Thou :

All things are altered since that
 time ago,— [know—
 And if I shine at eve, I shall not
 I am strange—I am slow !

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

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

Ah, ah !
 And gazing on me, such shall com-
 prehend,
 Through all my piteous pomp at
 morn or even, [Heaven,
 And melancholy leaning out of
 That love, their own divine, may
 change or end,
 That love may close in loss !
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros !

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

Adam. How doth the wide and
 melancholy earth
 Gather her hills around us, grey and
 ghost,
 And stare with blank significance of
 loss

Right in our faces ! Is the wind
 up ?

Eve. Nay.

Adam. And yet the cedars and
 the junipers
 Rock slowly through the mist, with-
 out a sound ;
 And shapes which have no certainty
 of shape

Drift dusky in and out between the
 pines, [hills,
 And loom along the edges of the
 And lie flat, curdling in the open
 ground—

Shadows without a body, which
 contract

And lengthen as we gaze on them.

Eve. O Life
 Which is not man's nor angel's
 What is this ?

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

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

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

Eve. Yea, I plucked the fruit
 With eyes upturned to Heaven and
 seeing there
 Our god-thrones, as the tempter
 said—not GOD.

My heart, which beat then, sinks.
 The sun has sunk
 Out of sight with our Eden.

Adam. Night is near.

Eve. And God's curse nearest.
 Let us travel back
 And stand within the sword-glare
 till we die ;

Believing it is better to meet death
 Than suffer desolation.

Adam. Nay, beloved !
 We must not pluck death from the
 Maker's hand,

As erst we plucked the apple: we
 must wait
 Until He gives death as He gave life;
 Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal
 gift,
 Because we spoil its sweetness
 with our sin.

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

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

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

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

Eve. Ah, ah! Dost thou pause
 to say
 Like what?—coil like the serpent
 when he fell
 From all the emerald splendour of
 his height
 And writhed,—and could not climb
 against the curse,
 Not a ring's length. I am afraid—
 afraid—
 I think it is God's will to make me
 afraid,

Permitting THESE to haunt us in the
 place [us
 Of His beloved angels—gone from
 Because we are not pure. Dear
 Pity of God,
 That didst permit the angels to go
 home
 And live no more with us who are
 not pure; [ny—
 Save *us* too from a loathly compa-
 Almost as loathly in our eyes, per-
 haps,
 As *we* are in the purest! Pity us—
 Us too! nor shut us in the dark,
 away
 From verity and from stability,
 Or what we name such through the
 precedence [not
 Of earth's adjusted uses,—leave us
 To doubt betwixt our senses and
 our souls,
 Which are the most distraught and
 full of pain
 And weak of apprehension.

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

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

Adam. Methinks this is the zo-
 diac of the earth,
 Which rounds us with its visionary
 dread,
 Responding with twelve shadowy
 signs of earth,

In fantasque apposition and approach,

To those celestial, constellated twelve [nights

Which palpitate adown the silent Under the pressure of the hand of God

Stretched wide in benediction. At this hour,

Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of heaven!

But, girdling close our nether wilderness,

The zodiac-figures of the earth loom slow,—

Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and time, [stars,

In twelve colossal shades instead of Through which the ecliptic line of mystery

Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting scope,

Foreshowing life and death.

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

Adam. Our spirits have climbed high

By reason of the passion of our grief, And from the top of sense, looked

over sense, [things

To the significance and heart of Rather than things themselves.

Eve. And the dim twelve . . .

Adam. Are dim exponents of the creature-life

As earth contains it. Gaze on them, beloved!

By stricter apprehension of the sight, Suggestions of the creatures shall

assuage Thy terror of the shadows;—what is known [it

Subduing the unknown and taming From all prodigious dread. That phantasm, there,

Presents a lion,—albeit twenty times As large as any lion—with a roar

Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,

And a strange horror stirring in his mane!

And, there, a pendulous shadow seems to weigh—

Good against ill, perchance; and there, a crab [claws,

Puts coldly out its gradual shadow—

Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all the ground,

Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself;

A bull stands horned here with gibbous glooms;

And a ram likewise; and a scorpion writhes

Its tail in ghastly slime and stings the dark!

This way a goat leaps with wild blank of beard; [float,

And here fantastic fishes dusky Using the calm for waters, while

their fins Throb out slow rhythms along the shallow air!

While images more human—

Eve. How he stands, That phantasm of a man—who is

not *thou*!

Two phantasms of two men.

Adam. One that sustains, And one that strives!—resuming,

so, the ends Of manhood's curse of labor.*

Dost thou see That phantasm of a woman?—

Eve. I have seen— But look off to those small humanities,†

* Adam recognizes in *Aquarius*, the water-bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combating,—the passive and active forms of human labor. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Capricornus, and Pisces, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

† Her maternal instinct is excited by *Gemini*.

Which draw me tenderly across my
 fear,—
 Lesser and fainter than my woman-
 hood,
 Or yet thy manhood—with strange
 innocence
 Set in the misty lines of head and
 hand
 They lean together! I would gaze
 on them [eyes,
 Longer and longer, till my watching
 As the stars do in watching any-
 thing,
 Should light them forward from
 their outline vague
 To clear configuration—

*Two Spirits, of organic and inor-
 ganic nature, arise from the
 ground.*

But what Shapes
 Rise up between us in the open
 space,
 And thrust me into horror back
 from hope?

Adam. Colossal Shapes—twin
 sovran images,
 With a disconsolate, blank majesty
 Set in their wondrous faces!—with
 no look,

And yet an aspect—a significance
 Of individual life and passionate
 ends,

Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound!
 O shadow of sound, O phantasm
 of thin sound!

How it comes, wheeling as the pale
 moth wheels,

Wheeling and wheeling in continu-
 ous wail,

Around the cyclic zodiac; and
 gains force,

And gathers, settling coldly like a
 moth,

On the wan faces of these images
 We see before us; whereby modi-
 fied

It draws a straight line to articu-
 late song
 From out that spiral faintness of
 lament—
 And, by one voice, expresses many
 griefs.

First Spirit.

I am the spirit of the harmless
 earth;

God spake me softly out among
 the stars, [worth,

As softly as a blessing of much
 And then, His smile did follow
 unawares,

That all things fashioned so for use
 and duty

Might shine anointed with His
 chrism of beauty—

Yet I wail!

I drave on with the worlds exult-
 ingly,

Obliquely down the Godlight's
 gradual fall—

Individual aspect and complexity

Of gyratory orb and interval
 Lost in the fluent motion of delight

Toward the high ends of Being be-
 yond sight—

Yet I wail!

Second Spirit.

I am the Spirit of the harmless
 beasts,

Of flying things, and creeping
 things, and swimming;

Of all the lives, erst set at silent
 feasts,

That found the love-kiss on the
 goblet brimming,

And tasted, in each drop within the
 measure,

The sweetest pleasure of their
 Lord's good pleasure—

Yet I wail!

What a full hum of life around His
 lips,

Bore witness to the fulness of
 creation!

How all the grand words were full-laden ships ;

Each sailing onward from enunciation,

To separate existence,—and each bearing

The creature's power of joying, hoping, fearing !

Yet I wail !

Eve. They wail, beloved ! they speak of glory and God,

And they wail—wail. That burden of the song

Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls

Into the lap of silence !

Adam. Hark, again !

First Spirit.

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,

My joy stood up within me bold to add

A word to God's, and when His work was full,

To 'very good,' responded 'very glad !'

Filtered through roses, did the light enclose me ;

And bunches of the grape swam blue across me—

Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

I bounded with my panthers ; I rejoiced

In my young tumbling lions rolled together !

My stag—the river at his fetlocks—poised,

Then dipped his antlers through the golden weather [tor

In the same ripple which the alligator Left in his joyous troubling of the water !

Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,•

What wordless triumph did your voices render !

O mountain-summits, where the angels stood

And shook from head and wing thick dews of splendour ;

How with a holy quiet, did your Earthy

Accept that Heavenly—knowing ye were worthy !

Yet I wail !

Second Spirit.

O my wild wood dogs, with your listening eyes !

My horses—my ground eagles, for swift fleeing !

My birds, with viewless wings of harmonies,

My calm cold fishes of a silver being,

How happy were ye, living and possessing,

O fair half-souls capacious of full blessing.

Yet I wail !

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Now hear my charge to-day,

Thou man, thou woman, marked as the misdoers

By God's sword at your backs ! I lent my clay

To make your bodies, which had grown more flowers :

And now, in change for what I lent, ye give me

The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to cleave me—

And I wail !

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail ! Behold ye that I fasten

My sorrow's fang upon your souls dishonoured ?

Accursed transgressors ! down the steep ye hasten,—

Your crown's weight on the world,
to drag it downward
Unto your ruin. Lo! my lions,
scenting
The blood of wars, roar hoarse and
unrelenting—
And I wail!

First Spirit.

I wail, I wail! Do you hear that I
wail?

I had no part in your transgres-
sion—none!

My rose on the bough did bud not
pale— [sun.

My rivers did not loiter in the
I was obedient. Wherefore in my
centre

Do I thrill at this curse of death
and winter!

And I wail!

Second Spirit.

I wail, I wail! I wail in the assault
Of undeserved perdition, sorely
wounded!

My nightingales sang sweet with-
out a fault,

My gentle leopards innocently
bounded;

We were obedient—what is this
convulses

Our blameless life with pangs and
fever pulses?

And I wail!

Eve. I choose God's thunder
and His angels' swords
To die by, Adam, rather than such
words.

Let us pass out and flee.

Adam. We cannot flee.
This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty
Curls round us, like a river cold and
drear, [hear.

And shuts us in, constraining us to

First Spirit.

I feel your steps, O wandering sin-
ners, strike

A sense of death to me, and un-
dug graves!

The heart of earth, once calm, is
trembling like

The ragged foam along the
ocean-waves;

The restless earthquakes rock
against each other;

The elements moan 'round me—
'Mother, mother'—

And I wail!

Second Spirit.

Your melancholy looks do pierce
me through;

Corruption swathes the paleness
of your beauty.

Why have ye done this thing?
What did we do

That we should fall from bliss as
ye from duty?

Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting
for their jesses,

Fierce howl the wolves along the
wildernesses—

And I wail!

Adam. To thee, the Spirit of
the harmless earth—

To thee, the Spirit of earth's harm-
less lives,—

Inferior creatures but still inno-
cent—

Be salutation from a guilty mouth
Yet worthy of some audience and
respect

From you who are not guilty. If
we have sinned,

God hath rebuked us, who is over
us,

To give rebuke or death; and if ye
wail

Because of any suffering from our
sin,

Ye who are under and not over us,
Be satisfied with God, if not with
us,

And pass out from our presence in
such peace

<p>As we have left you, to enjoy re- venge Such as the Heavens have made you. Verily, There must be strife between us, large as sin. <i>Eve.</i> No strife, mine Adam ! Let us not stand high Upon the wrong we did to reach disdain, Who rather should be humbler evermore Since self-made sadder. Adam ! shall I speak— I who spake once to such a bitter end— Shall I speak humbly now, who once was proud ? I, schooled by sin to more humility Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king— <i>My</i> king, if not the world's ? <i>Adam.</i> Speak as thou wilt. <i>Eve.</i> Thus then—my hand in thine— . . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits ! I pray you humbly in the name of God ; Not to say of these tears, which are impure— Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth From clean volitions toward a spotted will, From the wronged to the wronger ; this and no more ; I do not ask more. I am 'ware, in- deed, That absolute pardon is impossible From you to me, by reason of my sin,— And that I cannot evermore, as once, With worthy acceptance of pure joy, Behold the trances of the holy hills Beneath the leaning stars ; or watch the vales</p>	<p>Dew-pallid with their morning ec- stasy ; Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between Two grassy uplands,—and the riv- er-wells Work out their bubbling mysteries under ground— And all the birds sing, till for joy of song, They lift their trembling wings as if to heave The too-much weight of music from their heart And float it up the æther ! I am 'ware That these things I can no more comprehend With a full organ into a full delight ; The sense of beauty and of melody Being no more aided in me by the sense Of personal adjustment to those heights Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned, But rather coupled darkly and made ashamed By the percipiency of sin and fall In melancholy of humiliant thoughts. But, oh ! fair, dreadful Spirits—al- beit this Your accusation must confront my soul, And your pathetic utterance and full gaze Must evermore subdue me ; be con- tent— [me, Conquer me gently—as if pitying Not to say loving ! let my tears fall thick As watering dews of Eden, unre- proached ; And when your tongues, reprove me, make me smooth, Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,</p>
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And peradventure better while more
sad.
For look to it sweet Spirits—look
well to it—
It will not be amiss in you who kept
The law of your own righteousness,
and keep
The right of your own griefs to
mourn themselves,—
To pity me twice fallen,—from that,
and this,
From joy of place, and also right of
wail,
'I wail' being not for me—only 'I
sin.'
Look to it, O sweet Spirits!—
For was I not,
At that last sunset seen in Paradise,
When all the westering clouds
flashed out in throngs
Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,
All hushed and solemn, as a thought
of God
Held them suspended,—was I not,
that hour,
The lady of the world, princess of
life,
Mistress of feast and favour? Could
I touch
A rose with my white hand, but it
became
Redder at once? Could I walk
leisurely
Along our swarded garden, but the
grass
Tracked me with greenness? Could
I stand aside
A moment underneath a cornel-tree,
But all the leaves did tremble as
alive
With songs of fifty birds who were
made glad
Because I stood there? Could I
turn to look
With these twain eyes of mine, now
weeping fast,
Now good for only weeping—upon
man,

Angel, or beast, or bird, but each
rejoiced
Because I looked on him? Alas,
alas!
And is not this much wo, to cry
'alas!'
Speaking of joy? And is not this
more shame,
To have made the wo myself, from
all that joy?
To have stretched my hand, and
plucked it from the tree,
And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is
not this
Still most despair,—to have halved
that bitter fruit,
And ruined, so, the sweetest friend
I have,
Turning the GREATEST to mine
enemy?
Adam. I will not hear thee speak
so. Hearken, Spirits!
Our God, who is the enemy of none,
But only of their sin,—hath set your
hope
And my hope, in a promise, on this
Head.
Show reverence, then,—and never
bruise her more
With unpermitted and extreme re-
proach;
Lest, passionate in anguish, she
fling down
Beneath your trampling feet, God's
gift to us,
Of sovranity by reason and freewill!
Sinning against the province of the
Soul
To rule the soulless. Reverence
her estate:
And pass out from her presence
with no words.
Eve. O dearest Heart, have
patience with my heart,
O Spirit, have patience, 'stead of
reverence,
And let me speak: for, not being
innocent,

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

Composed and glad as singing-birds the sun,
 Might shriek now from our dismal desert, 'God,'
 And hear Him make reply, 'What is thy need,
 Thou whom I cursed to-day?'
Adam. Eve!
Eve. I, at last,
 Who yesterday was helpmate and delight [grief
 Unto mine Adam, am to-day the And curse-mete for him! And,
 so, pity us,
 Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,
 And let some tender peace, made of our pain,
 Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow
 With boughs on both sides. In the shade of which,
 When presently ye shall behold us dead,—
 For the poor sake of our humility,
 Breathe out your pardon on our breathless lips,
 And drop your twilight dews against our brows;
 And stroking with mild airs our harmless hands
 Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love
 Distilling through your pity over us,
 And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass.
LUCIFER rises in the circle.
Lucifer. Who talks here of a complement of grief?
 Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?
 Of hate subduable to pity? Eve?
 Take counsel from thy counsellor the snake,
 And boast no more in grief, nor hope from pain,

My docile Eve! I teach you to
despond,

Who taught you disobedience.
Look around;—

Earth-spirits and phantasms hear
you talk unmoved,

As if ye were red clay again and
talked!

What are your words to them?
your griefs to them?

Your deaths, indeed, to them?
Did the hand pause

For *their* sake, in the plucking of
the fruit,

That they should pause for *you*, in
hating you;

Or will your grief or death, as did
your sin,

Bring change upon their final
doom? Behold,

Your grief is but your sin in the re-
bound,

And cannot expiate for it.

Adam. That is true.

Lucifer. Ay, it is true. The
clay-king testifies

To the snake's counsel,—hear him!
—very true.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. And certes, *that* is
true.

Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I
Could wail among you. O thou
universe,

That holdest sin and wo,—more
room for wail!

Distant starry voice. Ah, ah,
Heosphoros! Heosphoros!

Adam. Mark Lucifer. He
changes awfully.

Eve. It seems as if he looked
from grief to God

And could not see Him;—wretch-
ed Lucifer!

Adam. How he stands—yet an
angel!

Earth Spirits. We all wail!

Lucifer, (after a pause.) Dost

thou remember, Adam, when
the curse

Took us in Eden? On a mount-
ain peak

Half-sheathed in primal woods and
glittering

In spasms of awful sunshine at
that hour

A lion couched,—part raised upon
his paws,

With his calm, massive face turned
full on thine,

And his mane listening. When
the ended curse

Left silence in the world,—right
suddenly

He sprang up rampant and stood
straight and stiff,

As if the new reality of death
Were dashed against his eyes,—

and roared so fierce,
(Such thick carnivorous passion in

his throat
Tearing a passage through the

wrath and fear)
And roared so wild, and smote

from all the hills
Such fast, keen echoes crumbling

down the vales
Precipitately,—that the forest

beasts,
One after one, did mutter a re-
sponse

[plaint
Of savage and of sorrowful com-
Which trailed along the gorges.

Then, at once,
He fell back, and rolled crashing

from the height
Into the dust of pines.

Adam. It might have been
I heard the curse alone.

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. That lion is the type
of what I am!

And as he fixed thee with his full-
faced hate,

And roared, O Adam—compre-
hending doom;

So, gazing on the face of the Un-
seen,

I cry out here between the heavens
and earth

My conscience of this sin, this wo,
this wrath,

Which damn me to this depth!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Eve. I wail, O God!

Lucifer. I scorn you that ye
wail,

Who use your petty griefs for ped-
estals

To stand on, beckoning pity from
without,

And deal in pathos of antithesis *
Of what ye *were* forsooth, and
what ye are;—

I scorn you like an angel! Yet,
one cry

I, too, would drive up like a col-
umn erect,

Marble to marble, from my heart
to Heaven,

A monument of anguish to trans-
pierce

And overtop your vapoury com-
plaints

Expressed from feeble woes!

Earth Spirits. I wail, I wail!

Lucifer. For, O ye heavens, ye
are my witnesses,

That *I*, struck out from nature in a
blot,

The outcast and the mildew of
things good,

The leper of angels, the expected
dust

Under the common rain of daily
gifts,—

I the snake, I the tempter, I the
cursed,—

To whom the highest and the low-
est alike

Say, Go from us—we have no need
of thee,—

Was made by God like others.
Good and fair,

He did create me!—ask Him, if not
fair;

Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly
His blessing for chief angels on my
head

Until it grew there, a crown crys-
tallized!

Ask, if He never called me by my
name,

Lucifer—kindly said as ‘Ga-
briel’—

Lucifer—soft as ‘Michael!’
While serene

I, standing in the glory of the
lamps,

Answered ‘my father,’ innocent of
shame

And of the sense of thunder. Ha!
ye think,

White angels in your niches,—I re-
pent,

And would tread down my own
offences back

To service at the footstool! *That’s*
read wrong:

I cry as the beast did, that I may
cry—

Expansive, not appealing! Fallen
so deep [pit,

Against the side of this prodigious
I cry—cry—dashing out the hands

of wail

On each side, to meet anguish
everywhere,

And to attest it in the ecstasy
And exaltation of a wo sustained

Because provoked and chosen.
Pass along

Your wilderness, vain mortals’
Puny griefs

In transitory shapes, be henceforth
dwarfed

To your own conscience by the
dread extremes

Of what I am and have been. If
ye have fallen,

It is a step’s fall,—the whole ground
beneath

And willing to hate good and to
 hate love, [more,
 And willing to will on so ever-
 Scorning the Past, and damning
 the To come—
 Go and rejoice! I curse you!

LUCIFER *vanishes.*

Earth Spirits.

And we scorn you! there's no pardon

Which can lean to you aright!
 When your bodies take the guerdon

Of the death-curse in our sight,
 Then the bee that hummeth lowest
 shall transcend you,

Then ye shall not move an eyelid
 Though the stars look down
 your eyes;

And the earth which ye defiled,
 Shall expose you to the skies,—

Lo! these kings of ours—who
 sought to comprehend you.'

First Spirit.

And the elements shall boldly
 All your dust to dust constrain;
 Unresistedly and coldly

I will smite you with my rain!
 From the slowest of my frosts is no
 receding.

Second Spirit.

And my little worm, appointed
 To assume a royal part,
 He shall reign, crowned and
 anointed,

O'er the noble human heart!
 Give him counsel against losing
 of that Eden!

Adam. Do ye scorn us? Back
 your scorn

Toward your faces gray and lorn,
 As the wind drives back the rain,
 Thus I drive with passion-strife;

I who stand beneath God's sun,
 Made like God, and, though un-
 done,

Not unmade for love and life.

Lo! ye utter threats in vain!

By my free will that chose sin,

By mine agony within

Round the passage of the fire:

By the pinings which disclose

That my native soul is higher

Than what it chose,

We are yet too high, O spirits, for

your disdain.

Eve. Nay, beloved! if these be

low,

We confront them with no height;

We have stooped down to their

level

By infecting them with evil,

And their scorn that meets our

blow

Scathes aright.

Amen. Let it be so.

Earth Spirits.

We shall triumph—triumph greatly

When ye lie beneath the sward!

There, our lily shall grow stately

Though ye answer not a word—

And with fragrance shall be

scornful of your silence.

While your throne ascending

calmly

We, in heirdom of your soul,

Flash the river, lift the palm tree,

The dilated ocean roll

By the thoughts that throbbed

within you—round the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit

Your significance of will:

With the grandeur of your spirit

Shall our broad savannahs fill—

In our winds, your exultations shall

be springing.

Even your parlance which inveigles,

By our rudeness shall be won:

Hearts poetic in our eagles

Shall beat up against the sun,

And strike downward in articulate

clear singing.

Your bold speeches, our Behe-
moth

With his thunderous jaw shall
wield!

Your high fancies shall our Mam-
moth

Breathe sublimely up the shield
Of St. Michael at God's throne, who
waits to speed him!

Till the heavens' smooth-grooved
thunder

Spinning back, shall leave them
clear;

And the angels smiling wonder
With dropt looks from sphere
to sphere,

Shall cry, 'Ho, ye heirs of Adam!
ye exceed him!'

Adam. Root out thine eyes,
sweet, from the dreary ground.
Beloved, we may be overcome by
God,

But not by *these*.

Eve. By God, perhaps, in *these*.

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

Certes, but not deceive.

Eve. Behold this rose!

I plucked it in our bower of Para-
dise

This morning as I went forth; and
my heart [day.

Hath beat against its petals all the
I thought it would be always red
and full

As when I plucked it—*Is it?*—Ye
may see!

I cast it down to you that ye may
see,

All of you!—count the petals lost of
it—

And note the colours faded! ye
may see:

And I am as it is, who yesterday
Grew in the same place. O ye spir-
its of earth!

I almost, from my miserable heart,
Could here upbraid you for your
cruel heart,

Which will not let me down the
slope of death,

Draw any of your pity after me,
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,
As my flower, there, in mine.

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

Adam. So, verily,

The last departs.

Eve. So Memory follows Hope,
And Life both. Love said to me,
'Do not die,'

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

I exiled and I will not orphan Love.'
But now it is no choice of mine to
die—

My heart throbs from me.

Adam. Call it straightway back.
Death's consummation crowns com-
pleted life,

Or comes too early. Hope being
set on thee

For others; if for others then for
thee,—

For thee and me.

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

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

Eve. I hear life.

Infant voices passing in the wind.

O we live, O we live—

And this life that we receive

Is a warm thing and a new,
Which we softly bud into
From the heart and from the brain,
Something strange that overmuch
is

Of the sound and of the sight,
Flowing round in trickling touches,
With a sorrow and delight,—
Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Youthful voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we achieve
Is a loud thing and a bold,
Which with pulses manifold
Strikes the heart out full and fain—
Active doer, noble liver

Strong to struggle, sure to con-
quer, [er
Though the vessel's prow will quiv-
At the lifting of the anchor :
Yet do we strive in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Poet voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we conceive
Is a clear thing and a fair,
Which we set in cyrstal air
That its beauty may be plain :
With a breathing and a flooding
Of the heaven-life on the whole,
While we hear the forest budding
To the music of the soul—
Yet is it tuned in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Philosophic voices passing.

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

We are helpers, fellow-creatures,
Of the right against the wrong,
We are earnest-hearted teachers
Of the truth which maketh
strong—

Yet do we teach in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain?

Revel voices passing.

O we live, O we live—
And this life that we reprieve
Is a low thing and a light,
Which is jested out of sight,
And made worthy of disdain !
Strike with bold electric laughter
The high tops of things divine—
Turn thy head, my brother, after,
Lest thy tears fall in my wine ;—
For is all laughed in vain?

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,
Lest it be all in vain.

Eve. I hear a sound of life—of
life like ours—
Of laughter and of wailing,—of
grave speech,
Of little plaintive voices innocent,
Of life in separate courses flowing
out

Like our four rivers to some out-
ward main.

I hear life—life !

Adam. And, so, thy cheeks have
snatched
Scarlet to paleness ; and thine eye
drink fast

Of glory from full cups, and thy
moist lips
Seem trembling, both of them, with
earnest doubts

Whether to utter words or only
smile.

Eve. Shall I be mother of the
coming life?
Hear the steep generations, how
they fall

Adown the visionary stairs of Time,
Like supernatural thunders—far yet
near ;

Showing their fiery echoes through
the hills. [these?]

Am I a cloud to these—mother to
Earth Spirits. And bringer of
the curse upon all these.

EVE sinks down again.

Poet voices passing.

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

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

Love voices passing.

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

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Though it be all in vain.

Aged voices passing.

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

Infant voices passing.

Rock us softly,

Though it be *all* in vain.

Voices die away.

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

Eve. The voices of foreshown
Humanity

Die off ;—so let me die.

Adam. So let us die,
When God's will soundeth the right
hour of death.

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

Eve. O spirits ! by the gentle-
ness ye use

In winds at night, and floating clouds
at noon,

In gliding waters under lily leaves,
In chirp of crickets, and the settling
hush [and wings,—

A bird makes in her nest with feet
Fulfil your natures now !

Earth Spirits..

Agreed ; allowed !

We gather out our natures like a
cloud,

And thus fulfil their lightnings !
Thus, and thus !

Hearken, O hearken to us !

First Spirit.

As the storm-wind blows bleakly
from the norland,

As the snow-wind beats blindly on
the moorland, [desert,

As the simoon drives hot across the
As the thunder roars deep in the
Unmeasured,

As the torrent tears the ocean-world
to atoms,

As the whirlpool grinds it fathoms
below fathoms,

Thus,—and thus !

Second Spirit.

As the yellow toad, that spits its
poison chilly,

As the tiger, in the jungle crouching
stilly,

As the wild boar, with ragged tusks
of anger,

As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glittering
clangour,

As the vultures that scream against
the thunder, [asunder,

As the owlets that sit and moan
Thus,—and thus!

Eve. Adam! God!

Adam. Cruel, unrelenting Spir-
its!

By the power in me of the sovran
soul

Whose thoughts keep pace yet with
the angel's march,

I charge you into silence—trample
you [you!

Down to obedience.—I am king of
Earth Spirits.

Ha, ha! thou art king!

With a sin for a crown,

And a soul undone:

Thou, the antagonized,

Tortured and agonized,

Held in the ring

Of the zodiac!

Now, king, beware!

We are many and strong

Whom thou standest among.—

And we pass on the air,

And we stifle thee back,

And we multiply where

Thou wouldst trample us down

From rights of our own

To an utter wrong—

And, from under the feet of thy
scorn,

O forlorn!

We shall spring up like corn,

And our stubble be strong.

Adam. God, there is power in

Thee! I make appeal

Unto thy kingship.

Eve. There is pity in THEE,

O sinned against, great God!—My
seed, my seed,

There is hope set on THEE—I cry
to thee,

Thou mystic seed that shall be!—
leave us not

In agony beyond what we can bear,
Fallen in debasement below thun-
der-mark

A mark for scorning—taunted and
perplex

By all these creatures we ruled yes-
terday,

Whom thou, Lord, rulest always.
O my seed,

Through the tempestuous years that
rain so thick [face,

Betwixt my ghostly vision and thy
Let me have token! for my soul is

bruised
Before the serpent's head is.

[*A vision of CHRIST appears in
the midst of the zodiac, which
pales before the heavenly light.*

*The Earth Spirits grow grayer
and fainter.*

CHRIST. I AM HERE!

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

Eve. But gazing so—so—with
omnific eyes,

Lift my soul upward till it touch thy
feet!

Or lift it only,—not to seem too
proud,—

To the low height of some good
angel's feet—

For such to tread on when he walk-
eth straight

And thy lips praise him.

CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,
I meet you with rebuke for the re-
proach

And cruel and unmitigated blame
Ye cast upon your masters. True,

they have sinned;

And true their sin is reckoned into
loss

For you the sinless. Yet, your in-
nocence,

<p>Which of you praises? since God made your acts Inherent in your lives, and bound your hands With instincts and imperious sanc- tities From self-defacement? Which of you disdains These sinners who in falling proved their height Above you by their liberty to fall? And which of you complains of loss by them, For whose delight and use ye have your life And honor in creation? Ponder it! This regent and sublime Humanity, Though fallen, exceeds you! this shall film your sun, Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of cloud, Turn back your rivers, footpath all your seas, Lay flat your forests, master with a look Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down Your eagle flying. Nay, without this law Of mandom, ye would perish,— beast by beast Devouring; tree by tree, with stran- gling roots And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would gaze on God With imperceptive blankness up the stars, And mutter, 'Why, God, hast thou made us thus?' And pining to a sallow idiocy Stagger up blindly against the ends of life; Then stagnate into rottenness and drop Heavily—poor, dead matter—piece- meal down The abysmal spaces—like a little stone</p>	<p>Let fall to chaos. Therefore over you Receive man's sceptre,—therefore be content To minister with voluntary grace And melancholy pardon, every rite And function in you, to the human hand. Be ye to man as angels are to God, Servants in pleasure, singers of de- light, Suggesters to his soul of higher things [last, Than any of your highest. So at He shall look round on you with lids too straight To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well; And bless you when he prays his secret prayers, And praise you when he sings his open songs For the clear song-note he has learnt in you Of purifying sweetness; and extend Across your head his golden fan- tasies Which glorify you into soul from sense! Go serve him for such price. That not in vain Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place My word here for an oath, mine oath for act To be hereafter. In the name of which Perfect redemption and perpetual grace, I bless you through the hope and through the peace Which are mine,—to the Love, which is myself. <i>Eve.</i> Speak on still, Christ. Al- beit thou bless me not In set words, I am blessed in heark- ening thee— Speak, Christ.</p>
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CHRIST. Speak, Adam. Bless the woman, man—
It is thine office.

Adam. Mother of the world,
Take heart before this Presence.

Lo! my voice,
Which, naming erst the creatures,
did express,—

God breathing through my breath,
—the attributes

And instincts of each creature in
its name;

Floats to the same afflatus,—floats
and heaves

Like a water-weed that opens to a
wave,

A full-leaved prophecy affecting
thee,

Out fairly and wide. Hencefor-
ward, rise, aspire

To all the calms and magnanimities
The lofty uses and the noble ends,

The sanctified devotion and full
work,

To which thou art elect forever-
more,

First woman, wife, and mother.

Eve. And first in sin.

Adam. And also the sole
bearer of the Seed

Whereby sin dieth! Raise the
majesties

Of thy disconsolate brows, O well
beloved,

And front with level eyelids the To
come,

And all the dark o' the world.
Rise, woman, rise

To thy peculiar and best altitudes
Of doing good and of enduring ill,

Of comforting for ill, and teaching
good,

And reconciling all that ill and
good

Unto the patience of a constant
hope,—

Rise with thy daughters! If sin
come by thee,

And by sin, death,—the ransom-
righteousness,

The heavenly life and compensative
rest

Shall come by means of thee. If
wo by thee

Had issued to the world, thou shalt
go forth

An angel of the wo thou didst
achieve;

Found acceptable to the world in-
stead

Of others of that name, of whose
bright steps

Thy deed stripped bare the hills.
Be satisfied;

Something thou hast to bear
through womanhood—

Peculiar suffering answering to the
sin;

Some pang paid down for each new
human life;

Some weariness in guarding such
a life—

Some coldness from the guarded;
some mistrust

From those thou hast too well
served; from those beloved

Too loyally some treason: feeble-
ness

Within thy heart, and cruelty with-
out;

And pressures of an alien tyranny
With its dynastic reasons of larger
bones

And stronger sinews. But, go to!
thy love

Shall chant itself its own beatitudes
After its own life-working. A

child's kiss

Set on thy sighing lips, shall make
thee glad:

A poor man served by thee, shall
make thee rich;

A sick man helped by thee, shall
make thee strong;

Thou shalt be served thyself by
every sense

<p>Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing With looks of prompting love—to keep thee clear Of all reproach against the sin foregone, From all the generations which succeed. Thy hand which plucked the apple I clasp close ; Thy lips which spake wrong counsel, I kiss close, I bless thee in the name of Paradise And by the memory of Edenic joys Forfeit and lost ; by that last cypress tree Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out ; And by the blessed nightingale which threw Its melancholy music after us ;— And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells [hind Did follow softly, plucking us back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers And four-fold river-courses :—by all these, I bless thee to the contraries of these ; I bless thee to the desert and the thorns, To the elemental change and turbulence, And to the roar of the estranged beasts, And to the solemn dignities of grief,— To each one of these ends,—and to this END Of Death and the hereafter ! <i>Eve.</i> I accept For me and for my daughters this high part Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work</p>	<p>Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest ; And in the place of Eden's lost delight Worthy endurance of permitted pain ; While on my longest patience there shall wait Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself Humbly henceforward on the ill I did, That humbleness may keep it in the shade. Shall it be so ? Shall I smile, saying so ? O seed ! O king ! O God, who shalt be seed,— What shall I say ? As Eden's fountains swelled Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul Betwixt Thy love and power ! And, sweetest thoughts Of foregone Eden ! now, for the first time Since God said ' Adam,' walking through the trees, I dare to pluck you as I plucked erewhile The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope, So pluck I you,—so largely—with both hands, And throw you forward on the outer earth Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it. <i>Adam.</i> As thou, Christ, to illumine it, holdest Heaven Broadly above our heads. [<i>The CHRIST is gradually transfigured during the following phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.</i> <i>Eve.</i> O Saviour Christ,</p>
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Thou standest mute in glory, like
the sun.

Adam. We worship in Thy silence,
Saviour Christ.

Eve. Thy brows grow grander
with a forecast wo,—

Diviner, with the possible of Death!
We worship in thy sorrow, Saviour
Christ.

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

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

CHRIST. Eternity stands always
fronting God; [eyes
A stern colossal image, with blind
And grand dim lips that murmur
evermore

God, God, God! While the rush
of life and death,
The roar of act and thought, of evil
and good, [worlds

The avalanches of the ruining
Tolling down space,—the new
world's genesis

Budding in fire,—the gradual hum-
ming growth

Of the ancient atoms and first forms
of earth,

The slow procession of the swathing
seas

And firmamental waters,—and the
noise [airs,—

Of the broad, fluent strata of pure
All these flow onward in the
intervals

Of that reiterated sound of—GOD!
Which WORD, innumerable angels
straightway lift

Wide on celestial altitudes of song
And choral adoration, and then drop

The burden softly, shutting the last
notes

In silver wings. Howbeit in the
noon of time [Death,

Eternity shall wax as dumb as
While a new voice beneath the
spheres shall cry,

'God! Why hast thou forsaken
me, my God?'

And not a voice in heaven shall
answer it.

[*The transfiguration is completed
in silence.*

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

Eve. My nature overcomes me
from thine eyes.

CHRIST. In the set noon of time,
shall one from Heaven,
An angel fresh from looking upon
God, [her

Descend before a woman, blessing
With perfect benediction of pure
love,

For all the world in all its elements;
For all the creatures of earth, air,
and sea; [soul,

For all men in the body and in the
Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

Eve. O pale, pathetic Christ—I
worship thee!

I thank thee for that woman!

CHRIST. Then, at last,
I, wrapping round me your hu-
manity,

Which, being sustained, shall
neither break nor burn

Beneath the fire of Godhead, will
tread earth,

And ransom you and it, and set
strong peace

Betwixt you and its creatures.
With my pangs

I will confront your sins: and since
those sins

Have sunken to all nature's heart
 from yours,
 The tears of my clean soul shall
 follow them [clear
 And set a holy passion to work
 Absolute consecration. In my brow
 Of kingly whiteness, shall be
 crowned anew
 Your discrowned human nature.
 Look on me !
 As I shall be uplifted on a cross
 In darkness of eclipse and anguish
 dread, [hands,
 So shall I lift up in my pierced
 Not into dark, but light—not unto
 death,
 But life, beyond the reach of guilt
 and grief,
 The whole creation. Henceforth
 in my name
 Take courage, O thou woman,—
 man, take hope !
 Your grave shall be as smooth as
 Eden's sward,
 Beneath the steps of your prospective
 thoughts ;
 And one step past it a new Eden-gate
 Shall open on a hinge of harmony,
 And let you through to mercy. Ye
 shall fall
 No more, within that Eden, nor
 pass out
 Any more from it. In which hope,
 move on,
 First sinners and first mourners.
 Live and love,—
 Doing both nobly, because lowly ;
 Live and work, strongly,—because
 patiently !
 And for the deed of death, trust it
 to God,
 That it be well done, unrepented of,
 And not to loss. And thence with
 constant prayers
 Fasten your souls so high, that constantly
 The smile of your heroic cheer may
 float

Above all floods of earthly agonies,
 Purification being the joy of pain !

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

Earth Spirits.

By the mighty word thus spoken
 Both for living and for dying,
 We, our homage-oath once broken,
 Fasten back again in sighing ;
 And the creatures and the elements
 renew their covenanting.
 Here, forgive us all our scorning ;
 Here, we promise milder duty ;
 And the evening and the morning
 Shall re-organize in beauty
 A sabbath day of sabbath joy, for
 universal chanting.
 And if, still, this melancholy
 May be strong to overcome us ;
 If this mortal and unholy
 We still fail to cast out from us,—
 And we turn upon you, unaware,
 your own dark influences ;
 If ye tremble when surrounded
 By our forest pine and palm trees ;
 If we cannot cure the wounded
 With our gum-trees and our
 balm-trees,
 And if your souls all mournfully sit
 down among your senses,—
 Yet, O mortals, do not fear us,
 We are gentle in our languor ;
 And more good ye shall have near us
 Than any pain or anger :
 And our God's refracted blessing
 in our blessing shall be given !
 By the desert's endless vigil
 We will solemnize your passions ;
 By the wheel of the black eagle

We will teach you exaltations,
When he sails against the wind, to
the white spot up in Heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses
To your weariness of nature ;
And our hands shall stroke the
curse's

Dreary furrows from the creature,
Till your bodies shall lie smooth in
death, and straight and slumberful :

Then, a couch we will provide you
Where no summer heat shall
dazzle ;

Strewing on you and beside you
Thyme and rosemary and basil—
And the yew-tree shall grow over-
head to keep all safe and cool.

Till the Holy blood awaited
Shall be chrisms around us run-
ning,

Whereby, newly-consecrated
We shall leap up in God's sun-
ning,

To join the spheric company which
purer worlds assemble ;

While, renewed by new evangels,
Soul-consummated, made glori-
ous,

Ye shall brighten past the angels—
Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious ;

And the rays around His feet be-
neath your sobbing lips, shall
tremble.

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

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

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

Hear our heavenly promise
Through your mortal passion !
Love ye shall have from us,

In a pure relation !
As a fish or bird

Swims or flies, if moving,
We unseen are heard
To live on by loving.

Far above the glances

Of your eager eyes,

Listen ! we are loving !

Listen, through man's ignorances—

Listen, through God's mysteries—

Listen down the heart of things,

Ye shall hear our mystic wings

Murmurous with loving !

Through the opal door,

Listen evermore

How we live by loving !

First semichorus.

When your bodies therefore,
Reach the grave their goal,

Softly will we care for

Each enfranchised soul !

Softly and unlothly

Through the door of opal

Toward the Heavenly people.

Floated on a minor fine

Into the full chant divine,

We will draw you smoothly,—

While the human in the minor

Makes the harmony diviner :

Listen to our loving !

Second semichorus.

There a sigh of glory

Shall breathe on you as you come.

Ruffling round the doorway

All the light of angeldom.

From the empyrean centre

Heavenly voices shall repeat—

'Souls redeemed and pardoned, en-
ter ;

For the chrisms on you is sweet.'

And every angel in the place

Lowlily shall bow his face,

Folded fair on softened sounds,

Because upon your hands and feet

He images his Master's wounds :

Listen to our loving !

First semichorus.

So, in the universe's
 Consummated undoing,
 Our seraphs of white mercies
 Shall hover round the ruin!
 Their wings shall stream upon the
 flame
 As if incorporate of the same
 In elemental fusion:
 And calm their faces shall burn out
 With a pale and mastering thought,
 And a steadfast looking of desire
 From out between the clefts of
 fire,—
 While they cry, in the Holy's name.
 To the final Restitution!
 Listen to our loving!

Second semichorus.

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

First semichorus.

But wild is the horse of Death!
 He will leap up wild at the clamour
 Above and beneath;
 And where is his Tamer
 On that last day,
 When he crieth, Ha, ha!
 To the trumpet's blare,
 And paweth the earth's Aceldama?
 When he tosseth his head,
 The drear-white steed,
 And ghastrily champeth the last
 moon-ray,—

What angel there
 Can lead him away,
 That the living may rule for the
 Dead?

Second semichorus.

Yet a TAMER shall be found!
 One more bright than seraph
 crowned,
 And more strong than cherub bold;
 Elder, too, than angel old,
 By his gray eternities,
 He shall master and surprise
 The steed of Death.
 For He is strong, and He is fain;
 He shall quell him with a breath,
 And shall lead him where He will,
 With a whisper in the ear,
 Full of fear—
 And a hand upon the mane,
 Grand and still.

First semichorus.

Through the flats of Hades where
 the souls assemble
 HE will guide the Death-steed calm
 between their ranks;
 While, like beaten dogs, they a
 little moan and tremble
 To see the darkness curdle from
 the horse's glittering flanks.
 Through the flats of Hades, where
 the dreary shade is,
 Up the steep of Heaven, will the
 Tamer guide the steed,—
 Up the spheric circles—circle above
 circle,
 We who count the ages, shall count
 the tolling tread—
 Every hoof-fall striking a blinder,
 blanker sparkle
 From the stony orbs, which shall
 show as they were dead.

Second semichorus.

All the way the Death-steed with
 toiling hoofs shall travel,
 Ashen gray the planets shall be
 motionless as stones;

Loosely shall the systems eject their
parts coeval,—
Stagnant in the spaces shall float
the pallid moons;
Suns that touch their apogees, reel-
ing from their level,
Shall run back on their axles, in
wild, low, broken tunes.

Chorus.

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

Semichorus.

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

Chorus.

Listen, man, through life and death,
Through the dust and through the
breath,
Listen down the heart of things!
Ye shall hear our mystic wings
Murmurous with loving.

A Voice from below. Gabriel,
thou Gabriel!

A Voice from above. What
wouldst thou with me?

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

Second Voice. Question me.

First Voice. Why have I called
thrice to my Morning-star
And had no answer? All the
stars are out,
And answer in their places. Only
in vain

I cast my voice against the outer
rays
Of my star, shut in light behind the
sun.

No more reply than from a break-
ing string,

Breaking when touched. Or is she
not my star?

Where *is* my star—my star?
Have ye cast down

Her glory like my glory? Has
she waxed

Mortal, like Adam? Has she
learnt to hate

Like any angel?

Second Voice. She is sad^o for
thee:

All things grow sadder to thee, one
by one.

Chorus. Live, work on, O
Earthy!

By the Actual's tension,

Speed the arrow worthy

Of a pure ascension.

From the low earth round you,

Reach the heights above you;

From the stripes that wound you,

Seek the loves that love you!

God's divinest burneth plain

Through the crystal diaphane

Of our loves that love you.

First Voice. Gabriel, O Gabriel!

Second Voice. What wouldst
thou with me?

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

That HE claims THAT too?

Second Voice. Lost one it is
true.

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

Second Voice. It is true.

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

Second Voice. It is true.

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

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. Gabriel!

Second Voice. I hearken.

First Voice. It is true besides—
Aright true—that mine orient star
will give

Her name of 'Bright and Morning-
Star' to HIM,—

And take the fairness of his virtue
back,

To cover loss and sadness?

Second Voice. It is true.

First Voice. UNtrue, UNtrue!

O Morning-star! O MINE!

Who sittest secret in a veil of
light

Far up the starry spaces, say,—
Untrue!

Speak but so loud as doth a wast-
ed moon

To Tyrrhene waters! I am Luci-
fer—

[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*
All things grow sadder to me, one
by one.

Angel Chorus.

Exiled human creatures,
Let your hope grow larger,
Larger grows the vision
Of the new delight.

From this chain of Nature's,
God is the Discharger;
And the Actual prison
Opens to your sight.

Semichorus.

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

Chorus. Future joy and far light

Working such relations

Hear us singing gently

Exiled is not lost!

God, above the starlight,

God, above the patience,

Shall at last present ye

Guerdons worth the cost.

Patiently enduring,

Painfully surrounded,

Listen how we love you—

Hope the uttermost—

Waiting for that curing

Which exalts the wounded,

Hear us sing above you—

EXILED, BUT NOT LOST!

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

THE LOST BOWER.

IN the pleasant orchard closes,
'God bless all our gains,' say we;
But 'May God bless all our
losses,'

Better suits with our degree,
Listen gentle—ay, and simple!
Listen children on the knee!
Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played,

Dimpled close with hill and valley,
 Dappled very close with shade ;
 Summer-snow of apple blossoms
 running up from glade to
 glade.

There is one hill I see nearer,
 In my vision of the rest ;
 And a little wood seems clearer,
 As it climbeth from the west,
 Sideway from the tree-locked valley,
 to the airy upland crest.

Small the wood is, green with
 hazels,
 And, completing the ascent,
 Where the wind blows and sun
 dazzles,
 Thrills in leafy tremblement :
 Like a heart that, after climbing,
 beateth quickly through content.

Not a step the wood advances
 O'er the open hill-top's bound :
 There, in green arrest, the
 branches
 See their image on the ground :
 You may walk beneath them smiling,
 glad with sight and glad
 with sound.

For you hearken on your right
 hand,
 How the birds do leap and call
 In the greenwood out of sight
 and
 Out of reach and fear of all ;
 And the squirrels crack the filberts,
 through their cheerful madrigal.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
 The slant grass and daisies pale ;
 And five apple-trees stand dropping

Separate shadows toward the
 vale,
 Over which, in choral silence, the
 hills look you their ' All hail !'

Far out, kindled by each other,
 Shining hills on hills arise ;
 Close as brother leans to brother,
 When they press beneath the
 eyes
 Of some father praying blessings
 from the gifts of paradise.

While beyond, above them
 mounted,
 And above their woods also,
 Malvern hills, for mountains
 counted
 Not unduly, loom a-row—
 Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions,
 through the sunshine and the
 snow.*

Yet in childhood little prized I
 That fair walk and far survey :
 'Twas a straight walk, unadvised
 by
 The least mischief worth a nay—
 Up and down—as dull as grammar
 on the eve of holiday.

But the wood, all close and clenching
 Bough in bough and root in root—
 No more sky (for overbranching)
 At your head than at your foot,—
 Oh, the wood drew me within it,
 by a glamour past dispute.

Few and broken paths showed
 through it,
 Where the sheep had tried to
 run,— [it,
 Forced with snowy wool to strew
 Round the thickets, when anon
 They with silly thorn-pricked noses
 bleated back into the sun.

* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

But my childish heart beat
stronger
Than those thickets dared to
grow : [longer
I could pierce them ! *I* could
Travel on, methought, than so.
Sheep for sheep-paths ! braver
children climb and creep where
they would go.

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude !
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sat to meet him in a wood—
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed
out pure with solitude.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor mar-
velled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving,
in their island-citadel.

Thus I thought of the old sing-
ers,
And took courage from their
song,
Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped
me, and the barrier branches
strong.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonaire,
Under-crawling, overleaping,
Thorns that prick and boughs
that bear,
I stood suddenly astonished—I was
gladdened unaware. .

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close ;
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and
moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence
signed it worthily across.

Here a linden-tree stood, bright-
ening
All adown its silver rind ; [ning,
For as some trees draw the light-
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine
from the sky where it was
shrined.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew ;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that Bower of
beauty which I sing of thus to
you.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide.
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to
side,
Shaped and shaven was the fresh-
ness, as by garden-cunning
plied.

Oh, a lady might have come there.
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk,—
Listening less to her own music,
than for footsteps on the walk.

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place !
With such seeming art and trav-
ail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to
the summit from the base.

And the ivy, veined and glossy,
Was inwrought with eglantine ;
And the wild-hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window mullion,
did right sylvanly entwine.

Rose-trees either side the door
were
Growing lythe and growing tall ;

Each one set a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose,
 leaning, nodding at the wall.

As I entered—mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot ;
And a green elastic cushion,
 Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence, very
 rare and absolute.

All the floor was paved with
 glory,
Greenly, silently inlaid,
Through quick motions made be-
 fore me,
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which
 slanted overhead.

'Is such a pavement in a palace ?'
So I questioned in my thought :
The sun, shining through the
 chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an
 answer to my doubt.

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, down-
 ward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out
 of sight yet blessing well.

Down to floor and up to ceiling,
Quick I turned my childish face ;
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place,
To the trees which surely knew it,
 in partaking of the grace.

Where's no foot of human crea-
 ture,
How could reach a human hand ?
And if this be work of nature,
Why has nature turned so bland,
Breaking off from other wild work ?
 It was hard to understand.

Was she weary of rough-doing,
Of the bramble and the thorn ?
Did she pause in tender ruing,
Here, of all her sylvan scorn ?
Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was
 the sudden mildness worn ?

Or could the same bower (I fan-
 cied)
Be the work of Dryad strong ;
Who, surviving all that chanced
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland
 on the last true poet's song ?

Or was this the house of fairies
Left because of the rough ways,
Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming
 on the blessed Sabbath days ?

So, young muser, I sat listening
To my fancy's wildest word—
On a sudden, through the glisten-
 ing
Leaves around a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music,
 which was rather felt than
 heard.

Softly, finely; it enwound me—
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little water Naiad sitting
 smilingly within.

Whence the music came, who
 knoweth ?
I know nothing. But indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed,
Which has sucked the milk of wa-
 ters at the oldest riverhead.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness! when the
 lark,
The high planets overtaking

In the half evanished dark
Cast his singing to their singing,
like an arrow to the mark.

Never nightingale so singeth—
Oh! she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet song she flingeth
Over pain to victory!
Yet she never sings such music,—
or she sings it not to me.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the
bushes
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways
to the summer heavens complete.

If it *were* a bird, it seemed
Most like Chaucer's, which, in
sooth,
He of green and azure dreamed,
While it sat in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady,
singing nigh her silent mouth.

If it *were* a bird!—ah, sceptic,
Give me 'Yea' or give me
'Nay'—
Though my soul were nympho-
leptic,
As I heard that virelay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon,
for my sin is far away.

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,
And (it seemed) in geste of passion
Dropped the music at my feet,
Like a garment rustling downwards!—
such a silence followed it.

Heart and head beat through the
quiet,
Full and heavily, though slower;
In the song, I think, and by it,

Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless,
then returned me to the Hour.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I
past;
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at
last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine, I all
consciously was cast.

Face to face with the true mountains,
I stood silently and still;
Drawing strength for fancy's
dauntings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies,
and most debonair goodwill.

Oh! the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my
youth,
To the truth of things with
praises
To the beauty of the truth:
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing
joyfully for both.

And I said within me, laughing,
I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus—fashioned half in
Chance, and half in Nature's
play—
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will
nevermore missay.

Henceforth *I* will be the fairy
Of this bower, not built by one;
I will go there sad or merry,
With each morning's benison:
And the bird shall be my harper in
the dream-hall I have won.

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—
'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorn-
ing!

This is truth in its pure grace,)
The next morning, all had vanished,
or my wandering missed the
place.

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew—
By the advent of the snow-drop—
by the rosemary and rue,—

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,
That my wandering searches
many
Missed the bower of my ro-
mance—
That I nevermore upon it, turned
my mortal countenance.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair—
Never garden-creeper crossed it,
With so deft and brave an air—
Never bird sung in the summer, as
I saw and heard them there.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith—
Under leaf and over briar—
Through the thickets, out of
breath—
Like the prince who rescued Beauty
from the sleep as long as death.

But his sword of mettle clashed,
And his arm smote strong, I
ween;
And her dreaming spirit flashed
Through her body's fair white
screen,
And the light thereof might guide
him up the cedar alleys green.

But for me, I saw no splendour—
All my sword was my child-heart;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Ædipus's grave-place, 'mid
Colone's olives swart.

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four and twenty case-
ments

Which gave answers to the sun;
So, in wilderment of gazing I looked
up, and I looked down.

Years have vanished since as
wholly
As the little bower did then;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come
again?

Ah! I cannot change this sighing
for your smiling, brother-men!

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul in spirit-vigour,
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty
than an arbour in a wood.

I have lost—oh many a pleasure—
Many a hope and many a power—
Studious health and merry lei-
sure—

The first dew on the first flower!
But the first of all my losses was
the losing of the bower.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done—
The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompleteness,
in the face of what is won—

Exhalations in the far light,
Where some cottage only is—
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss;
And the child-cheek blushing scar-
let, for the very shame of bliss.

I have lost the sound child-sleep-
ing [break;
Which the thunder could not
Something too of the strong
leaping

Of the stagelike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping
in the road it ought to take.

Some respect to social fictions
Hath been also lost by me ;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of
our false Humanity.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye, perchance, would look
away ;— [you
Ye would answer me, ' Farewell !
Make sad company to-day ;
And your tears are falling faster
than the bitter words you say.'

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground, with power ;
And my heart had for its trial,
All the sun and all the shower !
And I suffered many losses ; and
my first was of the bower.

Laugh you ? If that loss of mine
be
Of no heavy seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the
pine-tree, [at ;
The young children laugh there—
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth,
and the tempest shall be great !

One who knew me in my child-
hood
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild,
would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections,
where those changes overcame.

On this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still
sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine,
I behold the bower arise.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly
Stroked with light adown its
rind—

And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined,
And the rose-trees at the doorway,
they have neither grown nor
pined.

From those overblown faint roses
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of
red,
For the winters and the summers
which have passed me over-
head.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, and sylvan eaves .
Thrush or nightingale—who
knoweth ?
Fay or Faunus—who believes ?
But my heart still trembles in me
to the trembling of the leaves.

Is the bower lost, then ? Who
sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost ?
Hark ! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the sunshine and the
frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly
to the last and uttermost—

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His Throne ;
And a saint's voice in the palm-
trees, singing—' ALL IS LOST . .
and won !'

THE ROMAUNT OF THE
PAGE.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds
And a young page at his side
From the holy war in Palestine

Did slow and thoughtful ride,
As each were a palmer, and told
for beads
The dews of the eventide.

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

'O brave knight,' said the page,
'Or ere we hither came,
We talked in tent, we talked in field
Of the bloody battle game:
But here, below this greenwood
bough,
I cannot speak the same.

'Our troop is far behind,
The woodland calm is new;
Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled
hoofs,
Tread deep the shadows through;
And in my mind, some blessing kind
Is dropping with the dew.

'The woodland calm is pure—
I cannot choose but have
A thought from these, o' the
beechen-trees
Which in our England wave;
And of the little finches fine
Which sang there, while in Palestine
The warrior-hilt we drave.

'Methinks, a moment gone,
I heard my mother pray! [*me*
I heard, sir knight, the prayer for
Wherein she passed away;
And I know the Heavens are lean-
ing down
To hear what I shall say.'

The page spake calm and high
As of no mean degree;
Perhaps he felt in nature's broad
Full heart, his own was free

And the knight looked up to his
lifted eye,
Then answered smilingly:—

'Sir Page, I pray your grace!
Certes, I meant not so [*page*,
To cross your pastoral mood, sir
With the crook of the battle-bow;
But a knight may speak of a lady's
face,
I ween, in any mood or place,
If the grasses die or grow.

'And this, I meant to say—
My lady's face shall shine
As ladies' faces use, to greet
My Page from Palestine:
Or, speak she fair, or prank she gay,
She is no lady of mine.

'And this I meant to fear,—
Her bower may suit thee ill!
For, sooth, in that same field and
tent,
Thy *talk* was somewhat still;
And fitter thy hand for thy knightly
spear,
Than thy tongue for my lady's
will.'

Slowly and thankfully
The young page bowed his head
His large eyes seemed to muse a
smile,
Until he blushed instead;
And no lady in her bower pardie,
Could blush more sudden red—
'Sir Knight,—thy lady's bower to
me,
Is suited well,' he said.

Beati, beati, mortui!
From the convent on the sea,
One mile off, or scarce as nigh,
Swells the dirge as clear and high
As if that, over brake and lea,
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers burning o'er it,
And the lady Abbess dead before
it,

And the chanting nuns whom
yesterweek
Her voice did charge and bless—
Chanting steady, chanting meek,
Chanting with a solemn breath
Because that they are thinking less
Upon the Dead than upon death !
Beati, beati, mortui !
Now the vision in the sound
Wheelet on the wind around—
Now it sleepeth back, away—
The uplands will not let it stay
To dark the western sun.
Mortui !—away at last,
Or ere the page's blush is past !
And the knight heard all, and the
page heard none.

' A boon, thou noble knight,
If ever I served thee !
Though thou art a knight and I
am a page,
Now grant a boon to me—
And tell me sooth, if dark or bright,
If little loved or loved aright,
Be the face of thy ladye.'

Gloomily looked the knight ;
' As a son thou hast served me :
And would to none I had granted
boon,
Except to only thee !
For haply then I should love aright,
For then I should know if dark or
bright
Were the face of my ladye.

' Yet ill it suits my knightly tongue
To grudge that granted boon :
That heavy price from heart and life
I paid in silence down : [fine
The hand that claimed it, cleared in
My father's fame : I swear by mine,
That price was nobly won.

' Earl Walter was a brave old earl,—
He was my father's friend ;
And while I rode the lists at court
And little guessed the end,

My noble father in his shroud,
Against a slanderer lying loud,
He rose up to defend.

' O, calm, below the marble gray
My father's dust was strown !
Oh, meek, above the marble gray
His image prayed alone !
The slanderer lied—the wretch was
brave,—
For, looking up the minster-nave,
He saw my father's knightly glaive
Was changed from steel to stone.

' But Earl Walter's glaive was steel,
With a brave old hand to wear it !
And dashed the lie back in the
mouth
Which lied against the godly truth
And against the knightly merit :
The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's
heel,
Struck up the dagger in appeal
From stealthy lie to brutal force—
And out upon that traitor's corse
Was yielded the true spirit.

' I would my hand had fought that
fight
And justified my father !
I would my heart had caught that
wound
And slept beside him rather !
I think it were a better thing
Than murdered friend and mar-
riage-ring
Forced on my life together.

' Wail shook Earl Walter's house—
His true wife shed no tear—
She lay upon her bed as mute
As the earl did on his bier :
Till—" Ride, ride fast," she said at
last,
" And bring the avengèd son anear !
Ride fast—ride free, as a dart can
flee :
For white of blee with waiting for me
Is the corse in the next chambère."

' I came— I knelt beside her bed—
 Her calm was worse than strife—
 " My husband, for thy father dear,
 Gave freely when thou wert not here
 His own and eke my life.
 A boon! Of that sweet child we
 make
 An orphan for thy father's sake,
 Make thou, for ours, a wife."

' I said, " My steed neighs in the
 court:
 My bark rocks on the brine;
 And the warrior's vow I am under
 now
 To free the pilgrim's shrine:
 But fetch the ring and fetch the
 priest
 And call that daughter of thine;
 And rule she wide from my castle
 on Nyde
 While I am in Palestine."

In the dark chambère, if the bride
 was fair,
 Ye wis, I could not see;
 But the steed thrice neighed, and
 the priest fast prayed
 And wedded fast were we.
 Her mother smiled upon her bed
 As at its side we knelt to wed;
 And the bride rose from her knee
 And kissed the smile of her mother
 dead,
 Or ever she kissed me.

' My page, my page, what grieves
 thee so, [face?']—
 That the tears run down thy
 ' Alas, alas! mine own sistèr
 Was in thy lady's case!
 But *she* laid down the silks she wore
 And followed him she wed before,
 Disguised as his true servitor,
 To the very battle-place.'

And wept the page, but laughed the
 knight,
 A careless laugh laughed he:

' Well done it were for thy sistèr,
 But not for my ladye!
 My love, so please you shall requite
 No woman, whether dark or bright,
 Unwomaned if she be.'

The page stoppèd weeping, and
 smiled cold—
 ' Your wisdom may declare
 That womanhood is proved the best
 By golden brooch and glossy vest
 The mincing ladies wear:
 Yet is it proved, and was of old,
 A near as well—I dare to hold—
 By truth, or by despair.'

He smiled no more—he wept no
 more—
 But passionately he spake,—
 ' Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,
 When none beside did wake!
 Oh, womanly she paled in fight,
 For one belovèd's sake!—
 And her little hand defiled with
 blood,
 Her tender tears of womanhood
 Most woman-pure did make!

' Well done it were for thy sistèr
 Thou tellest well her tale!
 But for my lady, she shall pray
 I' the kirk of Nydesdale—
 Not dread for me but love for me
 Shall make my lady pale:
 No casque shall hide her woman's
 tear—

It shall have room to trickle clear
 Behind her woman's veil.'

' But what if she mistook thy mind
 And followed thee to strife;
 Then kneeling, did entreat thy love,
 As Paynims ask for life?
 ' I would forgive, and evermore
 Would love her as my servitor,
 But little as my wife.

' Look up—there is a small bright
 cloud
 Alone amid the skies!

So high, so pure, and so apart,
A woman's honour lies.
The page looked up—the cloud was
sheen—

A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,
Betwixt it and his eyes :

Then dimly dropped his eyes away
From welken unto hill—

Ha! who rides there?—the page is
'ware,

Though the cry at his heart is still!
And the page seeth all and the
knight seeth none

Though banner and spear do fleck
the sun,

And the Saracens ride at will.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh
low,—

'Ride fast, my master, ride,
Or ere within the broadening dark
The narrow shadows hide!'

'Yea, fast, my page; I will do so;
And keep thou at my side.'

'Now nay, now nay, ride on thy
way,

Thy faithful page precede!
For I must loose on saddle-bow
My battle-casque that galls, I trow,
The shoulder of my steed;
And I must pray, as I did vow,
For one in bitter need.

'Ere night I shall be near to thee,—
Now ride, my master, ride!

Ere night, as parted spirits cleave
To mortals too beloved to leave,
I shall be at thy side.'

The knight smiled free at the fan-
tasy,

And adown the dell did ride.

Had the knight looked up to the
page's face,

No smile the word had won!

Had the knight looked up in the
page's face,

I ween he had never gone:
Had the knight looked back to the
page's geste,

I ween he had turned anon:
For dread was the wo in the face
so young;

And wild was the silent geste that
flung

Casque, sword to earth—as the boy
down-sprung,

And stood—alone, alone.

He clenched his hands as if to hold
His soul's great agony—

'Have I renounced my womanhood,
For wifehood unto *thee*?

And is this the last, last look of
thine

That ever I shall see?

'Yet God thee save, and mayst thou
have

A lady to thy mind;
More woman-proud and half as true
As one thou leav'st behind!

And God me take with HIM to
dwell—

For HIM I cannot love too well,
As I have loved my kind.'

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,
The hopeful Heavens to seek:

That little cloud still floateth there,
Whereof her Loved did speak.

How bright the little cloud appears!
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,

And the tears down either cheek.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of
steel—

The Paynims round her coming!
The sound and sight have made her
calm,—

False page, but truthful woman!
She stands amid them all unmoved:

The heart once broken by the loved
Is strong to meet the foeman.

‘Ho, Christian page! art keeping
sheep,
From pouring wine cups rest-
ing?’—

‘I keep my master’s noble name,
For warring, not for feasting:
And if that here Sir Hubert were,
My master brave, my master dear,
Ye would not stay to question.’

‘Where is thy master, scornful page,
That we may slay or bind him?’—

‘Now search the lea and search the
wood,

And see if ye can find him!
Nathless, as hath been often tried,
Your Paynim heroes faster ride
Before him than behind him.’

‘Give smoother answers, lying page,
Or perish in the lying,’—

‘I trow that if the warrior brand
Beside my foot, were in my hand,
’Twere better at replying.’

They cursed her deep, they smote
her low,

They cleft her golden ringlets
through:

The Loving is the Dying.

She felt the scimitar gleam down,
And met it from beneath
With smile more bright in victory
Than any sword from sheath,—
Which flashed across her lip serene
Most like the spirit-light between
The darks of life and death.

Ingemisco, ingemisco!

From the convent on the sea,
Now it sweepeth solemnly!
As over wood and over lea
Bodily the wind did carry
The great altar of St. Mary,
And the fifty tapers paling o’er it,
And the Lady Abbess stark before
it, [that faintly
And the weary nuns with hearts
Beat along their voices saintly—

Ingemisco, ingemisco!

Dirge for abbess laid in shroud,
Sweepeth o’er the shroudless Dead,
Page or lady, as we said,
With the dews upon her head,
All as sad if not as loud:

Ingemisco, ingemisco!

Is ever a lament begun
By any mourner under sun,
Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one?*

THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

PART FIRST.

‘ONORA, ONORA’—her mother is
calling—

She sits at the lattice and hears the
dew falling [laden

Drop after drop from the sycamores
With dew as with blossom, and
calls home the maiden—

‘Night cometh, Onora.’

She looks down the garden-walk
caverned with trees,
To the limes at the end where the
green arbor is—

‘Some sweet thought or other may
keep where it found her,
While forgot or unseen in the
dreamlight around her—

Night cometh, Onora!’

She looks up the forest whose alleys shoot on
 Like the mute minster-aisles when the anthem is done,
 And the choristers sitting with faces aslant
 Feel the silence to consecrate more than the chant—
 ‘Onora, Onora!’

And forward she looketh across the brown heath—
 ‘Onora, art coming?’—what is it she seeth?
 Nought, nought, but the gray borderstone that is wist
 To dilate and assume a wild shape in the mist—
 ‘My daughter!’—Then over

The casement she leaneth, and as she doth so,
 She is ‘ware of her little son playing below:
 ‘Now where is Onora?’—He hung down his head
 And spake not, then answering blushed scarlet red,—
 ‘At the tryst with her lover.’

But his mother was wroth. In a sternness quoth she,
 ‘As thou play’st at the ball, art thou playing with me?
 When we know that her lover to battle is gone,
 And the saints know above that she loveth but one
 And will ne’er wed another?’

Then the boy wept aloud. ‘Twas a fair sight yet sad
 To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had:
 He stamped with his foot, said—
 ‘The saints know I lied
 Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide!
 Must I utter it, mother?’

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,
 And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin;
 But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he—
 ‘Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosarie,
 At nights in the ruin!

‘The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,
 Where the owl hoots by day, and the toad is sun-proof;
 Where no singing-birds build; and the trees gaunt and gray
 As in stormy sea-coasts appear blasted one way—
 But is *this* the wind’s doing?

‘A nun in the east wall was buried alive,
 Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,—
 And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,
 The old abbess fell backward and swooned unto death
 With an ave half-spoken.

‘I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,
 Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground!
 A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!
 And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her throat
 In the pass of the Brocken.

‘At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there,
 With the brown rosarie never used for a prayer?
 Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,
 What an ugly great hole in that west wall must be
 At dawn and at even!

' Who meet there, my mother, at
dawn and at even ?

Who meet by that wall, never look-
ing to heaven ?

O sweetest my sister, what doeth
with *thee*,

The ghost of a nun with a brown
rosarie,

And a face turned from heaven ?

' St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my
dreams ; and erewhile

I have felt through mine eyelids
the warmth of her smile—

But last night, as a sadness like
pity came o'er her,

' She whispered—" Say *two* prayers
at dawn for Onora !

The Tempted is sinning." '

Onora, Onora ! they heard her not
coming—

Not a step on the grass, not a voice
through the gloaming :

But her mother looked up, and she
stood on the floor

Fair and still as the moonlight that
came there before,

And a smile just beginning :

It touches her lips—but it dares
not arise

To the height of the mystical
sphere of her eyes :

And the large musing eyes, neither
joyous nor sorry

Sing on like the angels in separate
glory,

Between clouds of amber.

For the hair droops in clouds am-
ber-colored, till stirred

Into gold by the gestures that
comes with a word :

While—O soft !—her speaking is
so interwound

Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a
twilight of sound

And floats through the chamber.

' Since thou shrivest my brother
fair mother,' said she.

' I count on thy priesthood for mar-
rying of me :

And I know by the hills that the
battle is done—

That my lover rides on—will be
here with the sun,

' Neath the eyes that behold
thee !'

Her mother sat silent—too tender,
I wis,

Of the smile her dead father smiled
dying to kiss ;

But the boy started up pale with
tears, passion-wrought,—

' O wicked fair sister, the hills ut-
ter nought !

If he cometh, who told thee ?'

' I know by the hills,' she resumed
calm and clear,

' By the beauty upon them, that HE
is anear :

Did they ever look *so* since he bade
me adieu ?

Oh, love in the waking, sweet
brother, is true

As St. Agnes in sleeping.'

Half-ashamed and half-softened
the boy did not speak,

And the blush met the lashes which
fell on his cheek :

She bowed down to kiss him—
Dear saints, did he see

Or feel on her bosom the BROWN
ROSARIE—

That he shrank away weeping ?

PART SECOND.

*A bed—ONORA sleeping. Angels,
but not near.*

First Angel.

Must we stand so far, and she
So very fair ?

Second Angel.

As bodies be.

First Angel.
And she so mild?

Second Angel.

As spirits when
They meeken, not to God, but
men.

First Angel.

And she so young,—that I who
bring
Good dreams for saintly children,
might
Mistake that small soft face to-
night.

And fetch her such a blessed thing,
That at her waking she would
weep

For childhood lost anew in sleep :
How hath she sinned?

Second Angel.

In bartering love—
God's love—for man's.

First Angel.

We may reprove
The world for this ! not only her :
Let me approach to breathe away
This dust o' the heart with holy
air.

Second Angel.

Stand off ! she sleeps, and did not
pray.

First Angel.

Did none pray for her ?

Second Angel.

Ay, a child,—
Who never, praying, wept before :
While, in a mother undefiled
Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true
And pauseless as the pulses do.

First Angel.

Then I approach.

Second Angel.

It is not WILLED.

First Angel.

One word : Is she redeemed ?

Second Angel.

No more !

THE PLACE IS FILLED.

[Angels *vanish*.]

*Evil Spirit in a Nun's garb by the
bed.*

Forbear that dream— forbear that
dream ! too near to Heaven it
leaned.

Onora in sleep.

Nay, leave me this—but only this !
'tis but a dream, sweet fiend !

Evil Spirit.

It is a *thought*.

Onora in sleep.

A sleeping thought—most inno-
cent of good—

It doth the Devil no harm, sweet
fiend ! it cannot, if it would.

I say in it no holy hymn,—I do no
holy work ;

I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that
chimeth from the kirk.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream— forbear that
dream !

Onora in sleep.

Nay, let me *dream* at least :
That far-off bell, it may be took
for viol at a feast—

I only walk among the fields, be-
neath the autumn-sun,

With my dead father, hand in
hand, as I have often done.

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream— forbear that
dream !

Onora in sleep.

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go—
I never more can walk with *him*, O
nevermore but so :

Oh, deep and straight ; oh, very
straight ! they move at nights
alone :

And then he calleth through my
dreams, he calleth tenderly,

'Come forth, my daughter, my be-
loved, and walk the fields with
me !'

Evil Spirit.

Forbear that dream, or else dis-
prove its pureness by a sign.

Onora in sleep.

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied !
my word shall answer thine.

I hear a bird which used to sing
when I a child was praying ;
I see the poppies in the corn I used
to sport away in.

What shall I do—tread down the
dew, and pull the blossoms
blowing ?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright
the finches from the rowen ?

Evil Spirit.

Thou shalt do something harder
still : stand up where thou dost
stand

Among the fields of Dreamland
with thy father hand in hand,
And, clear and slow, repeat the
vow—declare its cause and
kind,

Which, not to break, in sleep or
wake, thou bearest on thy
mind.

Onora in sleep.

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow
for mournful cause :

I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong
—the spirits laughed applause :
The spirits trailed along the pines
low laughter like a breeze,

While, high atween their swinging
tops the stars appeared to
freeze.

Evil Spirit.

More calm and free,—speak out
to me, why such a vow was
made.

Onora in sleep.

Because that God decreed my
death, and I shrank back
afraid :

Have patience, O dead father mine !
I did not fear to die ;

I wish I were a young dead child,
and had thy company !

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried
three-year child,

And wearing only a kiss of thine
upon my lips that smiled !

The linden tree that covers thee
might so have sheltered twain—

For death itself I did not fear—
'tis love that makes the pain.

Love feareth death. I was no child
—I was betrothed that day ;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I
could not give away.

How could I bear to lie content and
still beneath a stone,

And feel mine own Betrothed go
by—alas ! no more mine
own,—

Go leading by in wedding pomp
some lovely lady brave,

With cheeks that blushed as red
as rose, while mine were white
in grave ?

How could I bear to sit in Heaven,
on e'er so high a throne,

And hear him say to her—to *her* !
that else he loveth none ?

Though e'er so high I sate above,
though e'er so low he spake,

As clear as thunder I should hear
the new oath he might take—

That *hers*, forsooth, are heavenly
eyes,—ah, me ! while very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of
Heaven !) would darken down
to *him*.

Evil Spirit.

Who told thee thou wast called to
death ?

Onora in sleep.

I sat all night beside thee—
The gray owl on the ruined wall
shut both his eyes to hide
thee ;

And ever he flapped his heavy
wing all brokenly and weak,

And the long grass waved against
the sky, around his gasping
beak.

I sate beside thee all the night,
while the moonlight lay forlorn,

Strewn round us like a dead world's
shroud, in ghastly fragments
torn.

And through the night, and through
the hush, and over the flapping
wing,

We heard beside the Heavenly
Gate the angels murmuring :—

We heard them say, ' Put day to
day, and count the days to
seven,

' And God will draw Onora up the
golden stairs of Heaven :

' And yet the evil ones have leave
that purpose to defer,

' For if she has no need of HIM,
He has no need of *her*'—

Evil Spirit.

Speak out to me—speak bold and
free.

Onora in sleep.

And then I heard thee say,—

I count upon my rosarie brown
the hours thou hast to stay !

' Yet God permits us evil ones to
put by that decree,

' Since if thou hast no need of HIM,
he has no need of *thee*—

' And if thou wilt forego the sigh
of angels, verily

' Thy true love gazing on thy face,
shall guess what angels be—

' Nor bride shall pass save thee' . . .

Alas! my father's hand's
acold—

The meadows seem . . .

Evil Spirit.

Forbear the dream, or let the vow
be told !

Onora in sleep.

I vowed upon thy rosarie brown,
this string of antique beads,

By charnel lichens overgrown, and
dank among the weeds—

The rosarie brown which is thine
own,—lost soul of buried nun,

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render
now all souls alike undone ;—

I vowed upon the rosarie brown,—
and, till such vow should break,

A pledge always of living days,
'twas hung around my neck—

I vowed to thee on rosarie, (Dead
father, look not so !)

*I would not thank God in my weal,
nor seek God in my wo.*

Evil Spirit.

And canst thou prove . . .

Onora in sleep.

O love—my love ! I felt him near
again !

I saw his steed on mountain-head,
I heard it on the plain !

Was this no weal for me to feel ?—
is greater weal than this ?

Yet when he came, I wept his
name—and the angels heard
but *his*.

Evil Spirit.

Well done, well done !

Onora in sleep.

Ay me ! the sun . . . the dream-
light 'gins to pine,—

Ay me ! how dread can look the
Dead !

—Aroint thee, father mine !

She starteth from slumber, she sit-
teth upright,

And her breath comes in sobs while
she stares through the night :

There is nought. The great wil-
low, her lattice before,

Large-drawn in the moon, lieth
calm on the floor ;

But her hands tremble fast as their
pulses, and free

From the death-clasp, close over—
the BROWN ROSARIE.

THIRD PART.

'TIS a morn for a bridal ; the merry
bride-bell

Rings clear through the green-wood
that skirts the chapelle ;

And the priest at the altar awaiteth
the bride,
And the sacristans slyly are jesting
aside
At the work shall be doing.

While down through the wood
rides that fair company,
The youths with the courtship, the
maids with the glee,
Till the chapel-cross opens to sight,
and at once
All the maids sigh demurely, and
think for the nonce,
'And so endeth a wooing!'

And the bride and the bridegroom
are leading the way,
With his hand on her rein, and a
word yet to say:
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft
answers beneath,
And the little quick smiles come
and go with her breath,
When she sigheth or speaketh.

And the tender bride-mother breaks
off unaware
From an Ave, to think that her
daughter is fair,
Till in nearing the chapel, and
glancing before,
She seeth her little son stand at
the door.
Is it play that he seeketh?

Is it play? when his eyes wander
innocent-wild,
And sublimed with a sadness unfit-
ting a child!
He trembles not, weeps not—the
passion is done,
And calmly he kneels in their midst,
with the sun
On his head like a glory.

O fair-featured maids, ye are
many!' he cried,—
But, in fairness and vileness, who
matcheth the bride?

O brave-hearted youths, ye are
many, but whom,
For the courage and woe, can ye
match with the groom,
As ye see them before ye?'

Out spake the bride's mother—
'The vileness is thine,
If thou shame thine own sister, a
bride at the shrine!'

Out spake the bride's lover—'The
vileness be mine,
If he shame mine own wife at the
hearth or the shrine,
And the charge be unprovèd.

'Bring the charge, prove the charge,
brother! speak it aloud—
Let thy father and hers, hear it deep
in his shroud!'

—'O father, thou seest—for dead
eyes can see—
How she wears on her bosom a
brown rosarie,
O my father beloved!'

Then outlaughed the bridegroom,
and outlaughed withal
Both maidens and youths, by the
old chapel wall—
'So she weareth no love-gift, kind
brother,' quoth he,
'She may wear an she listeth, a
brown rosarie,
Like a pure-hearted lady!'

Then swept through the chapel the
long bridal train:
Though he spake to the bride she
replied not again:
On, as one in a dream, pale and
stately she went
Where the altar-lights burn o'er the
great sacrament,
Faint with daylight, but
steady.

But her brother had passed in be-
tween them and her,
And calmly knelt down on the high-
altar stair—

Of an infantine aspect so stern to
the view,
That the priest could not smile on
the child's eyes of blue
As he would for another.

He knelt like a child marble-sculpt-
ured and white,
That seems kneeling to pray on the
tomb of a knight, [of stone
With a look taken up to each iris
From the greatness and death
where he kneeleth, but none
From the face of a mother.

' In your chapel, O priest, ye have
wedded and shriven
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair
sinners for Heaven!
But this fairest my sister, ye think
now to wed,
Bid her kneel where she standeth,
and shrive her instead—
O shrive her and wed not !'

In tears the bride's mother,—' Sir
priest, unto thee
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair
company !'
In wrath, the bride's lover,—' The
lie shall be clear !
Speak it out, boy ! the saints in their
niches shall hear—
Be the charge proved or said
not !'

Then serene in his childhood he
lifted his face,
And his voice sounded holy and fit
for the place—
' Look down from your niches, ye
still saints, and see
How she wears on her bosom a
brown rosarie !
Is it used for the praying ?'

The youths looked aside—to laugh
there were a sin—
And the maidens' lips trembled
with smiles shut within :

Quoth the priest—' Thou art wild,
pretty boy ! Blessed she
Who prefers at her bridal a brown
rosarie
' To a worldly arraying !'

The bridegroom spake low and led
onward the bride,
And before the high altar they
stood side by side :
The rite-book is opened, the rite is
begun—
They have knelt down together to
rise up as one—
Who laughed by the altar ?

The maidens looked forward, the
youths looked around.
The bridegroom's eye flashed from
his prayer at the sound ;
And each saw the bride, as if no
bride she were,
Gazing cold at the priest without
gesture of prayer,
As he read from the psalter.

The priest never knew that she did
so, but still
He felt a power on him too strong
for his will ;
And whenever the Great Name was
there to be read,
His voice sank to silence—THAT
could not be said,
• Or the air could not hold it.

' I have sinned,' quoth he, ' I have
sinned, I wot'—
And the tears ran down his old
cheeks at the thought ;
They dropped fast on the book ;
but he read on the same,
And aye was the silence where
should be the NAME,
As the choristers told it.

The rite-book is closed, and the
rite being done,
They who knelt down together,
arise up as one :

Fair riseth the bride—Oh, a fair
bride is she,—

But, for all (think the maidens) that
brown rosarie,

No saint at her praying!

What aileth the bridegroom? He
glares blank and wide—

Then suddenly turning, he kisseth
the bride—

His lips stung her with cold: she
glanced upwardly mute:

‘Mine own wife,’ he said, and fell
stark at her foot

In the word he was saying.

They have lifted him up,—but his
head sinks away,

And his face showeth bleak in the
sunshine and gray.

Leave him now where he lieth—for
oh, nevermore

Will he kneel at an altar or stand
on a floor!

Let his bride gaze upon him!

Long and still was her gaze, while
they chafed him there,

And breathed in the mouth whose
last life had kissed her:

But when they stood up—only *they!*
with a start

The shriek from her soul struck her
pale lips apart—

She has lived, and forgone him!

And low on his body she droppeth
adown—

‘Didst call me thine own wife, be-
loved—thine own?’

Then take thine own with thee!
thy coldness is warm

To the world’s cold without thee!
Come, keep me from harm

In a calm of thy teaching!’

She looked in his face earnest long,
as in sooth

There were hope of an answer,—
and then kissed his mouth:

And with head on his bosom, wept,
wept bitterly,—

‘Now, O God, take pity—take pity
on me!—

God, hear my beseeching!’

She was ‘ware of a shadow that
crossed where she lay;

She was ‘ware of a presence that
wither’d the day—

Wild she sprang to her feet,—‘I
surrender to *thee*

The broken vow’s pledge,—the ac-
cursed rosarie,—

I am ready for dying!’

She dashed it in scorn to the mar-
ble-paved ground,

Where it fell mute as snow; and a
weird music-sound

Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles
long and dim,—

As the fiends tried to mock at the
choristers’ hymn

And moaned in the trying.

FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown
the garden walk:

‘I am weary, O my mother, of thy
tender talk!

I am weary of the trees a-waving
to and fro—

Of the steadfast skies above, the
running brooks below;

All things are the same but I;—only
I am dreary;

And, mother, of my dreariness be-
hold me very weary.

‘Mother, brother, pull the flowers
I planted in the spring,

And smiled to think I should smile
more upon their gathering.

The bees will find out other flow-
ers—oh, pull them dearest

mine,

And carry them and carry me be-
fore St. Agnes’ shrine.’

- Whereat they pulled the summer
flowers she planted in the
spring,
And her and them all mournfully to
Agnes' shrine did bring.
- She looked up to the pictured saint
and gently shook her head—
'The picture is too calm for *me*—
too calm for *me*,' she said :
'The little flowers we brought with
us, before it we may lay,
For those are used to look at heav-
en,—but *I* must turn away—
Because no sinner under sun can
dare or bear to gaze
On God's or angel's holiness, ex-
cept in Jesu's face.'
- She spoke with passion after
pause—
'And were it wisely done,
If we who cannot gaze above,
should walk the earth alone?
If we whose virtue is so weak,
should have a will so strong,
And stand blind on the rocks, to
choose the right path from the
wrong?
To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth,
instead of love and Heaven—
A single rose, for a rose-tree, which
beareth seven times seven?
A rose that droppeth from the hand,
that fadeth in the breast,
Until, in grieving for the worst, we
learn what is the best!'
- Then breaking into tears,—'Dear
God,' she cried, 'and must we
see
All blissful things depart from *us*,
or ere we go to THEE?
We cannot guess thee in the wood,
or hear thee in the wind?
Our cedars must fall round us, ere
we see the light behind?
Ay, sooth, we feel too strong in
weal, to need thee on that road ;
But wo being come, the soul is
dumb that crieth not on
"God."'
- Her mother could not speak for
tears ; she ever mused thus—
'*The bees will find out other flow-
ers,—but what is left for us?*'
But her young brother stayed his
sobs and knelt beside her knee,
'Thou sweetest sister in the world,
hast never a word for me?'
- She passed her hand across his
face, she pressed it on his
cheek,
So tenderly, so tenderly—she need-
ed not to speak.
- The wreath which lay on shrine that
day, at vespers bloomed no
more—
The woman fair who placed it
there had died an hour before.
Both perished mute, for lack of root,
earth's nourishment to reach ;
O reader breathe (the ballad saith)
some sweetness out of each

A VISION OF POETS.

O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,
 How may I lightly stile thy great power?
Echo. Power! but of whence? under the greenwood spray?
 Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.
Echo. In Heavens aye!
 In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne
 By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine?
Echo. By paine.
 Show me the paine, it shall be undergone:
 I to my end will still go on.
Echo. Go on.

BRITANNIA'S PASTORALS.

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

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

Where, sloping up the darkest
 glades, [nades,
 The moon had drawn long colon-
 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 tears in their large eyes to see
 The consecrated sight. But HE

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

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

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

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 nightin-
 gales,
 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, [nown
The chief whose mortgage of re-
Fixed upon graves, has bought a
crown—

Both these are happier, more ap-
proved [moved
Than poets !—Why should I be
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, and to anoint them all
With blessed oils which surely shall
Smell sweeter æ the ages fall.'

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

' As sweet as window eglantine—
Some bough of which, as they de-
cline, [sign.
The hired nurse gathers at their

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

The lady answered, ' Yea, as sweet !
The things thou namest being com-
plete
In fragrance as I measure it.

' Since sweet the death-clothes and
the knell [well,—
Of him who having lived, dies
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 [fore :
Of tearless Death,—and even be-
Sweet, consecrated evermore !

' What ! dost thou judge it a strange
thing, [ing
That poets, crowned for vanquish-
Should bear some dust from out the
ring ?

' Come on with me, come on with
me ;
And learn in coming ! Let me free
Thy spirit into verity.'

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

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

Its billowy foliage through the air,
 And the calm stars did, far and
 spare

O'er-swim the masses everywhere :

Save when the overtopping pines
 Did bar their tremulous light with
 lines

All fixed and black. Now the
 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 under-
 neath, [heath
 And four pools breaking up the
 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 [blow :

Wherewith it struggled from the
 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 waters sat
 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 mourn-
 ful 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— [know.'

'*World's love* behoveth thee* to
 He looked to her commanding so.

Her brow was troubled, but her eye
 Struck clear to his soul. For all
 reply

He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness,
 passed

Beside the fourth pool and the last,
 Where weights of shadow were
 down-cast

From yew and alder, and rank
 trails [scales,

Of nightshade clasping the trunk-
 And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew. Who dares to stoop
Where those dank branches over-
droop

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,
Right in his face their wings ex-
pand.

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 un-
loth,
As if from rivers of the south.

His lips sobbed through the water
rank, [drank,
His heart paused in him while he
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 ex-
treme.

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 dis-
spread.

The moonshine seemed dishevelled
In her sleek tresses manifold ;
Like Danae's in the rain of old,
That dripped with melancholy gold.

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

'Rise up !' said she, with voice
where song
Eddied through speech—'rise up
be strong :
And learn how right avengeth
wrong.'

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

And mystic altarlights 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 towards 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 throbb-
ingly,
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,

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

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

And now in dark, and now in light,
The countless columns, glimmer-
ing 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 over-
flowed,

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 niched 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 sover-
eign—

On the vast background of his
wings
Arose his image, and he flings,
From each plumed arc, pale glitter-
ings

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 sigh grew sentient

Of a strange company around,
And toward the altar,—pale and
bound
With bay above the eye 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 spirit 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 sus-
pense [tense
Of thunderous brows, and lips in-
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There, Shakspeare! on whose fore-
head climb

The crowns o' the world! Oh, 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 gloriole

Of ebon hair on calmed brows—
O poet-woman none foregoes
The leap attaining the repose!

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

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

The infinite echoes hid in each.
And Virgil : shade of Mantuan
beech

Did help the shade of bay to reach

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

Lucretius—nobler than his mood :
Who dropped his plummet down
the broad

Deep universe, and said ' No God,'

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

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

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

And Spencer drooped his dreaming
head [said
(With languid sleep-smile you had
From his own verse engendered)

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

From his fine lids. And Dante
stern

And sweet, whose spirit was an urn
For wine and milk poured out in
turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri; and fancy-
willed

Boiardo,—who with laughter filled
The pauses of the jostled shield,

And Berni, with a hand stretched
out [without
To sleek that storm: And not
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 Cor-
neille,
The orator of rhymes, whose wail
Scarce shook his purple. And
Petrarch pale,

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

And Camoens, with that look he
had,
Compelling India's Genius sad
From the wave through the Lusiad,
With murmurs of the storm-cape
ocean

Indrawn in vibrative emotion
Along the verse. And while devo-
tion

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

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

And Goethe—with that reaching
eye [high,
His soul reached out from, far and
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 fur-
rows when
The world was worthy of such
men.

And Burns, with pungent passion-
ings
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 be-
tween
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.

The 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 wonder-
ful
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, [it,
There seemed a wound instead of
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 those who
died,
An anthem fully glorified :

' Whereat God's blessing . . . IBA-
RAK
Breathes back this music—folds it
back
About the earth in vapoury rack,

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

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

' ' No little flower but joys or
grieves,
' Full life is rustling in the sheaves ;
' Full spirit sweeps the forest-
leaves.'

' So works this music on the earth :
God so admits it, sends it forth,
To 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
throbb'd betwixt

The incomplete and the unfixed :

And therein mighty minds were
heard

In mighty musings, inly stirred,
And struggling outward for a word.

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

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

Up, upward! like a saint who strips
The shroud back from his eyes and
lips,

And rises in apocalypse :

A Harmony sublime and plain,
Which cleft (as flying swan, the
rain,—

Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those under-
tones

Of perplex 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 Python, 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 re-
verse,)

'Was shot to the heart of the wood
and lies [eyes

Wedged deepest in the best:—if
That look for visions and surprise

- ' From influent angels, must shut
down
Their lids first, upon sun and moon,
The head asleep upon a stone,—
- ' If ONE who did redeem you back,
By HIS own loss from final wrack
Did consecrate by touch and track
- ' Those temporal sorrows, till the
taste
Of brackish waters of the waste
Is salt with tears He dropt too
fast,—
- ' If all the crowns of earth must
wound [found,—
With prickings of the thorns He
If saddest sighs swell sweetest
sound,—
- ' What say ye unto this ?—refuse
This baptism in salt water ?—
choose
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labor
loose ?
- ' Or, oh ye gifted givers ! ye
Who give your liberal hearts to
me,
To make the world this harmony,
- ' Are ye resigned that they be spent
To such world's help ? '—
The Spirits bent
Their awful brows and said—
' Content !'
- Content ! it sounded like *Amen*,
Said by a choir of mourning men—
An affirmation full of pain
- And patience :—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 con-
sume.
- ' 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, [ed—
As if the world were dispossess-
And one did pillow chin on
breast,
- Right languid—an as he should
faint !
- One shook his curls across his
paint,
And moralized on worldly taint,

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

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

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

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

And when this company drew
near
The spirits crowned, it might ap-
pear
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,
A Pindar's rushing words forsooth
Were pent behind it. One, his
smooth

Pink cheeks, did rumple passion-
ate,
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 re-
quite,
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 in-
strument
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 labor, it shall be
As suiteth best with our degree,
In after-dinner reverie.'

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

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

Ay, jettèd 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 [mark,
To its white cloud : So high my
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 di-
vine—
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 pray-
ed,
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 com-
mand

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 re-
joined
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 multi-
plied
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 sad vision—as a soul
Is raised by a thought : and as a
scroll

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

Angel and organ, and the round
Of spirits solemnized and crown-
ed,—
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 with-
drew,
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 be-
ing wound,
He knew the moorland of his
swound,
And the pale pools that seared the
ground,—

The far wood-pines, like offing
ships— [drips—
The fourth pools yew anear him
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,
And 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

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, [ed,
'Hush! keep this morning undefil-

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 some-
what slow

In honouring his living brow,

'Commands the palms—They must
be strown

On his new marble very soon,
In a procession of the town.'

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

'But this I know,—I fain would lay
Mine own head down, another day,
As *he* did,—with the 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—sound and
scene—
This sense of Being and of 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 heav-
enly 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 out-
give!
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 over 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 be-
hooved?'

'*I*,' softly said the child; and then,
'*I*,' said he louder, once again.
'*His son*,—my rank is among men.

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

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

'Me, a voice calleth to that tomb
Where these are strewing branch
and bloom,
Saying, *come nearer!*—and I come.

'Glory to God!' resumed he,
And his eyes smiled for victory
O'er their own tears which I could
see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek
and chin—
'That poet now hath 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 EN-
DURETH;
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY
DEATH!

CROWNED AND WEDDED.

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—

<p>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 god-like vow—to rule in right and righteousness, And with the law and for the land!—so God the vower bless! The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I ween, And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty aisled scene: The priests stood stoled in their pomp, the sworded chiefs in theirs, And so, the collared knights,—and so, the civil ministers, And so, the waiting lords and dames—and little pages best At holding trains—and legates so, from countries east and west— So, alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladies bright, Along whose brows the queen's new crowned, flashed coronets to light! And so, the people at the gates, with priestly hands on high, Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty. And so the DEAD—who lie in rows 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,</p>	<p>Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown! <i>Dieu et mon droit</i>—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!' 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!</p>
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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 woman-
 hood to be the royal thing :
 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.

NAPOLEON !—years ago, and that
 great word [and dread
 Compact of human breath in hate
 And exaltation, 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.
 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.
 Napoleon ! Sages, with high fore-
 heads drooped,
 Did use it for a problem ; children
 small [hood's call :
 Leapt up to greet it, as at man-
 Priests blessed it from their altars
 over-stooped
 By meek-eyed Christs,—and wid-
 ows with a moan
 Spake it when questioned why they
 sat alone.
 That name consumed the silence
 of the snows [hid
 In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-
 The mimic eagles dared what Na-
 ture's did,
 And over-rushed her mountainous
 repose
 In search of eyries : and the Egyp-
 tian river
 Mingled the same word with its
 grand 'for ever.'
 That name was shouted near the
 pyramidal [habitants,
 Nilotic tombs, whose mummied
 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.

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.

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 we heard her chain.

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.

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, to freedom stretched, dropped paralyzed
To wield a sword or fit an under-sized

King's crown to a great man's head,
And though along
Her Paris's streets, did float on frequent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams,
Dreampt right by genius in a world gone wrong,— [to see
No dream, of all so won, was fair
As the lost vision of her liberty.

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.

The kings crept out—the peoples sat 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.

A deep gloom centred in the deep repose—
The nations stood up mute to count their dead—
And *he* who owned the NAME which vibrated
Through silence,—Trusting to his noblest foes
When earth was all too gray for chivalry—
Died of their mercies, 'mid the desert sea.

O wild St. Helen! very still she
 kept him, [mid,—
 With a green willow for all pyra-
 Which stirred a little if the low
 wind did, [him
 A little more, if pilgrims overwept
 Disparting the lithe boughs to see
 the clay
 Which seemed to cover his for judg-
 ment-day.

Nay! not so long!—France kept
 her old affection [corse,
 As deeply as the sepulchre the
 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.'

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 strife, 'twixt
 thee and me.'
 Amen, mine England! 'tis a court-
 ous claim—
 But ask a little room too . . . for thy
 shame!

Because it was not well, it was not
 well, [part
 Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted
 Among the Oceanides,—that heart
 To bind and bare and vex with vult-
 ure fell.
 I would, my noble England, men
 might seek
 All crimson stains upon thy breast
 —not cheek!

I would that hostile fleets had
 scarred Torbay,
 Instead of the lone ship which wait-
 ed moored

Until thy princely purpose was as-
 sured. [away—
 Then left a *shadow*—not to pass
 Not for to-night's moon, nor to-
 morrow's sun!
 Green watching hills, ye witnessed
 what was done!

And since it *was* done,—in the sep-
 ulchral 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 [turn
 Of a fallen foe and exile:—We re-
 Orestes to Electra . . . in his urn.

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

And run back again 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 Aus-
 terlitz.

Napoleon! he hath come again—
 borne home [sea
 Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a
 Which gathers its own wrecks per-
 petually,
 Majestically moaning. Give him
 room!

Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
And grave deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded column!*

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
From roar of fields: provided Jupiter [near
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so His bolts!—And this he *may*. For, dispossessed [arm—
Of any godship lies the godlike The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm.

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world! and we [ry,
Look out upon the passing pageant—Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a French grave,—another kingdom won,
The last—of few spans—by Napoleon.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth!
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
Meridian light. He was a despot—granted! [mouth
But the *autos* of his autocratic Said yea i' the people's French: he magnified
The image of the freedom he denied.

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.

* It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

He ruled them like a tyrant—true: but none
Were ruled like slaves! Each felt Napoleon!

I do not praise this man: the man was flawed
For Adam—much more, Christ!—his knee unbent [pent
His hand unclean—his aspiration Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why let him have [grave.
The justice to be honoured in his

I think this nation's tears poured thus together,
Better than shouts: I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all:
I think this grave stronger than thrones:—But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be worthier, I discern not—Angels may.

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

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.

A thousand flowers—each seeming one
That learnt, by gazing on the sun,
To counterfeit his shining—
Within those leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven, hath won anew
A glory . . . in declining.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

No flowers our gardened England
 hath,

To match with these in bloom and
 Which from the world are hiding

In sunny Devon moist with rills,
 A nunnery of cloistered hills,
 The elements presiding.

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.

But, *here*, all summers are com-
 prised—

The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
 Before the priestly moonshine ;

And every Wind with stoled feet,
 In wandering down the alleys
 sweet,

Steps lightly on the sunshine :

And (having promised Harpocrate
 Among the nodding roses, that

No harm shall touch his daugh-
 ters)

Gives quite away the rushing sound
 He dares not use upon such ground,
 To ever-trickling waters.

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.

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.

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.

How coldly on its head did fall
 The sunshine, from the city wall
 In pale refraction driven !
 How sadly flashed upon its leaves
 The raindrops, losing in the eaves
 The first sweet dews of Heaven !

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.

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 !

Because, whatever virtue dwells
 In genial skies—warm oracles
 For gardens brightly springing,—
 The flower which grew beneath
 your eyes,
 Beloved friends, to mine supplies
 A beauty worthier singing !

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 ere-
 while
 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.

FELICIA HEMANS.

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER
MONODY ON THAT 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 throw-
ing;

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 tread-
est!
No flowers for her! no need of
flowers—albeit “bring flow-
ers,” 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 seem-
ing!
Lay only dust's stern verity upon
the dust undreaming.
And while the calm perpetual stars
shall look upon *me* 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 af-
flated

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 reck *who* wreathed the
brow which on His bosom lieth.

The whiteness of His innocence
o'er all her garments flowing,

There, learneth she the sweet 'new
song,' she will not mourn in
knowing.

VIII.

Be happy, crowned and living One!
and, as thy dust decayeth,

May thine own England say for
thee, what now for her it say-
eth— [song was ringing,

'Albeit softly in our ears her silver
The foot-fall of her parting soul is
softer than her singing!'

MY HEART AND I.

I.

ENOUGH! we're tired, my heart
and I.

We sit beside the headstone thus,
And wish that name were carved
for us.

The moss reprints more tenderly
The hard types of the mason's
knife,

As heaven's sweet life renews
earth's life

With which we're tired, my heart
and I.

II.

You see we'er tired, my heart and I.

We dealt with books, we trusted
men,

And in our own blood drenched
the pen,

As if such colors could not fly.

We walked too straight for fort-
une's end,

We loved too true to keep a
friend;

At last we're tired, my heart and I

III.

How tired we feel, my heart and I!

We seem of no use in the world;
Our fancies hang gray and un-
curled

About men's eyes indifferently;

Our voice which thrilled you so,
will let [wet:

You sleep; our tears are only
What do we here, my heart and I.

IV.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!

It was not thus in that old time
When Ralph sat with me neath
the lime

To watch the sunset from the sky.

'Dear love, you're looking tired,'
he said;

I, smiling at him, shook my head:
'Tis now we're tired, my heart
and I.

V.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!

Though now none takes me on
his arm

To fold me close and kiss me
warm

Till each quick breath end in a sigh
 Of happy languor. Now, alone,
 We lean upon this graveyard
 stone, [I.
 Uncheered, my heart and

VI.

Tired out we are, my heart and I.
 Suppose the world brought dia-
 dems
 To tempt us, crusted with loose
 gems
 Of powers and pleasures? Let it
 try.
 We scarcely care to look at
 even
 A pretty child, or God's blue
 heaven,
 We feel so tired, my heart and I.

VII.

Yet who complains? My heart
 and I?
 In this abundant earth no doubt
 Is little room for things worn out;
 Disdain them, break them, throw
 them by!
 And if before the days grew
 rough
 We *once* were loved, used,—well
 enough,
 I think, we've fared, my heart and I.

WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

I.

If I were thou, O butterfly,
 And poised my purple wings to spy
 The sweetest flowers that live and
 die.

II.

I would not waste my strength on
 those,
 As thou,—for summer hath 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 de-
 ferred;

X.

I would not overstay delight,
 As thou,—but take a swallow-flight,
 Till the new spring returned to
 sight.

XI.

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did
fade
As thus, methought, an angel said :

XII.

'If I were *thou* who sing'st this
song,
Most wise for others : and most
strong
In seeing right while doing wrong ;

XIII.

'I would not waste my cares and
choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must
lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

XIV.

'I would not work where none can
win,
As *thou*,—half way 'twixt grief and
sin,
But look above and judge within.

XV.

'I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*,—towards fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

XVI.

'I would not champ the hard cold
bit, [fit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks
But takes 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 !'

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

'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 praised.'
Be pitiful, O God !

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 !

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 !

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— [ing ;
The strong man brings it weep-
The mother from her babe looks up,
And shrieks away its sleeping.
Be pitiful, O God !

The plague of gold strides 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, [ures.
And marked, like sheep, with fig-
Be pitiful, O God !

The curse of gold upon the land,
The lack of bread enforces—
The rail-cars snort from strand to
strand, [Horses !

Like more of Death's White
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 !

We meet together at the feast—
To private mirth betake us--
We stare down in the winecup lest
Some vacant chair should shake
us ! [round—
We name delight, and pledge it
'It shall be ours to-morrow !'
God's seraphs do your voices sound
As sad in naming sorrow ?
Be pitiful, O God !

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, dear God !

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed—
Our tears drop on the lids 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 !

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

We pray together at the kirk,
For mercy, mercy, solely—
Hands weary with the evil work,
We lift them to the Holy !
The corpse is calm below our
knee—
Its spirit bright before Thee—
Between them, worse than either,
we—
Without the rest of glory !
Be pitiful, O God !

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 !

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
Woods, hamlets, streams, be-
holding :

The sun strikes through the far-
thest 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 !

And soon all vision waxeth dull—

Men whisper, ' He is dying : '

We cry no more, ' Be pitiful ! '—

We have no strength for crying :
No strength no need ! Then, Soul
of mine,

Look up and triumph rather—
Lo ! in the depth of God's Divine,
The Son adjures the Father—
BE PITIFUL, O GOD !

A 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 guests 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 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 thank and praise and
blessing !

' A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection
And spontaneous benediction.

' Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn, as to a brightness,—

' And every moth and bee,
Approach me reverently ;
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er
me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

' Three larks shall leave a cloud ;
To my whiter beauty vowed—
Singing gladly all the moontide,
Never waiting for the suntide.

' Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

' I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When low on earth they see me,
With my starry aspect dreamy !

' And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors, [ing,
By their curtsies and sweet-smell-
To give grace to my foretelling.'

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
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 strong enough for
lifting.

The lark, too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so;
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas.
Guess him in the happy islands,
Learning music from the silence.

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both;
Doing honour, doing honour,
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down,
As on a royal crown;
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose—' Ha, snow!
And art thou fallen so?

Thou, who wast enthroned stately
All along my mountains lately?

' Holla, thou world-wide snow!
And art thou wasted so?
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee!'

—Poor Rose to be misknown!
Would, she had ne'er been
blown,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
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 chanceth too with *us*
Poets singing sweetest snatches,
While that deaf men keep the
watches—

' Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore,
In a loneness, in a loneness,
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 chimed 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 unprepared season?

'Drop leaf—be silent song—
Cold things we come among.
We must warm them, we must
warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

'Howbeit' (here his face
Lightened round the place,—
So to mark the outward turning
Of his spirit's inward burning.)

'Something it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of His mild Beauty!

'Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty's sign and
shadow!

'Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb
around us,
All unable to expound us.

'Though none us deign to bless,
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 *obulum 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 lov-
ing,—

'For life, so lovely-vain,
For death which breaks the
chain,— [ness,—
For this sense of present sweet-
And this yearning to complete-
ness!'

'For sights of things away,
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be
given
And sung over, up in Heaven.—

RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

To the belfry, one by one, went the ringers from the sun, *Toll slowly.*
And the oldest ringer said, 'Ours is music for the Dead,
When the Rebecks are all done.'

Six abeles i' the churchyard grow on the northside in a row, *Toll slowly.*
And the shadows of their tops rock across the little slopes
Of the grassy graves below.

On the south side and the west, a small river runs in haste, *Toll slowly.*
And between the river flowing and the fair green trees a growing
Do the dead lie at their rest.

On the east I sate that day, up against a willow gray: *Toll slowly.*
Through the rain of willow-branches, I could see the low hill-ranges,
And the river on its way.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the bell tolled solemnly, *Toll slowly.*
While the trees' and river's voices flowed between the solemn noises,—
Yet death seemed more loud to me.

There, I read this ancient rhyme, while the bell did all the time *Toll slowly.*
And the solemn knell fell in with the tale of life and sin,
Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

THE RHYME.

Broad the forest stood (I read) on the hills of Linteged— *Toll slowly.*
And three hundred years had stood mute adown each hoary wood,
Like a full heart having prayed.

And the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, *Toll slowly.*
And but little thought was theirs, of the silent antique years,
In the building of their nest.

Down the sun dropt large and red, on the towers of Linteged,— *Toll slowly.*
Lance and spear upon the height, bristling strange in fiery light,
While the castle stood in shade.

There, the castle stood up black, with the red sun at its back,— *Toll slowly.*
 Like a sullen smouldering pyre, with a top that flickers fire,
 When the wind is on its track.

And five hundred archers tall did besiege the castle wall, *Toll slowly.*
 And castle, seethed in blood, fourteen days and nights had stood,
 And to-night was near its fall.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three months since, a bride did come,—
Toll slowly.
 One who proudly trod the floors, and softly whispered in the doors,
 ‘ May good angels bless our home.’

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a front of constancies,— *Toll slowly.*
 Oh, a bride of cordial mouth,—where the untired smile of youth
 Did light outward its own sighs.

’Twas a Duke’s fair orphan-girl, and her uncle’s ward, the Earl
Toll slowly.
 Who betrothed her, twelve years old, for the sake of dowry gold,
 To his son Lord Leigh, the churl.

But what time she had made good all her years of womanhood, *Toll slowly.*
 Unto both those Lords of Leigh, spake she out right sovranly,
 ‘ My will runneth as my blood.

‘ And while this same blood makes red this same right hand’s veins,’ she
 said,— *Toll slowly.*
 ‘Tis my will as lady free, not to wed a Lord of Leigh,
 But Sir Guy of Linteged.’

The old Earl he smiled smooth, then he sighed for wilful youth.—
Toll slowly.
 ‘ Good my niece, that hand withal looketh somewhat soft and small,
 For so large a will, in sooth.’

She, too, smiled by that same sign,—but her smile was cold and fine,—
Toll slowly.
 ‘ Little hand clasps muckle gold ; or it were not worth the hold
 Of thy son, good uncle mine !’

Then the young lord jerked his breath, and sware thickly in his teeth,
Toll slowly.
 ‘ He would wed his own betrothed, an she loved him, an she loathed,
 Let the life come or the death.’

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her father’s child might rise, *Toll slowly.*
 ‘ Thy hound’s blood, my Lord of Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,’ quoth
 she,
 ‘ And he moans not where he lies,

'But a woman's will dies hard, in the hall or on the sward!—*Toll slowly.*
 'By that grave, my lords, which made me orphaned girl and dowered
 lady,
 I deny you wife and ward.'

Unto each she bowed her head, and swept past with lofty tread.
Toll slowly.
 Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in the chapel had the priest
 Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

Fast and fain the bridal train along the night-storm rode amain :
Toll slowly.
 Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck their hoofs out on the turf,
 In the pauses of the rain.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train along the storm pursued amain—
Toll slowly.
 Steed on steed-track, dashing off—thickening, doubling hoof on hoof,
 In the pauses of the rain.

And the bridegroom led the flight on his red-roan steed of might,
Toll slowly.
 And the bride lay on his arm, still as if she feared no harm,
 Smiling out into the night.

'Dost thou fear?' he said at last :—'Nay!' she answered him in haste,—
Toll slowly.
 'Not such death as we could find—only life with one behind—
 Ride on fast as fear—ride fast!'

Up the mountain wheeled the steed—girth to ground, and fetlocks
 spread,—
Toll slowly.
 Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,—down he staggered—down the
 banks,
 To the towers of Linteged.

High and low the serfs looked out, red the flambeaus tossed about,—
Toll slowly.
 In the courtyard rose the cry—'Live the Duchess and Sir Guy!'
 But she never heard them shout.

On the steed she dropt her cheek, kissed his mane and kissed his neck,—
Toll slowly.
 'I had happier died by thee, than lived on a Lady Leigh,'
 Were the first words she did speak.

But a three months' joyaunce lay 'twixt that moment and to-day,
Toll slowly
 When five hundred archers tall stand beside the castle wall,
 To recapture Duchess May.

And the castle standeth black, with the red sun at its back,—
Toll slowly.

And a fortnight's siege is done—and, except the Duchess, none
Can misdoubt the coming wrack.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh, with his eyes so gray of blee.
Toll slowly.

And thin lips that scarcely sheath the cold white gnashing of his teeth,
Gnashed in smiling, absently,

Cried aloud—' So goes the day, bridegroom fair of Duchess May!—
Toll slowly.

Look thy last upon that sun. If thou seest to-morrow's one,
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

' Ha, fair bride! Dost hear no sound, save that moaning of the
hound?—
Toll slowly

Thou and I have parted troth,—yet I keep my vengeance oath,
And the other may come round.

' Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and thy new love past compare,—
Toll slowly.

Yet thine old love's falchion brave is as strong a thing to have,
As the will of lady fair.

' Peck on blindly, netted dove!—if a wife's name thee behove,
Toll slowly.

Thou shalt wear the same to-morrow, ere the grave has hid the sorrow
Of thy last ill-mated love.

' O'er his fixed and silent mouth, thou and I will call back troth,
Toll slowly.

He shall altar be and priest,—and he will not cry at least
" I forbid you,—I am loath ! "

' I will wring my fingers pale in the gauntlet of my mail, *Toll slowly.*
' Little hand and muckle gold " close shall lie within my hold,
As the sword did to prevail.'

O the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, *Toll slowly.*
O, and laughed the Duchess May, and her soul did put away
All his boasting, for a jest.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing low to think of it,— *Toll slowly*
' Tower is strong and will is free—thou canst boast, my Lord of Leigh,
But thou boasteth little wit.'

In her tire-glass gazed she, and she blushed right womanly.
Toll slowly
 She blushed half from her disdain—half, her beauty was so plain.
 —‘Oath for oath, my Lord of Leigh!’

Straight she called her maidens in—‘Since ye gave me blame herein,
Toll slowly.
 That a bridal such as mine should lack gauds to make it fine,
 Come and shrive me from that sin.

‘It is three months gone to-day, since I gave mine hand away.
Toll slowly.
 Bring the gold and bring the gem, we will keep bride state in them,
 While we keep the foe at bay.

‘On your arms I loose my hair;—comb it smooth and crown it fair,
Toll slowly.
 I would look in purple-pall from this lattice down the wall,
 And throw scorn to one that’s there!’

O, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, *Toll slowly.*
 On the tower the castle’s lord leant in silence on his sword,
 With an anguish in his breast.

With a spirit-laden weight, did he lean down passionate. *Toll slowly.*
 They have almost sapped the wall,—they will enter there withal,
 With no knocking at the gate.

Then the sword he leant upon, shivered—snapped upon the stone,—
Toll slowly.
 ‘Sword,’ he thought, with inward laugh, ‘ill thou servest for a staff
 When thy nobler use is done!’

‘Sword, thy nobler use is done!—tower is lost, and shame begun;
Toll slowly.
 If we met them in the breach, hilt to hilt or speech to speech,
 We should die there, each for one.

If we met them at the wall, we should singly, vainly fall,— *Toll slowly.*
 But if I die here alone,—then I die, who am but one,
 And die nobly for them all.

‘Five true friends lie for my sake—in the moat and in the brake,—
Toll slowly
 Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a black wound in the breast,
 And not one of these will wake.

- ‘And no more of this shall be!—heart-blood weighs too heavily—
Toll slowly.
 And I could not sleep in grave, with the faithful and the brave
 Heaped around and over me.
- ‘Since young Clare a mother hath, and young Ralph a plighted faith,
Toll slowly.
 Since my pale young sister’s cheeks blush like rose when Ronald speaks,
 Albeit never a word she saith—
- ‘These shall never die for me—life-blood falls too heavily : *Toll slowly.*
 And if I die here apart,—o’er my dead and silent heart
 They shall pass out safe and free.
- ‘When the foe hath heard it said—“Death holds Guy of Linteged,”—
Toll slowly.
 That new corse new peace shall bring; and a blessed, blessed thing,
 Shall the stone be at its head.
- ‘Then my friends shall pass out free, and shall bear my memory,—
Toll slowly.
 Then my foes shall sleek their pride, soothing fair my widowed bride
 Whose sole sin was love of me.
- ‘With their words all smooth and sweet, they will front her and entreat,
Toll slowly.
 And their purple pall will spread underneath her fainting head
 While her tears drop over it.
- ‘She will weep her woman’s tears, she will pray her woman’s prayers,—
Toll slowly.
 But her heart is young in pain, and her hopes will spring again
 By the suntime of her years.
- ‘Ah, sweet May—ah, sweetest grief!—once I vowed thee my belief,
Toll slowly.
 That thy name expressed thy sweetness,—May of poets, in completeness!
 Now my May-day seemeth brief.’
- All these silent thoughts did swim o’er his eyes grown strange and dim,—
Toll slowly.
 Till his true men in the place, wished they stood there face to face
 With the foe instead of him.
- ‘One last oath, my friends that wear faithful hearts to do and dare!—
Toll slowly.
 Tower must fall, and bride be lost!—swear me service worth the cost,
 —Bold they stood around to swear.

- ‘ Each man clasp my hand and swear, by the deed we failed in there,
 Not for vengeance, not for right, will ye strike one blow to-night !’
Toll slowly.
 Pale they stood around—to swear.
- ‘ One last boon, young Ralph and Clare ! faithful hearts to do and dare !’
Toll slowly.
 Bring that steed up from his stall, which she kissed before you all,
 Guide him up the turret stair.
- ‘ Ye shall harness him aright, and lead upward to this height !’
Toll slowly.
 Once in love and twice in war hath he borne me strong and far,
 He shall bear me far to-night.’
- Then his men looked to and fro, when they heard him speaking so.
Toll slowly.
 — ‘ Las ! the noble heart,’ they thought,— ‘ he in sooth is grief-distraught.
 Would, we stood here with the foe !’
- But a fire flashed from his eye, ’twixt their thought and their reply,—
Toll slowly.
 ‘ Have ye so much time to waste ! We who ride here, must ride fast,
 As we wish our foes to fly.’
- They have fetched the steed with care, in the harness he did wear,
Toll slowly.
 Past the court and through the doors, across the rushes of the floors ;
 But they goad him up the stair.
- Then from out her bower chambère, did the Duchess May repair.
Toll slowly.
 ‘ Tell me now what is your need,’ said the lady, ‘ of this steed,
 That ye goad him up the stair ?’
- Calm she stood ; unbodkined through, fell her dârk hair to her shoe,—
Toll slowly.
 And the smile upon her face, ere she left the tiring-glass,
 Had not time enough to go.
- ‘ Get thee back, sweet Duchess May ! hope is gone like yesterday,—’
Toll slowly.
 One half-hour completes the breach ; and thy lord grows wild of
 speech,
 Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray.
- ‘ In the east tower, high’st of all,—loud he cries for steed from stall.
Toll slowly.
 He would ride as far,’ quoth he, ‘ as for love and victory,
 Though he rides the castle wall.’

And we fetch the steed from stall, up where never a hoof did fall,—
Toll slowly.

Wifely prayer meets deathly need ! may the sweet Heavens hear thee
 plead.
 If he rides the castle-wall.'

Low she dropt her head, and lower, till her hair coiled on the floor,—
Toll slowly.

And tear after tear you heard fall distinct as any word
 Which you might be listening for.

Get thee in, thou soft ladie !—here is never a place for thee !—
Toll slowly.

Braid thy hair and clasp thy gown, that thy beauty in its moan
 May find grace with Leigh of Leigh.'

She stood up in bitter case, with a pale yet stately face, *Toll slowly.*
 Like a statue thunderstruck, which, though quivering, seems to look
 Right against the thunder-place.

And her foot trod in, with pride, her own tears i' the stone beside,—
Toll slowly.

Go to, faithful friends, go to !—Judge no more what ladies do,—
 No, nor how their lords may ride !'

Then the good steed's rein she took, and his neck did kiss and stroke :
Toll slowly.

Soft he neighed to answer her ; and then followed up the stair,
 For the love of her sweet look.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up the narrow stair around,—
Toll slowly.

Oh, and closely speeding, step by step beside her treading,
 Did he follow, meek as hound.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—there, where never a hoof did fall,—
Toll slowly.

Out they swept, a vision steady,—noble steed and lovely lady,
 Calm as if in bower or stall !

Down she knelt at her lord's knee, and she looked up silently,—
Toll slowly.

And he kissed her twice and thrice, for that look within her eyes
 Which he could not bear to see.

Quoth he, 'Get thee from this strife,—and the sweet saints bless thy
 life !—
Toll slowly.

In this hour, I stand in need of my noble red-roan steed—
 But no more of my noble wife.'

Quoth she, ' Meekly have I done all thy biddings under sun : *Toll slowly.*
 But by all my womanhood,—which is proved so true and good,
 I will never do this one.

' Now my womanhood's degree, and my wifehood's verity, *Toll slowly.*
 In this hour if thou hast need of thy noble red-roan steed,
 Thou hast also need of *me.*

' By this golden ring ye see on this lifted hand pardie, *Toll slowly.*
 If this hour, on castle-wall, can be room for steed from stall,
 Shall be also room for *me.*

' So the sweet saints with me be ' (did she utter solemnly,) *Toll slowly.*
 ' If a man, this eventide, on this castle-wall will ride,
 He shall ride the same with *me.*'

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he laughed out bitter well,—
Toll slowly.

Wouldst thou ride among the leaves, as we used on other eves,
 To hear chime a vesper bell ?'

She clang closer to his knee—' Ay, beneath the cypress tree !
Toll slowly.

Mock me not ; for elsewhere than along the green-wood fair,
 Have I ridden fast with thee !

' Fast I rode with new-made vows, from my angry kinsman's house !
Toll slowly

What ! and would you men should wreck that I dared more for
 love's sake
 As a bride than as a spouse ?

' What, and would you it should fall, as a proverb, before all,
Toll slowly.

That a bride may keep your side while through castle gate you ride,
 Yet eschew the castle-wall ?'

Ho ! the breach yawns into ruin, and roars up against her suing,—
Toll slowly.

With the inarticulate din, and the dreadful falling in—
 Shrieks of doing and undoing !

Twice he wrung her hands in twain ; but the small hands closed again.
Toll slowly.

Back he reined the steed—back, back ! but she trailed along his track
 With a frantic clasp and strain !

Evermore the foeman pour through the crash of window and door, . . .
Toll slowly.

And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh, and the shrieks of ' kill ! ' and ' flee !
 Strike up clear amid the roar.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain,---but they closed and clung again,---
Toll slowly.

Wild she clung, as one, withstood, clasps a Christ upon the rood,
 In a spasm of deathly pain.

She clung wild and she clung mute,—with her shuddering lips half-shut.
Toll slowly.

Her head fallen as half in swoond,—hair and knee swept on the ground,
 She clung wild to stirrup and feet.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown on the slippery coping-stone.
Toll slowly.

Back the iron hoofs did grind on the battlement behind,
 Whence a hundred feet went down.

And his heel did press and goad on the quivering flank bestrode,
Toll slowly.

‘ Friends and brothers, save my wife !—Pardon, sweet, in change for
 life,—
 But I ride alone to God.’

Straight as if the Holy name had upbreathed her like a flame, *Toll slowly.*
 She upsprang, she rose upright,—in his selle she sat in sight ;
 By her love she overcame.

And her head was on his breast, where she smiled as one at rest, --
Toll slowly.

‘ Ring,’ she cried, ‘ O vesper-bell, in the beach-wood’s old chapelle !
 But the passing-bell rings best.’

They have caught out at the rein, which Sir Guy threw loose—in vain,
Toll slowly.

For the horse in stark despair, with his front hoofs poised in air,
 On the last verge rears amain.

Now he hangs, he rocks between—and his nostrils curdle in,—
Toll slowly.

And he shivers head and hoof—and the flakes of foam fall off ;
 And his face grows fierce and thin !

And a look of human woe from his staring eyes did go, *Toll slowly*
 And a sharp cry uttered he, in a foretold agony
 Of the headlong death below,—

And ‘ Ring, ring, thou passing bell,’ still she cried, ‘ i’ the old chapelle !—
Toll slowly

Then back-toppling, crushing back, a dead weight flung out to wrack-
 Horse and riders overfell !

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west,—
Toll slowly.
 And I read this ancient Rhyme in the churchyard, while the chime
 Slowly tolled for one at rest.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the river smooth did run, *Toll slowly.*
 And the ancient Rhyme rang strange, with its passion and its change,
 Here where all done lay undone.

And beneath a willow tree, I a little grave did see, *Toll slowly.*
 Where was graved,—HERE UNDEFINED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-YEAR
 CHILD,
 EIGHTEEN HUNDRED FORTY-THREE.

Then, O Spirits—did I say—ye who rode so fast that day,— *Toll slowly.*
 Did star-wheels and angel-wings, with their holy winnowings,
 Keep beside you all the way?

Though in passion ye would dash, with a blind and heavy crash,
Toll slowly.
 Up against the thick-bossed shield of God's judgment in the field,—
 Though your heart and brain were rash,—

Now your will is all unwilling—now your pulses are all stilled,—
Toll slowly.
 Now, ye lie as meek and mild (whereso laid) as Maud the child,
 Whose small grave was lately filled.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye are very patient now, *Toll slowly.*
 And the children might be bold to pluck the kingcups from your mould
 Ere a month had let them grow.

And you let the goldfinch sing in the alder near in spring, *Toll slowly.*
 Let her build her nest and sit all the three weeks out on it,
 Murmuring not at anything.

In your patience ye are strong; cold and heat ye take not wrong:
Toll slowly
 When the trumpet of the angel blows eternity's evangel,
 Time will seem to you not long.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, *Toll slowly*
 And I said in underbreath,—all our life is mixed with death,
 And who knoweth which is best?

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, *Toll slowly*
 And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incomplete-
 ness,—
 Round our restlessness, His rest.

THE LADY'S 'YES.'

'YES!' I answered you last night;
'No!' this morning, Sir, I say.
Colours seen by candle-light
Will not look the same by day.

When the viols played their best,
Lamps above and laughs below—
Love me sounded like a jest,
Fit for *Yes* or fit for *No*.

Call me false or call me free—
Vow, whatever lights may shine,
No man on your face shall see
Any grief for change on mine.

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* :

Learn to win a lady's faith
Nobly as the thing is high ;
Bravely, as for life and death
With loyal gravity.

Lead her from the festive boards,
Point her to the starry skies,
Guard her, by your truthful words,
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

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.

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.

'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 min-
strelsy ;
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— [you ?'
'Do you think of me as I think of
It seemed not much to ask—As I
of *you* ?

We all do ask the same. No eye-
lids cover

Within the meekest eyes, that ques-
tion over. [do

And little in the world the Loving
But sit (among the rocks ?) and lis-
ten for

The echo of their own love ever-
more— [you ?'

'Do you think of me as I think of

Love-learned, 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 tur-
bulence,— [sense

Even so, suggestive to her inward
All sounds of life assumed one tune
of love.

And when the glory of her dream
withdrew,

When knightly guests 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 ?'

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.

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?*

Bring your vain answers—cry, 'We
 think of *thee*!' [ago
 How think ye of her? warm in long
 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!

Do ye think of me as I think of
 you?'
 O friends,—O kindred,—O dear
 brother-hood
 Of all the world! what are we, that
 we should
 For covenants of long affection sue?

* Her lyric on the polar star came home
 with her latest papers.

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.'

But while on mortal lips I shape
 anew
 A sign 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?*

THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

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 nightin-
 gale, who, sitting in the gate-
 way,
 Makes fitter music to our ear, than
 any song of thine!'

The poet went out weeping—the
 nightingale ceased chanting;
 'Now, wherefore, O thou nightin-
 gale, is all thy sweetness
 done?'

'I cannot sing my earthly things
 the heavenly poet wanting,
 Whose highest harmony includes
 the lowest under sun.'

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!

—
A CHILD ASLEEP.

How he sleepeth! having drunken
Weary childhood's mandragore,
From his pretty eyes have sunken
Pleasures to make room for
more—

Sleeping near the withered nosegay
which he pulled the day be-
fore.

Nosegays! leave them for the wak-
ing. [they grew:

Throw them earthward where
Dim are such beside the breaking
Amaranths he looks unto—

Folded eyes see brighter colors than
the open ever do.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows
golden

From the palms they sprang be-
neath

Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath—

We may think so from the quicken-
ing of his bloom and of his
breath.

Vision unto vision calleth,
While the young child dreameth
on:

Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
With the glory thou hast won!

Darker wert thou in the garden,
yestermorn by summer sun.

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee, — were the clouds
away. [singing

Tis the child-heart draws them,
In the silent-seeming clay—

Singing!—Stars that seem the mu-
test, go in music all the way.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapor,
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood, as
if drinking its repose.

Shapes of brightness overlean
thee,

With 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 ethereal
mouth.

Haply it is angel's duty,
During slumber, shade by shade

To fine down his childish beauty
To the thing it must be made,
Ere the world shall bring it praises,
or the tomb shall see it fade.

Softly, softly! make no noises!

Now he lieth dead and dumb—

Now he hears the angels' voices

Folding silence in the room—

Now he muses deep the meaning
of the Heaven-words as they
come.

Speak not! he is consecrated—

Breathe no breath across his
eyes:

Lifted up and separated

On the hand of God he lies,
In a sweetness beyond touching, -
held in cloistral sanctities.

Could ye bless him—father-
mother?

Bless the dimple in his cheek?

Dare ye look at one another,

And the benediction speak?

Would ye not break out in weeping,
and confess yourselves too
weak?

He is harmless—ye are sinful,
 Ye are troubled,—he at ease :
 From his slumber, virtue winful
 Flaweth outward with increase—
 Dare not bless him ! but be blessed
 by his peace—and go in peace.

THE LITTLE FRIEND.

—το δ' ἠδῆ εἰς οφθαλμον ἀπηλλύθειν.
 MARCUS ANTONINUS.

WRITTEN IN THE BOOK WHICH
 SHE MADE AND SENT TO ME.

THE book thou givest, dear as such,
 Shall bear thy dearer name ;
 And many a word the leaves shall
 touch,

For thee who form'dst the same !
 And on them, many a thought shall
 grow
 'Neath memory's rain and sun.
 Of thee, glad child, who dost not
 know
 That thought and pain are one !

Yes ! thoughts of thee who satest
 oft,
 A while since, at my side—
 So wild to tame,—to move so oft,
 So very hard to chide :
 The childish vision at thine heart,
 The lesson on the knee ;
 The wandering looks which *would*
 depart
 Like gulls across the sea !

The laughter, which no half-belief
 In wrath could all suppress ;
 The falling tears, which looked like
 grief,
 And were but gentleness ;
 The fancies sent, for bliss, abroad,
 As Eden's were not done—
 Mistaking still the cherub's sword
 For shining of the sun !

The sportive speech with wisdom
 in't—

The question strange and bold—
 The childish fingers in the print
 Of God's creative hold :

The praying words in whispers said,
 The sin with sobs confest ;
 The leaning of the young meek
 head

Upon the Saviour's breast !

The gentle consciousness of praise
 With hues that went and came ;
 The brighter blush, a word could
 raise,

Were *that*—a father's name !
 The shadow on thy smile for each
 That on his face could fall !
 So quick hath love been, *thee* to
 teach,

What soon it teacheth all.

Sit still as erst beside his feet !
 The future days are dim,—
 But those will seem to thee most
 sweet,

Which keeps thee nearest *him* !
 Sit at his feet in quiet mirth,
 And let him see arise

A clearer sun and greener earth
 Within thy loving eyes !—

Ah loving eyes ! that used to lift
 Your childhood to my face—
 That leave a memory on the gift
 I look on in your place—
 May bright-eyed hosts your guar-
 dians be

From all but thankful tears,—
 While, brightly as ye turned on *me*,
 Ye meet th' advancing years !

THE MOURNING MOTHER (OF THE DEAD BLIND).

DOST thou weep, mourning mother
 For thy blind boy in the 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, sat smiling
 The child-mouth evermore,
 As one who watcheth, wiling
 The time by, at the 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, nevermore to mark
 His low soft words, made softer
 By speaking in the dark ?
 Weep on, thou mourning mother !

But since to him when living,
 Thou wert 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 mark-
 est,
 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.

 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 wings un-
 furled
 To follow, perhaps, thy way ?
 Where the tamer, thine own will
 bind,
 And, to make thee sing, will blind,
 While the little hip grows for the
 free behind ?

Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Free hearts are better so.'

II.

The world, thou hast heard it told,
Has counted its robber-gold,
And the pieces stick to the hand.
The world goes riding it fair and
grand,

While the truth is bought and
sold!
World-voices east, world-voices
west,

They call thee, heart, from thine
early rest,
'Come hither, come hither and be
our guest.'

Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Good hearts are calmer so.'

III.

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's
Strife,

With a golden heft to his knife:
World's Mirth, with a finger fine
That draws on a board in wine
Her blood-red plans of life:
World's Gain, with a brow knit
down:

World's Fame, with a laurel crown,
Which rustles most as the leaves
turn brown—

Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
Calm hearts are wiser so.'

IV.

Hast heard that Proserpina
(Once fooling) was snatched away,
To partake the dark king's seat,—
And that the tears ran fast on her
feet

To think how the sun shone yes-
terday?
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,— [spair!

The world, and the world's De-
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 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,
The 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.'

HUMAN LIFE'S MISERY.

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,

Enquiring 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 Righteous-
ness

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
eye

Like swans adown a stream.

VI.

Abstractions, are they, from the
forms [tions

Of His great beauty?—exalta-
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 [Things ;
To be so near such mystic
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 [try
We stretch our hands abroad and
To reach them in our agony,—
And widen, so, the broad life-
wound, [death.
Which soon is large enough for

INCLUSIONS.

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.

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.
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 sep-
arate, when soul is joined to
soul.

INSUFFICIENCY.

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.
Say, what can I do for thee ? . . .
weary thee . . . grieve thee ?
Lean on my shoulder . . . new
burdens to add ?
Weep my tears over thee . . . mak-
ing thee sad ?
Oh, hold me not—love me not ?
let me retrieve thee !
I love thee so, Dear, that I only
can leave thee.

A DEAD ROSE.

O ROSE ! who dares to name
thee ? [nor sweet ;
No longer roseate now, nor soft,
But pale, and hard, and dry, as
stubble-wheat,—
Kept seven years in a drawer—
thy titles shame thee.

The breeze that used to blow thee
Between the hedge-row thorns, and
take away [day,—
An odour up the lane to last all
If breathing now,—unsweetened
would forego thee.

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.

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined
because [was,
It lay upon thee where the crimson
If dropping now,—would darken
where it met thee.

The fly that lit upon thee,
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny
feet [heat,—
Along thy leaf's pure edges after
If lighting now,—would coldly
overrun thee.

The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up
his hive, [scarce alive,—
And swoon in thee for joy, till
If passing now,—would blindly
overlook thee.

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.

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose! than to such
roses bold [cold!—
As Julia wears at dances, smiling
Lie still upon this heart—which
breaks below thee.

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS

I.

SHE has laughed as softly as if she
sighed!

She has counted six and over.
Of a purse well filled, and a heart
well tried—

Oh, each a worthy lover!
They 'give her time;' for her scul
must slip

Where the world has set the
grooving:
She will lie to none with her fair
red lip—

But love seeks truer loving.

II.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness
dumb,

As her thoughts were beyond re-
calling;

With a glance for *one*, and a glance
for *some*,

From her eyelids rising and fall-
ing.

—Speaks common words with a
blushful air:

—Hears bold words, unrepining!
But her silence says—what she
never will swear—

And love seeks better loving.

III.

Go, lady! lean to the night-guitar,
And drop a smile to the bringer;
Then smile as sweetly, when he is
far

At the voice of an in-door singer!
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes;

Glance lightly, on their removing,
And join new vows to old per-
juries—

But dare not call it loving!

IV.

Unless you can think, when the
song is done,
No other is soft in the rhythm;

Unless you can feel, when left by
One,

That all men else go with him ;
Unless you can know, when up-
raised by his breath,
That your beauty itself wants
proving ,

Unless you can swear—' For life,
for death !'—

Oh, fear to call it loving !

V.

Unless you can muse in a crowd
all day,

On the absent face that fixed
you ;

Unless you can love, as the angels
may,

With the breadth of heaven be-
twixt you ;

Unless you can dream that his
faith is fast,

Though behoving and unbe-
hooving ;

Unless you can *die* when the dream
is past—

Oh, never call it loving !

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 a
way—

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 be-
gun ;

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 [drown :
Both voices to my ear would
I listened in mine agony—
It was the *silence* made me groan !
And now my spinning is all done.

V.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,
Who cursed me on her death-bed
lone,

And my dead baby's—(God it save !)
Who, not to bless me, would not
moan.

And now my spinning is all done.

VI.

A stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone !
Sweet neighbours ! whisper low in-
stead,

' 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, [sedge,
The lilies bloomed within the
And we were lingering to and fro,—
Where none will track thee in this
snow, [hedge.
Along the stream, beside the

Ah, sweet, to 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 to pale,
It was thine oath that first did
fail,— [frail!

It was thy love proved false and
And why, since these be changed
enow,

Should *I* change less than *thou*?

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 : [sedge.
Then let them leave me in the

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

[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 all partizanship.

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 discrepancy we are called upon to accept at every hour by the conditions of our nature . . . the discrepancy between aspiration and performance, between faith and disillusion, between hope and fact.

"Oh trusted, broken prophecy,
Oh 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.

1848

I HEARD last night a little child go
singing
'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by
the church, [ing
"O bella liberta, O bella!" string-
The same words still on notes he
went in search
So high for, you concluded the up-
springing
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 liberta* he sang.

II.

Then I thought, musing, of the in-
numerous
Sweet songs which still for Italy
outrang
From older singers' lips, who sang
not thus
Exultingly and purely, yet, with
pang
Sheathed into music, touched the
heart of us
So finely that the pity scarcely
pained!
I thought how Filicaja led on
others,
Bewailers for their Italy en-
chained,
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, [laid,
Harrowed and hideous in a filthy
Some personating Image, whereat
woe
Was wrapt in beauty from of-
fending 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!*

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 [figes,
On mournful masks, and sad ef-
Than on real, live, weak creatures
crushed by strong.

* They show at Verona an empty trough
of stone as the tomb of Juliet.

III.

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's 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
 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 the marble scorn,*
 Like dogs upon a dunghill, couched on clay
 From whence the Medicean stamp's outworn, [sway
 The final putting off of all such
 By all such hands, and freeing of the unborn
 In Florence and the great world outside Florence
 Three hundred years his patient statues wait
 In that small chapel of the dim St. Lawrence!
 Day's eyes are breaking bold and passionate
 Over his shoulder, and will flash abhorrence
 On darkness and with level looks meet fate,
 When once loose from that marble film of theirs;
 The Night has wild dreams in her sleep; the Dawn
 Is haggard as the sleepless, Twilight wears
 A sort of horror; as the veil withdrawn
 'Twixt the artist's soul and works had left them heirs
 Of speechless thoughts which would not quail nor fawn,
 Of angers and contempts, of hope and love;
 For not without a meaning did he place
 Princely Urbino on the seat above
 With everlasting shadow on his face;

* 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 Michael Angelo's rejoinder, is well known

While the slow dawns and twilight
 disapprove
 The asnes of his long-extinguished
 race,

Which never more shall clog the
 feet of men.

IV.

I do believe, divinest Angelo,
 That winter-hour Via Larga,
 when,

They bade thee build a statue up
 in snow,*

And straight that marvel of
 thine art again [glow,

Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian
 Thine eyes, dilated with the
 plastic passion,

Thawing too, in drops of wounded
 manhood, since,

To mock alike thine art and in-
 dignation,

Laughed at the palace-window the
 new prince,—

('Aha! this genius needs for ex-
 altation,

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 these few tears—which were
 only few!

That as, beneath the sun, the
 grand white lines

Of thy snow statue trembled and
 withdrew,—

Thy 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, [verily,

And laugh the laugh back, I think
 Thine eyes being purged by

tears of righteous rage
 To read a wrong into a prophecy,

And measure a true great man's
 heritage [terity.

Against a mere great duke's pos-
 I think thy soul said then, 'I do

not need
 A principedom and its quarries after

all;
 For if I write, paint, carve a word,
 indeed,

On book or board or dust, on floor
 or wall,

The same is kept of God who
 taketh heed

That not a letter of the meaning fall,
 Or ere it touch and teach His

world's deep heart
 Outlasting, therefore, all your lord-

ships, Sir!
 So keep your stone, beseech you,
 for your part,

To cover up your grave-place and
 refer [art!

The proper titles! / live by my
 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, [sign

Shall gather up, for unborn men, a
 Of what is the true principedom'

ay, and none
 Shall laugh that day, except the

drunk with wine.'

* This mocking task was set by Pietro, the
 unworthy successor of Lorenzo the Magnifi-
 cent.

V.

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 sonneteering in
 their sleep,
 And archaists mumbling dry
 bones up the land,
 And sketchers lauding ruined towns
 a-heap,—
 Through all that drowsy hum of
 voices smooth,
 The hopeful bird mounts 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 mountain
 dew,
 (And many of such wakers now
 are here,
 Complete in their anointed man-
 hood, 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 liberta*,'
 Than, with those poets, croon the
 dead or cry
 '*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia!*'

VI.

'Less wretched if less fair.' Per-
 haps 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, Boc-
 caccio,
 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 elec-
 trical,
 Or broke up heaven for music.
 What more then?
 Why, then, no more. The chap-
 let'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 nym-
 pholept!
 Consenting to be nailed here by
 the hand
 To the very bay-tree under which
 she stepped
 A queen of old, and plucked a
 leafy branch.
 And, licensing the world too long
 indeed

To use her broad phylacteries to
 staunch
 And stop her bloody lips, she takes
 no heed
 How one clear word would draw
 an avalanche
 Of living sons around her, to suc-
 ceed
 The vanished generations. Can
 she count
 The oil-eaters. with large, live, mo-
 bile mouths
 Agape for macaroni, in the
 amount
 Of consecrated heroes of her south's
 Bright rosary? The pitcher at
 the fount,
 The gifts 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 pen-
 sioner,
 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!

VII.

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 fore-
 gone days.
 O Dead, ye shall no longer cling to
 us
 With rigid hands of desiccating
 praise,
 And drag us backward by the gar-
 ment 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 un-
 latched the door—
 But will not make it inaccessible
 By thankings on the threshold
 any more. [hell
 We hurry onward to extinguish
 With our fresh souls, our younger
 hope, and God's
 Maturity of purpose. Soon shall
 we
 Die also! and, that then our pe-
 riods
 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, unlim-
 ited
 By the last mind-mark! so, to be
 invoked
 By future generations, as their
 Dead.

VIII.

'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 [desire,
 And acceptable. I, too, should
 When men make record with the
 flowers they strew,
 Savonarola's soul went out in fire
 Upon our Grand-duke's piazza,
 and burned through
 A moment first, or ere he did ex-
 pire,
 The veil betwixt the right and
 wrong, and showed
 How near God sate and judged the
 judges there,'—*
 Upon the self-same pavement
 over-strewed,
 To cast my violets with as reverent
 care,
 And prove that all the winters
 which have snowed
 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! [cried
 Who also by a princely death-bed
 '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 [rest
 To grudge Savonarola and the
 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 life's en-
 tangled mesh,
 Show their full length in graves,
 or oft indeed
 Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,
 To noble admirations which ex-
 ceed [that
 Most nobly, yet will calculate in
 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,

* Savonarola was burnt in martyrdom for his testimony against Papal corruptions as early as March, 1498: and, as late as our own day, it is a custom in Florence to strew violets on the pavement where he suffered, in grateful recognition of the anniversary.

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.

IX.

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

X.

You enter, in your Florence wan-
derings,

The church of St. Maria Novella.
Pass

The left stair, where at plague-time
Macchiavel *

Saw one with set fair face as in a
glass,

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 [brave,

By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and
That picture was accounted,

mark, of old!

A king stood bare before its sovran
grace; †

* See his description of the plague in
Florence.

† Charles of Anjou, whom, in his passage
through Florence, Cimabue allowed to see
this picture while yet in his 'Bottega.'
The populace followed the royal visitor,
and in the universal delight and admiration
the quarter of the city in which the artist
lived was called "Borgo Allegri." The
picture was carried in a triumph to the
church and deposited there.

The death-sigh from his heart. If
wistfully
Margheritone sickened at the
smell
Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go!—
For Cimabue stood up very well
In spite of Giotto's—and Angelico,
The artist-saint, kept smiling in
his cell
The smile with which he welcomed
the sweet slow
Inbreak of angels, (whitening
through the dim
That he might paint them!) while
the sudden sense
Of Raffael's future was revealed
to him
By force of his own fair works'
competence.
The same blue waters where the
dolphins swim
Suggest the Tritons. Through the
blue Immense
Strike out all swimmers! cling
not in the way
Of one another, so to sink; but learn
The strong man's impulse, catch
the fresh'ning spray
He throws up in his motions, and
discern
By his clear, westering eye, the
time of day.
Thou, God, hast set us worthy gifts
to earn,
Besides thy heaven and Thee!
and when I say
There's room here for the weakest
man alive
To live and die,—there's room
too, I repeat,
For all the strongest to live well
and strive,
Their own way, by their indi-
vidual heat,—
Like a 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.

XI.

Cold graves, we say? It shall be
testified
That living men who burn in heart
and brain,
Without the dead, were colder.
If we tried [be sure
To sink the past beneath our feet,
The future would not stand.
Precipitate
This old roof from the shrine—and,
insecure,
The nestling 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, [sun
If, looking up, he saw not in the
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, [confuse ;
 The plains before us sadden and
 If orphaned, we are disinherited.

XII.

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 ?

XIII.

. . . . 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 [sire.
 And piazzas with a tumult and de-
 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,— [lit
 The first touch of Italian freedom,
 To toss in the next tiger's face
 who should
 Approach too near them in a
 greedy fit,— [blood,
 The first pulse of an even flow of
 To prove the level of Italian veins
 Toward rights perceived and grant-
 ed. How we gazed
 From Casa Guidi windows, while,
 in trains [raised,
 Of orderly procession—banners
 And intermittent bursts of martial
 strains
 Which died upon the shouts, as if
 amazed
 By gladness beyond music—they
 passed on !
 The magistracy, with insignia,
 passed ; [sun,
 And all the people shouted in the
 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 win-
 dows to surprise
 Those grave calm brows with bay-
 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 [sunny air,
 With indrawn 'vivas,' the whole
 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 }hare;
 Of the first flag preceded Pisa's
 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 teem-
 ing flanks—
 Greeks, English, French—as if to
 a parliament
 Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,
 Each bearing its land's symbols
 reverent;

At which the stones seemed break-
 ing 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 gest-
 ure'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
 Did it more warmly; two-months'
 babies leapt
 Right upward in their mothers'
 arms, whose black
 Wide, glittering eyes looked else-
 where; lovers pressed
 Each before either, neither glanc-
 ing 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. What 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 [ness

In any special actual righteous-Of what that day he granted ; * still the signs

Are good, and full of promise, we must say,

When multitudes approach their kings with prayers

And kings concede their people's right to pray,

Both in one sunshine ! Griefs are not despairs,

So uttered ; nor can royal claims dismay

When men from humble homes and ducal chairs,

Hate wrong together. It was well to view

Those banners ruffled in a ruler's face,

Inscribed, ' Live freedom, union, and all true

Brave patriots who are aided by God's grace !'

Nor was it ill, when Leopoldo drew

His little children to the window-place [gest

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 [add

Of faith and duty,—studious not to 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 [pain !

Of spirit, such a look of careful For God must love it better than

repose.

XIV.

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 when the constitutional concessions have been complete in Tuscany, as all the world knows. The event breaks in upon the meditation, and is too fast for prophecy in these strange times.—E. B. B.

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 Buonarotti 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,

Not there ? the people chose still
holier ground !

The people, who are simple, blind,
and rough,

Know their own angels, after
looking round.

What chose they then ? where met
they ?

xv.

On the stone
Call'd 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— [ate

It is not cold to-day. O passion-
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,

Could'st know thy favorite 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 [tomb !*

Did pile the empty marbles as thy
For now thou art no longer ex-
iled, 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 plough

Their way to, through Time's or-
dures stratified, †

* The Florentines, to whom the Raven-
nese denied the body of Dante which was
asked of them in a "late remorse of love,"
have given a cenotaph to their divine poet
in this church. Something less than a
grave !

† In allusion to Mr. Kirkup's well-known
discovery of Giotto's fresco-portrait of
Dante.

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 piercing-
est sweet smell

Of love's dear incense by the living
sent

To find the dead, is not accessi-
ble
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.

XVI.

For Dante sits in heaven, and ye
stand here,

And more remains for doing, all
must feel,

Than trysting on his stone from
year to year

To shift processions, civic toe to
heel,

The town's thanks to the Pitti.
Are ye freer

For what was felt that day? A
chariot wheel

May spin fast, yet the chariot never
roll.

But if that day suggested some-
thing 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.

XVII.

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 !

XVIII.

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-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
 Well as the onslaught, how to
 stand aloof!
 Or else the world gets past the
 mere brute blow
 Given or taken. Children use the
 fist
 Until they are of age to use the
 brain: [sist
 And so we needed Cæsars to as-
 Man's justice, and Napoleons to
 explain
 God's counsel, when a point was
 nearly missed,
 Until our generations should at-
 tain
 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 cow-
 ard's flinch;
 And, after chloroform and ether-
 gas,
 We find out slowly what the bee
 and finch
 Have ready found, through Na-
 ture'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 Eng-
 land, seek [ings
 To stifle the bad heat and flicker-
 Of this world's false and nearly ex-
 pended 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. An-
 nounce 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 Eng-
 land, cease
 Thy purple with no alien agonies!
 No struggles toward encroach-
 ment, no vile war!
 Disband thy captains, change thy
 victories,
 Be henceforth prosperous as the
 angels are—
 Helping, not humbling.

XIX.

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 bar-
 bican.
 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— [sweet
 The oracles of life—previsions
 And awful, like divine swans glid-
 ing through
 White arms of Ledas, which will
 leave the heat
 Of their escaping godship to endue
 The human medium with a
 heavenly flush.
 Meanwhile, in this same Italy we
 want
 Not popular passion, to arise and
 crush,
 But popular conscience, which may
 covenant
 For what it knows. Concede
 without a blush—
 To grant the 'civic guard' is not to
 grant
 The civic spirit, living and awake.
 Those lappets on your shoulders,
 citizens,
 Your eyes strain after sideways
 till they ache,
 While still, in admirations and
 amens,
 The crowd comes up on festa-
 days, to take
 The great sight in—are not intelli-
 gence, [the sign
 Not courage even—alas, if not
 Of something very noble, they are
 nought ;

For every day ye dress your sal-
 low 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 capa-
 ble to lead
 The conscious people,—conscious
 and advised,— [clay,
 For if we lift a people like mere
 It falls the same. We want thee,
 O unfound
 And sovran teacher!—if thy
 beard be grey
 Or black, we bid thee rise up from
 the ground
 And speak the word God giveth
 thee to say,
 Inspiring into all this people round,
 Instead of passion, thought,
 which pioneers
 All generous passion, purifies from
 sin,
 And strikes the hour for. Rise
 up teacher ! here's
 A crowd to make a nation!—best
 begin
 By making each a man, till all
 be peers
 Of earth's true patriots and pure
 martyrs in
 Knowing and daring. Best un-
 bar the doors
 Which Peter's heirs keep locked so
 overclose
 They only let the mice across the
 the floors,

While every churchman dangles as
 he goes
 "The great key at his girdle, and
 abhors
 In Christ's name, meekly. Open
 wide the house—
 Concede the entrance with
 Christ's liberal mind,
 And set the tables with His wine
 and bread.
 What! commune in 'both
 kinds?' In every kind—
 Wine, wafer, love, hope, truth, un-
 limited,
 Nothing kept back. For when a
 man is blind
 To starlight, will he see the rose is
 red?
 A bondsman shivering at a
 Jesuit's foot—
 'Væ! meâ culpâ!' is not like to
 stand
 A freedman at a despot's, and
 dispute
 His titles by the balance in his
 hand,
 Weighing them 'suo jure.' Tend
 the root,
 If careful of the branches; and ex-
 pand
 The inner souls of men before
 you strive
 For civic heroes.

xv.

But the teacher, where?
 From all these crowded faces, all
 alive,
 Eyes, of their own lids flashing
 themselves bare,
 And brows that with a mobile
 life contrive
 A deeper shadow—may we no wise
 dare
 To point a finger out, and touch a
 man,
 And cry 'this is the leader.' What,
 all these!—

Broad heads, black eyes,—yet
 not a soul that ran
 From God down with a message?
 All, to please
 The donna waving measures with
 her fan,
 And not the judgment-angel on
 his knees—
 The trumpet just an inch off
 from his lips—
 Who when he breathes next, will
 put out the sun?
 Yet mankind's self were founde-
 red in eclipse,
 If lacking doers, with great works
 to be done, [dips
 And lo, the startled earth already
 Back into light—a better day's be-
 gun—
 And soon this leader, teacher,
 will stand plain,
 And build the golden pipes and
 synthesize
 This people-organ for a holier
 strain.
 We hold this hope, and still in all
 these eyes,
 Go sounding for the deep look
 which shall drain
 Suffused thought into channelled
 enterprise!
 Where is the teacher? What
 now may he do,
 Who shall do greatly? Doth he
 gird his waist
 With a monk's rope, like Luther?
 or pursue
 The goat, like Tell? or dry his nets
 in haste,
 Like Masaniello when the sky
 was blue?
 Keep house like other peasants,
 with inlaced
 Bare, brawny arms about a fav-
 ourite child [door.
 And meditative looks beyond the
 (But not to mark the kidling's
 teeth have filed

The green shoots of his vine which
 last year bore
 Full twenty bunches;) or, on tri-
 ple-piled [the poor,
 Throne-velvets sits at ease, to bless
 Like other pontiffs, in the Poor-
 est's name,
 The old tiara keeps itself aslope
 Upon his steady brows, which all
 the same,
 Bend mildly to permit the people's
 hope?

XXI.

Whatever hand shall grasp this
 oriflamme,
 Whatever man (last peasant or first
 Pope
 Seeking to free his country!)
 shall appear,
 Teach, lead, strike fire into the
 masses, fill
 These empty bladders with fine
 air, insphere
 These wills into a unity of will,
 And make of Italy a nation—
 dear
 And blessed be that man! the
 Heavens shall kill
 No leaf the earth shall grow for
 him; and Death
 Shall cast him back upon the lap of
 Life, [breath
 To live more surely, in a clarion-
 Of hero-music! Brutus, with the
 knife,
 Rienzi, with the fasces, throb be-
 neath
 Rome's stones; and more, who
 threw away joy's fife
 Like Pallas, that the beauty of
 their souls
 Might ever shine untroubled and
 entire!
 But if it can be true that he who
 rolls
 The Church's thunders will reserve
 her fire

For only light; from eucharistic
 bowls
 Will pour new life for nations that
 expire,
 And rend the scarlet of his Pa-
 pal vest
 To gird the weak loins of his coun-
 trymen—
 I hold that he surpasses all the
 rest
 Of Romans, heroes, patriots,—and
 that when
 He sat down on the throne, he
 dispossessed
 The first graves of some glory.
 See again,
 This country-saving is a glorious
 thing!
 And if a common man achieved it?
 Well!
 Say, a rich man did? Excellent!
 A king?
 That grows sublime! A priest?
 Improbable!
 A Pope? Ah, there we stop
 and cannot bring
 Our faith up to the leap, with his-
 tory's bell
 So heavy round the neck of it—
 albeit
 We fain would grant the possibility
 For *thy* sake, Pio Nono!

XXII.

Stretch thy feet
 In that case—I will kiss them rev-
 erently
 As any pilgrim to the Papal seat!
 And, such proved possible, thy
 throne to me
 Shall seem as holy a place as
 Pellico's
 Venetian dungeon; or as Spiel-
 berg's grate.
 At which the Lombard woman
 hung the rose
 Of her sweet soul, by its own dewy
 weight,

To feel the dungeon round her
 sunshine close [late
 And pining so, died early, yet too
 For what she suffered! Yea, I
 will not choose
 Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and
 the spot
 Marked red for ever spite of rains
 and dews
 Where two fell riddled by the Aus-
 trian's shot—
 The brothers Bandiera, who ac-
 cuse,
 With one same mother-voice and
 face, (that what
 They speak may be invincible,)
 the sins [the just,
 Of earth's tormentors before God,
 Until the unconscious thunder-
 bolt begins to loosen in His
 grasp.

XXIII.

And yet we must
 Beware, and mark the natural
 kiths and kins
 Of circumstance and office, and dis-
 trust
 A rich man reasoning in a poor
 man's hut;
 A poet who neglects pure truth to
 prove [a rut
 Statistic fact; a child who leaves
 For a smoother road; the priest
 who vows his glove
 Exhales no grace; the prince
 who walks a-foot;
 The woman who has sworn she
 will not love;
 And this Ninth Pius in Seventh
 Gregory's chair,
 With Andrea Doria's forehead!

XXIV.

Count what goes
 To make up a pope before he
 wear
 That triple crown. We pass the
 worldwide throes

Which went to make the pope-
 dom,—the despair
 Of free men, good men, wise men;
 the dread shows
 Of women's faces, by the fagot's
 flash,
 Tossed out, to the minutest stir
 and throb
 O' the white lips, the least trem-
 ble of a lash, [mob!
 To glut the red stare of a licensed
 The short mad cries down ou-
 bliettes, and plash
 So horribly far off! priests, trained
 to rob,
 And kings that, like encouraged
 night mares, sate
 On nations' hearts most heavily
 distressed
 With monstrous sights and
 apophthegms of fact!—
 We pass these things,—because
 'the times' are prest
 With necessary charges of the
 weight [rest,
 Of all this sin, and 'Calvin, for the
 Made bold to burn Servetus—
 Ah, men err!
 And so do *churches*? which is all
 we mean
 To bring to proof in any register
 Of theological fat kine and lean—
 So drive them back into the pens!
 refer
 Old sins (with pourpoint 'quotha'
 and 'I ween,')
 Entirely to the old times, the old
 times;
 Nor even ask why this preponder-
 ant,
 Infallible, pure Church could set
 her chimes
 Most loudly then, just then,—most
 jubilant,
 Precisely then—when mankind
 stood in crimes
 Full heart-deep, and Heaven's
 judgments were not scant.

Inquire still less, what signifies a church
 Of perfect inspiration and pure laws,
 Who burns the first man with a brimstone-torch,
 And grinds the second, bone by bone, because
 The times, forsooth, are used to rack and scorch!
 What *is* a holy Church, unless she awes
 The times down from their sins?
 Did Christ select [teach
 Such amiable times, to come and Love to, and mercy? The whole world were wrecked,
 If every mere great man, who lives to reach
 A little leaf of popular respect, Attained not simply by some special breach
 In the age's customs, by some precedence
 In thought and act, which, having proved him higher
 Than those he lived with, proved his competence
 In helping them to wonder and aspire.

XXV.

My words are guiltless of the bigot's sense! [fire
 My soul has fire to mingle with the
 Of all these souls, within or out of doors
 Of Rome's Church or another. I believe
 In one priest, and one temple, with its floors
 Of shining jasper gloom'd at morn and eve
 By countless knees of earnest auditors; [ceive,
 And crystal walls, too lucid to per-
 That none may take the measure of the place

And say, 'so far the porphyry; then the flint—
 To this mark, mercy goes, and there, ends grace,'
 Though still the permeable crystals hint
 At some white starry distance, bathed in space!
 I feel how nature's ice-crusts keep the dint
 Of undersprings of silent Deity:
 I hold the articulated gospels, which Show Christ among us, crucified on tree; [rich
 I love all who love truth, if poor or In what they have won of truth possessively!
 No altars and no hands defiled with pitch
 Shall scare me off, but I will pray and eat
 With all these—taking leave to choose my ewers
 And say at last, 'Your visible Churches cheat
 Their inward types; and if a Church assures
 Of standing without failure and defeat,
 The same both fails and lies!'

XXVI.

To leave which lures
 Of wider subject through past years,—behold,
 We come back from the Popedom to the Pope,
 To ponder what he *must* be, ere we are bold
 For what he *may* be, with our heavy hope
 To trust upon his soul. So, fold by fold, [cope
 Explore this mummy in the priestly Transmitted through the darks of time, to catch
 The man within the wrappage, and discern

How he, an honest man, upon the
 watch
 Full fifty years, for what a man may
 learn,
 Contrived to get just there; with
 what a snatch
 Of old world oboli he had to earn
 The passage through; with what
 a drowsy sop [brain;
 To drench the busy barkings of his
 What ghosts of pale tradition,
 wreathed with hop
 'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to
 entertain
 For heavenly visions; and consent
 to stop
 The clock at noon, and let the hour
 remain
 (Without vain windings up) in-
 violate,
 Against all chimings from the bel-
 fry. Lo!
 From every given pope you must
 abate,
 Albeit you love him, some things—
 good, you know— [hate
 Which every given heretic you
 Assumes for his, as being plainly so.
 A pope must hold by popes a lit-
 tle,—yes, [Trent,
 By councils,—from Nicæa up to
 By hierocratic empire, more or
 less [sent
 Irresponsible to men,—he must re-
 Each man's particular conscience,
 and repress
 Inquiry, meditation, argument,
 As tyrants faction. Also, he must
 not
 Love truth too dangerously, but
 prefer
 'The interests of the Church,' be-
 cause a blot
 Is better than a rent in miniver,—
 Submit to see the people swallow
 hot
 Husk-porridge which his chartered
 churchmen stir,
 Quoting the only true God's epi-
 graph,
 'Feed my lambs, Peter!'—must
 consent to sit
 Attesting with his pastoral ring
 and staff,
 To such a picture of our Lady, hit
 Off well by artist angels, though
 not half [ed it;
 As fair as Giotto would have paint-
 To such a vial, where a dead
 man's blood
 Runs yearly warm beneath a church-
 man's finger;
 To such a holy house of stone
 and wood,
 Whereof a cloud of angels was the
 bringer
 From Bethlehem to Loreto —
 Were it good
 For any pope on earth to be a flinger
 Of stones against those high-
 nighed counterfeits?
 Apostates only are iconoclasts.
 He dares not say, while this false
 thing abets
 That true thing, 'this is false!' he
 keeps his fasts
 And prayers, as prayer and fast
 were silver frets
 To change a note upon a string
 that lasts,
 And make a lie a virtue. Now,
 if he
 Did more than this,—higher hoped
 and braver dared, [dy,
 I think he were a pope in jeopar-
 Or no pope rather! for his truth had
 barred
 The vaunting of his life. And
 certainly
 If he do only this, mankind's regard
 Moves on from him at once, to
 seek some new
 Teacher and leader! He is good
 and great
 According to the deeds a pope
 can do;

Most liberal, save those bonds; affectionate,

As princes may be; and, as priests are, true—

But only the ninth Pius after eight, When all's praised most. At best and hopefullest,

He's pope—we want a man! his heart beats warm,

But, like the prince enchanted to the waist.

He sits in stone, and hardens by a charm

Into the marble of his throne high-placed! [arm—

Mild benediction waves his saintly So good! but what we want's a perfect man,

Complete and all alive: half travertine

Half-suits our need, and ill sub-serves our plan.

Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies divine

Were never yet too much for men who ran

In such hard ways as must be this of thine,

Deliver whom we seek, whoe'er thou art,

Pope, prince, or peasant! If, indeed, the first,

The noblest, therefore! since the heroic heart

Within thee must be great enough to burst

Those trammels buckling to the baser part

Thy saintly peers in Rome, who crossed and cursed

With the same finger.

XXVII.

Come, appear, be found,

If Pope or peasant come! we hear the cock,

The courtier of the mountains when first crowned

With golden dawn; and orient glories flock

To meet the sun upon the highest ground

Take voice and work! we wait to hear thee knock

At some one of our Florentine nine gates,

On each of which was imaged a sublime

Face of a Tuscan genius, which for hate's

And love's sake both, our Florence in her prime

Turned boldly on all comers to her states,

As heroes turned their shields in antique time,

Blazoned with honourable acts. And though

The gates are blank now of such images,

And Petrarch looks no more from Nicolò

Toward dear Arezzo, 'twixt the acacia trees,

Nor Dante, from gate Gallo—still we know,

Despite the razing of the blazonries, Remains the consecration of the shield,—

The dead heroic faces will start out On all these gates, if foes should

take the field,

And blend sublimely, at the earliest shout,

With living heroes who will scorn to yield

A hair's-breadth ev'n, when, gazing round about,

They find in what a glorious company

They fight the foes of Florence! Who will grudge

His one poor life, when that great man we see

Has given five hundred years, the world being judge,

To help the glory of his Italy?
 Who, born the fair side of the Alps,
 will budge,
 When Dante stays, when Ariosto
 stays,
 When Petrarch stays for ever? Ye
 bring swords,
 My Tuscans? Why, if wanted
 in this haze,
 Bring swords, but first bring
 souls!—bring thoughts and
 words
 Untrusted by a tear of yesterday's,
 Yet awful by its wrong, and cut
 these cords
 And mow this green lush falseness
 to the roots,
 And shut the mouth of hell below
 the swathe!
 And if ye can bring songs too,
 let the lute's
 Recoverable music softly bathe
 Some poet's hand, that, through
 all bursts and bruits
 Of popular passion—all unripe and
 rather
 Convictions of the popular intel-
 lect—
 Ye may not lack a finger up the air,
 Annunciative, reproofing, pure,
 erect, [bare
 To show which way your first Ideal
 The whiteness of its wings, when,
 sorely pecked
 By falcons on your wrists, it un-
 aware
 Arose up overhead, and out of
 sight.

XXVIII.

Meanwhile, let all the far ends of
 the world
 Breathe back the deep breath of
 their old delight,
 To swell the Italian banner just
 unfurled.
 Help, lands of Europe! for, if
 Austria fight,

The drums will bar your slumber.
 Had ye curled
 The laurel for your thousand
 artists' brows,
 If these Italian hands had planted
 none?
 Can any sit down idle in the
 house,
 Nor hear appeals from Buonarotti's
 stone
 And Raffael's canvas, rousing
 and to rouse?
 Where's Poussin's master? Gallic
 Avignon
 Bred Laura, and Vaucluse's fount
 has stirred
 The heart of France too strongly,—
 as it lets
 Its little stream out, like a wiz-
 ard's bird
 Which bounds upon its emerald
 wing, and wets
 The rocks on each side—that
 she should not gird
 Her loins with Charlemagne's
 sword when foes beset
 The country of her Petrarch.
 Spain may well
 Be minded how from Italy she
 caught,
 To mingle with her tinkling
 Moorish bell,
 A fuller cadence and a subtler
 thought;
 And even the New World, the
 receptacle
 Of freemen, may send glad men,
 as it ought,
 To greet Vespucci Amerigo's
 door;
 While England claims, by trump
 of poetry,
 Verona, Venice, the Ravenna
 shore,
 And dearer holds John Milton's
 Fiesole
 Than Langlande's Malvern with
 the stars in flower.

XXIX.

And Vallombrosa, we two went to
see

Last June, beloved companion,
—where sublime

The mountains live in holy families,
And the slow pinewoods ever
climb and climb

Half up their breasts; just stagger
as they seize

Some gray crag—drop back with
it many a time,

And straggle blindly down the
precipice!

The Vallombrosan brooks were
strewn as thick

That June-day, knee-deep, with
dead beechen leaves,

As Milton saw them ere his heart
grew sick,

And his eyes blind. I think the
monks and beeves

Are all the same too: scarce
they have changed the wick

On good St. Gualbert's altar, which
receives

The convent's pilgrims; and the
pool in front

Wherein the hill-stream trout are
cast, to wait

The beatific vision and the grunt
Used at refectory, keeps its weedy
state,

To baffle saintly abbots who
would count [bate

The fish across their breviary, nor
The measure of their steps. O
waterfalls

And forests! sound and silence!
mountains bare,

That leap up peak by peak, and
catch the palls

Of purple and silver mist to rend
and share

With one another, at electric calls
Of life in the sunbeams,—till we
cannot dare

Fix your shapes, count your
number! we must think

Your beauty and your glory helped
to fill

The cup of Milton's soul so to
the brink

He never more was thirsty when
God's will

Had shattered to his sense the
last chain-link

By which he had drawn from
Nature's visible

The fresh well-water. Satisfied
by this,

He sang of Adam's paradise and
smiled,

Remembering Vallombrosa.
Therefore is

The place divine to English man
and child—

And pilgrims leave their souls
here in a kiss.

XXX.

For Italy's the whole earth's
treasury, piled

With reveries of gentle ladies
flung

Aside, like ravelled silk, from the
life's worn stuff—

With coins of scholars' fancy,
which, being rung

On work-day counter, still sound
silver proof—

In short, with all the dreams of
dreamers young,

Before their heads have time for
slipping off

Hope's pillow to the ground
How oft, indeed,

We've sent our souls out from the
rigid north,

On bare white feet which would
not print nor bleed

To climb the Alpine passes and
look forth,

Where blooming low the Lom-
bard rivers lead

To gardens, vineyards, all a dream
is worth,—

Sights, thou and I, Love, have
seen afterward

From Tuscan Bellosguardo, wide
awake,*

When, standing on the actual
blessed sward [take

Where Galileo stood at nights to
The vision of the stars, we have

found it hard,

Gazing upon the earth and heaven,
to make

A choice of beauty.

Therefore let us all
Refreshed in England or in other
land,

By visions, with their fountain-rise
and fall

Of this earth's darling,—we, who
understand

A little how the Tuscan musical
Vowels do round themselves as if
they plann'd [—we

Eternities of separate sweetness,
Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-book,

Or ere in wine-cup we pledged
faith or glee—

Who loved Rome's wolf, with
demigods at suck,

Or ere we loved truth's own di-
vinity,—

Who loved, in brief, the classic
hill and brook,

And Ovid's dreaming tales, and
Petrarch's song,

Or ere we loved Love's self even!—
let us give

The blessing of our souls, and
wish them strong

To bear it to the height where pray-
ers arrive,

When faithful spirits pray against
a wrong ;

* Galileo's villa, close to Florence, is
built on an eminence called Bellosguardo.

To this great cause of southern
men, who strive

In God's name for man's rights,
and shall not fail !

XXXI.

Behold, they shall not fail. The
shouts ascend

Above the shrieks, in Naples,
and prevail.

Rows of shot corpses, waiting for
the end

Of burial, seem to smile up
straight and pale

Into the azure air, and apprehend
That final gun-flash from Paler-
mo's coast

Which lightens their apocalypse of
death.

So let them die ! The work
shows nothing lost ;

Therefore, not blood ! above or un-
derneath,

What matter, brothers, if ye keep
your post

On duty's side ? As sword returns
to sheath,

So dust to grave, but souls find
place in Heaven.

Heroic daring is the true success,
The eucharistic bread requires
no leaven ;

And though your ends were hope-
less, we should bless

Your cause as holy ! Strive—
and, having striven,

Take, for God's recompense, that
righteousness !

PART II.

1.

I WROTE a meditation and a dream.
Hearing a little child sing in the
street

I leant upon his music as a theme,
Till it gave way beneath my
heart's full beat,

Which tried at an exultant proph-
 ecy
 But dropped before the measure
 was complete—
 Alas, for songs and hearts! O
 Tuscany,
 O Dante's Florence, is the type too
 plain?
 Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty,
 As little children take up a high
 strain
 With unintentioned voices, and
 break off
 To sleep upon their mothers'
 knees again?
 Could'st thou not watch one hour?
 Then, sleep enough—
 That sleep may hasten manhood,
 and sustain
 The faint pale spirit with some mus-
 cular stuff.

II.

But we who cannot slumber as
 thou dost,
 We thinkers, who have thought for
 thee and failed,
 We hoppers, who have hoped for
 thee and lost,
 We poets, wandered round by
 dreams,* who hailed
 From this Atrides' roof (with
 lintel-post
 Which still drips blood,—the worst
 part hath prevailed)
 The fire-voice of the beacons, to
 declare
 Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozen-
 ed through
 A crimson sunset in a misty air,—
 What now remains for such as we
 to do?
 —God's judgments, peradvent-
 ure, will he bare
 To the roots of thunder, if we kneel
 and sue?

* Referring to the well-known opening passage of the *Agamemnon* of *Æschylus*.

III.

From Casa Guidi windows I
 looked forth,
 And saw ten thousand eyes of Flor-
 entines
 Flash back the triumph of the
 Lombard north,—
 Saw fifty banners, freighted with
 the signs
 And exultations of the awaken-
 ed earth, [lines,
 Float on above the multitude in
 Straight to the Pitti. So, the
 vision went.
 And so, between those populous
 rough hands
 Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold
 outleant,
 And took the patriot's oath, which
 henceforth stands
 Among the oaths of perjurers,
 eminent
 To catch the lightnings ripened for
 these lands.

IV.

Why swear at all, thou false Duke
 Leopold?
 What need to swear? What need
 to boast thy blood
 Unspoilt of Austria, and thy
 heart unsold
 Away from Florence? It was un-
 derstood
 God made thee not too vigorous
 or too bold,
 And men had patience with thy
 quiet mood,
 And women, pity, as they saw
 thee pace
 Their festive streets with premature
 grey hairs:
 We turned the mild dejection of
 thy face
 To princely meanings, took thy
 wrinkling cares
 For ruffling hopes, and called
 thee weak, not base.

Nay, better light the torches for
 more prayers
 And smoke the pale Madonnas
 at the shrine,
 Being still 'our poor Grand-duke,'
 'our good Grand-duke.'
 'Who cannot help the Austrian
 in his line,' [book
 Than write an oath upon a nation's
 For men to spit at with scorn's
 blurring brine!
 Who dares forgive what none can
 overlook?

v.

For me, I do repent me in this
 dust
 Of towns and temples, which makes
 Italy,—
 I sigh amid the sighs which
 breathe a gust
 Of dying century to century,
 Around us on the uneven crater-
 crust
 Of the old worlds,—I bow my soul
 and knee,
 Absolve me, patriots, of my
 woman's fault
 That ever I believed the man was
 true.
 These sceptred strangers shun
 the common salt
 And, therefore, when the general
 board's in view,
 And they stand up to carve for
 blind and halt,
 The wise suspect the viands which
 ensue. [and place,
 And I repent that in this time
 Where many corpse-lights of experi-
 ence burn
 From Cæsar's and Lorenzo's fes-
 tering race,
 To enlighten groping reasoners, I
 could learn
 No better counsel for a simple case
 Than to put faith in princes, in my
 turn.

Had all the death-piles of the
 ancient years
 Flared up in vain before me?
 Knew I not
 What stench arises from some
 purple gears—
 And how the sceptres witness
 whence they got
 Their briar-wood, crackling
 through the atmosphere's
 Foul smoke, by princely perjuries,
 kept hot?
 Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—
 Brutus, thou,
 Who trailest downhill into life again
 Thy blood-weighted cloak, to in-
 dict me with thy slow
 Reproachful eyes!—for being
 taught in vain
 That while the illegitimate Cæsars
 show [strain.
 Of meaner stature than the first full
 (Confessed incompetent to con-
 quer Gaul)
 They swoon as feebly and cross
 Rubicons [all.
 As rashly as any Julius of them
 Forgive that I forgot the mind
 which runs
 Through absolute races, too un-
 sceptical!
 I saw the man among his little sons,
 His lips were warm with kisses
 while he swore,—
 And I, because I am a woman, I,
 Who felt my own child's coming
 life before
 The prescience of my soul, and
 held faith high, [ever bore,
 I could not bear to think, who-
 That lips so warmed could shape
 so cold a lie.

vi.

From Casa Guidi windows I
 looked out,
 Again looked, and beheld a differ-
 ent sight,

The Duke had fled before the
 people's shout
 'Long live the Duke!' A people,
 to speak right,
 Must speak as soft as courtiers,
 lest a doubt
 Should curdle brows of gracious
 sovereigns, white.
 Moreover that same dangerous
 shouting meant
 Some gratitude for future-favours,
 which
 Were only promised;—the Con-
 stituent
 Implied;—the whole being subject
 to the hitch
 In motu propriis, very incident
 'To all these Czars, from Paul to
 Paulovitch.
 Whereat the people rose up in
 the dust
 Of the ruler's flying feet, and
 shouted still
 And loudly, only, this time, as
 was just,
 Not 'Live the Duke,' who had fled,
 for good or ill,
 But 'Live the People,' who re-
 mained and must,
 The unrenounced and unrenounce-
 able.

VII.

Long live the people! How they
 lived! and boiled
 And bubbled in the cauldron of the
 street!
 How the young blustered, nor
 the old recoiled,
 And what a thunderous stir of
 tongues and feet
 Trod flat the palpitating bells,
 and foiled [tering it!
 The joy-guns of their echo, shat-
 How they pulled down the Duke's
 arms everywhere!
 How they set up new café-signs, to
 show

Where patriots might sip ices in
 pure air—
 (The fresh paint smelling some-
 what.) To and fro
 How marched the civic guard,
 and stopped to stare
 When boys broke windows in a
 civic glow.
 How rebel songs were sung to
 loyal tunes,
 And Bishops cursed in ecclesiasti-
 cal metres!
 How all the Circoli grew large
 as moons,
 And all the speakers, moonstruck!
 —thankful greeters
 Of prospects which struck poor
 the ducal boons,
 A mere free press, and chambers!
 —frank repeaters
 Of great Guerazzi's praises . . .
 'There's a man,
 The father of the land!—who, truly
 great,
 Takes off that national disgrace
 and ban,
 The farthing-tax upon our Florence-
 gate,
 And saves Italia as he only can.'
 How all the nobles fled, and would
 not wait,
 Because they were most noble!
 which being so,
 How liberals vowed to burn their
 palaces,
 Because free Tuscans were free
 not to go.
 How grown men raged at Austria's
 wickedness,
 And smoked,—while fifty strip-
 lings in a row
 Marched straight to Piedmont for
 the wrong's redress!
 You say we failed in duty, we
 who wore
 Black velvet like Italian democrats,
 Who slashed our sleeves like pa-
 triots, nor forswore

<p>The true republic in the form of hats? We chased the archbishop from the duomo door— We chalked the walls with bloody caveats Against all tyrants. If we did not fight, [air, Exactly, we fired muskets up the To show that victory was ours of right. We met, had free discussion everywhere, Except, perhaps, i' the chambers, day and night : We proved the poor should be employed, . . . that's fair,— And yet the rich not worked for anywise,— Pay certified, yet prayers abrogated, Full work secured, yet liabilities To over-work excluded,—not one bated [twice Of all our holidays, that still at Or thrice a-week are moderately rated. We proved that Austria was dislodged, or would Or should be, and that Tuscany in arms Should, would, dislodge her, ending the old feud ; And yet, to leave our piazzas, shops, and farms, For the bare sake of fighting, was not good. We proved that also—' Did we carry charms Against being killed ourselves, that we should rush On killing others? What! desert herewith Our wives and mothers!—was that duty? Tush !' At which we shook the sword within the sheath, Like heroes—only louder! and the flush</p>	<p>Ran up the cheek to meet the future wreath. Nay, what we proved, we shouted—how we shouted, (Especially the boys did) boldly planting That tree of liberty whose fruit is doubted, Because the roots are not of nature's granting— A tree of good and evil!—none, without it, Grow gods!—alas, and, with it, men are wanting.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">VIII.</p> <p>O holy knowledge, holy liberty, O holy rights of nations! If I speak These bitter things against the jugglery Of days that in your names proved blind and weak, It is that tears are bitter. When we see The brown skulls grin at death in churchyards bleak, We do not cry, ' This Yorick is too light,' For death grows deathlier with that mouth he makes. So with my mocking. Bitter things I write, Because my soul is bitter for your sakes, O freedom! O my Florence!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">IX.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Men who might</p> <p>Do greatly in a universe that breaks And burns, must ever <i>know</i> before they do. [fice ; Courage and patience are but sacrifice A sacrifice is offered for and to Something conceived of. Each man pays a price For what himself counts precious, whether true</p>
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Or false the appreciation it implies.
 But here,—no knowledge, no
 conception, nought!
 Desire was absent, that provides
 great deeds
 From out the greatness of pre-
 venient thought;
 And action, action, like a flame
 that needs
 A steady breath and fuel, being
 caught [reeds,
 Up, like a burning reed from other
 Flashed in the empty and uncer-
 tain air,
 Then wavered, then went out.
 Behold, who blames
 A crooked course, when not a
 goal is there,
 To round the fervid striving of the
 games?
 An ignorance of means may
 minister
 To greatness, but an ignorance of
 aims [at all.
 Makes it impossible to be great
 So with our Tuscans! Let none
 dare to say,
 Here virtue never can be national,
 Here fortitude can never cut its
 way
 Between the Austrian muskets,
 out of thrall.
 I tell you rather that whoever may
 Discern true ends here, shall
 grow pure enough
 To love them, brave enough to
 strive for them,
 And strong enough to reach
 them, though the roads be
 rough:
 That having learnt—by no mere
 apophthegm—
 Nor just the draping of a grace-
 ful stuff
 About a statue, broidered at the
 hem,—
 Not just the trilling on an opera
 stage,

Of 'libertà' to bravos—(a fair word,
 Yet too allied to inarticulate rage
 And breathless sobs, for singing,
 though the cord
 Were deeper than they struck
 it!)—but the guage
 Of civil wants sustained, and wrongs
 abhorred,—
 The serious, sacred meaning and
 full use. [indeed,
 Of freedom for a nation,—then,
 Our Tuscans, underneath the
 bloody dews
 Of some new morning, rising up
 agreed
 And bold, will want no Saxon
 souls or thews
 To sweep their piazzas clear of
 Austria's breed.

X.

Alas, alas! it was not so this
 time.
 Conviction was not, courage failed,
 and truth
 Was something to be doubted of.
 The mime
 Changed masks, because a mime;
 the tide as smooth
 In running in as out; no sense
 of crime [ruth
 Because no sense of virtue. Sudden
 Seized on the people . . . they
 would have again
 Their Grand-duke, and leave Gue-
 razzi, though
 He took that tax from Florence:—
 Much in vain
 He takes it from the market-carts,
 we trow,
 While urgent that no market-
 men remain,
 But all march off and leave the
 spade and plough
 To die among the Lombards.
 Was it thus
 The dear paternal Duke did?
 'Live the Duke!'

At which the joy-bells multitudinous,
 Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly shook,
 Recall the mild Archbishop to his house,
 To bless the people with his frightened look.
 He shall not yet be hanged, you comprehend.
 Seize on Guerazzi; guard him in full view, [to end.
 Or else we stab him in the back,
 Rub out those chalked devices!
 Set up new
 The Duke's arms; doff your Phrygian caps; and mend
 The pavement of the piazzas broke into
 By barren poles of freedom!
 Smooth the way
 For the ducal carriage, lest his highness sigh
 'Here trees of liberty grew yesterday.'
 Long live the Duke!—How roared the cannonry,
 How rocked the bell-towers, and through thickening spray
 Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs tossed on high,
 How marched the civic guard, the people still
 Being good at shouts,—especially the boys.
 Alas, poor people, of an unfledged will
 Most fitly expressed by such a callow voice!
 Alas, still poorer duke, incapable
 Of being worthy even so much noise!

XI.

You think he came back instantly with thanks
 And tears in his faint eyes, and hands extended

To stretch the franchise through their utmost ranks?
 That having, like a father, apprehended,
 He came to pardon fatherly those pranks
 Played out, and now in filial service ended?—
 That some love token, like a prince, he threw,
 To meet the people's love-call, in return?
 Well, how he came I will relate to you;
 And if your hearts should burn, why, hearts *must* burn,
 To make the ashes which things old and new
 Shall be washed clean in—as this Duke will learn.

XII.

From Casa Guidi windows gazing, then,
 I saw and witness how the Duke came back.
 The regular tramp of horses and tread of men
 Did smite the silence like an anvil black
 And sparkless. With her wide eyes at full strain,
 Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed,
 'Alack, alack,
 Signora! these shall be the Austrians,' 'Nay,
 Be still,' I answered, 'do not wake the child!'
 For so, my two-months' baby sleeping lay
 In milky dreams upon the bed and smiled;
 And I thought, 'He shall sleep while he may,
 Through the world's baseness. Not being yet defiled,
 Why should he be disturbed by what is done?'

Then, gazing, I beheld the long-
drawn street

Live out, from end to end, full in
the sun,

With Austria's thousands. Sword
and bayonet,

Horse, foot, artillery,—cannons
rolling on,

Like blind, slow storm-clouds gest-
ant with the heat

Of undevolved lightnings, each
bestrode

By a single man, dust-white from
head to heel, [he rode,

Indifferent as the dreadful thing
Like a sculptored Fate serene and

terrible!

As some smooth river which has
overflowed,

Will slow and silent down its cur-
rent wheel

A loosened forest, all the pines
erect—

So, swept, in mute significance of
storm,

The marshalled thousands,—not
an eye deflect

To left or right, to catch a novel
form [itect

Of Florence city adorned by arch-
And carver, or of beauties live and

warm

Scared at the casements,—all,
straightforward eyes

And faces, held as steadfast as
their swords,

And cognisant of acts, not im-
ageries.

The key, O Tuscans, too well fits
the wards!

Ye asked for mimes; these bring
you tragedies—

For purple; these shall wear it as
your lords.

Ye played like children: die like
innocents!

Ye mimicked lightnings with a
torch: the crack

Of the actual bolt, your pastime,
circumvents.

Ye called up ghosts, believing they
were slack

To follow any voice from Gilboa's
tents, . . .

Here's Samuel!—and, so, Grand-
dukes come back.

XIII.

And yet they are no prophets
though they come.

That awful mantle they are draw-
ing close

Shall be searched, one day, by
the shafts of Doom,

Through double folds now hood-
winking the brows.

Resuscitated monarchs disen-
tomb

Grave-reptiles with them, in their
new life-throes:

Let such beware. Behold, the
people waits, [might,

Like God. As He, in his serene of
So they, in their endurance of

long straits.

Ye stamp no nation out, though day
and night

Ye tread them with that absolute
heel which grates

And grinds them flat from all at-
tempted height.

You kill worms sooner with a
garden-spade

Than you kill peoples: peoples will
not die;

The tail curls stronger when you
lop the head;

They writhe at every wound and
multiply,

And shudder into a heap of life
that's made

Thus vital from God's own vitality.
'Tis hard to shrivel back a day of
God's

Once fixed for judgment: 'tis hard
to change

The people's, when they rise be-
neath their loads
And heave them from their backs
with violent wrench,
To crush the oppressor. For
that judgment rod's
The measure of this popular re-
venge.

XIV.

Meantime, from Casa Guidi win-
dows we
Beheld the armament of Austria
flow [cany.
Into the drowning heart of Tus-
And yet none wept, none cursed ;
or, if 'twas so,
They wept and cursed in silence.
Silently
Our noisy Tuscans watched the in-
vading foe ;
They had learnt silence. Pressed
against the wall
And grouped upon the church-steps
opposite, [ed at all.
A few pale men and women star-
God knows what they were feeling,
with their white
Constrained faces!—they, so
prodigal
Of cry and gesture when the world
goes right,
Or wrong indeed. But here, was
depth of wrong,
And here, still water : they were si-
lent here :
And through that sentient si-
lence struck along
That measured tramp from which
it stood out clear
Distinct the sound and silence,
like a gong [awfuller,
At midnight, each by the other
While every soldier in his cap
displayed
A leaf of olive. Dusty, bitter thing !
Was such plucked at Novara, is
it said ?

XV.

A cry is up in England, which doth
ring
The hollow world through, that
for ends of trade
And virtue, and God's better wor-
shipping,
We henceforth should exalt the
name of Peace,
And leave those rusty wars that
eat the soul,—
Besides their clippings at our
golden fleece.
I, too, have loved peace, and from
bole to bole
Of immemorial, undeciduous trees,
Would write, as lovers use, upon
a scroll
The holy name of Peace, and set
it high
Where none could pluck it down.
On trees, I say,—
Not upon gibbets!—With the
greenery [May.
Of dewy branches and the flowery
Sweet meditation betwixt earth
and sky
Providing, for the shepherd's holi-
day!
Not upon gibbets! though the
vulture leaves
The bones to quiet, which he first
picked bare.
Not upon dungeons! though the
wretch who grieves
And groans within, stirs less the
outer air
Than any little field-mouse stirs
the sheaves.
Not upon chain-bolts! though the
slave's despair
Has dulled his helpless, miser-
able brain,
And left him blank beneath the
freeman's whip, [pain.
To sing and laugh out idiocies of
Nor yet on starving homes! where
many a lip

Has sobbed itself asleep through
 curses vain!
 I love no peace which is not fellow-
 ship,
 And which includes not mercy. I
 would have,
 Rather, the raking of the guns
 across
 The world, and shrieks against
 Heaven's architrave.
 Rather, the struggle in the slippery
 fosse [the wave
 Of dying men and horses, and
 Blood-bubbling. . . . Enough said!
 By Christ's own cross,
 And by the faint heart of my
 womanhood,
 Such things are better than a Peace
 which sits
 Beside the hearth in self-com-
 mended mood,
 And takes no thought how wind and
 rain by fits
 Are howling out of doors against
 the good
 Of the poor wanderer. What!
 your peace admits
 Of outside anguish while it keeps
 at home?
 I loathe to take its name upon my
 tongue—
 'Tis nowise peace. 'Tis treason,
 stiff with doom,—
 'Tis gagged despair, and inarticu-
 late wrong,
 Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,
 Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting
 'neath the thong,
 And Austria wearing a smooth
 olive-leaf
 On her brute forehead, while her
 hoofs outpress
 The life from these Italian souls,
 in brief.
 O Lord of Peace, who art Lord of
 Righteousness,
 Constrain the anguished worlds
 from sin and grief,

Pierce them with conscience, purge
 them with redress,
 And give us peace which is no
 counterfeit!

XVI.

But wherefore should we look out
 any more
 From Casa Guidi windows?
 Shut them straight; [door
 And let us sit down by the folded
 And veil our saddened faces, and
 so, wait

What next the judgment-heavens
 make ready for.

I have grown weary of these win-
 dows. Sights

Come thick enough and clear
 enough in thought,

Without the sunshine; souls
 have inner lights:

And since the Grand-duke has
 come back and brought

This army of the North which
 thus requites

His filial South, we leave him to be
 taught.

His South, too, has learnt some-
 thing certainly,

Whereof the practice will bring
 profit soon; [see,

And peradventure other eyes may
 From Casa Guidi windows, what is
 done

Or undone. Whatsoever deeds
 they be,

Pope Pius will be glorified in none.

XVII.

Record that gain, Mazzini!—it
 shall top

Some heights of sorrow. Peter's
 rock, so named, [drop

Shall lure no vessel any more to
 Among the breakers. Peter's chair

is shamed [lop

Like any vulgar throne the nations
 To pieces for their firewood unre-
 claimed;

And, when it burns too, we shall
 see as well
 In Italy as elsewhere. Let it burn.
 The cross, accounted still adorable,
 Is Christ's cross only!—if the thief's
 would earn [rebel;
 Some stealthy genuflexions, we
 And here the impenitent thief's has
 had its turn,
 As God knows; and the people
 on their knees
 Scoff and toss back the croziers,
 stretched like yokes
 To press their heads down lower
 by degrees.
 So Italy, by means of these last
 strokes,
 Escapes the danger which pre-
 ceded these,
 Of leaving captured hands in cloven
 oaks . . .
 Of leaving very souls within the
 buckle
 Whence bodies struggled out-
 ward . . . of supposing
 That freemen may like bondsmen
 kneel and truckle,
 And then stand up as usual, with-
 out losing
 An inch of stature.
 Those whom she-wolves suckle
 Will bite as wolves do, in the grap-
 ple-closing
 Of adverse interests: this, at last,
 is known, [albeit
 (Thank Pius for the lesson) that
 Among the Popedom's hundred
 heads of stone
 Which blink down on you from the
 roof's retreat
 In Siena's tiger-striped cathed-
 ral,—Joan
 And Borgia 'mid their fellows you
 may greet,
 A harlot and a devil, you will see
 Not a man, still less angel, grandly
 set

With open soul to render man
 more free. [net,
 The fishers are still thinking of the
 And if not thinking of the hook
 too, we
 Are counted somewhat deeply in
 their debt:
 But that's a rare case—so, by
 hook and crook
 They take the advantage, agonizing
 Christ
 By rustier nails than those of Ce-
 dron's brook, [priced;
 I' the people's body very cheaply
 And quote high priesthood out
 of Holy book,
 While buying death-fields with
 the sacrificed.

VIII.

Priests, priests!—there's no such
 name, God's own, except
 Ye take most vainly. Though
 Heaven's lifted gate [swept,
 The priestly ephod in sole glory
 When Christ ascended, entered in,
 and sate [wept,
 With victor face sublimely over-
 At Deity's right hand, to mediate,
 He alone, He for ever. On his
 breast
 The Urim and the Thummim, fed
 with fire
 From the full Godhead, flicker
 with the unrest
 Of human, pitiful heartbeats.
 Come up higher.
 All Christians! Levi's tribe is
 dispossessed!
 That solitary alb ye shall admire,
 But not cast lots for. The last
 chrism, poured right,
 Was on that Head, and poured for
 burial
 And not for domination in men's
 sight.
 What are these churches? The
 old temple wall

Doth overlook them juggling with
 the sleight [pall.
 Of surplice, candlestick, and altar-
 East church and west church, ay,
 north church and south,
 Rome's church and England's—let
 them all repent,
 And make concordats 'twixt their
 soul and mouth. [tent,
 Succeed St. Paul by working at the
 Become infallible guides by
 speaking truth,
 And excommunicate their pride that
 bent
 And cramped the souls of men.
 Why, even here,
 Priestcraft burns out; the twined
 linen blazes, [and clear,
 Not, like asbestos, to grow white
 But all to perish!—while the fire-
 smell raises
 To life some swooning spirits
 who, last year,
 Lost breath and heart in these
 church-stifled places.
 Why, almost, through this Pius,
 we believed
 The priesthood could be an honest
 thing, he smiled
 So saintly while our corn was be-
 ing sheaved
 For his own granaries. Showing
 now defiled
 His hireling hands, a better help's
 achieved
 Than if he blessed us shepherd-like
 and mild.
 False doctrine, strangled by its
 own amen, [Who
 Dies in the throat of all this nation.
 Will speak a pope's name, as they
 rise again?
 What woman or what child will
 count him true?
 What dreamer praise him with
 the voice or pen?
 What man fight for him?—Pius has
 his due.

XIX.

Record that gain, Mazzini!—Yes,
 but first
 Set down thy people's faults:—set
 down the want
 Of soul-conviction; set down aims
 dispersed,
 And incoherent means, and valour
 scant
 Because of scanty faith, and
 schisms accursed
 That wrench these brother-hearts
 from covenant
 With freedom and each other.
 Set down this
 And this, and see to overcome it
 when
 The seasons bring the fruits thou
 wilt not miss
 If wary. Let no cry of patriot men
 Distract thee from the stern anal-
 ysis [kin
 Of masses who cry only: keep thy
 Clear as thy soul is virtuous.
 Heroes' blood
 Splashed up against thy noble brow
 in Rome.—
 Let such not blind thee to an in-
 terlude [come
 Which was not also holy, yet did
 'Twixt sacramental actions;—
 brotherhood,
 Despised even there,—and some-
 thing of the doom
 Of Remus in the trenches. Listen
 now—
 Rossi died silent near where Cæsar
 died.
 HE did not say, 'My Brutus, is it
 thou?'
 But Italy unquestioned testified,
 'I killed him!—I am Brutus.—I
 avow.'
 At which the whole world's laugh
 of scorn replied,
 'A poor maimed copy of Brutus!'
 Too much like,

Indeed, to be so unlike. Too un-
skilled
At Philippi and the honest battle-
pike, [killed
To be so skilful where a man is
Near Pompey's statue, and the
daggers strike
At unawares i' the throat. Was
thus fulfilled
An omen once of Michel An-
gelo,—
When Marcus Brutus he conceived
complete,
And strove to hurl him out by
blow on blow
Upon the marble, at Art's thunder-
heat,
Till haply some pre-shadow rising
slow
Of what his Italy would fancy meet
To be called BRUTUS, straight
his plastic hand
Fell back before his prophet soul,
and left
A fragment . . . a maimed Bru-
tus,—but more grand
Than this so named of Rome, was !
Let thy weft
Present one woof and warp, Maz-
zini !—stand
With no man hankering for a dag-
ger's heft,— [apart,
No, not for Italy !—nor stand
No, not for the republic !—from
those pure
Brave men who hold the level of
thy heart
In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,
Albeit they will not follow where
thou art
As extreme theorist. Trust and
distrust fewer ;
And so bind strong and keep un-
stained the cause
Which (God's sign granted,) war-
trumps newly blown
Shall yet annunciate to the world's
applause.

XX.

But now the world is busy ; it has
grown
A Fair-going world. Imperial
England draws
The flowing ends of the earth, from
Fez, Canton,
Delhi and Stockholm, Athens and
Madrid,
The Russias and the vast Americas,
As if a queen drew in her robes
amid [sulas,
Her golden cincture,—isles, penin-
Capes, continents, far inland
countries hid
By jasper-sands and hills of chrys-
opras,
All trailing in their splendours
through the door
Of the gorgeous Crystal Palace.
Every nation, [yore,
To every other nation strange of
Gives face to face the civic saluta-
tion,
And holds up in a proud right
hand before
That congress, the best work which
she can fashion
By her best means—' These cor-
als, will you please
To match against your oaks ? They
grow as fast
Within my wilderness of purple
seas.'—
' This diamond stared upon me as
I passed
(As a live God's eye from a mar-
ble frieze)
Along a dark of diamonds. Is it
classed ?'—
' I wove these stuffs so subtly that
the gold
Swims to the surface of the silk like
cream,
And curdles to fair patterns. Ye
behold !'—
' These delicatest muslins rather
seem

Than be, you think? Nay, touch
 them and be bold,
 Though such veiled Chakhi's face
 in Hafiz' dream.'—
 'These carpets—you walk slow
 on them like kings,
 Inaudible like spirits, while your foot
 Dips deep in velvet roses and such
 things.'—
 'Even Apollonius might commend
 this flute.*
 The music winding through the
 stops, upsprings
 To make the player very rich.
 Compute.'—
 Here's goblet-glass, to take in
 with your wine [ed under.
 The very sun its grapes were ripen-
 Drink light and juice together,
 and each fine.'—
 This model of a steamship moves
 your wonder?
 You should behold it crushing
 down the brine,
 Like a blind Jove who feels his way
 with thunder.'—
 'Here's sculpture! Ah, *we* live
 too! Why not throw
 Our life into our marbles! Art has
 place
 For other artists after Angelo.'
 'I tried to paint out here a natural
 face—
 For nature includes Raffael, as
 we know,
 Not Raffael nature. Will it help
 my case?'—
 'Methinks you will not match
 this steel of ours!'—
 'Nor you this porcelain! One
 might dream the clay
 Retained in it the larvæ of the
 flowers,

* Philostratus relates of Apollonius that he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, its incompetence to enrich and beautify. The history of music in our day would, upon the former point, sufficiently confute the philosopher.

They bud so, round the cup, the
 old spring way.'—
 'Nor you these carven woods,
 where birds in bowers
 With twisting snakes and climbing
 cupids, play.'

XXI.

O Magi of the east and of the
 west,
 Your incense, gold, and myrrh are
 excellent.—
 What gifts for Christ, then, bring
 ye with the rest?
 Your hands have worked well. Is
 your courage spent
 In handwork only? Have you
 nothing best,
 Which generous souls may perfect
 and present,
 And he shall thank the givers for?
 No light [poor,
 Of teaching, liberal nations, for the
 Who sit in darkness when it is
 not night?
 No cure for wicked children?
 Christ,—no cure!
 No help for women sobbing out
 of sight
 Because men made the laws? No
 brothel-lure
 Burnt out by popular lightnings?
 —Hast thou found [woes?
 No remedy, my England, for such
 No outlet, Austria, for the scourg-
 ed and bound,
 No entrance for the exiled? No
 repose,
 Russia, for knouted Poles worked
 underground,
 And gentle ladies bleached among
 the snows?—
 No mercy for the slave, Ameri-
 ca?—
 No hope for Rome, free France,
 chivalric France?—
 Alas, great nations have great
 shames, I say.

No pity, O world, no tender utterance

Of benediction, and prayers stretched this way
For poor Italia baffled by mischance?—

O gracious nations, give some ear to me!

You all go to your Fair, and I am Who at the roadside of humanity
Beseech your alms,—God's justice to be done.

So, prosper!

XXII.

In the name of Italy,
Meantime, her patriot dead have benizon!

They only have done well; and what they did,
Being perfect, it shall triumph. Let them slumber.

No king of Egypt in a pyramid
Is safer from oblivion, though he number

Full seventy cerements for a coverlid.

These Dead be seeds of life, and shall encumber

The sad heart of the land until it loose

The clammy clods and let out the spring-growth

In beatific green through every bruise.

The tyrant should take heed to what he doth,

Since every victim-carrion turns to use,

And drives a chariot, like a god made wroth,

Against each piled injustice. Ay, the least

Dead for Italia, not in vain has Though many vainly, ere life's struggle ceased.

To mad dissimilar ends have swerved aside,

Each grave her nationality has pierced

By its own noble breadth, and fortified,

And pinned it deeper to the soil. Forlorn

Of thanks, be, therefore, no one of these graves!

Not hers,—who, at her husband's side, in scorn,

Outfaced the whistling shot and hissing waves,

Until she felt her little babe unborn

Recoil, within her, from the violent staves

And bloodhounds of the world: at which, her life

Dropt inward from her eyes and followed it

Beyond the hunters. Garibaldi's wife

And child died so. And now, the sea-weeds fit

Her body like a proper shroud and coif,

And murmuringly the ebbing waters grit

The little pebbles while she lies interred

In the sea-sand. Perhaps, ere dying thus,

She looked up in his face which never stirred

From its clenched anguish, as to make excuse

For leaving him for his, if so she erred.

Well he remembers that she could not choose.

A memorable grave! Another [is

At Genoa. There a king may fitly lie,

Who bursting that heroic heart of his [die,

At lost Novara, that he could not Though thrice into the cannon's eyes for this

He plunged his shuddering steed,
 and felt the sky
 Reel back between the fire-
 shocks;—stripped away
 The ancestral ermine ere the smoke
 had cleared,
 And naked to the soul, that none
 might say [and bleared
 His kingship covered what was base
 With treason, went out straight,
 an exile, yea,
 An exiled patriot! Let him be re-
 vered.

XXIII.

Yea, verily, Charles Albert has
 died well,
 And if he lived not all so, as one
 spoke,
 The sin pass softly with the pass-
 ing bell.
 For he was shriven, I think, in can-
 non smoke,
 And taking off his crown, made
 visible
 A hero's forehead. Shaking Aus-
 tria's yoke
 He shattered his own hand and
 heart. 'So best,' [bed,
 His last words were upon his lonely
 'I do not end like popes and
 dukes at least—
 Thank God for it.' And now that
 he is dead,
 Admitting it is proved and mani-
 fest
 That he was worthy, with a dis-
 crowned head,
 To measure heights with patriots,
 let them stand,
 Beside the man in his Oporto shroud
 And each vouchsafe to take him
 by the hand, [aloud,
 And kiss him on the cheek, and say
 Thou, too, hast suffered for our
 native land!
 'My brother, thou art one of us.
 Be proud.'

XXIV.

Still, graves, when Italy is talked
 upon!
 Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the
 stranger's hate.
 Still Niobe! still fainting in the
 sun [late
 By whose most dazzling arrows vio-
 Her beauteous offspring perish-
 ed! Has she won
 Nothings but garlands for the graves
 from Fate?
 Nothing but death-songs?—Yet,
 be it understood,
 Life throbs in noble Piedmont!
 while the feet
 Of Rome's clay image, dabbled
 soft in blood,
 Grow fat with dissolution, and, as
 meet,
 Will soon be shovelled off lik'
 other mud,
 To leave the passage free in church
 and street.
 And I, who first took hope up in
 this song,
 Because a child was singing one. . .
 behold,
 The hope and omen were not
 haply, wrong!
 Poets are soothsayers still, like
 those of old
 Who studied flights of doves,—
 and creatures young
 And tender, mighty meanings, may
 unfold.

XXV.

The sun strikes through the win-
 dows, up the floor:
 Stand out in it, my own young Flor-
 entine,
 Not two years old, and let me
 see thee more!
 It grows along thy amber curls to
 shine
 Brighter than elsewhere. Now
 look straight before,

And fix thy brave blue English eyes
 on mine,
 And from thy soul, which fronts
 the future so,
 With unabashed and unabated gaze
 Teach me to hope for, what the
 Angels know,
 When they smile clear as thou dost.
 Down God's ways,
 With just alighted feet between
 the snow
 And snowdrops, where a little lamb
 may gaze
 Thou hast no fear, my lamb,
 about the road,
 Albeit in our vain-glory we assume
 That, less than we have, thou
 hast learnt of God.
 Stand out, my blue-eyed proph-
 et!—thou, to whom
 The earliest world-day light that
 ever flowed,
 Through Casa Guidi windows,
 chanced to come!
 Now shake the glittering nimbus
 of thy hair,
 And be God's witness—that the
 elemental
 New springs of life are gushing
 everywhere
 To cleanse the water courses, and
 prevent all
 Concrete obstructions which in-
 fest the air!
 —That earth's alive, and gentle or
 ungentle
 Motions within her, signify but
 growth:
 The ground swells greenest o'er the
 labouring moles.
 Howe'er the uneasy world is
 vexed and wroth,
 Young children, lifted high on par-
 ent souls,
 Look round them with a smile
 upon the mouth,
 And take for music every bell that
 tolls.

WHO said we should be better if
 like these?
 And *we* sit murmuring for the fu-
 ture though
 Posterity is smiling on our knees,
 Convicting us of folly? Let us
 go—
 We will trust God. The blank
 interstices [into
 Men take for ruins, He will build
 With pillared marbles rare, or
 knit across
 With generous arches, till the fane's
 complete.
 This world has no perdition, if
 some loss.

XXVI.

Such cheer I gather from thy smil-
 ing Sweet! [emboss
 The selfsame cherub faces which
 The Vail, lean inward to the Mer-
 cy-seat.

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

Φεῦ, φεῦ, τι προσδερκεσθε
 μ' ομμασιν, τέκνα.—MEDEA.

Do ye hear the children weeping,
 O my brothers,
 Ere the sorrow comes with
 years?
 They are leaning their young heads
 against their mothers,
 And *that* cannot stop their
 tears.
 The young lambs are bleating in
 the meadows:
 The young birds are chirping in
 their nest:
 The young fawns are playing with
 the shadows;
 The young flowers are blowing
 toward the west—
 But the young, young children, O
 my brothers,
 They are weeping bitterly!

They are weeping in the playtime
of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children
in the sorrow,

Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-
morrow

Which 's lost in Long Ago—
The old tree is leafless in the for-
est—

The old year is ending in the
frost—

The old wound, if stricken, is the
sorest—

The old hope is hardest to be
lost :

But the young, young children, O
my brothers,

Do you ask them why they
stand

Weeping sore before the bosoms
of their mothers,

In our happy Fatherland ?

They look up with their pale and
sunken faces,

And their looks are sad to
see.

For the man's hoary anguish draws
and presses

Down the cheeks of infancy—
'Your old earth,' they say, 'is very
dreary ;

Our young feet,' they say, 'are
very weak !

Few paces have we taken, yet are
weary—

Our grave-rest is very far to
seek :

Ask the aged why they weep, and
not the children,

For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without
in our bewildering,

And the graves are for the
old :

' True,' say the children, 'it may
happen

That we die before our time :
Little Alice died last year—her
grave is shapen

Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to
take her—

Was no room for any work in
the close clay :

From the sleep wherein she lieth
none will wake her [day,'

Crying, 'Get up, little Alice ! it is
If you listen by that grave, in sun
and shower,

With your ear down, little Alice
never cries !

Could we see her face, be sure we
should not know her,

For the smile has time for grow-
ing in her eyes,

And merry go her moments, lulled
and stilled in

The shroud by the kirk-chime'
It is good when it happens,' say the
children,

'That we die before our time !'
Alas, alas, the children ! they are
seeking

Death in life as best to have !
They are binding up their hearts
away from breaking,

With a cerement from the
grave.

Go out, children, from the mine
and from the city—

Sing out, children, as the little
thrushes do—

Pluck your handfuls of the mead-
ow-cowslips pretty—

Laugh aloud, to feel your fin-
gers let them through !

But they answer, 'Are your cow-
slips of the meadows

Like our weeds anear the
mine ?

Leave us quiet in the dark of the
coal-shadows,

<p>From your pleasures fair and fine! For oh,' say the children, 'we are weary, And we cannot run or leap— If we cared for any meadows, it were merely To drop down in them and sleep. Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping— We fall upon our faces, trying to go; And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping, The reddest flower would look as pale as snow. For, all day, we drag our burden tiring, Through the coal-dark underground, Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron In the factories, round and round.</p> <p>For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning,— Their wind comes in our faces— Till our hearts turn,—our heads, with pulses burning, And the walls turn in their places— Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling— Turns the long light that drops adown the wall— Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling— All are turning, all the day, and we with all! And all day the iron wheels are droning: And sometimes we could pray, 'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning, 'Stop! be silent for to-day!')</p>	<p>Ay! be silent! Let them hear each other breathing For a moment, mouth to mouth— Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing Of their tender human youth! Let them feel that this cold metallic motion Is not all the life God fashions or reveals— Let them prove their living souls against the notion That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!— Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward, Grinding life down from its mark; And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward, Spin on blindly in the dark.</p> <p>Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers, To look up to Him and pray— So the blessed One who blesseth all the others, Will bless them another day. They answer, 'Who is God that He should hear us, While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred? When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word! And we hear not (for the wheels in their resounding) Strangers speaking at the door: Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him, Hears our weeping any more? 'Two words, indeed, of praying we remember; [harm. And at midnight's hour of 'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,</p>
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We say softly for a charm.*
 We know no other words, except
 'Our Father,'
 And we think that, in some pause
 of angel's song,
 God may pluck them with the
 silence sweet to gather,
 And hold both within His right
 hand which is strong.
 'Our Father!' If He heard us, He
 would surely
 (For they call him good and mild)
 Answer, smiling down the steep
 world very purely, [child,
 'Come and rest with me, my
 'But, no!' say the children, weep-
 ing faster,
 'He is speechless as a stone ;
 And they tell us, of His image is
 the master
 Who commands us to work on.
 'Go to!' say the children—'Up in
 Heaven,
 Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds
 are all we find :
 Do not mock us ; grief has made
 us unbelieving,—
 We look up for God, but tears
 have made us blind.'
 Do you hear the children weeping
 and disproving,
 O my brothers, what ye preach ?
 For God's possible is taught by His
 world's loving—
 And the children doubt of each.

* A fact rendered pathetically historical
 by Mr. Horne's Report of his commission.
 The name of the poet of "Orion" and
 "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change
 of associations, and comes in time to re-
 mind me (with other noble instances) that
 we have some noble poetic heat still in our
 literature,—though open to the reproach, on
 certain points, of being somewhat gelid in
 our humanity.

And well may the children weep
 before you ;
 They are weary ere they run ;
 They have never seen the sunshine,
 nor the glory
 Which is brighter than the sun :
 They know the grief of man, with-
 out his wisdom ;
 They sink in man's despair, with-
 out its calm—
 Are slaves, without the liberty in
 Christendom,
 Are martyrs, by the pang without
 the palm,—
 Are worn as if with age, yet unre-
 trievingly
 The harvest of its memories can-
 not reap,—
 Are orphans of the earthly love and
 heavenly :
 Let them weep ! let them weep.
 They look up, with their pale and
 sunken faces,
 And their look is dread to see,
 For they mind you of their angels
 in high places,
 With eyes turned on Deity ;—
 'How long,' they say, 'how long,
 O cruel nation,
 Will you stand, to move the
 world, on a child's heart,—
 Stifle down with a mailed heel its
 palpitation,
 And tread onward to your throne
 amid the mart ?
 Our blood splashes upward, O gold-
 heaper,
 And your purple shows your
 path ;
 But the child's sob in the silence
 curses deeper
 Than the strong man in his
 wrath !'

NAPOLEON III. IN ITALY.

[THESE poems were written under the pressure of the events they indicate, after a residence in Italy of so many years, that the present triumph of great principles is heightened to the writer's feelings by the disastrous issue of the last movement, witnessed from "Casa Guidi windows" in 1849. Yet, if the verses should appear to English readers too pungently rendered to admit of a patriotic respect to the English sense of things, I will not excuse myself on such grounds, nor on the ground of my attachment to the Italian people, and my admiration of their heroic constancy and union. What I have written has simply been written because I love truth and justice *quand meme*, "more than Plato" and Plato's country, more than Dante and Dante's country, more even than Shakspeare and Shakspeare's country.

And if patriotism means the flattery of one's nation in every case, then the patriot, take it as you please, is merely a courtier, which I am not, though I have written "Napoleon III. in Italy." It is time to limit the significance of certain terms, or to enlarge the significance of certain things. Nationality is excellent in its place; and the instinct of self-love is the *root* of a man, which will develop into sacrificial virtues. But all the virtues are means and uses; and, if we hinder their tendency to growth and expansion, we both destroy them as virtues, and degrade them to that rankest species of corruption reserved for the most noble organizations. For instance, non-intervention in the affairs of neighboring states is a high political virtue; but non-intervention does not mean, passing by on the other side when your neighbor falls among thieves,—or Phariseism would recover it from Christianity. Freedom itself is virtue, as well as privilege; but freedom of the seas does not mean piracy, nor freedom of the land brigandage; nor freedom of the senate, freedom to cudgel a dissident member, nor freedom of the press, freedom to calumniate and lie. So, if patriotism be a virtue indeed, it cannot mean an exclusive devotion to one's country's interest,—for that is only another form of devotion to personal interests, of family interests or provincial interests, all of which, if not driven past themselves, are vulgar and immoral objects. Let us put away the little Pedlingtonism unworthy of a great nation, and too prevalent among us. If the man who does not look beyond this natural life is of a somewhat narrow order, what must be the man who does not look beyond his own frontier or his own sea?

I confess that I dream of the day when an English statesman shall arise with a heart too large for England, having courage, in the face of his countrymen, to assert of some suggestive policy,—“This is good for your trade; this is necessary for your domination; but it will vex a people hard by; it will hurt a people farther off; it will profit nothing to the general humanity; therefore, away with it!—it is not for you or for me.” When a British Minister dares to speak so, and a British public applauds him speaking, then shall the nation be so glorious, that her praise, instead of exploding from within, from loud civic mouths, shall come to her from without, as all worthy praise must, from the alliances she has fostered, and from the populations she has saved.

And poets, who write of the events of that time, shall not need to justify themselves in prefaces, for ever so little jarring of the national sentiment imputable to their rhymes

ROME, February, 1860.]

I.

EMPEROR, Emperor!
From the centre to the shore,
From the Seine back to the Rhine,
Stood eight millions up and swore,
By their manhood's right divine
So to elect and legislate,

This man should renew the line
Broken in a strain of fate
And leagued kings at Waterloo,
When the people's hands let go.
Emperor
Evermore.

II.

With a universal shout
 They took the old regalia out
 From an open grave that day ;
 From a grave that would not close,
 Where the first Napoleon lay
 Expectant, in repose,
 As still as Merlin, with his con-
 quering face,
 Turned up in its unquenchable ap-
 peal [ing race,
 To men and heroes of the advanc-
 Prepared to set the seal
 Of what has been on what shall be.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

III.

The thinkers stood aside
 To let the nation act.
 Some hated the new constituted
 fact
 Of empire, as pride treading on
 their pride.
 Some quailed, lest what was pois-
 onous in the past
 Should graft itself in that Druidic
 bough
 On this green now.
 Some cursed, because at last
 The open heavens to which they
 had look'd in vain
 For many a golden fall of marvel-
 lous rain
 Were closed in brass ; and some
 Wept on because a gone thing
 could not come ;
 And some were silent, doubting all
 things for
 That popular conviction—ever-
 more
 Emperor.

IV.

That day I did not hate
 Nor doubt, nor quail, nor curse.
 I, reverencing the people, did not
 bate

My reverence of their deed and
 oracle,
 Nor vainly prate
 Of better and of worse
 Against the great conclusion of
 their will.
 And yet, O voice and verse,
 Which God set in me to acclaim
 and sing
 Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,
 We gave no music to the patent
 thing,
 Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb
 and swim
 About the name of him
 Translated to the sphere of domi-
 nation
 By democratic passion !
 I was not used, at least,
 Nor can be, now or then,
 To stroke the ermine beast
 On any kind of throne,
 (Though builded by a nation for
 its own,)
 And swell the surging choir for
 kings of men—
 ' Emperor
 Evermore '

v.

But now, Napoleon, now
 That, leaving far behind the pur-
 ple throng
 Of vulgar monarchs, thou
 Tread'st higher in thy deed
 Than stair of throne can lead
 To help in the hour of wrong
 The broken hearts of nations to be
 strong,—
 Now, lifted as thou art
 To the level of pure song,
 We stand to meet thee on these
 Alpine snows !
 And while the palpitating peaks
 break out [pose
 Ecstatic from somnambular re-
 With answers to the presence and
 the shout,

We, poets of the people, who take
 part [right,
 With elemental justice, natural
 Join in our echoes also, nor re-
 frain.
 We met thee, O Napoleon, at this
 height
 At last, and find thee great enough
 to praise.
 Receive the poet's chrism, which
 smells beyond
 The priest's, and pass thy
 ways;— [maintain
 An English poet warns thee to
 God's word, not England's:—let
 His truth be true
 And all men liars! with His truth
 respond
 To all men's lie. Exalt the sword
 and smite
 On that long anvil of the Apennine
 Where Austria forged the Italian
 chain in view [of fine
 Of seven consenting nations, sparks
 Admonitory light,
 Till men's eyes wink before con-
 victions new.
 Flash in God's justice to the world's
 amaze, [days
 Sublime Deliverer!—after many
 Found worthy of the deed thou art
 come to do—
 Emperor
 Evermore.

VI.

But Italy, my Italy
 Can it last, this gleam?
 Can she live and be strong,
 Or is it another dream
 Like the rest we have dreamed so
 long?
 And shall it, must it be,
 That after the battle-cloud has
 broken
 She will die off again
 Like the rain,
 Or like a poet's song

Sung of her, sad at the end
 Because her name is Italy—
 Die and count no friend?
 It is true—may it be spoken,
 That she who has lain so still.
 With a wound in her breast,
 And a flower in her hand,
 And a gravestone under her head.
 While every nation at will
 Beside her has dared to stand
 And flout her with pity and scorn,
 Saying, 'She is at rest,
 She is fair, she is dead,
 And, leaving room in her stead
 To Us who are later born,
 This is certainly best!'
 Saying, 'Alas, she is fair,
 Very fair, but dead,
 And so we have room for the race.'
 —Can it be true, be true,
 That she lives anew?
 That she rises up at the shout of
 her sons,
 At the trumpet of France,
 And lives anew?—is it true
 That she has not moved in a
 trance,
 As in Forty-eight?
 When her eyes were troubled with
 blood
 Till she knew not friend from foe,
 Till her hand was caught in a
 strait
 Of her cerement and baffled so
 From doing the deed she would;
 And her weak foot stumbled across
 The grave of a king,
 And down she dropt at heavy loss,
 And we gloomily covered her face
 and said,
 'We have dreamed the thing;
 She is not alive, but dead.'

VII.

Now, shall we say
 Our Italy lives indeed?
 And if it were not for the beat and
 bray

Of drum and trump of martial
men,
Should we feel the underground
heave and strain,
Where heroes left their dust as a
seed

Sure to emerge one day?
And if it were not for the rhythmic
march [hosts,

Of France and Piedmont's double
Should we hear the ghosts
Thrill through ruined aisle and
arch,

Throb along the frescoed wall,
Whisper an oath by that divine
They left in picture, book and
stone

That Italy is not dead at all?
Ay, if it were not for the tears in
our eyes, [joy,

These tears of a sudden passionate
Should we see her arise
From the place where the wicked
are overthrown,

Italy, Italy! loosed at length
From the tyrant's thrall,
Pale and calm in her strength?

Pale as the silver cross of Savoy
When the hand that bears the flag
is brave,

And not a breath is stirring, save
What is blown

Over the war-trump's lip of brass,
Ere Garibaldi forces the pass!

VIII.

Ay, it is so, even so,
Ay, and it shall be so.
Each broken stone that long ago
She flung behind her as she went
In discouragement and bewilder-
ment

Through the cairns of Time, and
missed her way

Between to-day and yesterday,
Up springs a living man.

And each man stands with his face
in the light

Of his own drawn sword,
Ready to do what a hero can.
Wall to sap, or river to ford,
Cannon to front, or foe to pursue,
Still ready to do, and sworn to be
true,

As a man and patriot can.
Piedmontese, Neapolitan,
Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,
Each man's body having a soul,—
Count how many they stand,
All of then sons of the land,
Every live man there
Allied to a dead man below,
And the deadest with blood to
spare

To quicken a living hand
In case it should ever be slow.
Count how many they come
To beat the Piedmont's drum,
With faces keener and grayer
Than swords of the Austrian slayer,
All set against the foe.

'Emperor
Evermore.'

IX.

Out of the dust where they ground
them,

Out of the holes where they dogged
them,

Out of the hulks where they wound
them

In iron, tortured and flogged them;
Out of the streets where they
chased them,

Taxed them and then bayoneted
them,—

Out of the homes, where they spied
on them,

(Using their daughters and
wives,—)

Out of the church where they
fretted them,

Rotted their souls and debased
them,

Trained them to answer with
knives,

Then cursed them all at their prayers!—
 Out of cold lands, not theirs,
 Where they exiled them, starved
 them, lied on them ;
 Back they come like a wind, in vain
 Cramped up in the hills, that roars
 its road
 The stronger into the open plain ;
 Or like a fire that burns the hotter
 And longer for the crust of cinder,
 Serving better the ends of the plot-
 ter ;
 Or like a restrained word of God,
 Fulfilling itself by what seems to
 hinder
 ‘ Emperor
 Evermore.’

x.

Shout for France and Savoy !
 Shout for the helper and doer.
 Shout for the good sword’s ring,
 Shout for the thought still truer.
 Shout for the spirits at large
 Who passed for the dead this spring,
 Whose living glory is sure.
 Shout for France and Savoy !
 Shout for the council and charge !
 Shout for the head of Cavour ;
 And shout for the heart of a King
 That’s great with a nation’s joy.
 Shout for France and Savoy !

xi.

Take up the child, MacMahon,
 though
 Thy hand be red
 From Magenta’s dead,
 And riding on, in front of the troop,
 In the dust of the whirlwind of
 war
 Through the gate of the city of
 Milan, stoop
 And take up the child to thy sad-
 dle-bow, [flower
 Nor fear the touch as soft as a
 Of his smile as clear as a star !

Thou hast a right to the child, we
 say,
 Since the women are weeping for
 joy as those
 Who, by thy help and from this
 day,
 Shall be happy mothers indeed.
 They are raining flowers from ter-
 race and roof :
 Take up the flower in the child.
 While the shout goes up of a nation
 freed
 And heroically self-reconciled,
 Till the snow on that peaked Alp
 aloof
 Starts, as feeling God’s finger anew,
 And all those cold white marble
 fires
 Of mounting saints on the Duomo
 spires
 Flicker against the Blue.
 ‘ Emperor
 Evermore.’

xii.

Ay, it is He,
 Who rides at the King’s right hand !
 Leave room for his horse and draw
 to the side,
 Nor press too near in the ecstasy
 Of a newly delivered impassioned
 land.

He is moved, you see,
 He who has done it all.
 They call it a cold stern face ;

But this is Italy
 Who rises up to her place !—
 For this he fought in his youth,
 Of this he dreamed in the past ;
 The lines of the resolute mouth
 Tremble a little at last.
 Cry, he has done it all !

‘ Emperor
 Evermore.’

xiii.

It is not strange that he did it,
 Though the deed may seem to strain
 To the wonderful, unpermitted,

For such as lead and reign.
 But he is strange, this man :
 The people's instinct found him
 (A wind in the dark that ran
 Through a chink where was no
 door),
 And elected him and crowned him
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XIV.

Autocrat ! let them scoff,
 Who fail to comprehend
 That a ruler incarnate of
 The people must transcend
 All common king-born kings.
 These subterranean springs
 A sudden outlet winning,
 Have special virtues to spend.
 The people's blood through him,
 Dilates from head to foot,
 Creates him absolute,
 And from this great beginning
 Evokes a greater end
 To justify and renew him—
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XV.

What ! did any maintain
 That God or the people (think !)
 Could make a marvel in vain ?—
 Out of the water-jar there,
 Draw wine that none could drink ?
 Is this a man like the rest,
 This miracle made unaware
 By a rapture of popular air,
 And caught to the place that was
 best ? [cheat
 You think he could barter and
 As vulgar diplomats use,
 With the people's heart in his
 breast ?
 Prate a lie into shape
 Lest truth should cumber the road ;
 Play at the fast and loose
 Till the world is strangled with
 tape ;
 Maim the soul's complete

To fit the hole of a toad ;
 And filch the dogman's meat
 To feed the offspring of God ?

XVI.

Nay, but he, this wonder,
 He cannot palter nor prate,
 Though many around him and
 under,
 With intellects trained to the curve,
 Distrust him in spirit and nerve
 Because his meaning is straight.
 Measure him ere he depart [led ;
 With those who have governed and
 Larger so much by the heart,
 Larger so much by the head.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XVII.

He holds that, consenting or dis-
 sident, [time ;
 Nations must move with the
 Assumes that crime with a prece-
 dent
 Doubles the guilt of the crime :
 —Denies that a slaver's bond
 Or a treaty signed by knaves,
 (*Quorum magna pars* and beyond
 Was one of an honest name)
 Gives an inexpugnable claim
 To abolishing men into slaves.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XVIII.

He will not swagger nor boast
 Of his country's meeds, in a tone
 Missuiting a great man most
 If such should speak of his own :
 Nor will he act, on her side,
 From motives baser, indeed,
 Than a man of a noble pride
 Can avow for himself at need ;
 Never, for lucre or laurels,
 Or custom, though such should
 be rife,
 Adapting the smaller morals
 To measure the larger life.

He, though the merchants persuade,
 And the soldiers are eager for
 strife,
 Finds not his country in quarrels
 Only to find her in trade,—
 While still he accords her such
 honour
 As never to flinch for her sake
 Where men put service upon her,
 Found heavy to undertake
 And scarcely like to be paid :
 Believing a nation may act
 Unselfishly—shiver a lance
 (As the least of her sons may, in
 fact)
 And not for a cause of finance.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

XIX.

Great is he
 Who uses his greatness for all.
 His name shall stand perpetually
 As a name to applaud and cherish,
 Not only within the civic wall
 For the loyal, but also without
 For the generous and free.
 Just is he,
 Who is just for the popular due
 As well as the private debt.
 The praise of nations ready to perish
 Fall on him,—crown him in view
 Of tyrants caught in the net,
 And statesmen dizzy with fear and
 doubt !
 And though, because they are many,
 And he is merely one,
 And nations selfish and cruel
 Heap up the inquisitor's fuel
 To kill the body of high intents,
 And burn great deeds from their
 place,
 Till this, the greatest of any,
 May seem imperfectly done ;
 Courage, whoever circumvents !
 Courage, courage, whoever is base !
 The soul of a high intent, be it
 known,

Can die no more than any sour
 Which God keeps by him under the
 throne ;
 And this, at whatever interim,
 Shall live, and be consummated
 In the being of deeds made whole,
 Courage, courage ! happy is he,
 Of whom (himself among the dead
 And silent,) this word shall be said ;
 —That he might have had the
 world with him, [men,
 But chose to side with suffering
 And had the world against him
 when
 He came to deliver Italy.
 Emperor
 Evermore.

THE DANCE.

I.

YOU remember down at Florence
 our Cascine,
 Where the people on the feast-
 days walk and drive,
 And through the trees, long-drawn
 in many a green way,
 O'er roofing hum and murmur
 like a hive, [alive ?
 The rivers and mountains look

II.

You remember the piazzone there,
 the stand-place
 Of carriages a-brim with Florence
 Beauties, [band plays,
 Who lean and melt to music as the
 Or smile and chat with some one
 who afoot is,
 Or on horseback, in observance
 of male duties ?

III.

'Tis so pretty, in the afternoons of
 summer,
 So many gracious faces brought
 together !
 Call it rout, or call it concert, they
 have come here,

In the floating of the fan and of
the feather,
To reciprocate with beauty the
fine weather.

IV.

While the flower-girls offer nose-
gays (because *they* too
Go with other sweets) at every
carriage door ;
Here, by shake of a white finger,
signed away to
Some next buyer, who sits buying
score on score,
Piling roses upon roses evermore.

V.

And last season, when the French
camp had its station
In the meadow-ground, things
quicken'd and grew gayer
Through the mingling of the libera-
ting nation
With this people; groups of
Frenchmen everywhere,
Strolling, gazing, judging lightly,
. . . 'who was fair.'

VI.

Then the noblest lady present took
upon her
To speak nobly from her carriage
for the rest ;
'Pray these officers from France to
do us honour
By dancing with us straightway.'
—The request
Was gravely apprehended as ad-
dressed.

VII.

And the men of France, bareheaded,
bowing lowly, [the space
Led out each a proud signora to
Which the startled crowd had
rounded for them—slowly,
Just a touch of still emotion in
his face,
Not presuming, through the sym-
bol, on the grace.

VIII.

There was silence in the people :
some lips trembled,
But none jested. Broke the mu-
sic at a glance :
And the daughters of our princes,
thus assembled,
Stepped the measure with the
gallant sons of France.
Hush ! it might have been a Mass
and not a dance.

IX.

And they danced there till the blue
that overskied us
Swooned with passion, though
the footing seemed sedate ;
And the mountains, heaving mighty
hearts beside us,
Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to
dilate,
And touched the holy stone
where Dante sate.

X.

Then the sons of France, bare
headed, lowly bowing,
Led the ladies back where kins-
men of the south
Stood, received them ;—till, with
burst of overflowing
Feeling . . . husbands, brothers,
Florence's male youth,
Turned, and kissed the martial
strangers mouth to mouth.

XI.

And a cry went up, a cry from all
that people !
—You have heard a people cheer-
ing you suppose,
For the Member, mayor . . . with
chorus from the steeple ?
This was different : scarce a
loud perhaps, (who knows ?)
For we saw wet eyes around us
ere the close.

XII.

And we felt as if a nation, too long
borne in
By hard wrongers, comprehend-
ing in such attitude
That God had spoken somewhere
since the morning,
That men were somehow broth-
ers, by no platitude.
Cried exultant in great wonder
and free gratitude.

A TALE OF VILLA FRANCA.
TOLD IN TUSCANY.

I.

MY little son, my Florentine,
Sit down beside my knee,
And I will tell you why the sign
Of joy which flushed our Italy,
Has faded since but yesternight ;
And why your Florence of delight
Is mourning as you see.

II.

A great man (who was crowned one
day)
Imagined a great Deed :
He shaped it out of cloud and clay,
He touched it finely till the seed
Possessed the flower : from heart
and brain
He fed it with large thoughts hu-
mane,
To help a people's need.

III.

He brought it out into the sun—
They blessed it to his face :
O great pure Deed, that hast undone
So many bad and base !
O generous Deed, heroic Deed,
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,
Deliver by God's grace.'

IV.

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north
and south,
Rose up in wrath and fear,

And cried protesting by one mouth,
'What monster have we here ?
A great Deed at this hour of day ?
A great just Deed—and not for
pay ?
Absurd,—or insincere.

v.

'And if sincere, the heavier blow
In that case we shall bear,
For where's our blessed "status
quo,"
Our holy treaties, where,—
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,
Protect and pillage, occupy,
And civilize despair ?'

VI.

Some muttered that the great Deed
meant
A great pretext to sin ;
And others, the pretext, so lent,
Was heinous (to begin).
Volcanic terms of 'great' and
'just ?' [crust
Admit such tongues of flame, the
Of time and law falls in.

VII.

A great Deed in this world of ours ?
Unheard of the pretence is :
It threatens plainly the great pow-
ers :
Is fatal in all senses.
A just deed in the world ?—call out
The rifles ! be not slack about
The national defences.

VIII.

And many murmured, 'From this
source
What red blood must be poured !'
And some rejoined, "'Tis even
worse ;
What red tape is ignored !'
All cursed the Doer for an evil
Called here, enlarging on the
Devil,—
There, monkeying the Lord !

IX.

Some said, it could not be explained,
Some, could not be excused ;
And others, ' Leave it unrestrained,
Gehenna's self is loosed,'
And all cried, ' Crush it, maim it,
gag it !' [ged,
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it rag-
Truncated and traduced !'

X.

But HE stood sad before the sun,
(The peoples felt their fate).
' The world is many,—I am one ;
My great Deed was too great.
God's fruit of justice ripens slow :
Men's souls are narrow ; let them
grow.
My brothers, we must wait.'

XI.

The tale is ended, child of mine,
Turned graver at my knee.
They say your eyes, my Florentine,
Are English : it may be :
And yet I've marked as blue a pair
Following the doves across the
square
At Venice by the sea.

XII.

Ah, child ! ah, child ! I cannot say
A word more. You conceive
The reason now, why just to-day
We see our Florence grieve.
Ah, child, look up into the sky !
In this low world, where great Deeds
die,
What matter if we live ?

AN AUGUST VOICE.

' Una voce augusta.'—MONITORE TOSCANO.

I.

YOU'LL take back your Grand
Duke ?
I made the treaty upon it.
Just venture a quiet duke,
Dall' Ongaro write him a sonnet ;

Ricasoli gently explain
Some need of the constitution ;
He'll swear to it over again,
Providing an ' easy solution.'
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

II.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
I promised the Emperor Francis
To argue the case by his book,
And ask you to meet his advances.
The ducal cause, we know,
(Whether you or he be the wrong-
er)
Has very strong points ;—although
Your bayonets there have strong-
er.
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

III.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
He is not pure altogether.
For instance, the oath which he
took [er)
(In the Forty-eight rough weath-
He'd ' nail your flag to his mast,'
Then softly scuttled the boat you
Hoped to escape in at last,
And both by a ' Proprio motu.'
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

IV.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
The scheme meets nothing to
shock it
In this smart letter, look,
We found in Radetsky's pocket ;
Where his Highness in sprightly
style [wrote,
Of the flower of his Tuscans
' These heads be the hottest in file ;
Pray shoot them the quickest.'
Quote,
And call back the Grand Duke.

V.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?
There *are* some things to object
to.

He cheated, betrayed, and forsook,
Then called in the foe to protect
you,

He taxed you for wines and for
meats

Throughout that eight years' pas-
time

Of Austria's drum in your streets—
Of course you remember the last
time

You called back your Grand Duke.

VI.

You'll take back the Grand Duke ?

It is not race he is poor in,
Although he never could brook

The patriot cousin at Turin.

His love of kin you discern,

By his hate of your flag and me—
So decidedly apt to turn

All colors at sight of the Three.*
You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VII.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

'Twas weak that he fled from the
Pitti.

But consider how little he shook

At thought of bombarding your
city !

And, balancing that with this,

The Christian rule is plain for us :

. . Or the Holy Father's Swiss

Have shot his Perugians in vain
for us.

You'll call back the Grand Duke.

VIII.

Pray take back your Grand Duke.

—I, too, have suffered persuasion.

All Europe, raven and rook,

Screeched at me armed for your
nation.

Your cause in any heart struck
spurs :

I swept such warnings aside for
you.

My very child's eyes, and Hers,
Grew like my brother's who died
for you.

You'll call back the Grand Duke ?

IX.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

My French fought nobly with
reason—

Left many a Lombardy nook

Red as with wine out of season.

Little we grudged what was done
there,

Paid freely your ransom of blood,

Our heroes stark in the sun there,

We would not recall if we could.

You'll call back the Grand Duke ?

X.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

His son rode fast as he got off

That day on the enemy's hook,

When *I* had an epaulette shot
off.

Though splashed (as I saw him
afar, no,

Near) by those ghastly rains,

The mark, when you've washed
him in Arno,

Will scarcely be larger than
Cain's.

You'll call back the Grand Duke ?

XI.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

'Twill be so simple, quite beauti-
ful :

The shepherd recovers his crook,

. . If you should be sheep and
dutiful.

I spoke a word worth chalking

On Milan's wall—but stay,

Here's Poniatowsky talking,—

You'll listen to *him* to-day,

And call back the Grand Duke.

XII.

You'll take back your Grand Duke ?

Observe, there's no one to force
it,—

* The Italian tricolor: red, green, and white.

Unless the Madonna, St. Luke
Drew for you, choose to endorse
it.

I charge you by St. Martino
And prodigies quickened by
wrong,
Remember your dead on Ticino;
Be worthy, be constant, be strong.
—Bah!—call back the Grand
Duke!!

CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

ὡς βασιλει, ὡς θεῷ, ὡς νεκρῷ.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

I.

THE Pope on Christmas day
Sits in St. Peter's Chair;
But the people murmur, and say,
'Our souls are sick and forlorn,
And who will show us where
Is the stable where Christ was
born?'

II.

The star is lost in the dark?
The manger is lost in the straw;
The Christ cries faintly. . . hark!
Through bands that swaddle and
strangle—
But the Pope in the chair of awe
Looks down the great quad-
rangle.

III.

The magi kneel at his foot,
Kings of the east and west,
But instead of the angels, (mute
Is the 'Peace on earth' of their
song)
The peoples, perplexed and opprest,
Are sighing, 'How long, how
long?'

IV.

And, instead of the king, bewilder
in
Shadow of aisle and dome,
The bear who tore up the children,
The fox who burnt up the corn,

And the wolf who suckled at Rome
Brothers to slay and to scorn.

V.

Cardinals left and right of him,
Worshippers round and beneath,
The silver trumpets at sight of him
Thrill with a musical blast:
But the people say through their
teeth, [Last!'
'Trumpets? we wait for the

VI.

He sits in the place of the Lord,
And asks for the gifts of the
time?

Gold, for the haft of a sword,
'To win back Romagna averse,
Incense, to sweeten a crime,
And myrrh, to embitter a curse.

VII.

Then a king of the west said,
'Good!—

I bring thee the gifts of the time;
Red, for the patriot's blood,
Green, for the martyr's crown,
White, for the dew and the rime,
When the morning of God
comes down.'

VIII.

—O mystic tricolor bright!
The Pope's heart quailed like a
man's,

The cardinals froze at the sight,
Bowing their tonsures hoary;
And the eyes of the peacock-fans
Winked at the alien glory.

IX.

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,
'Now blessed be he who has
brought

These gifts of the time to the Pope,
When our souls were sick and
forlorn,

—And *here* is the star we sought,
To show us where Christ was
born!'

ITALY AND THE WORLD.

I.

FLORENCE, Bologna, Parma, Modena, [ago,
When you named them a year
So many graves reserved by God,
in a
Day of judgment, you seemed
to know,
To open and let out the resurrection.

II.

And meantime (you made your reflection
If you were English) was naught
to be done
But sorting sables, in predilection
For all those martyrs dead and
gone,
Till the new earth and heaven
made ready.

III.

And if your politics were not heady,
Violent, . . . 'Good,' you added,
'good
In all things! mourn on sure and
steady.
Churchyard thistles are wholesome
food
For our European wandering asses.

IV.

'The date of the resurrection
passes
Human foreknowledge : men un-
born
Will gain by it, (even in the
lower classes),
But none of these. It is not the
morn
Because the cock of France is crow-
ing.

V.

'Cocks crow at midnight, seldom
knowing [mad
Starlight from dawn-light : 'tis a

Poor creature.' Here you pause
by growing
Scornful, . . . suddenly, let us add,
The trumpet sounded, the graves
were open.

VI.

Life and life and life ! agropo in
The dusk of death, warm hands,
stretched out
For swords, proved more life still
to hope in,
Beyond and behind. Arise with
a shout,
Nation of Italy, slain and buried !

VII.

Hill to hill and turret to turret
Flashing the tricolor—newly
created
Beautiful Italy, calm, unhurried,
Rise heroic and renovated,
Rise to the final restitution.

VIII.

Rise ; prefigure the grand solution
Of earth's municipal, insular
schisms— [clusion
Statesmen draping self-love's con-
In cheap, vernacular patriotisms,
Unable to give up Judæa for Jesus.

IX.

Bring us the higher example ; re-
lease us
Into the larger coming time :
And into Christ's broad garment
piece us
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

X.

No more Jew or Greek then—
taunting
Nor taunted ; no more England
nor France !
But one confederate brotherhood,
planting [vance,
One flag only, to mark the ad-
Onward and upward, of all human-
ity.

XI.

For fully developed Christianity
 Is civilization perfected.
 'Measure the frontier,' shall be
 said, [vanity?
 'Count the ships,' in national
 —Count the nation's heart-beats
 sooner.

XII.

For, though behind a cannon or
 schooner,
 That nation still is predominant
 Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal
 to oppugn or
 Succour another, in wrong or
 want,
 Passing the frontier in love and
 abhorrence.

XIII.

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Flor-
 ence,
 Open us out the wider way!
 Dwarf in that chapel of old St.
 Lawrence
 Your Michael Angelo's giant
 Day,
 With the grandeur of this Day
 breaking o'er us!

XIV.

Ye who restrained as an ancient
 chorus,
 Mute while the coryphæus spake,
 Hush your separate voices before
 us, [sake
 Link your separate lives for the
 Of one sole Italy's living forever!

XV.

Givers of coat and cloak too,—
 never
 Grudging that purple of yours at
 the best,—
 By your heroic will and endeavour
 Each sublimely dispossessed,
 That all may inherit what each
 surrenders!

XVI.

Earth shall bless you, O noble
 emenders
 On egotist nations! Ye shall
 lead
 The plough of the world, and sow
 new splendours
 Into the furrow of things, for
 seed,—
 Ever the richer for what ye have
 given.

XVII.

Lead us and teach us, till earth
 and heaven
 Grow larger around us and
 higher above.
 Our sacrament-bread has a bitter
 leaven;
 We bait our traps with the name
 of love,
 Till hate itself has a kinder mean-
 ing.

XVIII.

Oh, this world: this cheating and
 screening
 Of cheats! this conscience for
 candlewicks, [ing
 Not beacon-fires! this over-ween-
 Of under-hand diplomatic tricks,
 Dared for the country while scorn-
 ed for the counter!

XIX.

Oh, this envy of those who mount
 here,
 And oh, this malice to make
 them trip
 Rather quenching the fire there
 drying the fount here,
 To frozen body and thirsty lip,
 Than leave to a neighbor their
 ministration.

XX.

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,
 Viewing my England o'er Alp
 and sea.

I loved her more in her ancient
fashion :
She carries her rifles too thick
for me,
Who spares them so in the cause
of a brother.

XXI.

Suspicion, panic? end this pother,
The sword, kept sheathless at
peacetime, rusts.
None fears for himself while he
feels for another :
The brave man either fights or
trusts,
And wears no male in his private
chamber.

XXII.

Beautiful Italy ! golden amber
Warm with the kisses of lover
and traitor !
Thou who hast drawn us on to re-
member,
Draw us to hope now : let us be
greater
By this new future than that old
story,

XXIII.

Till truer glory replaces all glory,
As the torch grows blind at the
dawn of day ;
And the nations rising up, their
sorry
And foolish sins shall put away,
As children their toys when the
teacher enters.

XXIV.

Till Love's one centre devour these
centres
Of many self-loves ; and the pa-
triot's trick
To better his land by egotist ven-
tures,
Defamed from a virtue, shall
make men sick,
As the scalp at the belt of some
red hero.

XXV.

For certain virtues have dropped
to zero
Left by the sun on the mount-
ain's dewy side ;
Churchman's charities, tender as
Nero,
Indian suttee, heathen suicide,
Service to rights divine, proved
hollow :

XXVI.

And Heptarchy patriotism must
follow,
—National voices, distinct yet
dependent,
Enspiring each other, as swallow
does swallow,
With circles still widening and
ever ascendant,
In multiform life to united pro-
gression,—

XXVII.

These shall remain. And when,
in the session
Of nations, the separate language
is heard,
Each shall aspire, in sublime indis-
cretion,
To help with a thought or exalt
with a word
Less her own than her rival's
honour.

XXVIII.

Each Christian nation shall take
upon her
The law of the Christian man in
vast :
The crown of the getter shall fall
to the donor,
And last shall be first while first
shall be last,
And to love best shall still be, to
reign unsurpassed.

A CURSE FOR A NATION.

PROLOGUE.

I HEARD an angel speak last night,
And he said, 'Write!
Write a nation's curse for me,
And send it over the Western Sea.

I faltered, taking up the word :
'Not so, my lord!
If curses must be, choose another
To send thy curse against my
brother.

'For I am bound by gratitude,
By love and blood,
To brothers of mine across the sea,
Who stretch out kindly hands to
me.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt
thou write
My curse to-night.
From the summits of love a curse
is driven,
As lightning is from the tops of
heaven.

'Not so,' I answered. 'Evermore
My heart is sore [feet
For my own land's sins; for little
Of children bleeding along the
street :

'For parked-up honours that gain-
say
The right of way : [is
For almsgiving through a door that
Not open enough for two friends
to kiss :

'For love of freedom which abates
Beyond the Straits :
For patriot virtue starved to vice on
Self-praise, self-interest, and sus-
picion :

'For an oligarchic parliament,
And bribes well-meant.
What curse to another land assign,
When heavy-souled for the sins of
mine ?'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt
thou write

My curse to-night.
Because thou hast strength to see
and hate
A foul thing done *within* thy gate.'

'Not so,' I answered once again.
'To curse, choose men.
For I, a woman, have only known
How the heart melts and the tears
run down.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt
thou write
My curse to-night.
Some women weep and curse, I say
(And no one marvels,) night and
day,

'And thou shalt take their part to-
night,
Weep and write.
A curse from the depths of woman-
hood
Is very salt, and bitter, and good.'

So thus I wrote and mourned in-
deed,
What all may read.
And thus, as was enjoined on me,
I send it over the Western Sea.

THE CURSE.

I.

BECAUSE ye have broken your own
chain
With the strain
Of brave men climbing a nation's
height,
Yet thence bear down with brand
and thong
On souls of others,—for this wrong
This is the curse. Write.

Because yourselves are standing
straight
In the state
Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,
Yet keep calm footing all the time

On writhing bond-slaves,—for this
crime

This is the curse. Write.

Because ye prosper in God's name,
With a claim

To honour in the old world's sight,
Yet do the fiend's work perfectly

In strangling martyrs,—for this lie
This is the curse. Write.

II.

Ye shall watch while kings conspire
Round the people's smouldering
fire,

And, warm for your part,
Shall never dare—O shame!

To utter the thought into flame
Which burns at your heart.

This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while nations strive
With the bloodhounds, die or sur-
vive,

Drop faint from their jaws,
Or throttle them backward to death,
And only under your breath
Shall favor the cause.

This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while strong men
draw

The nets of feudal law

To strangle the weak,

And, counting the sin for a sin,
Your soul shall be sadder within

Than the word ye shall speak.

This is the curse. Write.

When good men are praying erect
That Christ may avenge his elect
And deliver the earth,

The prayer in your ears, said low,
Shall sound like the tramp of a foe
That's driving you forth.

This is the curse. Write.

When wise men give you their
praise,

They shall pause in the heat of the
phrase,

As if carried too far.

When ye boast your own charters
kept true, [ye do

Ye shall blush ;—for the thing which
Derides what ye are.

This is the curse. Write.

When fools casts taunts at your
gate,

Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate
As ye look o'er the wall.

For your conscience, tradition, and
name

Explode with a deadlier blame
Than the worst of them all.

This is the curse. Write.

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be
done

Go, plant your flag in the sun
Beside the ill-doers!

And recoil from clenching the
curse

Of God's witnessing Universe
With a curse of yours.

THIS is the curse. Write.

A COURT LADY.

I.

HER hair was tawny with gold, her eyes with purple were dark,
Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a red and restless spark.

II.

Never was Lady of Milan nobler in name and in race ;
Never was lady of Italy fairer to see in the face.

III.

Never was lady on earth more true as woman and wife,
Larger in judgment and instinct, prouder in manners and life.

IV.

She stood in the early morning, and said to her maidens, ' Bring
That silken robe made ready to wear at the court of the king.

V.

' Bring me the clasps of diamond, lucid, clear of the mote,
Clasp me the large at the waist, and clasp me the small at the throat.

VI.

Diamonds to fasten the hair, and diamonds to fasten the sleeves,
Laces to drop from their rays, like a powder of snow from the eaves.

VII.

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight, which gathered her up in a flame.
While, straight in her open carriage, she to the hospital came.

VIII.

In she went at the door, and gazing from end to end,
' Many and low are the pallets, but each is the place of a friend.'

IX.

Up she passed through the wards, and stood at a young man's bed :
Bloody the band on his brow, and livid the droop of his head.

X.

' Art thou a Lombard, my brother ? Happy art thou,' she cried,
And smiled like Italy on him : he dreamed in her face and died.

XI.

Pale with his passing soul, she went on still to a second ;
He was a grave hard man, whose years by dungeons were reckoned.

XII.

Wounds in his body were sore, wounds in his life were sorer,
' Art thou a Romagnole ?' Her eyes drove the lightnings before her

XIII.

Austrian and priest had joined to double and tighten the cord
Able to bind thee, O strong one—free by the stroke of a sword.

XIV.

' Now be grave for the rest of us, using the life overcast
To ripen our wine of the present, (too new,) in glooms of the past.'

XV.

Down she stepped to a pallet where lay a face like a girl's
Young and pathetic with dying—a deep black hole in the curls.

XVI.

'Art thou from Tuscany, brother? and seest thou, dreaming in pain,
Thy mother stand in the piazza, searching the list of the slain?'

XVII.

Kind as a mother herself, she touched his cheeks with her hands;
'Blessed is she who has borne thee, although she should weep as she
stands.'

XVIII.

On she passed to a Frenchman, his arm carried off by a ball:
Kneeling . . . 'O more than my brother! how shall I thank thee for all?'

XIX.

'Each of the heroes around us has fought for his land and line,
But *thou* hast fought for a stranger, in hate of a wrong not thine.

XX.

'Happy are all free peoples, too strong to be dispossessed,
But blessed are those among nations, who dare to be strong for the rest!'

XXI.

Ever she passed on her way, and came to a couch where pined
One with a face from Venetia, white with a hope out of mind.

XXII.

Long she stood and gazed, and twice she tried at the name,
But two great crystal tears were all that faltered and came.

XXIII.

Only a tear for Venice?—she turned as in passion and loss,
And stooped to his forehead and kissed it, as if she were kissing the
cross.

XXIV.

Faint with that strain of heart she moved on then to another,
Stern and strong in his death. 'And dost thou suffer, my brother?'

XXV.

Holding his hands in hers:—'Out of the Piedmont lion
Cometh the sweetness of freedom! sweetest to live on or to die on.'

XXVI.

Holding his cold rough hands—'Well, oh well have ye done
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would not be noble alone.'

XXVII.

Back he fell while she spoke. She rose to her feet with a spring—
 'That was Piedmontese! and this is the Court of the King.'

CONFESSIONS.

I.

FACE to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her!
 God and she and I only, . . . there, I sate down to draw her
 Soul through the clefts of confession. . . . Speak, I am holding thee fast,
 As the angels of resurrection shall do at the last.

'My cup is blood-red
 With my sin,' she said,

'And I pour it out to 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 organized 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-winds, a little searching and chill,
 To quicken thy flame . . . didst thou kindle and flash to the heights of
 His will?

'I have sinned,' she said,

'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 changing, . . . thy fel-
 low of men ?

‘ I have *loved*,’ she said.
 (Words bowing her head
 As the wind the wet acacia-tree !)
 ‘ 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,
 ‘ Enquire 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 was 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 approach 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 deal with me sinning, but only indeed the same

And no gentler than these.'

AURORA LEIGH.

FIRST BOOK.

OF writing many books there is no
end;

And I have written much in prose
and verse

For others' uses, will write now for
mine,— [self,

Will write my story for my better
As when you paint your portrait for
a friend,

Who keeps it in a drawer and looks
at it

Long after he has ceased to love
you, just

To hold together what he was and is.

I, writing thus, am still what men
call young;

I have not so far left the coasts of
life

To travel inland, that I cannot hear
That murmur of the outer Infinite
Which unweaned babies smile at in
their sleep

When wondered at for smiling;
not so far,

But still I catch my mother at her
post [up,

Beside the nursery-door, with finger
'Hush, hush—here's too much
noise!' while her sweet eyes

Leap forward, taking part against
her word [feel

In the child's riot. Still I sit and
My father's slow hand, when she
had left us both,

Stroke out my childish curls across
his knee;

And hear Assunta's daily jest (she
knew

* Wordsworth's Distinctions.

He liked it better than a better jest)
 Inquire how many golden scudi
 went
 To make such ringlets. O my
 father's hand,
 Stroke heavily, heavily the poor
 hair down,
 Draw, press the child's head closer
 to thy knee!
 I'm still too young, too young, to
 sit alone.

I write. My mother was a Floren-
 tine,
 Whose rare blue eyes were shut
 from seeing me
 When scarcely I was four years
 old; my life [failing lamp
 A poor spark snatched up from a
 Which went out therefore. She
 was weak and frail;
 She could not bear the joy of giv-
 ing life—
 The mother's rapture slew her. If
 her kiss
 Had left a longer weight upon my
 lips,
 It might have steadied the uneasy
 breath,
 And reconciled and fraternised my
 soul [indeed,
 With the new order. As it was,
 I felt a mother-want about the
 world,
 And still went seeking, like a bleat-
 ing lamb
 Left out at night in shutting up the
 fold,—
 As restless as a nest-deserted bird
 Grown chill through something be-
 ing away, though what
 It knows not. I, Aurora Leigh, was
 born
 To make my father sadder, and
 myself [know
 Not overjoyous, truly. Women
 The way to rear up children, (to be
 just.)

They know a simple, merry, tender
 knack
 Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,
 And stringing pretty words that
 make no sense,
 And kissing full sense into empty
 words;
 Which things are corals to cut life
 upon,
 Although such trifles; children
 learn by such,
 Love's holy earnest in a pretty play,
 And get not over-early solemnised,
 But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's
 Divine,
 Which burns and hurts not,—not a
 single bloom,—
 Become aware and unafraid of
 Love.
 Such good do mothers. Fathers
 love as well
 —Mine did, I know,—but still with
 heavier brains,
 And wills more consciously respon-
 sible,
 And not as wisely, since less fool-
 ishly;
 So mothers have God's license to
 be missed.
 My father was an austere English-
 man,
 Who, after a dry life-time spent at
 home
 In college-learning, law, and parish
 talk,
 Was flooded with a passion un-
 aware,
 His whole provisioned and compla-
 cent past
 Drowned out from him that mo-
 ment. As he stood
 In Florence, where he had come to
 spend a month
 And note the secret of Da Vinci's
 drains,
 He musing somewhat absently
 perhaps

The
 fact
 sep

<p>Some English question . . whether men should pay The unpopular but necessary tax With left or right hand—in the alien sun In that great square of the Santis- sima, There drifted past him (scarcely marked enough To move his comfortable island- scorn,) A train of priestly banners, cross and psalm, The white-veiled rose-crowned maidens holding up Tall tapers, weighty for such wrists, aslant [air, To the blue luminous tremor of the And letting drop the white wax as they went To eat the bishop's wafer at the church ; From which long trail of chanting priests and girls A face flashed like a cymbal on his face, And shook with silent clangour brain and heart, Transfiguring him to music. Thus, even thus, He too received his sacramental gift With eucharistic meanings ; for he loved.</p> <p>And thus beloved, she died. I've heard it said That but to see him in the first surprise Of widower and father, nursing me, Unmothered little child of four years old, His large man's hands afraid to touch my curls, As if the gold would tarnish,—his grave lips Contriving such a miserable smile, As if he knew needs must, or I should die,</p>	<p>And yet 'twas hard,—would almost make the stones Cry out for pity. There's a verse he set In Santa Croce to her memory, ' Weep for an infant too young to weep much When death removed this mother ' —stops the mirth To-day on women's faces when they walk With rosy children hanging on their gowns, Under the cloister to escape the sun That scorches in the piazza. After which He left our Florence and made haste to hide Himself, his prattling child, and silent grief, Among the mountains above Pelago ; Because unmothered babes, he thought, had need Of mother nature more than others use, And Pan's white goats, with udders warm and full Of mystic contemplations, come to feed Poor milkless lips of orphans like his own--- Such scholar-scrap he talked, I've heard from friends, For even prosaic men, who wear grief long, Will get to wear it as a hat aside With a flower stuck in't. Father then, and child, We lived among the mountains many years, God's silence on the outside of the house, And we, who did not speak too loud within : [fire, And old Assunta to make up the Crossing herself when'er a sudden flame</p>
---	--

Which lightened from the firewood,
 made alive
 That picture of my mother on the
 wall. [dead ;
 The painter drew it after she was
 And when the face was finished,
 throat and hands,
 Her cameriera carried him, in hate
 Of the English-fashioned shroud,
 the last brocade
 She dressed in at the Pitti. 'He
 should paint
 No sadder thing than that,' she
 swore, 'to wrong
 Her poor signora.' Therefore very
 strange
 The effect was. I, a little child,
 would crouch
 For hours upon the floor with knees
 drawn up,
 And gaze across them, half in ter-
 ror, half
 In adoration, at the picture there,—
 That swan-like supernatural white
 life,
 just sailing upward from the red
 stiff silk
 Which seemed to have no part in it,
 nor power
 To keep it from quite breaking out
 of bounds
 For hours I sate and stared. As-
 sunta's awe [eyes
 And my poor father's melancholy
 Still pointed that way. That way,
 went my thoughts
 When wandering beyond sight.
 And as I grew
 tr years, I mixed, confused, uncon-
 sciously, [dreamed
 Whatever I last read or heard or
 Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,
 Pathetical or ghastly, or grotesque,
 With still that face . . . which did
 not therefore change, [forms
 But kept the mystic level of all
 And fears and admirations, was by
 turns

Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch,
 and sprite,
 A dauntless Muse who eyes a dread-
 ful Fate, [Love,
 A loving Psyche who loses sight of
 A still Medusa, with mild milky
 brows
 All curdled and all clothed upon
 with snakes
 Whose slime falls fast as sweat will ;
 or, anon,
 Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed
 with swords
 Where the babe sucked ; or, Lamia
 in her first
 Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk
 and blinked,
 And, shuddering, wriggled down to
 the unclean ;
 Or, my own mother, leaving her
 last smile [mouth
 In her last kiss, upon the baby-
 My father pushed down on the bed
 for that,—
 Or my dead mother, without smile
 or kiss,
 Buried at Florence. All which im-
 ages,
 Concentred on the picture, glassed
 themselves [as
 Before my meditative childhood, . .
 The incoherencies of change and
 death
 Are represented fully, mixed and
 merged,
 In the smooth fair mystery of per-
 petual Life.

And while I stared away my child-
 ish wits
 Upon my mother's picture, (ah,
 poor child,)
 My father, who through love had
 suddenly
 Thrown off the old conventions,
 broken loose
 From chin-bands of the soul, like
 Lazarus,

Yet had no time to learn to talk and
 walk
 Or grow anew familiar with the
 sun,—
 Who had reached to freedom, not
 to action, lived,
 But lived as one entranced, with
 thoughts, not aims,—
 Whom love had unmade from a
 common man
 But not completed to an uncommon
 man,—
 My father taught me what he had
 learnt the best
 Before he died and left me,—grief
 and love.
 And, seeing we had books among
 the hills,
 Strong words of counselling souls
 confederate
 With vocal pines and waters,—out
 of books [men,
 He taught me all the ignorance of
 And how God laughs in heaven
 when any man
 Says 'Here I'm learned; this, I un-
 derstand;
 In that, I am never caught at fault
 or doubt.'
 He sent the schools to school, de-
 monstrating
 A fool will pass for such through
 one mistake, [such
 While a philosopher will pass for
 Through said mistakes being ven-
 tured in the gross
 And heaped up to a system.
 I am like,
 They tell me, my dear father.
 Broader brows
 Howbeit, upon a slenderer under-
 growth
 Of delicate features,—paler, near as
 grave;
 But then my mother's smile breaks
 up the whole,
 And makes it better sometimes
 than itself.

So, nine full years, our days were
 hid with God
 Among his mountains. I was just
 thirteen,
 Still growing like the plants from
 unseen roots
 In tongue-tied Springs,—and sud-
 denly awoke [onies,
 To full life and life's needs and ag-
 With an intense, strong, struggling
 heart beside
 A stone-dead father. Life, struck
 sharp on death,
 Makes awful lightning. His last
 word was, 'Love—'
 'Love, my child, love, love!'—(then
 he had done with grief)
 'Love, my child.' Ere I answered
 he was gone,
 And none was left to love in all the
 world.
 There, ended childhood: what suc-
 ceeded next
 I recollect as, after fevers, men
 Thread back the passage of delirium,
 Missing the turn still, baffled by the
 door;
 Smooth endless days, notched here
 and there with knives;
 A weary, wormy darkness, spurred
 the flank
 With flame, that it should eat and
 end itself
 Like some tormented scorpion.
 Then, at last, [came
 I do remember clearly, how there
 A stranger with authority, not right,
 (I thought not) who commanded,
 caught me up
 From old Assunta's neck; how,
 with a shriek, [too full
 She let me go,—while I, with ears
 Of my father's silence, to shriek
 back a word,
 In all a child's astonishment at grief
 Stared at the wharf-edge where she
 stood and moaned,

My poor Assunta, where she stood
 and moaned! [Italy,
 The white walls, the blue hills, my
 Drawn backward from the shud-
 dering steamer-deck,
 Like one in anger drawing back her
 skirts
 Which suppliants catch at. Then
 the bitter sea
 Inexorably pushed between us both,
 And sweeping up the ship with my
 despair
 Threw us out as a pasture to the
 stars.

Ten nights and days we voyaged
 on the deep;
 Ten nights and days without the
 common face [sun
 Of any day or night; the moon and
 Cut off from the green reconciling
 earth,
 To starve into a blind ferocity
 And glare unnatural; the very sky
 (Dropping its bell-net down upon
 the sea
 As if no human heart should 'scape
 alive,)
 Bedraggled with the desolating salt,
 Until it seemed no more that holy
 heaven
 To which my father went. All
 new, and strange—
 The universe turned stranger, for a
 child.

Then, land!—then, England! oh,
 the frosty cliffs
 Looked cold upon me. Could I
 find a home
 Among those mean red houses
 through the fog?
 And when I heard my father's
 language first [for mine,
 From alien lips which had no kiss
 I wept aloud, then laughed, then
 wept, then wept,
 And some one near me said the
 child was mad

Through much sea-sickness. The
 train swept us on.
 Was this my father's England?
 the great isle?
 The ground seemed cut up from
 the fellowship
 Of verdure, field from field, as man
 from man;
 The skies themselves looked low
 and positive,
 As almost you could touch them
 with a hand,
 And dared to do it, they were so
 far off
 From God's celestial crystals; all
 things blurred
 And dull and vague. Did Shakes-
 peare and his mates
 Absorb the light here?—not a hill
 or stone
 With heart to strike a radiant
 colour up
 Or active outline on the indifferent
 air!

I think I see my father's sister stand
 Upon the hall-step of her country-
 house
 To give me welcome. She stood
 straight and calm,
 Her somewhat narrow forehead
 braided tight
 As if for taming accidental thoughts
 From possible pulses; brown hair
 pricked with gray
 By frigid use of life, (she was not
 old, [year)
 Although my father's elder by a
 A nose drawn sharply, yet in deli-
 cate lines;
 A close mild mouth, a little soured
 about
 The ends, through speaking unre-
 quited loves,
 Or peradventure niggardly half-
 truths;
 Eyes of no color,—once they might
 have smiled,

But never, never have forgot them-
selves
In smiling; cheeks in which was
yet a rose
Of perished summers, like a rose
in a book,
Kept more for ruth than pleasure,
—if past bloom,
Past fading also.

She had lived, we'll say,
A harmless life, she called a virtu-
ous life, [all,
A quiet life, which was not life at
(But that, she had not lived enough
to know)

Between the vicar and the county
squires,

The lord-lieutenant looking down
sometimes [souls

From the empyrean to assure their
Against chance vulgarisms, and, in
the abyss,

The apothecary looked on once a
year, [ity.

To prove their soundness of humil-
The poor-club exercised her Chris-
tian gifts

Of knitting stockings, stitching
petticoats,

Because we are of one flesh after all
And need one flannel, (with a
proper sense

Of difference in the quality)—and
still

The book-club, guarded from your
modern trick

Of shaking dangerous questions
from the crease,

Preserved her intellectual. She
had lived

A sort of cage-bird life, born in a
cage,

Accounting that to leap from perch
to perch [bird.

Was act and joy enough for any
Dear heaven, how silly are the
things that live

In thickets, and eat berries!

I, alas,
A wild bird scarcely fledged, was
brought to her cage,
And she was there to meet me,
Very kind.
Bring the clean water; give out
the fresh seed.

She stood upon the steps to wel-
come me,

Calm, in black garb. I clung about
her neck,—

Young babes, who catch at every
shred of wool

To draw the new light closer, catch
and cling

Less blindly. In my ears, my
father's word

Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in
shells,

'Love, love, my child.' She, black
there with my grief,

Might feel my love—she was his
sister once—

I clung to her. A moment she
seemed moved,

Kissed me with cold lips, suffered
me to cling, [hall into

And drew me feebly through the
The room she sate in.

There, with some strange spasm
Of pain and passion, she wrung
loose my hands

Imperiously, and held me at arm's
length,

And with two gray-steel naked-
bladed eyes

Searched through my face,—ay,
stabbed it through and through,

Through brows and cheeks and
chin; as if to find

A wicked murderer in my innocent
face,

If not here, there perhaps. Then,
drawing breath,

She struggled for her ordinary calm,
And missed it rather,—told me not

to shrink,

As if she had told me not to lie or swear—

'She loved my father and would love me too

As long as I deserved it.' Very kind,

I understood her meaning afterward ;

She thought to find my mother in my face,

And questioned it for that. For she, my aunt,

Had loved my father truly, as she could,

And hated, with the gall of gentle souls,

My Tuscan mother who had fooled away

A wise man from wise courses, a good man

From obvious duties, and depriving her,

His sister, of the household precedence,

Had wronged his tenants, robbed his native land,

And made him mad, alike by life and death,

In love and sorrow. She had pored for years

What sort of woman could be suitable

To her sort of hate, to entertain it with,

And so, her very curiosity became hate too, and all the idealism

She ever used in life, was used for hate,

Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at last

The love from which it grew, in strength and heat,

And wrinkled her smooth conscience with a sense

Of disputable virtue (say not, sin) When Christian doctrine was enforced at church.

And thus my father's sister was to me [she did

My mother's later. From that day, Her duty to me, (I appreciate it

In her own word as spoken to herself)

Her duty, in large measure, well-pressed out,

But measured always. She was generous, bland.

More courteous than was tender, gave me still

The first place,—as if fearful that God's saints

Would look down suddenly and say, 'Herein

You missed a point, I think, through lack of love.'

Alas, a mother never is afraid Of speaking angrily to any child.

Since love, she knows, is justified of love.

And I, I was a good child on the whole.

A meek and manageable child. Why not? [life :

I did not live, to have the faults of There seemed more true life in my

father's grave

Than in all England. Since *that* threw me off

Who fain would cleave, (his latest will, they say,

Consigned me to his land) I only thought [thrown

Of lying quiet there where I was Like sea-weed on the rocks, and

suffering her To prick me to a pattern with her

pin, [leaf, Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from

And dry out from my drowned anatomy

The last sea-salt left in me. So it was.

I broke the copious curls upon my head

In braids, because she liked smooth-
 ordered hair.
 I left off saying my sweet Tuscan
 words [heart
 Which still at any stirring of the
 Came up to float across the English
 phrase,
 As lilies, (*Bene . . . or che che*) because
 She liked my father's child to speak
 his tongue. [chism,
 I learnt the collects and the cate-
 The creeds, from Athanasius back
 to Nice,
 The Articles . . . the Tracts *against*
 the times,
 (By no means Buonaventure's
 'Prick of Love,')
 And various popular synopses of
 Inhuman doctrines never taught by
 John,
 Because she liked instructed piety.
 I learnt my complement of classic
 French [gism,)
 (Kept pure of Balzac and neolo-
 And German also, since she liked a
 range
 Of liberal education,—tongues, not
 books.
 I learnt a little algebra, a little
 Of the mathematics,—brushed with
 extreme flounce
 The circle of the sciences, because
 She disliked women who are friv-
 olous.
 I learnt the royal genealogies
 Of Oviedo, the internal laws
 Of the Burmese empire, . . . by how
 many feet [riffe,
 Mount Chimborazo outsoars Tene-
 What navigable river joins itself
 To Lara, and what census of the
 year five,
 Was taken at Klagenfurt,—because
 she liked
 A general insight into useful facts.
 I learnt much music,—such as
 would have been
 As quite impossible in Johnson's day
 As still it might be wished—fine
 sleights of hand [off
 And unimagined fingering, shuffling
 The hearer's soul through hurri-
 canes of notes [costumes
 To a noisy Tophet: and I drew . .
 From French engravings, nereids
 neatly draped,
 With smirks of simmering godship,
 —I washed in
 Landscapes from nature (rather say,
 washed out.)
 I danced the polka a la *moderne*,
 Spun glass, stuffed birds and mod-
 elled flowers in wax,
 Because she liked accomplishments
 in girls.
 I read a score of books on woman-
 hood
 To prove, if women do not think at
 all,
 They may teach thinking, (to a
 maiden aunt
 Or else the author)—books that
 boldly assert
 Their right of comprehending hus-
 band's talk
 When not too deep, and even of
 answering
 With pretty 'may it please you,' or
 'so it is,'—
 Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,
 Particular worth and general mis-
 sionariness, [fire
 As long as they keep quiet by the
 And never say 'no' when the
 world say 'ay,'
 For that is fatal,—their angelic reach
 Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and
 darn,
 And fatten household sinners,—
 their, in brief,
 Potential faculty in everything
 Of abdicating power in it: she
 owned
 She liked a woman to be womanly.
 And English women, she thanked
 God and sighed,

(Some people always sigh in thank-
ing God) [last
Were models to the universe. And
I learnt cross-stitch, because she
did not like
To see me wear the night with
empty hands,
A-doing nothing. So, my shep-
herdess
Was something after all, (the pas-
toral saints
Be praised for't) leaning lovelorn
with pink eyes
To match her shoes, when I mis-
took the silks ;
Her head uncrushed by that round
weight of hat [shell
So strangely similar to the tortoise-
Which slew the tragic poet.

By the way,
The works of women are symboli-
cal.
We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull
our sight,
Producing what ? A pair of slip-
pers, sir,
To put on when you're weary—or a
stool
To tumble over and vex you . .
'curse that stool !'
Or else at best, a cushion, where
you lean
And sleep, and dream of something
we are not,
But would be for your sake. Alas,
alas !
This hurts most, this . . . that, after
all, we are paid
The worth of our work, perhaps.

In looking down
Those years of education, (to return)
I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered
more
In the water torture . . . flood succeed-
ing flood
To drench the incapable throat and
split the veins . . .

Than I did. Certain of your feebler
souls [pine
Go out in such a process ; many
To a sick, inodorous light ; my own
endured : [drew
I had relations in the Unseen, and
The elemental nutriment and heat
From nature, as earth feels the sun
at nights,
Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark.
I kept the life thrust on me, on the
outside [room
Of the inner life with all its ample
For heart and lungs, for will and
intellect,
Inviolable by conventions. God,
I thank thee for that grace of thine !

At first,
I felt no life which was not patience,
—did
The thing she bade me, without
heed to a thing
Beyond it, sate in just the chair she
placed,
With back against the window, to
exclude
The sight of the great lime-tree on
the lawn,
Which seemed to have come on
purpose from the woods
To bring the house a message,—ay,
and walked
Demurely in her carpeted low
rooms,
As if I should not, harkening my
own steps,
Misdoubt I was alive. I read her
books, [Leigh,
Was civil to her cousin, Romney
Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her
visitors,
And heard them whisper, when I
changed a cup,
(I blushed for joy at that)—'The
Italian child,
For all her blue eyes and her quiet
ways,

Thrives ill in England ; she is paler
yet

Than when we came the last time ;
she will die.'

'Will die.' My cousin, Romney
Leigh, blushed too,

With sudden anger, and approach-
ing me

Said low between his teeth—' You're
wicked now ! [a-dusk

You wish to die and leave the world
For others, with your naughty light
blown out ?'

I looked into his face defyingly.
He might have known that, being
what I was,

'Twas natural to like to get away
As far as dead folk can ; and then
indeed

Some people make no trouble when
they die.

He turned and went abruptly,
slammed the door

And shut his dog out.

Romney, Romney Leigh.

I have not named my cousin
hitherto, [friend ;

And yet I used him as a sort of
My elder by few years, but cold
and shy

And absent . . . tender when he
thought of it,

Which scarcely was imperative,
grave betimes,

As well as early master of Leigh
Hall,

Whereof the nightmare sate upon
his youth [lights,

Repressing all its seasonable de-
And agonising with a ghastly sense

Of universal hideous want and
wrong

To incriminate possession. When
he came

From college to the country, very oft
He crossed the hill on visits to my

aunt,

With gifts of blue grapes from the
hot-houses,

A book in one hand,—mere statis-
tics (if [of all

I chanced to lift the cover) count
The goats whose beards grow

sprouting down toward hell,
Against God's separative judg-
ment-hour.

And she, she almost loved him,—
even allowed

That sometimes he should seem to
sigh my way ;

It made him easier to be pitiful,
And sighing was his gift. So, un-
disturbed

At whiles she let him shut my mu-
sic up

And push my needles down, and
lead me out

To see in that south angle of the
house

The figs grow black as if by a Tus-
can rock,

On some light pretext. She would
turn her head

At other moments, go to fetch a
thing,

And leave me breath enough to
speak with him.

For his sake ; it was simple.

Sometimes too

He would have saved me utterly,
it seemed,

He stood and looked so.

Once, he stood so near

He dropped a sudden hand upon
my head

Bent down on woman's work, as
soft as rain— [fire,

But then I rose and shook it off as
The stranger's touch that took my

father's place
Yet dared seem soft.

I used him for a friend

Before I ever knew him for a friend
'Twas better, 'twas worse also, af-
terward :

<p>We came so close, we saw our differences Too intimately. Always Romney Leigh Was looking for the worms, I for the gods. A godlike nature his; the gods look down, Incurious of themselves; and 'Tis well I should remember, how, those days, I was a worm too, and he looked on me.</p> <p>A little by his act perhaps, yet more By something in me, surely not my will, I did not die. But slowly, as one in swoon, To whom life creeps back in the form of death, With a sense of separation, a blind pain Of blank obstruction, and a roar i' the ears Of visionary chariots which retreat As vision grows clearer . . . slowly, by degrees, I woke, rose up . . . where was I? in the world; For uses therefore I must count worth while.</p> <p>I had a little chamber in the house, As green as any pivot-hedge a bird Might choose to build in, though the nest itself Could show but dead-brown sticks and straws; the walls Were green, the carpet was pure green, the straight Small bed was curtained greenly, and the folds Hung green about the window, which let in The out-door world with all its greenery. You could not push your head out and escape</p>	<p>A dash of dawn-dew from the honey-suckle, [grace But so you were baptised into the And privilege of seeing. . . First, the lime, (I had enough, there, of the lime, be sure,— My morning-dream was often hummed away By the bees in it;) past the lime, the lawn, Which, after sweeping broadly round the house, Went trickling through the shrubberies in a stream Of tender turf, and wore and lost itself [saw Among the acacias, over which, you The irregular line of elms by the deep lane Which stopped the grounds and dammed the overflow Of arbutus and laurel. Out of sight The lane was; sunk so deep, no foreign tramp Nor drover of wild ponies out of Wales Could guess if lady's hall or tenant's lodge Dispensed such odours,—though his stick well crooked Might reach the lowest trail of blossoming briar Which dipped upon the wall. Behind the elms, And through their tops, you saw the folded hills Striped up and down with hedges, (burly oaks Projecting from the line to show themselves) Through which my cousin Romney's chimneys smoked As still as when a silent mouth in frost Breathes — showing where the woodlands hid Leigh Hall;</p>
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While, far above, a jut of table-land,
 A promontory without water,
 stretched,—
 You could not catch it if the days
 were thick,
 Or took it for a cloud ; but, other-
 wise
 The vigorous sun would catch it
 up at eve
 And use it for an anvil till he had
 filled
 The shelves of heaven with burn-
 ing thunderbolts,
 Protesting against night and dark-
 ness :—then,
 When all his setting trouble was
 resolved
 To a trance of passive glory, you
 might see
 In apparition on the golden sky
 (Alas, my Giotto's background !) the
 sheep run
 Along the fine clear outline, small
 as mice
 That run along a witch's scarlet
 thread.
 Not a grand nature. Not my
 chestnut-woods
 Of Vallombrosa, cleaving by the
 spurs
 To the precipices. Not my head-
 long leaps
 Of waters, that cry out for joy or
 fear
 In leaping through the palpitating
 pines,
 Like a white soul tossed out to eter-
 nity
 With thrills of time upon it. Not
 indeed
 My multitudinous mountains, sit-
 ting in
 The magic circle, with the mutual
 touch
 Electric, panting from their full
 deep hearts
 Beneath the influent heavens, and
 waiting for
 Communion and commission. Italy
 Is one thing, England one.
 On English ground
 You understand the letter . . . ere
 the fall
 How Adam lived in a garden. All
 the fields
 Are tied up fast with hedges, nose-
 gay-like ;
 The hills are crumpled plains,—the
 plains parterres,
 The trees, round, woolly, ready to
 be clipped ;
 And if you seek for any wilderness
 You find, at best, a park. A nature
 tamed
 And grown domestic like a barn-
 door fowl,
 Which does not awe you with its
 claws and beak, [up.
 Nor tempt you to an eyrie too high
 But which, in cackling, sets you
 thinking of
 Your eggs to-morrow at breakfast,
 in the pause
 Of finer meditation.
 Rather say,
 A sweet familiar nature, stealing in
 As a dog might, or child, to touch
 your hand
 Or pluck your gown, and humbly
 mind you so
 Of presence and affection, excellent
 For inner uses, from the things
 without.
 I could not be unthankful, I who
 was
 Entreated thus and holpen. In the
 room
 I speak of, ere the house was well
 awake,
 And also after it was well asleep,
 I sat alone, and drew the blessing
 in
 Of all that nature. With a gradual
 step, [a ray,
 A stir among the leaves, a breath,

It came in softly, while the angels
made
A place for it beside me. The
moon came,
And swept my chamber clean of
foolish thoughts.
The sun came, saying, 'Shall I lift
this light
Against the lime-tree, and you will
not look?
I make the birds sing—listen! ..
but, for you,
God never hears your voice, except-
ing when
You lie upon the bed at nights and
weep.'

Then, something moved me. Then,
I wakened up
More slowly than I verily write now,
But wholly, at last, I wakened, open-
ed wide
The window and my soul, and let
the airs
And out-door sights sweep gradual
gospels in,
Regenerating what I was. O life,
How oft we throw it off and think,
—' Enough,
Enough of life in so much!—here's
a cause
For rupture;—herein we must
break with Life,
Or be ourselves unworthy; here we
are wronged,
Maimed, spoiled for aspiration :
farewell Life!'
—And so, as froward babes, we
hide our eyes
And think all ended.—Then, Life
calls to us
In some transformed, apocalyptic
voice,
Above us, or below us, or around :
Perhaps we name it Nature's
voice, or Love's,
Tricking ourselves, because we are
more ashamed

To own our compensations than
our griefs :
Still, Life's voice!—still, we make
our peace with Life.

And I, so young then, was not sul-
len. Soon

I used to get up early, just to sit
And watch the morning quicken in
the gray.

And hear the silence open like a
flower,

Leaf after leaf,—and stroke with
listless hand

The woodbine through the window,
till at last

I came to do it with a sort of love,
At foolish unaware : whereat I
smiled,—

A melancholy smile, to catch myself
Smiling for joy.

Capacity for joy
Admits temptation. It seemed,
next, worth while

To dodge the sharp sword set
against my life ;

To slip down stairs through all the
sleepy house,

As mute as any dream there, and
escape

As a soul from the body, out of doors,
Glide through the shrubberies, drop
into the lane, [two,

And wander on the hills an hour or
Then back again before the house
should stir.

Or else I sat on in my chamber green
And lived my life, and thought my
thoughts, and prayed

My prayers without the vicar ; read
my books,

Without considering whether they
were fit

To do me good. Mark, there.
We get no good

By being ungenerous, even to a book,
And calculating profits .. so much
help

By so much reading. It is rather
 when
 We gloriously forget ourselves and
 plunge
 Soul-forward, headlong, into a
 book's profound,
 Impassioned for its beauty and salt
 of truth—
 'Tis then we get the right good
 from a book.

I read much. What my father
 taught before
 From many a volume, Love re-em-
 phasised [phrast
 Upon the self-same pages: Theo-
 Grew tender with the memory of
 his eyes,
 And Ælian made mine wet. The
 trick of Greek
 And Latin, he had taught me, as
 he would
 Have taught me wrestling or the
 game of fives
 If such he had known,—most like
 a shipwrecked man
 Who heaps his single platter with
 goats' cheese
 And scarlet berries; or like any man
 Who loves but one, and so gives all
 at once, [cause
 Because he has it, rather than be-
 He counts it worthy. Thus, my
 father gave;
 And thus, as did the women for-
 merly
 By young Achilles, when they pin-
 ned the veil
 Across the boy's audacious front,
 and swept
 With tuneful laughs the silver-fret-
 ted rocks. [large
 He wrapt his little daughter in his
 Man's doublet, careless did it fit or
 no.

But, after I had read for memory,
 I read for hope. The path my
 father's foot

Had trod me out, which suddenly
 broke off,
 (What time he dropped the wallet
 of the flesh [set
 And passed) alone I carried on, and
 My child-heart 'gainst the thorny
 underwood,
 To reach the grassy shelter of the
 trees.
 Ah, babe i' the wood, without a
 brother-babe!
 My own self-pity, like the red-breast
 bird,
 Flies back to cover all that past
 with leaves.

Sublimest danger, over which none
 weeps,
 When any young wayfaring soul
 goes forth [road,
 Alone, unconscious of the perilous
 The day-sun dazzling in his limpid
 eyes,
 To thrust his own way, he an alien,
 through
 The world of books! Ah, you!—
 you think it fine,
 You clap hands—'A fair day!'—
 you cheer him on,
 As if the worst could happen were
 to rest
 Too long beside a fountain. Yet,
 behold,
 Behold!—the world of books is still
 the world; [ciful
 And worldlings in it are less mer-
 And more puissant. For the wick-
 ed there
 Are winged like angels. Every knife
 that strikes,
 Is edged from elemental fire to
 assail
 A spiritual life. The beautiful seems
 right
 By force of beauty, and the feeble
 wrong
 Because of weakness. Power is
 justified,

<p>Though armed against St. Michael. Many a crown Covers bald foreheads. In the book- world, true, There's no lack, neither, of God's saints and kings, That shake the ashes of the grave aside From their calm locks, and undis- comfited Look steadfast truths against Time's changing mask. True, many a prophet teaches in the roads ; True, many a seer pulls down the flaming heavens Upon his own head in strong mar- tyrdom, space. In order to light men a moment's But stay !—who judges ?—who dis- tinguishes 'Twixt Saul and Nahash justly, at first sight, And leaves King Saul precisely at the sin, To serve King David ? who dis- cerns at once The sound of the trumpets, when the trumpets blow For Alaric as well as Charlemagne ? Who judges wizards, and can tell true seers From conjurors ? The child, there ? Would you leave That child to wander in a battle- field And push his innocent smile against the guns ? Or even in a catacomb . . . his torch Grown ragged in the fluttering air, and all The dark a mutter round him ? not a child.</p> <p>I read books bad and good—some bad and good At once : (good aims not always make good books ;</p>	<p>Well-tempered spades turn up ill- smelling soils In digging vineyards, even) books that prove God's being so definitely, that man's doubt Grows self-defined the other side the line, Made Atheist by suggestion, moral books, Exasperating to license ; genial books, [nity ; Discounting from the human dig- And merry books, which set you weeping when The sun shines,—ay, and melan- choly books, Which make you laugh that any one should weep In this disjointed life for one wrong more.</p> <p>The world of books is still the world, I write, And both worlds have God's provi- dence, thank God, To keep and hearten : with some struggle, indeed, Among the breakers, some hard swimming through The deeps—I lost breath in my soul sometimes, And cried, ' God save me if there's any God,' But, even so, God saved me ; and being dashed From error on to error, every turn Still brought me nearer to the cen- tral truth.</p> <p>I thought so. All this anguish in the thick Of men's opinions . . . press and counterpress, [and now Now up, now down, now underfoot, Emergent . . all the best of it, perhaps, But throws you back upon a noble trust</p>
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And use of your own instinct,—
 merely proves
 Pure reason stronger than bare inference
 At strongest. Try it,—fix against
 heaven's wall
 Your scaling ladders of school
 logic—mount
 Step by step!—Sight goes faster;
 that still ray
 Which strikes out from you, how,
 you cannot tell,
 And why, you know not—(did you
 eliminate,
 That such as you, indeed, should
 analyse?)
 Goes straight and fast as light, and
 high as God.

The cygnet finds the water; but
 the man
 Is born in ignorance of his element,
 And feels out blind at first, disorganised
 By sin i' the blood,—his spirit-in-
 sight dulled
 And crossed by his sensations.
 Presently
 He feels it quicken in the dark
 sometimes;
 When mark, be reverent, be obedient,—
 For such dumb motions of imperfect
 life
 Are oracles of vital Deity
 Attesting the Hereafter. Let who
 says
 'The soul's a clean white paper,'
 rather say,
 A palimpsest, a prophet's holo-
 graph
 Defiled, erased and covered by a
 monk's,—
 The apocalypse, by a Longus!
 poring on
 Which obscene text, we may discern
 perhaps,

Some fair, fine trace of what was
 written once,
 Some upstroke of an alpha and
 omega
 Expressing the old Scripture.

Books, books, books!
 I had found the secret of a garret-
 room
 Piled high with cases in my father's
 name;
 Piled high, packed large,—where,
 creeping in and out
 Among the giant fossils of my
 past,
 Like some small nimble mouse be-
 tween the ribs
 Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and
 there
 At this or that box, pulling through
 the gap,
 In heats of terror, haste, victorious
 joy,
 The first book first. And how I
 felt it beat
 Under my pillow in the morning's
 dark,
 An hour before the sun would let
 me read!
 My books!
 At last, because the time was ripe,
 I chanced upon the poets.
 As the earth
 Plunges in fury, when the internal
 fires
 Have reached and pricked her
 heart, and, throwing flat
 The marts and temples, the tri-
 umphal gates
 And towers of observation, clears
 herself
 To elemental freedom—thus, my
 soul,
 At poetry's divine first finger touch,
 Let go conventions and sprang up
 surprised,
 Convicted of the great eternities
 Before two worlds.

What's this, Aurora Leigh,
You write so of the poets, and not
laugh?

Those virtuous liars, dreamers af-
ter dark,
Exaggerators of the sun and moon,
And soothsayers in a tea-cup?

I write so

Of the only truth-tellers, now left
to God, [truth,

The only speakers of essential
Opposed to relative, comparative,
And temporal truths; the only
holders by

His sun-skirts, through conven-
tional grey glooms;

The only teachers who instruct
mankind,

From just a shadow on a charnel
wall,

To find man's veritable stature
out, [man,

Erect, sublime,—the measure of a
And that's the measure of an angel, says

The apostle. Ay, and while your
common men

Lay telegraphs, gauge railroads,
reign, reap, dine,

And dust the flaunty carpets of
the world

For kings to walk on, or our presi-
dent. [up

The poet suddenly will catch them
With his voice like a thunder . . .

'This is soul,

This is life, this word is being said
in heaven,

Here's God down on us! what are
you about?'

How all those workers start amid
their work,

Look round, look up, and feel, a
moment's space,

That carpet-dusting, though a
pretty trade,

Is not the imperative labour after
all.

My own best poets, am I one with
you,

That thus I love you,—or but one
through love?

Does all this smell of thyme about
my feet

Conclude my visit to your holy
hill

In personal presence, or but tes-
tify

The rustling of your vesture
through my dreams

With influent odours? When my
joy and pain,

My thought and aspiration, like
the stops

Of pipe or flute, are absolutely
dumb

Unless melodious, do you play on
me,

My pipers,—and if, sooth, you did
not blow

Would no sound come? or is the
music mine,

As a man's voice or breath is call-
ed his own,

Imbreathed by the Life-breather?
There's a doubt

For cloudy seasons!

But the sun was high

When first I felt my pulses set
themselves

For concord; when the rhythmic
turbulence

Of blood and brain swept outward
upon words,

As wind upon the alders, blanch-
ing them

By turning up their under natures
till

They trembled in dilation. O de-
light

And triumph of the poet,—who
would say

A man's mere 'yes,' a woman's
common 'no,'

A little human hope of that or this,

And says the word so that it burns
 you through
 With a special revelation, shakes
 the heart
 Of all the men and women in the
 world,
 As if one came back from the dead
 and spoke,
 With eyes too happy, a familiar
 thing
 Become divine i' the utterance !
 while for him
 The poet, speaker, he expands
 with joy ;
 The palpitating angel in his flesh
 Thrills inly with consenting fellow-
 ship
 To those innumerable spirits who
 sun themselves
 Outside of time.

O life, O poetry,
 —Which means life in life ! cogni-
 sant of life

Beyond this blood-beat,—passionate
 for truth

Beyond these senses,—poetry, my
 life,

My eagle, with both grappling feet
 still hot

From Zeus's thunder, who has rav-
 ished me

Away from all the shepherds, sheep,
 and dogs,

And set me in the Olympian roar
 and round

Of luminous faces, for a cup bearer,
 To keep the mouths of all the god-
 heads moist

For everlasting laughters,—I, my-
 self

Half drunk across the beaker with
 their eyes !

How those gods look !

Enough so, Ganymede.

We shall not bear above a round
 or two—

We drop the golden cup at Heré's
 foot

And swoon back to the earth,—
 and find ourselves

Face-down among the pine-cones,
 cold with dew,

While the dogs bark, and many a
 shepherd scoffs,

' What's come now to the youth ?'
 Such ups and downs

Have poets.

Am I such indeed ? The name
 Is royal, and to sign it like a
 queen,

Is what I dare not,—though some
 royal blood

Would seem to tingle in me now
 and then,

With sense of power and ache,—
 with imposthumes

And manias usual to the race.
 Howbeit

I dare not : 'tis too easy to go
 mad,

And ape a Bourbon in a crown of
 straws ;

The thing's too common.

Many fervent souls
 Strike rhyme on rhyme, who would
 strike steel on steel

If steel had offered, in a restless
 heat

Of doing something. Many tender
 souls

Have strung their losses on a
 rhyming thread,

As children, cowslips :—the more
 pains they take,

The work more withers. Young
 men, ay, and maids,

Too often sow their wild oats in
 tame verse,

Before they sit down under their
 own vine

And live for use. Alas, near all
 the birds

Will sing at dawn,—and yet we do
 not take

The chaffering swallow for the holy
 lark.

<p>In those days, though, I never analysed, Not even myself. Analysis comes late. [est, You catch a sight of Nature, earli- In full front sun-face, and your eyelids wink And drop before the wonder of 't ; you miss The form, through seeing the light. I lived, those days, And wrote because I lived—unlicensed else : My heart beat in my brain. Life's violent flood Abolished bounds,—and, which my neighbour's field, Which mine, what mattered ? It is thus in youth We play at leap-frog over the god Term ; The love within us and the love without Are mixed, confounded ; if we are loved or love, We scarce distinguish : thus with other power ; Being acted on and acting seem the same : In that first onrush of life's chariot-wheels, We know not if the forest move or we. And so, like most young poets, in a flush Of individual life I poured myself Along the veins of others, and achieved [verse, Mere lifeless imitations of live And made the living answer for the dead, Profaning nature. 'Touch not, do not taste, Nor handle,'—we're too legal, who write young : We beat the phorminx till we hurt our thumbs,</p>	<p>As if still ignorant of counterpoint ; We call the Muse . . 'O Muse, benignant Muse !'— As if we had seen her purple-braided head With the eyes in it, start between the boughs As often as a stag's. What make-believe, With so much earnest ! what effete results, From virile efforts ! what cold wire-drawn odes, From such white heats !—bucolics, where the cows Would scare the writer if they splashed the mud In lashing off the flies,—didactics, driven Against the heels of what the master said ; And counterfeiting epics, shrill with trumps A babe might blow between two straining cheeks Of bubbled rose, to make his mother laugh ; [love, And elegiac griefs, and songs of Like cast-off nosegays picked up on the road, The worse for being warm : all these things, writ On happy mornings, with a morning heart, That leaps for love, is active for resolve, Weak for art only. Oft, the ancient forms Will thrill, indeed, in carrying the young blood, The wine-skins, now and then, a little warped, Will crack even, as the new wine gurgles in. Spare the old bottles !—spill not the new wine. By Keat's soul, the man who never stepped</p>
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In gradual progress like another
 man, [self,
 But, turning grandly on his central
 Enspersed himself in twenty per-
 cent years,
 And died, not young,—(the life of
 a long life,
 Distilled to a mere drop, falling
 like a tear
 Upon the world's cold cheek to
 make it burn
 For ever ;) by that strong excepted
 soul,
 I count it strange, and hard to un-
 derstand
 That nearly all young poets should
 write old ; [teen,
 That Pope was sexagenary at six-
 and beardless Byron academical,
 And so with others. It may be,
 perhaps,
 Such have not settled long and
 deep enough
 In trance, to attain to clairvoyance,
 —and still
 The memory mixes with the vision,
 spoils,
 And works it turbid.
 Or perhaps, again
 In order to discover the Muse-
 Sphinx,
 The melancholy desert must sweep
 round,
 Behind you as before,—
 For me, I wrote
 False poems, like the rest, and
 thought them true,
 Because myself was true in writing
 them. [since
 I peradventure have writ true ones
 With less complacence.
 But I could not hide
 My quickening inner life from those
 at watch.
 They saw a light at a window now
 and then,
 They had not set there. Who had
 set it there ?

My father's sister started when she
 caught
 My soul agaze in my eyes. She
 could not say
 I had no business with a sort of
 soul, [murred
 But plainly she objected,—and de-
 That souls were dangerous things
 to carry straight
 Through all the spilt saltpetre of
 the world.
 She said sometimes, 'Aurora, have
 you done
 Your task this morning?—have
 you read that book?
 And are you ready for the crochet
 here?'—
 As if she said, 'I know there's
 something wrong ;
 I know I have not ground you down
 enough
 To flatten and bake you to a whole-
 some crust
 For household uses and proprieties,
 Before the rain has got into my barn
 And set the grains a-sprouting.
 What, you're green
 With out-door impudence? you
 almost grow?'
 To which I answered, 'Would she
 hear my task,
 And verify my abstract of the book?
 Or should I sit down to the crochet
 work?
 Was such her pleasure?'.. Then
 I sate and teased
 The patient needle till it split the
 thread [dering lace
 Which oozed off from it in mean-
 From hour to hour. I was not,
 therefore, sad ;
 My soul was singing at a work apart
 Behind the wall of sense, as safe
 from harm
 As sings the lark when sucked up
 out of sight,
 In vortices of glory and blue air.

And so, through forced work and
 spontaneous work,
 The inner life informed the outer
 life,
 Reduced the irregular blood to
 settled rhythms,
 Made cool the forehead with fresh-
 sprinkling dreams,
 And, rounding to the spheric soul
 the thin
 Pined body, struck a colour up the
 cheeks,
 Though somewhat faint. I clenched
 my brows across
 My blue eyes greatening in the
 looking-glass,
 And said, 'We'll live, Aurora! we'll
 be strong.
 The dogs are on us—but we will
 not die.'

Whoever lives true life, will love
 true love.
 I learnt to love that England.
 Very oft, [wise
 Before the day was born, or other-
 Through secret windings of the
 afternoons,
 I threw my hunters off and plunged
 myself [stag
 Among the deep hills, as a hunted
 Will take the waters, shivering with
 the fear
 And passion of the course. And
 when at last
 Escaped,—so many a green slope
 built on slope
 Betwixt me and the enemy's house
 behind,
 I dared to rest, or wander,—in a rest
 Made sweeter for the step upon the
 grass,—
 And view the ground's most gentle
 dimplement,
 (As if God's finger touched but did
 not press
 In making England) such an up
 and down

Of verdure,—nothing too much up
 or down,
 A ripple of land; such little hills,
 the sky
 Can stoop to tenderly and the
 wheatfields climb;
 Such nooks of valleys, lined with
 orchises, [streams;
 Fed full of noises by invisible
 And open pastures, where you
 scarcely tell
 White daisies from white dew,—at
 intervals
 The mythic oaks and elm-trees
 standing out
 Self-poised upon their prodigy of
 shade,—
 I thought my father's land was
 worthy too
 Of being my Shakspeare's.

Very oft alone,
 Unlicensed: not unfrequently with
 leave
 To walk the third with Romney
 and his friend [rington,
 The rising painter, Vincent Car-
 Whom men judge hardly as bee-
 bonneted,
 Because he holds that, paint a body
 well, [like
 You paint a soul by implication,
 The grand first Master. Pleasant
 walks! for if
 He said.. 'When I was last in
 Italy'..
 It sounded as an instrument that's
 played [it's fine
 Too far off for the tune—and yet
 To listen.

Ofter we walked only two,
 If cousin Romney pleased to walk
 with me.
 We read, or talked, or quarrelled,
 as it chanced:
 We were not lovers, nor even friends
 well-matched,
 Say rather, scholars upon different
 tracks,

And thinkers disagreed : he, over-
full

Of what is, and I, haply, overbold
For what might be.

But then the thrushes sang,
And shook my pulses and the elms'
new leaves,—

At which I turned, and held my
finger up, [the world

And bade him mark that, howsoe'er
Went ill, as he related, certainly

The thrushes still sang in it. At
the word

His brow would soften,—and he
bore with me

In melancholy patience, not unkind,
While breaking into voluble ecstasy
I flattered all the beauteous country
round,

All poets use . . . the skies, the
clouds, the fields,

The happy violets hiding from the
roads* [ing gold.

The primroses run down to, carry-
The tangled hedgerows, where the
cows push out

Impatient horns and tolerant churn-
ing mouths

'T wixt dripping ash-boughs,—
hedgerows all alive

With birds and gnats and large
white butterflies

Which look as if the May-flower
had caught life

And palpitated forth upon the wind,
Hills, vales, woods, netted in a
silver mist,

Farms, granges, doubled up among
the hills, [vales,

And cattle grazing in the watered
And cottage chimneys smoking
from the woods,

And cottage-gardens smelling
everywhere,

Confused with smell of orchards.

'See,' I said,

And see! is God not with us on
the earth?

And shall we put him down by
ought we do?

Who says there's nothing for the
poor and vile

Save poverty and wickedness?
behold!

And ankle-deep in English grass I
leaped,

And clapped my hands, and called
all very fair.

In the beginning when God called
all good, [writ.

Even then was evil near us, it is
But we indeed who call things good
and fair,

The evil is upon us while we speak :
Deliver us from evil, let us pray.

SECOND BOOK.

TIMES followed one another.
Came a morn

I stood upon the brink of twenty
years, [stood

And looked before and after, as I
Woman and artist,—either incom-
plete,

Both credulous of completion.
There I held [cup,

The whole creation in my little
And smiled with thirsty lips before
I drank

'Good health to you and me, sweet
neighbour mine,
And all these peoples.'

I was glad, that day ;

The June was in me, with its
multitudes

Of nightingales all singing in the
dark,

And rosebuds reddening where the
calyx split.

I felt so young, so strong, so sure
of God!

So glad, I could not choose be very
wise! [pull

And, old at twenty, was inclined to

My childhood backward in a child-
ish jest
To see the face of 't once more, and
farewell! [forth
In which fantastic mood I bounded
At early morning,—would not wait
so long
As even to snatch my bonnet by
the strings,
But, brushing a green trail across
the lawn
With my gown in the dew, took
will and way
Among the acacias of the shrub-
beries,
To fly my fancies in the open air
And keep my birthday, till my aunt
awoke
To stop good dreams. Meanwhile
I murmured on
As honeyed bees keep humming to
themselves ;
The worthiest poets have re-
mained uncrowned
Till death has bleached their fore-
heads to the bone,
And so with me it must be, unless
I prove
Unworthy of the grand adversity,
And certainly I would not fail so
much. [to-day
What, therefore, if I crown myself
In sport, not pride, to learn the
feel of it,
Before my brows be numbed as
Dante's own
To all the tender pricking of such
leaves ?
Such leaves ! what leaves ?'
I pulled the branches down,
To choose from.
' Not the bay ! I choose no bay ;
The fates deny us if we are over-
bold :
Nor myrtle—which means chiefly
love ; and love
Is something awful which one
dares not touch

So early o' mornings. This ver-
bena strains
The point of passionate fragrance ;
and hard by,
This guelder rose, at far too slight
a beck
Of the wind, will toss about her
flower-apples.
Ah—there's my choice,—that ivy
on the wall. [grow
That headlong ivy ! not a leaf will
But thinking of a wreath. Large
leaves, smooth leaves,
Serrated like my vines, and half as
green. [height
I like such ivy : bold to leap a
'Twas strong to climb ! as good to
grow on graves
As 'twist about a thyrus ; pretty too
(And that's not ill), when twisted
round a comb.' [ing it,
Thus speaking to myself, half sing-
Because some thoughts are fash-
ioned like a bell
To ring with once being touched,
I drew a wreath
Drenched, blinding me with dew,
across my brow,
And fastening it behind so, . . . turn-
ing faced
. . . My public !—cousin Romney—
with a mouth
Twice graver than his eyes.
I stood there fixed—
My arms up, like the caryatid, sole
Of some abolished temple, help-
lessly [rides
Persistent in a gesture which de-
A former purpose. Yet my blush
was flame,
As if from flax, not stone.
' Aurora Leigh,
The earliest of Aurora's !'
Hand stretched out
I clasped, as shipwrecked men will
clasp a hand,
Indifferent to the sort of palm.
The tide

Had caught me at my pastime,
 writing down
 My foolish name too near upon the
 sea
 Which drowned me with a blush
 as foolish. 'You,
 My cousin!'
 The smile died out in his eyes
 And dropped upon his lips, a cold
 dead weight,
 For just a moment . . . 'Here's a
 book I found!
 No name writ on it—poems, by
 the form;
 Some Greek upon the margin,—
 lady's Greek,
 Without the accents. Read it?
 Not a word.
 I saw at once the thing had witch-
 craft in't,
 Whereof the reading calls up
 dangerous spirits;
 I rather bring it to the witch.'
 'My book!
 You found it' . . .
 'In the hollow by the stream
 That beach leans down into—of
 which you said [heart
 The Oread in it has a Naiad's
 And pines for waters.'
 'Thank you.'
 'Thanks to *you*,
 My cousin! that I have seen you
 not too much
 Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and
 the rest,
 To be a woman also.'
 With a glance
 The smile rose in his eyes again,
 and touched [air.
 The ivy on my forehead, light as
 I answered gravely, 'Poets needs
 must be
 Or men or women—more's the
 pity.'
 'Ah,
 But men, and still less women,
 happily,

Scarce need be poets. Keep to
 the green wreath.
 Since even dreaming of the stone
 and bronze
 Brings headaches, pretty cousin,
 and defiles
 The clean white morning dresses.'
 'So you judge!
 Because I love the beautiful, I must
 Love pleasure chiefly, and be over-
 charged
 For ease and whiteness. Well—
 you know the world,
 And only miss your cousin: 'tis
 not much.
 But learn this: I would rather take
 my part
 With God's Dead, who afford to
 walk in white
 Yet spread his glory, than keep
 quiet here,
 And gather up my feet from even
 a step,
 For fear to soil my gown in so
 much dust.
 I choose to walk at all risks.—
 Here, if heads
 That hold a rhythmic thought,
 must act perforce,
 For my part I choose headaches,—
 and to-day's
 My birthday.'
 'Dear Aurora, choose instead
 To cure them. You have balsams.'
 'I perceive
 The headache is too noble for my
 sex.
 You think the heartache would
 sound decenter,
 Since that's the woman's special
 proper ache,
 And altogether tolerable, except
 To a woman.'
 Saying which, I loosed my wreath,
 And swinging it beside me as I
 walked,
 Half petulant, half playful, as we
 walked.

I sent a side long look to find his
 thought,— [may,
 As falcon set on falconer's finger
 With sidelong head, and startled,
 braving eye,
 Which means, 'You'll see—you'll
 see! I'll soon take flight—
 You shall not hinder.' He, as
 shaking out
 His hand and answering, 'Fly
 then,' did not speak,
 Except by such a gesture. Silently
 We paced, until, just coming into
 sight [caught
 Of the house-windows, he abruptly
 At one end of the swinging wreath,
 and said,
 'Aurora!' There I stopped short,
 breath and all.

'Aurora, let's be serious, and throw
 by
 This game of head and heart. Life
 means, be sure,
 Both heart and head,—both active,
 both complete,
 And both in earnest. Men and
 women make
 The world, as head and heart
 make human life.
 Work man, work woman, since
 there's work to do
 In this beleaguered earth, for head
 and heart,
 And thought can never do the
 work of love:
 But work for ends, I mean for
 uses: not
 For such sleek fringes (do you call
 them ends?
 Still less God's glory) as we sew
 ourselves
 Upon the velvet of those baldaquins
 Held 'twixt us and the sun. That
 book of yours, [toss
 I have not read a page of; but I
 A rose up—it falls calyx down, you
 see!

The chances are that, being a
 woman, young,
 And pure, with such a pair of large,
 calm eyes,
 You write as well . . . and ill . . . upon
 the whole,
 As other women. If as well, what
 then?
 If even a little better, . . . still what
 then?
 We want the Best in art now, or no
 art. [up
 The time is done for facile settings
 Of minnow gods, nymphs here and
 tritons there;
 The polytheists have gone out in
 God,
 That unity of Bests. No best, no
 God!
 And so with art, we say. Give art's
 divine,
 Direct, indubitable, real as grief,—
 Or leave us to the grief we grow
 ourselves [hope
 Divine by overcoming with mere
 And most prosaic patience. You,
 you are young
 As Eve with nature's daybreak on
 her face;
 But this same world you are come
 to, dearest coz,
 Has done with keeping birthdays.
 saves her wreaths [gets
 To hang upon her ruins,—and for-
 To rhyme the cry with which she
 still beats back
 Those savage, hungry dogs that
 hunt her down
 To the empty grave of Christ. The
 world's hard pressed;
 The sweat of labour in the early
 curse
 Has (turning acrid in six thousand
 years)
 Become the sweat of torture. Who
 has time,
 An hour's time . . . think! . . . to sit
 upon a bank

That makes its own vocation ! here,
 we have stepped
 Across the bounds of time ! here's
 nought to see,
 But just the rich man and just
 Lazarus,
 And both in torments ; with a me-
 diate gulph,
 Though not a hint of Abraham's
 bosom. Who,
 Being man, Aurora, can stand
 calmly by
 And view these things, and never
 tease his soul
 For some great cure ? No physic
 for this grief,
 In all the earth and heavens too ? '
 ' You believe
 In God, for your part ?—ay ? that
 He who makes,
 Can make good things from ill
 things, best from worst,
 As men plant tulips upon dunghills
 when
 They wish them finest ? '
 ' True. A death-heat is
 The same as life-heat, to be accu-
 rate ;
 And in all nature is no death at all,
 As men account of death, as long
 as God [ally,
 Stands witnessing for life perpetu-
 By being just God. That's ab-
 stract truth, I know,
 Philosophy, or sympathy with God :
 But I, I sympathise with man, not
 God,
 I think, I was a man for chiefly this ;
 And when I stand beside a dying
 bed,
 It's death to me. Observe,—it had
 not much [know
 Consoled the race of mastodons to
 Before they went to fossil, that anon
 Their place would quicken with the
 elephant ;
 They were not elephants but mas-
 todons :

And I, a man, as men are now and
 not
 As men may be hereafter, feel with
 men
 In the agonising present.' ' Is it so,'
 I said, ' my cousin ? is the world so
 bad,
 While I hear nothing of it through
 the trees ?
 The world was always evil,—but
 so bad ? '
 ' So bad, Aurora. Dear, my soul is
 grey
 With poring over the long sum of
 ill ;
 So much for vice, so much for dis-
 content,
 So much for the necessities of
 power,
 So much for the connivances of fear,
 Coherent in statistical despairs
 With such a total of distracted life, . .
 To see it down in figures on a page,
 Plain, silent, clear . . as God sees
 through the earth
 The sense of all the graves
 that's terrible [right
 For one who is not God, and cannot
 The wrong he looks on. May I
 choose indeed
 But vow away my years, my means,
 my aims,
 Among the helpers, if there's any
 help
 In such a social strait ? The com-
 mon blood
 That swings along my veins is
 strong enough
 To draw me to this duty.' Then I spoke.
 ' I have not stood long on the strand
 of life.
 And these salt waters have had
 scarcely time
 To creep so high up as to wet my
 feet.

I cannot judge these tides—I shall, perhaps.
 A woman's always younger than a man
 At equal years, because she is disallowed
 Maturing by the outdoor sun and air,
 And kept in long-clothes past the age to walk.
 Ah well, I know you men judge otherwise! [peach,
 You think a woman ripens as a
 In the cheeks, chiefly. Pass it to me now;
 I'm young in age, and younger still, I think,
 As a woman. But a child may say amen
 To a bishop's prayer and feel the way it goes;
 And I, incapable to loose the knot
 Of social questions, can approve, applaud
 August compassion, christian thoughts that shoot
 Beyond the vulgar white of personal aims.
 Accept my reverence.'
 There he glowed on me
 With all his face and eyes. 'No other help?'
 Said he—'no more than so?'
 'What help?' I asked,
 'You'd scorn my help,—as Nature's self, you say, [mouth
 Has scorned to put her music in my
 Because a woman's. Do you now turn round
 And ask for what a woman cannot give?' [ask.
 'For what she only can,' I turn and
 He answered, catching up my hands in his,
 And dropping on me from his high-eaved brow
 The full weight of his soul,—'I ask for love,
 And that, she can; for life in fellowship
 Through bitter duties—that, I know she can;
 For widowhood . . . will she?'
 'Now,' I said, 'may God Be witness 'twixt us two!' and with the word,
 Meseemed I floated into a sudden light
 Above his stature,—'am I proved too weak
 To stand alone, yet strong enough to bear
 Such leaners on my shoulder? poor to think,
 Yet rich enough to sympathise with thought?' [can,
 Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds
 Yet competent to love, like HIM?'
 I paused:
 Perhaps I darkened, as the light-house will
 That turns upon the sea. 'It's always so!
 Anything does for a wife.'
 'Aurora, dear,
 And dearly honored' . . . he pressed in at once
 With eager utterance,—'you translate me ill.
 I do not contradict my thought of you
 Which is most reverent, with another thought
 Found less so. If your sex is weak for art,
 (And I who said so, did but honour you
 By using truth in courtship) it is strong
 For life and duty. Place your fecund heart [world
 In mine, and let us blossom for the
 That wants love's colour in the grey of time.
 My talk, meanwhile, is arid to you ay,

Since all my talk can only set you
 where
 You look down coldly on the arena-
 heaps
 Of headless bodies, shapeless, in-
 distinct !
 The Judgment-Angel scarce would
 find his way
 Through such a heap of general-
 ised distress
 To the individual man with lips and
 eyes—
 Much less Aurora. Ah my sweet,
 come down,
 And hand in hand we'll go where
 yours shall touch
 These victims, one by one ! till one
 by one,
 The formless, nameless trunk of
 every man
 Shall seem to wear a head with
 hair you know.
 And every woman catch your
 mother's face
 To melt you into passion.'

'I am a girl,'

I answered slowly ; ' you do well to
 name
 My mother's face. Though far too
 early, alas,
 God's hand did interpose 'twixt it
 and me,
 I know so much of love, as used to
 shine
 In that face and another. Just so
 much ; [seen
 No more indeed at all. I have not
 So much love since, I pray you
 pardon me,
 As answers even to make a mar-
 riage with
 In this cold land of England. What
 you love, [cause :
 Is not a woman, Romney, but a
 You want a helpmate, not a mis-
 tress, sir,
 A wife to help your ends . . . in her
 no end !

Your cause is noble, your ends ex-
 cellent,
 But I, being most unworthy of these
 and that,
 Do otherwise conceive of love.
 Farewell.'

'Farewell, Aurora ? you reject me
 thus ?'

He said.

'Sir, you were married long ago,
 You have a wife already whom you
 love,

Your social theory. Bless you
 both, I say.

For my part, I am scarcely meek
 enough [spouse.

To be the handmaid of a lawful
 Do I look a Hagar, think you ?'

'So you jest !'

'Nay so, I speak in earnest,' I re-
 plied.

'You treat of marriage too much
 like, at least,

A chief apostle ; you would bear
 with you

A wife . . . a sister . . . shall we speak
 it out ?

A sister of charity.'

'Then, must it be
 Indeed farewell ? And was I so
 far wrong

In hope and in illusion, when I
 took [man.

The woman to be nobler than the
 Yourself the noblest woman,—in
 the use

And comprehension of what love
 is,—love,

That generates the likeness of it-
 self [wrong,

Through all heroic duties ? so far
 In saying bluntly, venturing truth

on love,

'Come, human creature, love and
 work with me,'—

Instead of 'Lady, thou art won-
 drous fair.

'And, where the Graces walk before, the Muse
 'Will follow at the lighting of the eyes,
 'And where the Muse walks, lovers need to creep:
 'Turn round and love me, or I die of love.'

With quiet indignation I broke in.
 'You misconceive the question like a man,
 Who sees a woman as the complement
 Of his sex merely. You forget too much [male,
 That every creature, female as the
 Stands single in responsible act and thought,
 As also in birth and death. Whoever says
 To a loyal woman, 'Love and work with me,'
 Will get fair answers if the work and love,
 Being good themselves, are good for her—the best
 She was born for. Women of a softer mood,
 Surprised by men when scarcely awake to life,
 Will sometimes only hear the first word, love, [work.
 And catch up with it any kind of Indifferent, so that dear love go with it:
 I do not blame such women, though, for love,
 They pick much oakum; earth's fanatics make
 Too frequently heaven's saints. But *me*, your work
 Is not the best for,—nor your love the best,
 Nor able to commend the kind of work
 For love's sake merely. Ah, you force me, sir,

To be over-bold in speaking of myself: [do,
 I too have my vocation,—work to The heavens and earth have set me, since I changed
 My father's face for theirs,—and, though your world
 Were twice as wretched as you represent,
 Most serious work, most necessary work
 As any of the economists'. Reform,
 Make trade a Christian possibility, And individual right no general wrong;
 Wipe out earth's furrows of the Thine and Mine,
 And leave one green for men to play at bowls;
 With innings for them all! . . . what then, indeed,
 If mortals are not greater by the head
 Than any of their prosperities? what then,
 Unless the artist keep up open roads
 Betwixt the seen and unseen,—bursting through
 The best of your conventions with his best,
 The speakable, imaginable best
 God bids him speak, to prove what lies beyond
 Both speech and imagination? A starved man
 Exceeds a fat beast: we'll not barter, sir,
 The beautiful for barley.—And, even so,
 I hold you will not compass your poor ends
 Of barley-feeding and material ease,
 Without a poet's individualism
 To work your universal. It takes a soul

And shock he gave my life, in find-
ing me
Precisely where the devil of my
youth
Had set me, on those mountain-
peaks of hope
All glittering with the dawn-dew,
all erect
And famished for the noon,—ex-
claiming, while
I looked for empire and much trib-
ute, 'Come,
I have some worthy work for thee
below.
Come, sweep my barns and keep
my hospitals,
And I will pay thee with a current
coin
Which men give women.'

As we spoke, the grass
Was trod in haste beside us, and
my aunt,
With smile distorted by the sun,—
face, voice, [day
As much at issue with the summer-
As if you brought a candle out of
doors,
Broke in with 'Romney, here!—
My child, entreat
Your cousin to the house, and have
your talk,
If girls must talk upon their birth-
days. Come.'

He answered for me calmly, with
pale lips
That seemed to motion for a smile
in vain.
'The talk is ended, madam, where
we stand.
Your brother's daughter has dis-
missed me here;
And all my answer can be better
said
Beneath the trees, than wrong by
such a word
Your house's hospitalities. Fare-
well.'

With that he vanished. I could
hear his heel
Ring bluntly in the lane, as down
he leapt
The short way from us.—Then a
measured speech
Withdrew me. 'What means this,
Aurora Leigh?
My brother's daughter, has dis-
missed my guests?'

The lion in me felt the keeper's
voice,
Through all its quivering dewlaps:
I was quelled
Before her,—meekened to the child
she knew:
I prayed her pardon, said, 'I had
little thought
To give dismissal to a guest of hers,
In letting go a friend of mine who
came
To take me into service as a wife,—
No more than that, indeed.'
'No more, no more?
Pray Heaven,' she answered, 'that
I was not mad.
I could not mean to tell her to her
face
That Romney Leigh had asked me
for a wife
And I refused him?'

'Did he ask?' I said:
'I think he rather stooped to take
me up
For certain uses which he found
to do
For something called a wife. He
never asked.'

'What stuff!' she answered; 'are
they queens, these girls?
They must have mantles, stitched
with twenty silks,
Spread out upon the ground, before
they'll step
One footstep for the noblest lover
born.'

'But I am born,' I said with firm-
 ness, 'I,
 To walk another way than his,
 dear aunt.'
 'You walk, you walk! A babe at
 thirteen months
 Will walk as well as you,' she cried
 in haste,
 'Without a steadying finger.
 Why, you child,
 God help you, you are groping in
 the dark,
 For all this sunlight. You suppose,
 perhaps,
 That you, sole offspring of an opu-
 lent man,
 Are rich and free to choose a way
 to walk?
 You think, and it's a reasonable
 thought, [life,
 That I beside, being well to do in
 Will leave my handful in my niece's
 hand
 When death shall paralyse these
 fingers? Pray,
 Pray, child,—albeit, I know you
 love me not,
 As if you loved me, that I may not
 die!
 For when I die and leave you, out
 you go,
 (Unless I make room for you in
 my grave)
 Unhoused, unfed, my dear, poor
 brother's lamb,
 (Ah heaven,—that pains!)—with-
 out a right to crop
 A single blade of grass beneath
 these trees,
 Or cast a lamb's small shadow on
 the lawn,
 Unfed, unfolded! Ah, my brother,
 here's
 The fruit you planted in your for-
 eign loves!—
 Ay, there's the fruit he planted!
 never look

Astonished at me with your moth-
 er's eyes,
 For it was they who set you where
 you are,
 An undowered orphan. Child,
 your father's choice
 Of that said mother, disinherited
 His daughter, his and hers. Men
 do not think
 Of sons and daughters, when they
 fall in love,
 So much more than of sisters;
 otherwise
 He would have paused to ponder
 what he did,
 And sunk before that clause in the
 entail
 Excluding offspring by a foreign
 wife [ago
 (The clause set up a hundred years
 By a Leigh who wedded a French
 dancing-girl
 And had his heart danced over in
 return).
 But this man shrunk at nothing:
 never thought [me—
 Of you, Aurora, any more than
 Your mother must have been a
 pretty thing,
 For all the coarse Italian blacks and
 browns,
 To make a good man, which my
 brother was,
 Unchary of the duties to his house;
 But so it fell indeed. Our cousin
 Vane,
 Vane Leigh, the father of this
 Romney, wrote
 Directly on your birth, to Italy,
 'I ask your baby daughter for my
 son
 In whom the entail now merges by
 the law.
 Betroth her to us out of love, instead
 Of colder reasons, and she shall
 not lose
 By love or law from henceforth'—
 so he wrote;

A generous cousin, was my cousin
 Vane.
 Remember how he drew you to his
 knee
 The year you came here, just be-
 fore he died,
 And hollowed out his hands to hold
 your cheeks,
 And wished them redder,—you re-
 member Vane?
 And now his son who represents
 our house
And holds the fiefs and manors in
 his place,
 To whom reverts my pittance when
 I die,
 (Except a few books and a pair of
 shawls)
 The boy is generous like him, and
 prepared
 To carry out his kindest word and
 thought [man
 To you, Aurora. Yes, a fine young
 Is Romney Leigh; although the
 sun of youth
 Has shone too straight upon his
 brain, I know
 And fevered him with dreams of
 doing good
 To good-for-nothing people. But
 a wife
 Will put all right, and stroke his
 temples cool
 With healthy touches' . . .
 I broke in at that.
 I could not lift my heavy heart to
 breathe
 Till then, but then I raised it, and
 it fell
 In broken words like these—' No
 need to wait.
 The dream of doing good to . . . me,
 at least, [wife
 Is ended, without waiting for a
 To cool the fever for him. We've
 escaped
 That danger . . . thank Heaven for it.'
 'You,' she cried,

'Have got a fever. What, I talk
 and talk
 An hour long to you,—I instruct
 you how
 Yeⁿ cannot eat or drink or stand
 or sit,
 Or even die, like any decent wretch
 In all this unroofed and unfurnished
 world,
 Without your cousin,—and you
 still maintain
 There's room 'twixt him and you,
 for flirting fans
 And running knots in eyebrows!
 You must have
 A pattern lover sighing on his
 knee: [heart,
 You do not count enough a noble
 Above book-patterns, which this
 very morn
 Unclosed itself in two dear fathers'
 names
 To embrace your orphaned life! fie,
 fie! but stay,
 I write a word, and counteract this
 sin.'

She would have turned to leave me,
 but I clung.
 'O sweet my father's sister, hear
 my word
 Before you write yours. Cousin
 Vane did well,
 And cousin Romney well,—and I
 well too,
 In casting back with all my strength
 and will
 The good they meant me. O my
 God, my God!
 God meant me good, too, when he
 hindered me
 From saying 'yes' this morning.
 If you write
 A word, it shall be 'no.' I say no,
 no!
 I tie up 'no' upon His altar-horns,
 Quite out of reach of perjury! At
 least

My soul is not a pauper ; I can live
At least my soul's life, without
alms from men ;
And if it must be in heaven instead
of earth,
Let heaven look to it,—I am not
afraid.'

She seized my hands with both
hers, strained them fast,
And drew her probing and unscrupulous eyes
Right through me, body and heart.
' Yet, foolish Sweet,
You love this man. I have watched
you when he came,
And when he went, and when we've
talked of him ; [tell
I am not old for nothing ; I can
The weather-signs of love—you
love this man.'

Girls blush sometimes because they
are alive,
Half wishing they were dead to
save the shame.
The sudden blush devours them,
neck and brow ;
They have drawn too near the fire
of life, like gnats,
And flare up bodily, wings and all.
What then ?

Who's sorry for a gnat . . . or girl ?
I blushed.

I feel the brand upon my forehead
now
Strike hot, sear deep, as guiltless
men may feel

The felon's iron, say, and scorn
the mark

Of what they are not. Most illogical

Irrational nature of our womanhood,
That blushes one way, feels another
way,

And prays, perhaps, another !
After all,

We cannot be the equal of the male,
Who rules his blood a little.

For although
I blushed indeed, as if I loved the
man,

And her incisive smile, accrediting
That treason of false witness in my
blush,

Did bow me downward like a
swathe of grass [attest

Below its level that struck me,—I
The conscious skies and all their
daily suns,

I think I loved him not . . . nor then,
nor since . . .

Nor ever. Do we love the school-
master,

Being busy in the woods ? much
less, being poor,

The overseer of the parish ? Do
we keep

Our love to pay our debts with ?
White and cold

I grew next moment. As my blood
recoiled

From that imputed ignomy, I made
My heart great with it. Then, at
last, I spoke, [ate,

Spoke veritable words but passion-
Too passionate perhaps . . . ground
up with sobs

To shapeless endings. She let fall
my hands,

And took her smile off, in sedate
disgust,

As peradventure she had touched
a snake,—

A dead snake, mind !—and, turn-
ing round, replied,

' We'll leave Italian manners, if you
please.

I think you had an English father,
child, [speak

And ought to find it possible to
A quiet ' yes ' or ' no,' like English
girls,

Without convulsions. In another
month

We'll take another answer . . . no,
or yes.'

With that, she left me in the garden-walk.

I had a father! yes, but long ago—
How long it seemed that moment.

Oh, how far,

How far and safe, God, dost thou
keep thy saints

When once gone from us! We
may call against

The lighted windows of thy fair
June-heaven

Where all the souls are happy,—
and not one,

Not even my father, look from work
or play [us,

To ask, 'Who is it that cries after
Below there, in the dusk?' Yet

formerly

He turned his face upon me quick
enough,

If I said 'father.' Now I might
cry loud;

The little lark reached higher with
his song [alone,—

Than I with crying. Oh, alone,
Not troubling any in heaven, nor

any on earth,

I stood there in the garden, and
looked up

The deaf blue sky that brings the
roses out

On such June mornings.

You who keep account

Of crisis and transition in this life,
Set down the first time Nature says

plain 'no'

To some 'yes' in you, and walks
over you [all begin

In gorgeous sweeps of scorn. We
By singing with the birds and running

fast

With June-days, hand in hand; but
once, for all,

The birds must sing against us,
and the sun

Strike down upon us like a friend's
sword caught

By an enemy to slay us, while we
read

The dear name on the blade which
bites at us!— [that,

That's bitter and convincing: after
We seldom doubt that something

in the large

Smooth order of creation, though
no more

Than haply a man's footstep, has
gone wrong.

Some tears fell down my cheeks,
and then I smiled,

As those smile who have no face
in the world [a friend

To smile back to them. I had lost
In Romney Leigh; the thing was

sure—a friend,

Who had looked at me most gently
now and then,

And spoken of my favourite books
. . 'our books'

With such a voice! Well, voice
and look were now

More utterly shut out from me, I
felt,

Than even my father's. Romney
now was turned

To a benefactor, to a generous man,
Who had tied himself to marry . .

me, instead

Of such a woman, with low timorous
lids [day,

He lifted with a sudden word one
And left, perhaps, for my sake.—

Ah, self-tied

By a contract,—male Iphigenia
bound [change,

At a fatal Aulis for the winds to
(But loose him—they'll not change;)

he well might seem

A little cold and dominant in love!
He had a right to be dogmatical,

This poor, good Romney. Love,
to him, was made

A simple law-clause. If I married
him,

I would not dare to call my soul
my own,
Which so he had bought and paid
for; every thought
And every heart-beat down there
in the bill,
Not one found honestly deductible
From any use that pleased him!

He might cut
My body into coins to give away
Among his other paupers; change
my sons,
While I stood dumb as Griseld, for
black babes
Or piteous foundlings; might un-
questioned set
My right hand teaching in the Rag-
ged Schools,
My left hand washing in the Public
Baths,
What time my angel of the Ideal
stretched
Both his to me in vain! I could
not claim
The poor right of a mouse in a trap,
to squeal,
And take so much as pity from
myself.

Farewell, good Romney! if I loved
you even,
I could but ill afford to let you be
So generous to me. Farewell,
friend, since friend
Betwixt us two, forsooth, must be a
word [help
So heavily overladen. And, since
Must come to me from those who
love me not,
Farewell, all helpers—I must help
myself,
And am alone from henceforth.—
Then I stooped,
And lifted the soiled garland from
the earth,
And set it on my head as bitterly
As when the Spanish monarch
crowned the bones

Of his dead love. So be it. I pre-
serve
That crown still,—in the drawer
there! 'twas the first;
The rest are like it;—those Olym-
pian crowns, [sun
We run for, till we lose sight of the
In the dust of the racing chariots!

After that,
Before the evening fell, I had a note
Which ran,—'Aurora, sweet Chal-
dean, you read
My meaning backward like your
eastern books,
While I am from the west, dear.
Read me now
A little plainer. Did you hate me
quite [part;
But yesterday? I loved you for my
I love you. If I spoke untenderly
This morning, my beloved, pardon
it; [so
And comprehend me that I love you
I set you on the level of my soul,
And overwashed you with the bitter
brine
Of some habitual thoughts. Hence-
forth, my flower,
Be planted out of reach of any such,
And lean the side you please, with
all your leaves!
Write woman's verses and dream
woman's dreams;
But let me feel your perfume in my
home, [days;
To make my sabbath after working-
Bloom out your youth beside me,—
be my wife.

I wrote in answer—'We Chaldeans,
discern
Still farther than we read. I know
your heart,
And shut it like the holy book it is,
Reserved for mild-eyed saints to
pore upon
Betwixt their prayers at vespers.
Well, you're right,

<p>I did not surely hate you yesterday ; And yet I do not love you enough to-day To wed you, cousin Romney. Take this word, And let it stop you as a generous man From speaking farther. You may tease, indeed, And blow about my feelings, or my leaves,— And here's my aunt will help you with east winds, And break a stalk, perhaps, tor- menting me : But certain flowers grow near as deep as trees, And, cousin, you'll not move my root, not you, With all your confluent storms. Then let me grow Within my wayside hedge, and pass your way ! This flower has never as much to say to you As the antique tomb which said to travellers, ' Pause, 'Siste, viator.' ' Ending thus, I signed.</p> <p>The next week passed in silence, so the next, And several after : Romney did not come, Nor my aunt chide me. I lived on and on, As if my heart were kept beneath a glass, [ears, And everybody stood, all eyes and To see and hear it tick. I could not sit, Nor walk, nor take a book, nor lay it down, [stitch Nor sew on steadily, nor drop a And a sigh with it, but I felt her looks Still cleaving to me, like the sucking asp</p>	<p>To Cleopatra's breast, persistently Through the intermittent pantings. Being observed, When observation is not sympathy, Is just being tortured. If she said a word, A ' thank you,' or an ' if it please you, dear,' She meant a commination, or, at best, An exorcism against the devildom Which plainly held me. So with all the house. Susannah could not stand and twist my hair, Without such glancing at the look- ing-glass To see my face there, that she miss- ed the plait. And John,—I never sent my plate for soup, Or did not send it, but the foolish John Resolved the problem, 'twixt his napkin'd thumbs, Of what was signified by taking soup Or choosing mackerel. Neighbours who dropped in On morning visits, feeling a joint wrong, Smiled admonition, sate uneasily, And talked with measured, empha- sised reserve, [sick, Of parish news, like doctors to the When not called in,—as if, with leave to speak, They might say something. Nay, the very dog Would watch me from his sun patch on the floor, [fly In alternation with the large black Not yet in reach of snapping. So I lived.</p> <p>A Roman died so : smeared with honey, teased By insects, stared to torture by the noon :</p>
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And many patient souls 'neath Eng-
lish roofs
Have died like Romans. I, in look-
ing back,
Wish only, now, I had borne the
plague of all
With meeker spirits than were rife
in Rome.

For, on the sixth week, the dead sea
broke up,
Dashed suddenly through beneath
the heel of Him
Who stands upon the sea and earth,
and swears
Time shall be nevermore. The
clock struck nine [of tune ;
That morning too—no lark was out
The hidden farms among the hills
breathed straight
Their smoke toward the heaven :
the lime-tree scarcely stirred
Beneath the blue weight of the
cloudless sky,
Though still the July air came float-
ing through
The woodbine at my window, in
and out, [try-news
With touches of the out-door coun-
For a bending forehead. There I
sate, and wished
That morning-truce of God would
last till eve,
Or longer. 'Sleep,' I thought, 'late
sleepers,—sleep,
And spare me yet the burden of
your eyes.'

Then, suddenly, a single ghastly
shriek
Tore upwards from the bottom of
the house.
Like one who wakens in a grave
and shrieks,
The still house seemed to shriek it-
self alive, [and stairs
And shudder through its passages
With slam of doors and clash of
bells.—I sprang,

I stood up in the middle of the
room,
And there confronted at my cham-
ber-door,
A white face,—shivering, ineffect-
ual lips.
'Come, come,' they tried to utter,
and I went ; [point
As if a ghost had drawn me at the
Of a fiery finger through the uneven
dark,
I went with reeling footsteps down
the stair,
Nor asked a question.
There she sate, my aunt,—
Bolt upright in the chair beside her
bed,
Whose pillow had no dint! She
had used no bed
For that night's sleeping . . yet slept
well. My God,
The dumb derision of that grey,
peaked face
Concluded something grave against
the sun,
Which filled the chamber with its
July burst [norant
When Susan drew the curtains, ig-
Of who sate open-eyed behind her.
There
She sate . . it sate . . we said 'she'
yesterday . . [seal
And held a letter with unbroken
As Susan gave it to her hand last
night :
All night she had held it. If its
news referred [inch
To duchies or to dunghills, not an
She'd budge, 'twas obvious, for
such worthless odds,
Nor, though the stars were suns
and overburned
Their spheric limitations, swallow-
ing up
Like wax the azure spaces, could
they force
Those open eyes to wink once.
What last sight

Had 'left them blank and flat so,—
drawing out
The faculty of vision from the roots,
As nothing more, worth seeing, re-
mained behind?

Were those the eyes that watched
me, worried me?

That dogged me up and down the
hours and days, [soul?

A beaten, breathless, miserable
And did I pray, a half hour back,
but so,

To escape the burden of those eyes
. . . those eyes?

'Sleep late,' I said.—

Why now, indeed, they sleep.
God answers sharp and sudden on
some prayers,

And thrusts the thing we have
prayed for in our face,

A gauntlet with a gift in't. Every
wish

Is like a prayer . . with God.

I had my wish,
To read and meditate the thing I
would, [thought,

To fashion all my life upon my
And marry or not marry. Hence-
forth, none

Could disapprove me, vex me, ham-
per me.

Full ground-room, in this desert
newly made,

For Babylon or Balbec,—when the
breath,

Now choked with sand, returns for
building-towns.

The heir came over on the funeral
day, [dead,

And we two cousins met before the
With two pale faces. Was it death
or life

That moved us? When the will
was read and done,

The official guest and witnesses
withdrawn,

We rose up in a silence almost hard.

And looked at one another. Then
I said,

'Farewell, my cousin.'

But he touched, just touched
My hatstrings tied for going, (at the
door

The carriage stood to take me) and
said low,

His voice a little unsteady through
his smile,

'Siste, viator.'

'Is there time,' I asked,
'In these last days of railroads, to
stop short

Like Cæsar's chariot (weighing half
a ton)

On the Appian road for morals?'

He answered grave, 'for necessary
words,

Inclusive, trust me, of no epitaph
On man or act, my cousin. We
have read

A will, which gives you all the per-
sonal goods

And funded monies of your aunt.'

'I thank
Her memory for it. With three
hundred pounds

We buy in England even, clear
standing-room

To stand and work in. Only two
hours since,

I fancied I was poor.'

'And cousin, still
You're richer than you fancy. The
will says,

*Three hundred pounds, and any
other sum*

*Of which the said testatrix dies
possessed.*

I say she died possessed of other
sums.'

'Dear Romney, need we chronicle
the pence?

I'm richer than I thought—that's
evident.

Enough so.'

'Listen rather. You've to do
With business and a cousin,' he re-
sumed,

'And both, I fear, need patience.
Here's the fact.

The other sum (there *is* another
sum,

Unspecified in any will which dates
After possession, yet bequeathed as
much

And clearly as those said three hun-
dred pounds)

Is thirty thousand. You will have
it paid

When? where? My duty troubles
you with words.'

He struck the iron when the bar
was hot;

No wonder if my eyes sent out
some sparks.

'Pause there! I thank you. You
are delicate

In glosing gifts;—but I, who share
your blood,

Am rather made for giving, like
yourself,

Than taking, like your pensioners.
Farewell.'

He stopped me with a gesture of
calm pride.

'A Leigh,' he said, 'gives largesse
and gives love, [glose

But gloses never: if a Leigh could
He would not do it, moreover, to a
Leigh,

With blood trained up along nine
centuries

To hound and hate a lie from eyes
like yours.

And now we'll make the rest as
clear; your aunt

Possessed these monies.'

'You will make it clear,
My cousin, as the honour of us both,
Or one of us speaks vainly—that's
not I.

My aunt possessed this sum,—in-
herited
From whom, and when? bring doc-
uments, prove dates.'

'Why now indeed you throw your
bonnet off, [rithm!

As if you had time left for a loga-
The faith's the want. Dear cousin,
give me faith,

And you shall walk this road with
silken shoes,

As clean as any lady of our house
Supposed the proudest. Oh, I com-
prehend

The whole position from your point
of sight.

I oust you from your father's halls
and lands,

And make you poor by getting rich
—that's law;

Considering which, in common cir-
cumstance, [from me

You would not scruple to accept
Some compensation, some suffi-
ciency [alas,

Of income—that were justice; but
I love you . . . that's mere nature;

you reject

My love . . . that's nature also: and
at once,

You cannot, from a suitor disal-
lowed,

A hand thrown back as mine is,
into yours

Receive a doit, a farthing, . . . not
for the world!

That's woman's etiquette, and ob-
viously

Exceeds the claim of nature, law,
and right, }see,

Unanswerable to all. I grant, you
The case as you conceive it,—leave

you room

To sweep your ample skirts of
womanhood;

While, standing humbly squeezed
against the wall,

I own myself excluded from being
 just,
 Restrained from paying indubitable
 debts,
 Because denied from giving you
 my soul— [it
 That's my misfortune!—I submit to
 As if, in some more reasonable age,
 'Twould not be less inevitable.
 Enough.
 You'll trust me, cousin, as a
 gentleman,
 To keep your honour, as you count
 it, pure,
 Your scruples (just as if I thought
 them wise)
 Safe and inviolate from gifts of
 mine.'

I answered mild but earnest. 'I
 believe
 In no one's honour which another
 keeps,
 Nor man's nor woman's. As I
 keep, myself,
 My truth and my religion, I depute
 No father, though I had one this
 side death,
 Nor brother, though I had twenty,
 much less you,
 Though twice my cousin, and once
 Romney Leigh,
 To keep my honour pure. You
 face, to-day,
 A man who wants instruction,
 mark me, not
 A woman who wants protection.
 As to a man,
 Show manhood, speak out plainly,
 be precise
 With facts and dates. My aunt
 inherited
 This sum, you say—'
 'I said she died possessed
 Of this, dear cousin.'
 'Not by heritage
 Thank you: we're getting to the
 facts at last.

Perhaps she played at commerce
 with a ship
 Which came in heavy with Austra-
 lian gold?
 Or touched a lottery with her fin-
 ger-end,
 Which tumbled on a sudden into
 her lap [ity?
 Some old Rhine tower of principal-
 Perhaps she had to do with a ma-
 rine
 Sub-transatlantic railroad, which
 pre-pays
 As well as pre-supposes? or per-
 haps
 Some stale ancestral debt was
 after-paid
 By a hundred years, and took her
 by surprise?—
 You shake your head, my cousin;
 I guess ill.'

'You need not guess, Aurora, nor
 deride,—
 The truth is not afraid of hurting
 you.
 You'll find no cause, in all your
 scruples, why
 Your aunt should cavil at a deed
 of gift
 'Twixt her and me.'
 'I thought so—ah! a gift.'

'You naturally thought so,' he re-
 sumed.
 'A very natural gift.'
 'A gift, a gift!
 Her individual life being stranded
 high [ulence,
 Above all want, approaching op-
 Too haughty was she to accept a
 gift
 Without some ultimate aim: ah,
 ah, I see,—
 A gift intended plainly for her heirs,
 And so accepted . . . if accepted . . .
 ah,
 Indeed that might be; I am snared
 perhaps,

Just so. But, cousin, shall I pardon you,
If thus you have caught me with a
cruel springe ?'

He answered gently, 'Need you
tremble and pant

Like a netted lioness ? is't my
fault, mine,

That you're a grand wild creature
of the woods,

And hate the stall built for you ?

Any way,

Though triply netted, need you
glare at me ?

I do not hold the cords of such a
You're free from me, Aurora !'

'Now may God

Deliver me from this strait ! This
gift of yours

Was tendered . . . when ? accepted . . .
when ?' I asked.

'A month . . . a fortnight since ?
Six weeks ago

It was not tendered. By a word
she dropped

I know it was not tendered nor re-
ceived.

When was it ? bring your dates.'

'What matters when ?

A half-hour ere she died, or a half-
year,

Secured the gift, maintains the
heritage

Inviolable with law. As easy pluck
The golden stars from heaven's

embroidered stole,
To pin them on the grey side of

this earth,
As make you poor again, thank

God.'

'Not poor

Nor clean again from henceforth,
you thank God ?

Well, sir—I ask you . . . I insist at
need . . .

Vouchsafe the special date, the
special date.'

'The day before her death-day,'
he replied,

'The gift was in her hands. We'll
find that deed,

And certify that date to you.'

As one

Who has climbed a mountain-
height and carried up

His own heart climbing, panting in
his throat

With the toil of the ascent, takes
breath at last,

Looks back in triumph—so I stood
and looked :

'Dear cousin Romney, we have
reached the top

Of this steep question, and may
rest, I think.

But first,—I pray you pardon, that
the shock

And surge of natural feeling and
event

Had made me oblivious of acquaint-
ing you

That this, this letter . . . unread,
mark,—still sealed,

Was found enfolded in the poor
dead hand :

That spirit of hers had gone beyond
the address,

Which could not find her though
you wrote it clear,—

I know your writing, Romney,—
recognise

The open-hearted *A*, the liberal
sweep

Of the *G*. Now listen,—let us un-
derstand ;

You will not find that famous deed
of gift,

Unless you find it in the letter here,
Which, not being mine, I give you

back.—Refuse
To take the letter ? well then—

you and I,
As writer and as heiress, open it

Together by your leave.—Exactly
so :

The words in which the noble of
 ferings made,
 Are nobler still, my cousin : and, I
 own,
 The proudest and most delicate
 heart alive, [gift
 Distracted from the measure of the
 By such a grace in giving, might
 accept
 Your largesse without thinking any
 more
 Of the burthen of it, than King
 Solomon
 Considered when he wore his holy
 ring
 Charactered over with the ineffable
 spell, [up
 How many carats of fine gold made
 Its money-value. So, Leigh gives
 to Leigh—
 Or rather, might have given, ob-
 serve!—for that's
 The point we come to. Here's a
 proof of gift,
 But here's no proof, sir, of accept-
 ancy,
 But rather disproof. Death's black
 dust, being blown
 Infiltrated through every secret fold
 Of this sealed letter by a puff of
 fate, [ink
 Dried up for ever the fresh-written
 Annulled the gift, disutilised the
 grace,
 And left these fragments.'
 As I spoke, I tore
 The paper up and down, and down
 and up
 And crosswise, till it fluttered from
 my hands,
 As forest-leaves, stripped suddenly
 and rapt
 By a whirlwind on Valdarno, drop
 again,
 Drop slow, and strew the melan-
 choly ground
 Before the amazed hills . . . why, so,
 indeed,

I'm writing like a poet, somewhat
 large [aggerate
 In the type of the image,—and ex-
 A small thing with a great thing,
 topping it!—
 But then I'm thinking how his eyes
 looked . . . his,
 With what despondent and sur-
 prised reproach!
 I think the tears were in them, as
 he looked—
 I think the manly mouth just trem-
 bled. Then
 He broke the silence.
 'I may ask, perhaps,
 Although no stranger . . . only Rom-
 ney Leigh,
 Which means still less . . . than Vin-
 cent Carrington,
 Your plans in going hence, and
 where you go.
 This cannot be a secret.'
 'All my life
 Is open to you, cousin. I go hence
 To London, to the gathering-place
 of souls,
 To live mine straight out, vocally,
 in books;
 Harmoniously for others, if indeed
 A woman's soul, like man's, be wide
 enough
 To carry the whole octave (that's
 to prove),
 Or, if I fail, still purely by myself.
 Pray God be with me, Romney.'
 'Ah, poor child,
 Who fight against the mother's
 'tiring hand,
 And choose the headsman's! May
 God change his world
 For your sake, sweet, and make it
 mild as heaven,
 And juster than I have found you!'
 But I paused.
 'And you, my cousin?'—
 'I,' he said,—'you ask?
 You care to ask? Well, girls have
 curious minds,

<p>And fain would know the end of everything, Of cousins, therefore, with the rest. For me, Aurora, I've my work: you know my work; And having missed this year some personal hope, I must beware the rather that I miss No reasonable duty. While you sing [and trees, Your happy pastorals of the meads Bethink you that I go to impress and prove On stifled brains and deafened ears, stunned deaf, Crushed dull with grief, that nature sings itself, [voice, And needs no mediate poet, lute or To make it vocal. While you ask of men Your audience, I may get their leave perhaps For hungry orphans to say audibly 'We're hungry, see,'—for beaten and bullied wives To hold their unweaned babies up in sight, Whom orphanage would better; and for all To speak and claim their portion.. by no means Of the soil...but of the sweat in tilling it, [privilege, Since this is now-a-days turned To have only God's curse on us, not man's. Such work I have for doing, elbow- deep In social problems,—as you tie your rhymes, [needs To draw my uses to cohere with And bring the uneven world back to its round; Or, failing so much, fill up, bridge at least To smoother issues, some abysmal cracks</p>	<p>And fiends of earth, intestine heats have made To keep men separate,—using story shifts [schools, Of hospitals, almshouses, infant And other practical stuff of partial good, [whole You lovers of the beautiful and Despise by system.' 'I despise? The scorn Is yours my cousin. Poets become such, Through scorning nothing. You decry them for The good of beauty sung and taught by them, While they respect your practical partial good As being a part of beauty's self. Adieu! When God helps all the workers for his world, The singers shall have help of Him, not last.'</p> <p>He smiled as men smile when they will not speak Because of something bitter in the thought; And still I feel his melancholy eyes Look judgment on me. It is seven years since: I know not if 'twas pity or 'twas scorn Has made them so far-reaching: judge it ye Who have had to do with pity more than love, And scorn than hatred. I am used, since then, To other ways, from equal men. But so, Even so, we let go hands, my cousin and I, And, in between us, rushed the torrent-world To blanch our faces like divided rocks,</p>
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And bar for ever mutual sight and
touch
Except through swirl of spray and
all that roar.

THIRD BOOK.

'TO-DAY thou girdest up thy loins
thyself,
And goest where thou wouldest :
presently
Others shall gird thee,' said the
Lord, 'to go
Where thou wouldest not.' He
spoke to Peter thus,
To signify the death which he
should die
When crucified head downwards.
If He spoke
To Peter then, He speaks to us the
same ;
The word suits many different
martyrdoms,
And signifies a multiform of death,
Although we scarcely die apostles,
we,
And have mislaid the keys of heaven
and earth.
For 'tis not in mere death that men
die most ;
And, after our first girding of the
loins [ery
In youth's fine linen and fair broid-
To run up hill and meet the rising
sun, [fool,
We are apt to sit tired, patient as a
While others gird us with the vio-
lent bands
Of social figments, feints, and form-
alisms, [ing up
Reversing our straight nature, lift-
Our base needs, keeping down our
lofty thoughts,
Head downward on the cross-sticks
of the world.
Yet He can pluck us from that
shameful cross.

God, set our feet low and our fore-
head high,
And show us how a man was made
to walk !

Leave the lamp, Susan, and go to
bed.

The room does very well ; I have
to write

Beyond the stroke of midnight.

Get away ; [room,

Your steps, for ever buzzing in the

Tease me like gnats. Ah, letters !
throw them down

At once, as I must have them, to
be sure,

Whether I bid you never bring me
such

At such an hour, or bid you. No
excuse

You choose to bring them, as I
choose perhaps

To throw them into the fire. Now
get to bed,

And dream, if possible, I am not
cross.

Why what a pettish, petty thing I
grow,—

A mere, mere woman,—a mere
flaccid nerve,

A kerchief left out all night in the
rain,

Turned soft so,—overtasked and
overstrained [life !

And overlived in this close London
And yet I should be stronger.

Never burn
Your letters, poor Aurora ! for they
stare

With red seals from the table, say-
ing each,

'Here's something that you know
not.' Out alas,

'Tis scarcely that the world's more
good and wise

Or even straighter and more con-
sequent

Since yesterday at this time—yet,
 again, [rat,
 If but one angel spoke from Ara-
 I should be very sorry not to hear :
 So open all the letters ! let me
 read.
 Blanche Ord, the writer in the
 'Lady's Fan,'
 Requests my judgment on . . . that,
 afterwards.
 Kate Ward desires the model of
 my cloak,
 And signs, 'Elisha to you.' Prin-
 gle Sharpe
 Presents his work on 'Social Con-
 duct,' craves
 A little money for his pressing
 debts . . .
 From me, who scarce have money
 for my needs,
 Art's fiery chariot which we jour-
 ney in
 Being apt to singe our singing-
 robes to holes.
 Although you ask me for my cloak,
 Kate Ward !
 Here's Rudgely knows it,—editor
 and scribe—
 He's 'forced to marry where his
 heart is not,
 Because the purse lacks where he
 lost his heart.'
 Ah,—lost it because no one picked
 it up !
 That's really loss ! (and passable
 impudence) [ly,
 My critic Hammond flatters pretti-
 And wants another volume like
 the last.
 My critic Belfair wants another
 book,
 Entirely different, which will sell,
 (and live ?)
 A striking book, yet not a start-
 ling book,
 The public blames originalities,
 (You must not pump spring-water
 unawares

Upon a gracious public, full of
 nerves—)
 Good things, not subtle, new yet
 orthodox,
 As easy reading as the dog-eared
 page
 That's fingered by said public fifty
 years,
 Since first taught spelling by its
 grandmother,
 And yet a revelation in some sort :
 That's hard, my critic Belfair ! So
 —what next ?
 My critic Stokes objects to abstract
 thoughts ;
 'Call a man, John, a woman, Joan,'
 says he, [ties :'
 'And do not prate so of humani-
 Whereat I call my critic simply
 Stokes.
 My critic Jobson recommends more
 mirth
 Because a cheerful genius suits the
 times,
 And all true poets laugh unquench-
 ably
 Like Shakspeare and the gods.
 That's very hard.
 The gods may laugh, and Shaks-
 peare ; Dante smiled
 With such a needy heart on two
 pale lips,
 We cry, 'Weep rather, Dante.'
 Poems are
 Men, if true poems : and who dares
 exclaim
 At any man's poor, 'Here, 'tis un-
 derstood
 The thunder fell last week and
 killed a wife,
 And scared a sickly husband—
 what of that ?
 Get up, be merry, shout and clap
 your hands,
 Because a cheerful genius suits the
 times—?'
 None say so to the man,—and why
 indeed

Should any to the poem? A ninth
 seal; [close.
 The apocalypse is drawing to a
 Ha,—this from Vincent Carrington,—
 'Dear friend,
 I want good counsel. Will you
 lend me wings
 To raise me to the subject, in a
 sketch
 I'll bring to-morrow—may I? at
 eleven?
 A poet's only born to turn to use;
 So save you! for the world . . . and
 Carrington.'

(With after.) 'Have you heard of
 Romney Leigh
 Beyond what's said of him in news-
 papers,
 His phalansteries there, his speech-
 es here,
 His pamphlets, pleas, and state-
 ments, everywhere.
 He dropped *me* long ago; but no
 one drops
 A golden apple—though indeed
 one day
 You hinted that, but jested. Well,
 at least
 You know Lord Howe who sees
 him . . . whom he sees
 And *you* see, and I hate to see,—
 for Howe
 Stands high upon the brink of
 theories,
 Observes the swimmers and cries
 'Very fine,' [like
 But keeps dry linen equally,—un-
 That gallant breaster, Romney.
 Strange it is,
 Such sudden madness seizing a
 young man
 To make earth over again,—while
 I'm content
 To make the pictures. Let me
 bring the sketch.
 A tiptoe Danae, overbold and hot;
 Both arms aflame to meet her
 wishing Jove

Halfway, and burn him faster
 down; the face
 And breasts upturned and strain-
 ing, the loose locks
 All glowing with the anticipated
 gold.
 Or here's another on the self-same
 theme.
 She lies here—flat upon her prison-
 floor,
 The long hair swathed about her
 to the heel
 Like wet sea-weed. You dimly
 see her through
 The glittering haze of that prodig-
 ious rain, [love
 Half blotted out of nature by a
 As heavy as fate. I'll bring you
 either sketch.
 I think, myself, the second indi-
 cates
 More passion.'

Surely. Self is put away.
 And calm with abdication. She is
 Jove,
 And no more Danae—greater thus.
 Perhaps
 The painter symbolises unawares
 Two states of the recipient artist-
 soul:
 One, forward, personal, wanting
 reverence, [calm,
 Because aspiring only. We'll be
 And know that, when indeed our
 Joves come down
 We all turn stiller than we have
 ever been.

Kind Vincent Carrington. I'll let
 him come.
 He talks of Florence,—and may
 say a word
 Of something as it chanced seven
 years ago,
 A hedgehog in the path, or a lame
 bird,
 In those green country walks, in
 that good time,

When certainly I was so miserable . . .
 I seem to have missed a blessing
 ever since.

The music soars within the little
 lark
 And the lark soars. It is not thus
 with men.
 We do not make our places with
 our strains,—
 Content, while they rise, to remain
 behind, [heaven.
 Alone on earth instead of so in
 No matter—I bear on my broken
 tale.

When Romney Leigh and I had
 parted thus,
 I took a chamber up three flights
 of stairs
 Not far from being as steep as
 some larks climb,
 And there in a certain house in
 Kensington,
 Three years I have lived and
 worked. Get leave to work
 In this world,—'tis the best you
 get at all; [gifts
 For God, in cursing, gives us better
 Than men in benediction. God
 says, 'Sweat
 For foreheads;' men say 'crowns;'
 and so we are crowned,—
 Ay, gashed by some tormenting
 circle of steel
 Which snaps with a secret spring.
 Get work; get work;
 Be sure 'tis better than what you
 work to get.

Serene and unafraid of solitude
 I worked the short days out,—and
 watched the sun
 On lurid morns or monstrous af-
 ternoons
 Like some Druidic idol's fiery brass
 With fixed unflickering outline of
 dead heat,

From which the blood of wretches
 pent inside
 Seems oozing forth to incarnadine
 the air,
 Push out through fog with his
 dilated disk,
 And startle the slant roofs and
 chimney-pots
 With splashes of fierce colour. Or
 I saw
 Fog only, the great tawny welter-
 ing fog,
 Involve the passive city, strangle it
 Alive, and draw it off into the void,
 Spires, bridges, streets, and squares,
 as if a sponge
 Had wiped out London,—or as
 noon and night
 Had clapped together and utterly
 struck out
 The intermediate time, undoing
 themselves
 In the act. Your city poets see
 such things
 Not despicable. Mountains of the
 south,
 When, drunk and mad with ele-
 mental wines
 They rend the seamless mist and
 stand up bare,
 Make fewer singers, haply. No
 one sings, [mount
 Descending Sinai; on Parnassus-
 You take a mule to climb and not
 a muse,
 Except in fable and figure: forests
 chant
 Their anthems to themselves, and
 leave you dumb.
 But sit in London at the day's
 decline,
 And view the city perish in the mist
 Like Pharaoh's armaments in the
 deep Red Sea,
 The chariots, horsemen, footmen,
 all the host,
 Sucked down and choked to silence
 —then, surprised

<p>By a sudden sense of vision and of tune, You feel as conquerors though you did not fight, [girls, And you and Israel's other singing- Ay, Miriam with them, sing the song you choose.</p> <p>I worked with patience which means almost power. I did some excellent things indif- ferently, Some bad things excellently. Both were praised, The latter loudest. And by such a time That I myself had set them down as sins Scarce worth the price of sackcloth, week by week Arrived some letter through the sedulous post, Like these I've read, and yet dis- similar, With pretty maiden seals,—initials twined Of lilies, or a heart marked <i>Emily</i>, (Convicting Emily of being all heart;) [lors, Or rarer tokens from young bache- Who wrote from college with the same goosequill, Suppose, they had just been pluck- ed of, and a snatch From Horace, 'Collegisse juvat,' set Upon the first page. Many a letter signed Or unsigned, showing the writers at eighteen Had lived too long, although a muse should help Their dawn by holding candles,— compliments, To smile or sigh at. Such could pass with me No more than coins from Moscow circulate</p>	<p>At Paris. Would ten roubles buy a tag Of ribbon on the boulevard, worth a sou? I smiled that all this youth should love me,—sighed That such a love could scarcely raise them up To love what was more worthy than myself; Then sighed again, again, less generously, [so, To think the very love they lavished Proved me inferior. The strong loved me not, And he . . . my cousin Romney . . did not write. I felt the silent finger of his scorn Prick every bubble of my frivo- lous fame As my breath blew it, and resolve it back To the air it came from. Oh, I justified The measure he had taken of my height: The thing was plain—he was not wrong a line; I played at art, made thrusts with a toy-sword, Amused the lads and maidens. Came a sigh Deep, hoarse with resolution,—I would work To better ends, or play in earnest. 'Heavens, I think I should be almost popular If this went on!'—I ripped my verses up, And found no blood upon the rapier's point; The heart in them was just an em- bryo's heart Which never yet had beat, that it should die; [life; Just gasps of make-believe galvanic Mere tones, inorganised to any tune.</p>
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And yet I felt it in me where it
 burnt,
 Like those hot fire-seeds of crea-
 tion held
 In Jove's clenched palm before the
 worlds were sown,—
 But I—I was not Juno even! my
 hand
 Was shut in weak convulsion,
 woman's ill,
 And when I yearned to lose a
 finger—lo,
 The nerve revolted. 'Tis the same
 even now :
 This hand may never, haply, open
 large,
 Before the spark is quenched, or
 the palm charred,
 To prove the power not else than
 by the pain.
 It burns, it burnt—my whole life
 burnt with it,
 And light, not sunlight and not
 torch-light, flashed
 My steps out through the slow and
 difficult road.
 I had grown distrustful of too for-
 ward Springs, [cance
 The season's books in drear signifi-
 Of morals, dropping round me.
 Lively books?
 The ash has livelier verdure than
 the yew ;
 And yet the yew's green longer,
 and alone
 Found worthy of the holy Christ-
 mas time.
 We'll plant more yews if possible,
 albeit
 We plant the graveyards with them.
 Day and night
 I worked my rhythmic thought, and
 furrowed up
 Both watch and slumber with long
 lines of life
 Which did not suit their season.
 The rose fell

From either cheek, my eyes globed
 luminous
 Through orbits of blue shadow,
 and my pulse
 Would shudder along the purple-
 veined wrist
 Like a shot bird. Youth's stern,
 set face to face
 With youth's ideal: and when
 people came
 And said, 'You work too much,
 you are looking ill,'
 I smiled for pity of them who
 pitied me,
 And thought I should be better
 soon perhaps
 For those ill looks. Observe—'I,'
 means in youth
 Just *I* . . the conscious and eternal
 soul
 With all its ends,—and not the
 outside life,
 The parcel-man, the doublet of the
 flesh, [ment,
 The so much liver, lung, integu-
 Which make the sum of 'I' here-
 after when
 World-talkers talk of doing well
 or ill.
I prosper, if I gain a step, although
 A nail then pierced my foot:
 although my brain
 Embracing any truth froze par-
 alysed, [ment ;
I prosper. I but change my instru-
 I break the spade off, digging deep
 for gold,
 And catch the mattock up.
 I worked on, on.
 Through all the bristling fence of
 nights and days
 Which hedges time in from the
 eternities,
 I struggled, . . never stopped to
 note the stakes
 Which hurt me in my course. The
 midnight oil

Would stink sometimes; there
 came some vulgar needs :
 I had to live that therefore I might
 work,
 And, being but poor, I was con-
 strained, for life,
 To work with one hand for the
 booksellers
 While working with the other for
 myself
 And art. You swim with feet as
 well as hands,
 Or make small way. I apprehend-
 ed this,—
 In England, no one lives by verse
 that lives ; [prose
 And, apprehending, I resolved by
 To make a space to sphere my liv-
 ing verse.
 I wrote for cyclopædias, magazines,
 And weekly papers, holding up
 my name
 To keep it from the mud. I learnt
 the use
 Of the editorial ' we ' in a review,
 As courtly ladies the fine trick of
 trains,
 And swept it grandly through the
 open doors
 As if one could not pass through
 doors at all
 Save so encumbered. I wrote tales
 beside,
 Carved many an article on cherry-
 stones
 To suit light readers,—something
 in the lines
 Revealing, it was said, the mallet-
 hand,
 But that, I'll never vouch for.
 What you do
 For bread, will taste of common
 grain, not grapes,
 Although you have a vineyard in
 Champagne,—
 Much less in Nephelococcygia,
 As mine was peradventure.
 Having bread

For just so many days, just breath-
 ing room
 For body and verse, I stood up
 straight and worked
 My veritable work. And as the
 soul
 Which grows within a child makes
 the child grow,— [God,
 Or as the fiery sap, the touch from
 Careering through a tree, dilates
 the bark
 And roughs with scale and knob,
 before it strikes
 The summer foliage out in a green
 flame—
 So life, in deepening with me, deep-
 ened all
 The course I took, the work I did.
 Indeed
 The academic law convinced of sin ;
 The critics cried out on the falling
 off,
 Regretting the first manner. But
 I felt
 My heart's life throbbing in my
 verse to show
 It lived, it also—certes incomplete,
 Disordered with all Adam in the
 blood,
 But even its very tumors, warts,
 and wens,
 Still organised by and implying life.
 A lady called upon me on such a
 day.
 She had the low voice of your Eng-
 lish dames, [a note
 Unused, it seems, to need rise half
 To catch attention,—and their
 quiet mood,
 As if they lived too high above the
 earth
 For that to put them out in any-
 thing :
 So gentle, because verily so proud ;
 So wary and afraid of hurting you,
 By no means that you are not really
 vile,

But that they would not touch you
 with their foot
 To push you to your place ; so self-
 possessed
 Yet gracious and conciliating, it
 takes
 An effort in their presence to speak
 truth :
 You know the sort of woman,—
 brilliant stuff, [mar.
 And out of nature. ' Lady Walde-
 She said her name quite simply, as
 if it meant
 Not much indeed, but something,—
 took my hands,
 And smiled as if her smile could
 help my case,
 And dropped her eyes on me and
 let them melt.
 ' Is this,' she said, ' the Muse ? '
 ' No sybil even,'
 I answered, ' since she fails to guess
 the cause
 Which taxed you with this visit,
 madam.'
 ' Good,'
 She said, ' I value what's sincere at
 once ; [Muse,
 Perhaps if I had found a literal
 The visit might have taxed me. As
 it is,
 You wear your blue so chiefly in
 your eyes,
 My fair Aurora, in a frank good
 way.
 It comforts me entirely for your
 fame,
 As well as for the trouble of ascent
 To this Olympus.'
 There, a silver laugh
 Ran rippling through her quicken-
 ed little breaths
 The steep stair somewhat justified.
 ' But still
 Your ladyship has left me curious
 why
 You dared the risk of finding the
 said Muse ? '

' Ah,—keep me, notwithstanding to
 the point,
 Like any pedant. Is the blue in
 eyes
 As awful as in stockings after all,
 I wonder, that you'd have my busi-
 ness out
 Before I breathe—exact the epic
 plunge
 In spite of gasps ? Well, natural-
 ly you think
 I've come here as the lion-hunters
 go [trap,
 To deserts, to secure you with a
 For exhibition in my drawing-
 rooms
 On zoologic soirées ? Not in the
 least.
 Roar softly at me ; I am frivolous,
 I dare say ; I have played at wild-
 beasts shows,
 Like other women of my class,—
 but now
 I meet my lion simply as Andro-
 cles
 Met his . . . when at his mercy.'
 So, she bent
 Her head, as queens may mock,—
 then lifting up
 Her eyelids with real grave queen-
 ly look,
 Which ruled and would not spare,
 not even herself,—
 ' I think you have a cousin :—Rom-
 ney Leigh.'
 ' You bring a word from *him* ? '—
 my eyes leapt up
 To the very height of hers,—' a
 word from *him* ? '
 ' I bring a word about him, actu-
 ally.
 But first,'—she pressed me with
 her urgent eyes—
 ' You do not love him,—you ? '
 ' You're frank at least
 In putting questions, madam,' I re-
 plied.

'I love my cousin cousinly—no more.'
 'I guessed as much. I'm ready to be frank
 In answering also, if you'll question me,
 Or even with something less. You stand outside, [sex;
 You artist women, of the common
 You share not with us, and exceed us so
 Perhaps by what you're mulcted in, your hearts
 Being starved to make your heads : so run the old
 Traditions of you. I can therefore speak,
 Without the natural shame which creatures feel
 When speaking on their level, to their like.
 There's many a papist she, would rather die
 Than own to her maid she put a ribbon on
 To catch the indifferent eye of such a man,—
 Who yet would count adulteries on her beads
 At holy Mary's shrine and never blush; [we lose
 Because the saints are so far off,
 All modesty before them. Thus, to-day.
 'Tis I, love Romney Leigh.'
 'Forbear,' I cried.
 'If here's no Muse, still less is any saint;
 Nor even a friend, that Lady Waldemar
 Should make confessions' . . .
 'That's unkindly said.
 If no friend, what forbids to make a friend
 To join to our confession ere we have done?
 I love your cousin. If it seems unwise
 To say so, it's still foolisher (we're frank)
 To feel so. My first husband left me young,
 And pretty enough, so please you, and rich enough,
 To keep my booth in May-fair with the rest
 To happy issues. There are marriages
 Would serve seven years to call me wife, I know;
 And, after seven, I might consider it,
 For there's some comfort in a marriage
 When all's said,—yes, but after the seven years;
 I, now, love Romney. You put up your lip,
 So like a Leigh! so like him!—Pardon me,
 I am well aware I do not derogate
 I loving Romney Leigh. The name is good,
 The means are excellent; but the man; the man—
 Heaven help us both,—I am near as mad as he,
 In loving such an one.'
 She slowly wrung
 Her heavy ringlets till they touched her smile,
 As reasonably sorry for herself;
 And thus continued,—
 'Of a truth, Miss Leigh,
 I have not, without struggle, come to this.
 I took a master in the German tongue,
 I gamed a little, went to Paris twice;
 But, after all, this love! . . . you eat of love,
 And do as vile a thing as if you ate
 Of garlic—which, whatever else you eat, [peach
 Tastes uniformly acrid, till your

Reminds you of your onion! Am I coarse?
 Well, love's coarse, nature's coarse—ah, there's the rub!
 We fair fine ladies, who park out our lives
 From common sheep-paths, cannot help the crows
 From flying over,—we're as natural still
 As Blowsalinda. Drape us perfectly
 In Lyons' velvet,—we are not, for that,
 Lay-figures, like you: we have hearts within,
 Warm, live, improvident, indecent hearts,
 As ready for outrageous ends and acts
 As any distressed sempstress of them all
 That Romney groans and toils for. We catch love
 And other fevers, in the vulgar way. Love will not be outwitted by our wit,
 Nor outrun by our equipages:—mine
 Persisted, spite of efforts. All my cards
 Turned up but Romney Leigh; my German stopped
 At germane Wertherism; my Paris rounds
 Returned me from the Champs Elysées just
 A ghost, and sighing like Dido's. I came home
 Uncured,—convicted rather to myself
 Of being in love . . . in love! That's coarse you'll say.
 I'm talking garlic.'

Coldly I replied.
 'Apologise for atheism, not love! For me, I do believe in love, and God.
 I know my cousin: Lady Waldemar

I know not: yet I say as much as this—
 Whoever loves him, let her not excuse [a man,
 But cleanse herself, that, loving such
 She may not do it with such unworthy love
 He cannot stoop and take it.' 'That is said
 Austerely, like a youthful prophetess,
 Who knits her brows across her pretty eyes
 To keep them back from following the grey flight
 Of doves between the temple-columns. Dear,
 Be kinder with me. Let us two be friends.
 I'm a mere woman.—the more weak perhaps
 Through being so proud; you're better, as for him,
 He's best. Indeed he builds his goodness up
 So high, it topples down to the other side,
 And makes a sort of badness, there's the worst
 I have to say against your cousin's best! [worst,
 And so be mild, Aurora, with my
 For his sake, if not mine.' 'I own myself,
 Incredulous of confidence like this
 Availing him or you.' 'And I, myself
 Of being worthy of him with any love:
 In your sense I am not so—let it pass.
 Let that pass too.' 'Pass, pass; we play police
 Upon my cousin's life, to indicate
 What may or may not pass.' I cried. 'He knows
 What's worthy of him; the choice remains with *him*;

And what he chooses, act or wife, I think
 I shall not call unworthy, I, for one.'
 ' 'Tis somewhat rashly said,' she answered slow.
 ' Now let's talk reason, though we talk of love.
 Your cousin Romney Leigh's a monster: there,
 The word's out fairly; let me prove the fact. [antiques
 We'll take, say, that most perfect of
 They call the Genius of the Vatican,
 Which seems too beauteous to endure itself
 In this mixed world, and fasten it for once
 Upon the torso of the Dancing Fawn,
 (Who might limp surely, if he did not dance,)
 Instead of Buonarroti's mask: what then? [ney is,
 We show the sort of monster Rom—
 With godlike virtue and heroic aims
 Subjoined to limping possibilities
 Of mismade human nature. Grant the man
 Twice godlike, twice heroic,—still he limps,
 And here's the point we come to.'
 ' Pardon me,
 But, Lady Waldemar, the point's the thing
 We never come to.'
 ' Caustic, insolent
 At need! I like you'—(there, she took my hands)
 ' And now my lioness, help Androcles,
 For all your roaring. Help me! for myself
 I would not say so—but for him.
 He limps
 So certainly, he'll fall into the pit
 A week hence,—so I lose him—so he is lost!

For when he's fairly married, he a Leigh,
 To a girl of doubtful life, undoubted birth,
 Starved out in London till her coarse-grained hands
 Are whiter than her morals,—even you
 May call his choice unworthy.'
 ' Married! lost!
 He, . . . Romney!'
 ' Ah, you're moved at last,' she said. [sun,
 ' These monsters, set out in the open
 Of course throw monstrous shadows: those who think
 Awry, will scarce act straightly.
 Who but he?
 And who but you can wonder?
 He has been mad,
 The whole world knows, since first,
 a nominal man,
 He soured the proctors, tried the gownsmen's wits,
 With equal scorn of triangles and wine,
 And took no honours, yet was honourable.
 They'll tell you he lost count of
 Homer's ships
 In Melbourne's poor-bills, Ashley's
 factory bills— [praise,
 Ignored the Aspasia we all dare to
 For other women, dear, we could not name
 Because we're decent. Well, he had some right
 On his side probably; men always have,
 Who go absurdly wrong. The living boor
 Who brews your ale, exceeds in vital worth
 Dead Cæsar who 'stops bungholes' in the cask;
 And also, to do good is excellent,
 For persons of his income, even to boors:

I sympathise with all such things.
 But he
 Went mad upon them . . madder
 and more mad,
 From college times to these,—as
 going down hill,
 The faster still, the farther! you
 must know
 Your Leigh by heart; he has sown
 his black young curls
 With bleaching cares of half a mill-
 ion men [sin,
 Already. If you do not starve, or
 You're nothing to him. Pay the
 income-tax,
 And break your heart upon't . . he'll
 scarce be touched;
 But come upon the parish, qualified
 For the parish stocks, and Romney
 will be there
 To call you brother, sister, or per-
 haps
 A tenderer name still. Had I any
 chance
 With Mister Leigh, who am Lady
 Waldemar,
 And never committed felony?'
 'You speak
 Too bitterly,' I said, 'for the literal
 truth.'
 'The truth is bitter. Here's a man
 who looks
 For ever on the ground! you must
 be low;
 Or else a pictured ceiling overhead,
 Good painting thrown away. For
 me, I've done
 What women may, we're somewhat
 limited,
 We modest women, but I've done
 my best.
 —How men are perjured when they
 swear our eyes
 Have meaning in them! they're
 just blue or brown,
 They just can drop their lids a little.
 And yet

Mine did more, for I read half Fou-
 rier through,
 Proudhon, Considerant, and Louis
 Blanc,
 With various other of his socialists;
 And if I had been a fathom less in
 love,
 Had cured myself with gaping. As
 it was,
 I quoted from them prettily enough
 Perhaps, to make them sound half
 rational
 To a saner man than he when'er
 we talked,
 (For which I dodged occasion)—
 learnt by heart
 His speeches in the Commons and
 elsewhere
 Upon the social question; heaped
 reports
 Of wicked women and penitenti-
 aries [Sue;
 On all my tables, with a place for
 And gave my name to swell sub-
 scription-lists
 Toward keeping up the sun at
 night in heaven,
 And other possible ends. All things
 I did,
 Except the impossible . . such as
 wearing gowns
 Provided by the Ten Hours' move-
 ment: there,
 I stopped—we must stop some-
 where. He, meanwhile,
 Unmoved as the Indian tortoise
 'neath the world,
 Let all that noise go on upon his
 back:
 He would not disconcert or throw
 me out; [class
 'Twas well to see a woman of my
 With such a dawn of conscience.
 For the heart,
 Made firewood for his sake, and
 flaming up
 To his face,—he merely warmed
 his feet at it;

But deigned to let my carriage stop
 him short
 In park or street,—he leaning on
 the door
 With news of the committee which
 sate last
 On pickpockets at suck.
 ‘You jest—you jest.’
 ‘As martyrs jest, dear, (if you read
 their lives)
 Upon the axe which kills them.
 When all’s done
 By me, . . . for him—you’ll ask him
 presently [tell,
 The colour of my hair—he cannot
 Or answers ‘dark’ at random,—
 while, be sure, [ten,
 He’s absolute on the figure, five or
 Of my last subscription. Is it
 bearable,
 And I a woman?’
 ‘Is it reparable.
 Though I were a man?’
 ‘I know not. That’s to prove.
 But first, this shameful marriage.’
 ‘Ay?’ I cried,
 ‘Then really there’s a marriage?’
 ‘Yesterday
 I held him fast upon it. ‘Mister
 Leigh,’
 Said I, ‘shut up a thing, it makes
 more noise.
 ‘The boiling town keeps secrets ill;
 I’ve known
 Yours since last week. Forgive
 my knowledge so
 You feel I’m not the woman of
 the world
 ‘The world thinks; you have borne
 with me before
 ‘And used me in your noble work,
 our work,
 ‘And now you shall not cast me off
 because
 ‘You’re at the difficult point, the
 join. ’Tis true

‘Even I can scarce admit the co-
 gency
 ‘Of such a marriage . . . where you
 do not love,
 ‘(Except the class) you marry and
 throw your name [cape
 ‘Down to the gutter, for a fire-es-
 ‘To future generations!’tis sublime,
 ‘A great example,—a true Genesis
 ‘Of the opening social era. But
 take heed;
 ‘This virtuous act must have a pa-
 tent weight, [tell,
 ‘Or loses half its virtue. Make it
 ‘Interpret it, and set it in the light,
 ‘And do not muffle it in a winter
 cloak
 ‘As a vulgar bit of shame,—as if,
 at best,
 ‘A Leigh had made a misalliance
 and blushed
 ‘A Howard should know it.’ Then
 I pressed him more—
 ‘He would not choose,’ I said, ‘that
 even his kin . . .
 ‘Aurora Leigh, even . . . should con-
 ceive his act
 ‘Less sacrifice, more fantasy.’ At
 which
 He grew so pale, dear, . . . to the
 lips I knew,
 I had touched him. ‘Do you know
 her,’ he inquired,
 ‘My cousin Aurora?’ ‘Yes,’ I said
 and lied.
 (But truly we all know you by your
 books)
 And so I offered to come straight
 to you, [cause,
 Explain the subject, justify the
 And take you with me to St. Mar-
 garet’s Court
 To see this miracle, this Marian
 Erle,
 This drover’s daughter (she’s not
 pretty, he swears)
 Upon whose finger, exquisitely
 pricked

By a hundred needles, we're to
hang the tie
'Twixt class and class in England
—thus indeed
By such a presence, yours and
mine, to lift
The match up from the doubtful
place. At once
He thanked me sighing . . . mur-
mured to himself
'She'll do it perhaps ; she's noble.'
—thanked me, twice,
And promised, as my guerdon, to
put off
His marriage for a month.'

I answered then.
'I understand your drift imperfectly.
You wish to lead me to my cousin's
betrothed,
To touch her hand if worthy, and
hold her hand
If feeble, thus to justify his match.
So be it then. But how this serves
your ends,
And how the strange confession of
your love
Serves this, I have to learn—I can-
not see.'

She knit her restless forehead.
'Then, despite,
Aurora, that most radiant morning
name,
You're dull as any London after-
noon.
I wanted time,—and gained it,—
wanted *you*,
And gain you! You will come
and see the girl
In whose most prodigal eyes the
lineal pearl
And pride of all your lofty race of
Leighs [ised
Is destined to solution. Author-
By sight and knowledge, then,
you'll speak your mind,
And prove to Romney, in your
brilliant way,

He'll wrong the people and poster-
ity
(Say such a thing is bad for me and
you,
And you fail utterly,) by concluding
thus [up,
An execrable marriage. Break it
Disroot it—peradventure presently
We'll plant a better fortune in its
place.
Be good to me, Aurora, scorn me
less
For saying the thing I should not.
Well I know
I should not. I have kept, as others
have,
The iron rule of womanly reserve
In lip and life till now : I wept a
week
Before I came here.'—Ending, she
was pale ;
The last words, haughtily said, were
tremulous.
This palfrey pranced in harness,
arched her neck,
And, only by the foam upon the
bit,
You saw she champed against it.
Then I rose.
'I love love : truth's no cleaner
thing than love.
I comprehend a love so fiery hot
It burns its natural veil of august
shame,
And stands sublimely in the nude,
as chaste
As Medicean Venus. But I know,
A love that burns through veils will
burn through masks
And shrivel up treachery. What,
love and lie !
Nay—go to the opera ! your love's
curable.'
'I love and lie ? ' she said—' I lie,
forsooth ? ' [floor,
And beat her taper foot upon the
And smiled against the shoe,—
' You're hard, Miss Leigh,

Unversed in current phrases,—
 Bowling-greens
 Of poets are fresher than the world's
 highways ;
 Forgive me that I rashly blew the
 dust
 Which dims our hedges even, in
 your eyes,
 And vexed you so much. You find,
 probably,
 No evil in this marriage,—rather
 good
 Of innocence, to pastoralize in song :
 You'll give the bond your signature,
 perhaps.
 Beneath the lady's mark,—indiffer-
 ent
 That Romney chose a wife, could
 write her name,
 In witnessing he loved her.'
 'Loved!' I cried ;
 'Who tells you that he wants a
 wife to love ?
 He gets a horse to use, not love, I
 think :
 There's work for wives as well,—
 and after, straw,
 When men are liberal. For my-
 self, you err
 Supposing power in me to break
 this match,
 I could not do it to save Romney's
 life ;
 And would not, to save mine.'
 'You take it so,'
 She said ; 'farewell then. Write
 your books in peace,
 As far as may be for some secret
 stir
 Now obvious to me,—for, most ob-
 viously,
 In coming hither I mistook the
 way.'
 Whereat she touched my hand, and
 bent her head,
 And floated from me like a silent
 cloud
 That leaves a sense of thunder.

I drew breath
 Oppressed in my deliverance.
 After all
 This woman breaks her social sys-
 tem up
 For love, so counted—the love
 possible [pulled
 To such,—and lilies are still lilies,
 By smutty hands, though spotted
 from their white ;
 And thus she is better haply of her
 kind,
 Than Romney Leigh, who lives by
 diagrams,
 And crosses out the spontaneities
 Of all his individual, personal life,
 With formal universals. As if man
 Were set upon a high stool at a desk
 To keep God's books for Him in
 red and black,
 And feel by millions! What, if
 even God
 Were chiefly God by living out
 Himself
 To an individualism of the Infinite,
 Eterne, intense, profuse,—still
 throwing up
 The golden spray of multitudinous
 worlds
 In measure to the proclive weight
 and rush
 Of His inner nature,—the sponta-
 neous love
 Still proof and outlaw of sponta-
 neous life ?
 Then live, Aurora.

Two hours afterward,
 Within St. Margaret's Court I stood
 alone,
 Close-veiled. A sick child, from
 an ague-fit,
 Whose wasted right hand gamboled
 'gainst his left
 With an old brass button in a blot
 of sun,
 Jeered weakly at me as I passed
 across

The uneven pavement; while a woman, rouged
 Upon the angular cheek-bones, kerchief torn,
 Thin dangling locks, and flat lascivious mouth,
 Cursed at a window both ways, in and out,
 By turns some bed-rid creature and myself,—
 'Lie still there, mother! liker the dead dog
 You'll be to-morrow. What, we pick our way,
 Fine madam, with those damnable small feet! [good,
 We cover up our face from doing
 As if it were our purse! What brings you here,
 My lady? is't to find my gentleman
 Who visits his tame pigeon in the eaves?
 Our cholera catch you with its cramps and spasms,
 And tumble up your good clothes, veil and all,
 And turn your whiteness dead-blue.' I looked up;
 I think I could have walked through hell that day,
 And never flinched. 'The dear Christ comfort you,'
 I said, 'you must have been most miserable [out
 To be so cruel,—and I emptied
 My purse upon the stones: when, as I had cast
 The last charm in the cauldron, the whole court
 Went boiling, bubbling up, from all its doors
 And windows, with a hideous wail of laughs
 And roar of oaths, and blows perhaps . . . I passed
 Too quickly for distinguishing . . . and pushed [hinge,
 A little side-door hanging on a

And plunged into the dark, and groped and climbed
 The long, steep, narrow stair 'twixt broken rail
 And mildewed wall that let the plaster drop
 To startle me in the blackness. Still, up, up!
 So high lived Romney's bride. I paused at last
 Before a low door in the roof, and knocked;
 There came an answer like a hurried dove,
 'So soon? can that be Mister Leigh? so soon?'
 And as I entered, an ineffable face
 Met mine upon the threshold. 'Oh, not you,
 Not you!' . . . the dropping of the voice implied,
 'Then, if not you, for me not any one.'
 I looked her in the eyes, and held her hands,
 And said, 'I am his cousin,—Romney Leigh's;
 And here I'm come to see my cousin too.'
 She touched me with her face and with her voice,
 This daughter of the people. Such soft flowers,
 From such rough roots? the people, under there,
 Can sin so, curse so, look so, smell so . . . faugh!
 Yet have such daughters?
 No wise beautiful
 Was Marian Erle. She was not white nor brown,
 But could look either, like a mist that changed
 According to being shone on more or less. [curls
 The hair, too, ran its opulence of
 In doubt 'twixt dark and bright, nor left you clear

<p>To name the colour. Too much hair perhaps (I'll name a fault here) for so small a head Which seemed to droop on that side and on this, As a full-blown rose uneasy with its weight Though not a wind should trouble it. Again, The dimple in the cheek had better gone With redder, fuller rounds: and somewhat large The mouth was, though the milky little teeth Dissolved it to so infantine a smile. For soon it smiled at me; the eyes smiled too, But 'twas as if remembering they had wept, And knowing they should, some day, weep again.</p> <p>We talked. She told me all her story out, Which I'll re-tell with fuller utter- ance, [times As coloured and confirmed in after- By others and herself too. Marian Erle Was born upon the ledge of Mal- vern Hall To eastward, in a hut built up at night To evade the landlord's eye, of mud and turf, Still liable, if once he looked that way, To being straight levelled, scattered by his foot, Like any other anthill. Born I say; God sent her to His world, com- missioned right, Her human testimonials fully signed, Not scant in soul—complete in lineaments;</p>	<p>But others had to swindle her a place To wail in when she had come. No place for her By man's law born an outlaw; was this babe. Her first cry in our strange and strangling air, When cast in spasms out by the shuddering womb, Was wrong against the social code,—forced wrong. What business had the baby to cry there? I tell her story and grow passionate. She, Marian, did not tell it so, but used Meek words that made no wonder of herself For being so sad a creature. 'Mister Leigh Considered truly that such things should change. They <i>will</i>, in heaven—but mean- time, on the earth, There's none can like a nettle as a pink, Except himself. We're nettles, some of us, And give offence by the act of springing up; And, if we leave the damp side of the wall, The hoes, of course, are on us.' So she said. Her father earned his life by ran- dom jobs Despised by steadier workmen— keeping swine On commons, picking hops, or hurrying on The harvest at wet seasons,—or, at need, Assisting the Welsh drovers, when a drove [mist Of startled horses plunged into the Below the mountain-road, and sowed the wind</p>
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And Rose's pelting glee, as frank
 as rain
 On cherry-blossoms, brightened
 Marian too, [loved.
 To see another merry whom she
 She whispered once (the children
 side by side,
 With mutual arms entwined about
 their necks)
 Your mother lets you laugh so?'
 'Ay,' said Rose,
 'She lets me. She was dug into
 the ground
 Six years since, I being but a year-
 ling wean.
 Such mothers let us play and lose
 our time,
 And never scold nor beat us! don't
 you wish
 You had one like that?' There,
 Marian breaking off
 Looked suddenly in my face.
 'Poor Rose,' said she,
 'I heard her laugh last night in
 Oxford Street.
 I'd pour out half my blood to stop
 that laugh.
 Poor Rose, poor Rose!' said
 Marian.

She resumed.

It tried her, when she had learnt
 at Sunday-school
 What God was, what he wanted
 from us all,
 And how in choosing sin we vexed
 the Christ,
 To go straight home and hear her
 father pull
 The name down on us from the
 thunder shelf,
 Then drink away his soul into the
 dark
 From seeing judgment. Father,
 mother, home,
 Were God and heaven reversed to
 her: the more
 She knew of Right, the more she
 guessed their wrong.

Her price paid down for knowledge
 was to know
 The vileness of her kindred
 through her heart,
 Her filial and tormented heart,
 henceforth,
 They struck their blows at virtue.
 Oh, 'tis hard [heaven
 To learn you have a father up in
 By a gathering certain sense of
 being, on earth,
 Still worse than orphaned: 'tis too
 heavy a grief,
 The having to thank God for such
 a joy!

And so passed Marian's life from
 year to year.
 Her parents took her with them
 when they tramped,
 Dodged lanes and heaths, frequent-
 ed towns and fairs,
 And once went farther and saw
 Manchester,
 And once the sea, that blue end of
 the world, [book,—
 That fair scroll-finis of a wicked
 And twice a prison, back at inter-
 vals,
 Returning to the hills. Hills draw
 like heaven,
 And stronger sometimes. holding
 out their hands
 To pull you from the vile flats up
 to them;
 And though perhaps these strollers
 still strolled back,
 As sheep do, simply that they knew
 the way, [ware
 They certainly felt bettered un-
 Emerging from the social smut of
 towns
 To wipe their feet clean on the
 mountain-turf.
 In which long wanderings, Marian
 lived and learned,
 Endured and learned. The people
 on the roads

Would stop and ask her how her
 eyes outgrew
 Her cheeks, and if she meant to
 lodge the birds [her,
 In all that hair; and then they lifted
 The miller in his cart, a mile or
 twain,
 The butcher's boy on horseback.
 Often too
 The pedlar stopped, and tapped her
 on the head [ringed,
 With absolute forefinger, brown and
 And asked if peradventure she
 could read;
 And when she answered 'ay,'
 would toss her down
 Some stray odd volume from his
 heavy pack,
 A Thomson's Seasons, mulcted of
 the Spring,
 Or half a play of Shakspeare's, torn
 across: [page
 (She had to guess the bottom of a
 By just the top sometimes,—as dif-
 ficult,
 As, sitting on the moon, to guess
 the earth!)
 Or else a sheaf of leaves (for that
 small Ruth's
 Small gleanings) torn out from the
 heart of books,
 From Churchyard Elegies and
 Edens Lost,
 From Burns, and Bunyan, Selkirk,
 and Tom Jones.
 'Twas somewhat hard to keep the
 things distinct,
 And oft the jangling influence jarred
 the child
 Like looking at a sunset full of grace
 Through a pothouse window while
 the drunken oaths
 Went on behind her; but she weed-
 ed out
 Her book-leaves, threw away the
 leaves that hurt,
 (First tore them small, that none
 should find a word)

And made a nosegay of the sweet
 and good
 To fold within her breast, and pore
 upon
 At broken moments of the noon-
 tide glare,
 When leave was given her to untie
 her cloak [bank
 And rest upon the dusty highway's
 From the road's dust. Or oft, the
 journey done,
 Some city friend would lead her by
 the hand
 To hear a lecture at an institute:
 And thus she had grown, this
 Marian Erle of ours,
 To no book-learning,—she was ig-
 norant
 Of authors,—not in earshot of the
 things
 Out-spoken o'er the heads of com-
 mon men
 By men who are uncommon,—but
 within
 The cadenced hum of such, and ca-
 pable
 Of catching from the fringes of the
 wind
 Some fragmentary phrases, here
 and there,
 Of that fine music,—which, being
 carried in
 To her soul, had reproduced itself
 afresh
 In finer motions of the lips and lids.
 She said, in speaking of it, 'if a
 flower
 Were thrown you out of heaven at
 intervals,
 You'd soon attain to a trick of look-
 ing up,—
 And so with her. She counted
 me her years,
 Till I felt old; and then she count-
 ed me
 Her sorrowful pleasures, till I felt
 ashamed.

She told me she was fortunate and
 calm
 On such and such a season; sate
 and sewed,
 With no one to break up her crystal
 thoughts;
 While rhymes from lovely poems
 span around [tune,
 Their ringing circles of ecstatic
 Beneath the moistened finger of the
 Hour.
 Her parents called her a strange,
 sickly child,
 Not good for much, and given to
 sulk and stare,
 And smile into the hedges and the
 clouds,
 And tremble if one shook her from
 her fit
 By any blow or word even. Out-
 door jobs
 Went ill with her; and household
 quiet work
 She was not born to. Had they
 kept the north,
 They might have had their penny-
 worth out of her
 Like other parents, in the factories;
 (Your children work for you, not
 you for them,
 Or else they better had been choked
 with air
 The first breath drawn;) but, in
 this tramping life,
 Was nothing to be done with such
 a child
 But tramp and tramp. And yet
 she knitted hose
 Not ill, and was not dull at needle-
 work:
 And all the country people gave
 her pence
 For darning stockings past their
 natural age,
 And patching petticoats from old
 to new,
 And other light work done for
 thrifty wives.

One day, said Marian,—the sun
 shone that day—
 Her mother had been badly beat,
 and felt [ed soul,
 The bruises sore about her wreath-
 (That must have been :) she came
 in suddenly,
 And snatching in a sort of breath-
 less rage
 Her daughter's headgear comb, let
 down the hair
 Upon her like a sudden waterfall,
 Then drew her drenched and pas-
 sive by the arm
 Outside the hut they lived in.
 When the child
 Could clear her blinded face from
 all that stream
 Of tresses . . . there, a man stood,
 with beasts' eyes
 That seemed as they would swallow
 her alive
 Complete in body and spirit, hair
 and all,—
 With burning stertorous breath
 that hurt her cheek,
 He breathed so near. The mother
 held her tight,
 Saying hard between her teeth—
 'Why wench, why wench,
 The squire speaks to you now—the
 squire's too good;
 He means to set you up, and com-
 fort us.
 Be mannerly at least.' The child
 turned round
 And looked up piteous in the moth-
 er's face,
 (Be sure that mother's death-bed
 will not want
 Another devil to damn, than such
 a look)
 'Oh, mother!' then, with desperate
 glance to heaven,
 'God, free me from my mother,'
 she shrieked out,
 'These mothers are too dreadful.
 And, with force

As passionate as fear. she tore her
 hands
 Like lilies from the rocks, from
 hers and his,
 And sprang down, bounded head-
 long down the steep,
 Away from both—away, if possible.
 As far as God,—away! They
 yelled at her,
 As famished hounds at a hare.
 She heard them yell,
 She felt her name hiss after her
 from the hills,
 Like shot from guns. On, on.
 And now she had cast
 The voices off with the uplands.
 On. Mad fear
 Was running in her feet and killing
 the ground ;
 The white roads curled as if she
 burnt them up,
 The green fields melted, wayside
 trees fell back
 To make room for her. Then her
 head grew vexed,
 Trees, fields, turned on her and ran
 after her ;
 She heard the quick pants of the
 hills behind ;
 Their keen air pricked her neck.
 She had lost her feet,
 Could run no more, yet somehow
 went as fast,
 The horizon red 'twixt steeples in
 the east
 So sucked her forward, forward.
 while her heart
 Kept swelling, swelling, till it
 swelled so big [burst
 It seemed to fill her body ; when it
 And overflowed the world and
 swamped the light,
 'And now I am dead and safe,'
 thought Marian Erle—
 She had dropped, she had fainted.
 As the sense returned,
 The night had passed—not life's
 night. She was 'ware

Of heavy tumbling motions, creak-
 ing wheels,
 The driver shouting to the lazy team
 That swung their rankling bells
 against her brain ;
 While, through the waggon's covert-
 ure and chinks, [at her
 The cruel yellow morning pecked
 Alive or dead upon the straw in-
 side,—
 At which her soul ached back into
 the dark
 And prayed, 'no more of that.' A
 waggoner
 Had found her in a ditch beneath
 the moon,
 As white as moonshine save for the
 oozing blood.
 At first he thought her dead ; but
 when he had wiped
 The mouth and heard it sigh, he
 raised her up, [straw,
 And laid her in his waggon in the
 And so conveyed her to the distant
 town
 To which his business called him-
 self, and left
 That heap of misery at the hospital.
 She stirred ;—the place seemed new
 and strange as death.
 The white strait bed, with others
 strait and white,
 Like graves dug side by side at
 measured lengths,
 And quiet people walking in and out
 With wonderful low voices and
 soft steps [each,
 And apparitional equal care for
 Astonished her with order, silence,
 law :
 And when a gentle hand held out a
 cup,
 She took it, as you do at sacrament,
 Half awed, half melted,—not being
 used, indeed,
 To so much love as makes the form
 of love

<p>And courtesy of manners. Delicate drinks And rare white bread, to which some dying eyes Were turned in observation. O my God, How sick we must be, ere we make men just! I think it frets the saints in heaven to see How many desolate creatures on the earth Have learned the simple dues of fellowship And social comfort, in a hospital, As Marian did. She lay there, stunned, half tranced, And wished, at intervals of growing sense, She might be sicker yet, if sickness made The world so marvellous kind, the air so hushed, [sleep; And all her wake-time quiet as a For now she understood, (as such things were) How sickness ended very oft in heaven Among the unspoken raptures. Yet more sick And surelier happy. Then she dropped her lids, And, folding up her hands as flow- ers at night, Would lose no moment of the blessed time.</p> <p>She lay and seethed in fever many weeks; But youth was strong and overcame the test: Revolted soul and flesh were rec- onciled [day And fetched back to the necessary And daylight duties. She could creep about The long bare rooms, and stare out drearily</p>	<p>From any narrow window on the street, Till some one, who had nursed her as a friend Said coldly to her, as an enemy, 'She had leave to go next week, being well enough,' While only her heart ached. 'Go next week,' thought she, 'Next week! how would it be with her next week, Let out into that terrible street alone Among the pushing people, . . . to go . . . where?'</p> <p>One day, the last before the dreaded last, [self Among the convalescents, like her— Prepared to go next morning, she sate dumb, And heard half absently the women talk, How one was famished for her baby's cheeks— 'The little wretch would know her! a year old And lively, like his father!' one was keen To get to work, and fill some clam- orous mouths; And one was tender for the dear good man Who had missed her sorely,—and one, querulous . . . 'Would pay backbiting neighbours who had dared To talk about her as already dead.'— And one was proud. . . 'and if her sweetheart Luke Had left her for a ruddier face than hers, (The gossip would be seen through at a glance) Sweet riddance of such sweethearts —let him hang! 'Twere good to have been as sick for such an end.'</p>
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And while they talked, and Marian
 felt the worse
 For having missed the worst of all
 their wrongs,
 A visitor was ushered through the
 wards
 And paused among the talkers.
 'When he looked
 't was as if he spoke, and when he
 spoke
 He sang perhaps,' said Marian;
 'could she tell?
 She only knew (so much she had
 chronicled,
 As seraphs might the making of
 the sun)
 That he who came and spake, was
 Romney Leigh,
 And then, and there, she saw and
 heard him first.'
 And when it was her turn to have
 the face
 Upon her,—all those buzzing pallid
 lips
 Being satisfied with comfort—when
 he changed
 To Marian, saying, 'And *you?*
 you're going, where?'—
 She, moveless as a worm beneath a
 stone
 Which some one's stumbling foot
 has turned aside,
 Writhe suddenly, astonished with
 the light,
 And breaking into sobs cried,
 'Where I go?
 None asked me till this moment.
 Can I say
 Where I go? when it has not
 seemed worth while
 To God himself, who thinks of
 every one,
 To think of me, and fix where I
 shall go?'
 'So young,' he gently asked her,
 'you have lost
 Your father and your mother?'
 'Both,' she said

'Both lost! my father was burnt
 up with gin
 Or ever I sucked milk, and so is
 lost.
 My mother sold me to a man last
 month, [ifest.
 And so my mother's lost, 'tis man-
 And I, who fled from her for miles
 and miles,
 As if I had caught sight of the fire
 of hell
 Through some wild gap, (she was
 my mother, sir) [ently,
 It seems I shall be lost too, pres-
 And so we end, all three of us.'
 'Poor child!'
 He said,—with such a pity in his
 voice,
 It soothed her more than her own
 tears,—'poor child,
 'Tis simple that betrayal by moth-
 er's love
 Should bring despair of God's too.
 Yet be taught
 He's better to us than many moth-
 ers are,
 And children cannot wander be-
 yond reach
 Of the sweep of his white raiment
 Touch and hold,
 And if you weep still, weep where
 John was laid
 While Jesus loved him.'
 She could say the words.
 She told me, 'exactly as he uttered
 them
 A year back, . . . since in any doubt
 or dark
 They came out like the stars, and
 shone on her
 With just their comfort. Common
 words, perhaps
 'The ministers in church might say
 the same;
 But *he*, he made the church with
 what he spoke,—
 The difference was the miracle,
 said she.

Then catching up her smile to
ravishment,
She added quickly, 'I repeat his
words, [peat
But not his tones : can any one re-
The music of an organ, out of
church ?

And when he said 'poor child,' I
shut my eyes

To feel how tenderly his voice
broke through,

As the ointment-box broke on the
Holy feet

To let out the rich medicative nard.'

She told me how he had raised and
rescued her [grief,

With reverent pity, as, in touching
He touched the wounds of Christ,—
and made her feel

More self-respecting. Hope, he
called, belief

In God,—work, worship . . there-
fore let us pray !

And thus, to snatch her soul from
atheism,

And keep it stainless from her
mother's face,

He sent her to a famous semp-
stress-house

Far off in London, there to work
and hope.

With that they parted. She kept
sight of Heaven,

But not of Romney. He had good
to do

To others : through the days and
through the nights

She sewed and sewed and sewed.
She drooped sometimes,

And wondered, while along the
tawny light

She struck the new thread into her
needle's eye,

How people without mothers on
the hills

Could choose the town to live in!—
then she drew

The stitch, and mused how Rom-
ney's face would look.

And if 'twere likely he'd remember
her's

When they too had their meeting
after death.

FOURTH BOOK.

THEY met still sooner. 'Twas a
year from thence

When Lucy Gresham, the sick
sempstress girl,

Who sewed by Marian's chair so
still and quick,

And leant her head upon its back
to cough

More freely when, the mistress
turning round, [out,

The others took occasion to laugh
Gave up at last. Among the work-
ers, spoke

A bold girl with black eyebrows
and red lips,

'You know the news? Who's
dying, do you think?

Our Lucy Gresham. I expected it
As little as Nell Hart's wedding.

Blush not, Nell,

Thy curls be red enough without
thy cheeks ;

And, some day, there'll be found a
man to dote

On red curls.—Lucy Gresham
swooned last night,

Dropped sudden in the street while
going home :

And now the baker says, who took
her up [in bed,

And laid her by her grandmother
He'll give her a week to die in.

Pass the silk.

Let's hope he gave her a loaf too,
within reach,

For otherwise they'll starve before
they die,

That funny pair of bedfellows'
Miss Bell,

I'll thank you for the scissors.

The old crone

Is paralytic—that's the reason why
Our Lucy's thread went faster than
her breath,

Which went too quick we all know.

Marian Erle!

Why, Marian Erle, you're not the
fool to cry?

Your tears spoil Lady Waldemar's
new dress,

You piece of pity!

Marian rose up straight,
And breaking through the talk and
through the work,

Went outward, in the face of their
surprise,

To Lucy's home, to nurse her back
to life

Or down to death. She knew, by
such an act

All place and grace were forfeit in
the house,

Whose mistress would supply the
missing hand

With necessary, not inhuman haste,
And take no blame. But pity, too,

had dues;

She could not leave a solitary soul
To founder in the dark, while she

sate still

And lavished stitches on a lady's
As if no other work were para-

mount.

'Why, God,' thought Marian, 'has
a missing hand

This moment; Lucy wants a drink,
perhaps.

Let others miss me! never miss
me, God!

So Marian sat by Lucy's bed con-
tent

[recompense,

With duty, and was strong, for
To hold the lamp of human love

arm-high

To catch the death-strained eyes
and comfort them,

Until the angels, on the luminous
side

Of death, had got theirs ready.
And she said,

When Lucy thanked her sometimes,
called her kind,

It touched her strangely. 'Marian
Erle called kind!

What, Marian, beaten and sold,
who could not die!

'Tis verily good fortune to be kind.
Ah, you,' she said, 'who are born

to such a grace,

Be sorry for the unlicensed class,
the poor,

Reduced to think the best good
fortune means

That others, simply, should be kind
to them.'

From sleep to sleep while Lucy
slid away

So gently, like a light upon a hill,
Of which none names the moment

that it goes

Though all see when 'tis gone,—a
man came in

And stood beside the bed. The
old idiot wretch

Screamed feebly, like a baby over-
lain,

'Sir, sir, you won't mistake me for
the corpse?'

[*me!*

Don't look at *me*, sir! never bury
Although I lie here I'm as live as

you,

Except my legs and arms,—I eat
and drink,

And understand,—(that you're the
gentleman

Who fits the funerals up, Heaven
speed you, sir,)

And certainly I should be livelier
still

If Lucy here . . . sir, Lucy is the
corpse . . .

Had worked more properly to buy
me wine:

But Lucy, sir, was always slow at work,
I shan't lose much by Lucy. Marian Erle,
Speak up and show the gentleman the corpse.'

And then a voice said, 'Marian Erle.' She rose:

It was the hour for angels—there, stood hers!

She scarcely marvelled to see Romney Leigh.

As light November snows to empty nests,

As grass to graves, as moss to mildewed stones,

As July suns to ruins, through the rents,

As ministering spirits to mourners, through a loss,

As Heaven itself to men, through pangs of death,

He came uncalled wherever grief had come.

'And so,' said Marian Erle, 'we met anew,'

And added softly, 'so, we shall not part.'

He was not angry that she had left the house

Wherein he placed her. Well—she had feared it might

Have vexed him. Also, when he found her set

On keeping, though the dead was out of sight,

That half-dead, half-live body left behind

With cankerous heart and flesh,—which took your best

And cursed you for the little good it did, [alone,

(Could any leave the bed-rid wretch So joyless she was thankless even to God,

Much more to you?) he did not say 'twas well,

Yet Marian thought he did not take it ill,—

Since day by day he came, and every day

She felt within his utterance and his eyes

A closer, tenderer presence of the soul,

Until at last he said, 'We shall not part.'

On that same day, was Marian's work complete:

She had smoothed the empty bed, and swept the floor

Of coffin sawdust, set the *airs* anew

The dead had ended gossip in, and stood [derly,

In that poor room so cold and or—The door-key in her hand, prepared

to go

As *they* had, howbeit not their way. He spoke.

'Dear Marian, of one clay God made us all,

And though men push and poke and paddle in't

(As children play at fashioning dirt-pies)

And call their fancies by the name of facts,

Assuming difference, lordship, privilege,

When all's plain dirt,—they come back to it at last;

The first grave digger proves it with a spade,

And pass all even. Need we wait for this,

You, Marian, and I, Romney?' She, at that,

Looked blindly in his face, as when one looks

Through driving autumn-rains to find the sky.

He went on speaking. 'Marian, I being born

What men call noble, and you, issued from

The noble people,—though the tyrannous sword

Which pierced Christ's heart, has cleft the world in twain

'Twixt class and class, opposing rich to poor,

Shall *we* keep parted? Not so. Let us lean [each,

And strain together rather, each to Compress the red lips of this gaping wound,

As far as two souls can,—ay, lean and league,

I, from my superabundance,—from your want

You,—joining in a protest 'gainst the wrong

On both sides !'

All the rest, he held her hand In speaking, which confused the sense of much ;

Her heart against his words beat out so thick,

They might as well be written on the dust

Where some poor bird, escaping from hawk's beak,

Has dropped and beats its shuddering wings,—the lines

Are rubbed so,—yet 'twas something like to this,

—That they two, standing at the two extremes [seal,

Of social classes, had received one Been dedicate and drawn beyond themselves

To mercy and ministration,—he, indeed,

Through what he knew, and she, through what she felt,

He, by man's conscience, she, by woman's heart,

Relinquishing their several 'vantage posts

Of wealthy ease and honourable toil.

To work with God at love. And since God willed

That putting out his hand to touch this ark,

He found a woman's hand there, he'd accept

The sign too, hold the tender fingers fast,

And say, 'My fellow-worker, be my wife !'

She told the tale with simple, rustic turns,—

Strong leaps of meaning in her sudden eyes

That took the gaps of any imperfect phrase

Of the unschooled speaker : I have rather writ

The thing understood so, than the thing [right

I heard so. And I cannot render Her quick gesticulation, wild yet soft,

Self-startled from the habitual mood she used,

Half sad, half languid,—like dumb creatures (now

A rustling bird, and now a wandering deer,

Or squirrel 'gainst the oak-gloom, flashing up

His sidelong burnished head, in just her way

Of savage spontaneity,) that stir

Abruptly the green silence of the woods,

And make it stranger, holier, more profound ;

As Nature's general heart confessed itself

Of life, and then fell backward on repose.

I kissed the lips that ended.—' So indeed

He loves you, Marian?'

'Loves me !' She looked up

With a child's wonder when you
 ask him first
 Who made the sun—a puzzled
 blush, that grew,
 Then broke off in a rapid radiant
 smile
 Of sure solution. 'Loves me! he
 loves all,—
 And me, of course. He had not
 asked me else
 To work with him for ever and be
 his wife.'
 Her words reprov'd me. This
 perhaps was love—
 To have its hands too full of gifts
 to give, [gift;
 For putting out a hand to take a
 To love so much, the perfect round
 of love
 Includes, in strict conclusion, be-
 ing loved :
 As Eden-dew went up and fell
 again,
 Enough for watering Eden. Ob-
 viously [at all :
 She had not thought about his love
 The cataracts of her soul had
 poured themselves,
 And risen self-crowned in rain-
 bow; would she ask
 Who crowned her?—it sufficed
 that she was crowned.
 With women of my class, 'tis other-
 wise :
 We haggle for the small change of
 our gold,
 And so much love accord for so
 much love,
 Rialto-prices. Are we therefore
 wrong?
 If marriage be a contract, look to
 it then.
 Contracting parties should be equal,
 just ;
 But if, a simple fealty on one side,
 A mere religion,—right to give, is
 all, [ask
 And certain brides of Europe duly

To mount the pile as Indian wid-
 ows do,
 The spices of their tender youth
 heaped up,
 The jewels of their gracious virt-
 ues worn,
 More gems, more glory,—to con-
 sume entire
 For a living husband : as the man's
 alive,
 Not dead, the woman's duty by so
 much,
 Advanced in England beyond Hin-
 dostan.
 I sate there musing, till she touched
 my hand
 With hers, as softly as a strange
 white bird
 She feared to startle in touching.
 'You are kind.
 But are you, peradventure, vexed
 at heart
 Because your cousin takes me for
 a wife?
 I know I am not worthy—nay, in
 truth,
 I'm glad on't, since, for that, he
 chooses me.
 He likes the poor things of the
 world the best ;
 I would not therefore, if I could,
 be rich.
 It pleasures him to stoop for but-
 tercups ; [wall
 I would not be a rose upon the
 A queen might stop at, near the
 palace-door,
 To say to a courtier, 'Pluck that
 rose for me,
 'It's prettier than the rest.' O
 Romney Leigh !
 I'd rather far be trodden by his
 foot,
 Than lie in a great queen's bosom.'
 Out of breath
 She paused.
 'Sweet Marian, do you disavow

The roses with that face ?'
 She dropt her head,
 As if the wind had caught that
 flower of her,
 And bent it in the garden,—then
 looked up
 With grave assurance. 'Well, you
 think me bold !
 But so we all are, when we're pray-
 ing God. [me,
 And if I'm bold—yet, lady, credit
 That, since I know myself for what
 I am,
 Much fitter for his handmaid than
 his wife,
 I'll prove the handmaid and the
 wife at once,
 Serve tenderly, and love obediently,
 And be a worthier mate, perhaps,
 than some
 Who are the wooed in silk among
 their learned books ;
 While *I* shall set myself to read
 his eyes,
 Till such grow plainer to me than
 the French [I'll miss
 To wisest ladies. Do you think
 A letter, in the spelling of his mind ?
 No more than they do when they
 sit and write
 Their flying words with flickering
 wildfowl tails,
 Nor ever pause to ask how many *l*'s.
 Should that be *y* or *z*—they know't
 so well ;
 I've seen them writing, when I
 brought a dress
 And waited,—floating out their soft
 white hands
 On shining paper. But they're
 hard sometimes,
 For all those hands !—we've used
 out many nights, [shreds
 And worn the yellow daylight into
 Which flapped and shivered down
 our aching eyes
 Till night appeared more tolerable,
 just

That pretty ladies might look beau-
 tiful,
 Who said at last . . . 'You're lazy
 in that house !
 'You're slow in sending home the
 work,—I count
 'I've waited near an hour for't.
 Pardon me, [misprize :
 I do not blame them, madam, nor
 They are fair and gracious ; ay, but
 not like you,
 Since none but you has Mr. Leigh's
 own blood
 Both noble and gentle,—and with-
 out it . . . well,
 They are fair, I said ; so fair, it
 scarce seems strange
 That, flashing out in any looking-
 glass
 The wonder of their glorious brows
 and breasts,
 They are charmed so, they forget
 to look behind
 And mark how pale we've grown,
 we pitiful
 Reminders of the world. And so
 perhaps
 If Mister Leigh had chosen a wife
 from these,
 She might . . . although he's better
 than her best,
 And dearly she would know it . . .
 steal a thought
 Which should be all his, an eye-
 glance from his face,
 To plunge into the mirror opposite
 In search of her own beauty's
 pearl : while *I* . . .
 Ah, dearest lady, serge will out-
 weigh silk [a-cold,
 For winter-wear when bodies feel
 And I'll be a true wife to your
 cousin Leigh.'

Before I answered he was there
 himself.
 I think he had been standing in
 the room

And listened probably to half her
talk,
Arrested, turned to stone,—as
white as stone.
Will tender sayings make men look
so white?
He loves her then profoundly.

‘You are here,
Aurora? Here I meet you!’—We
clasped hands.

‘Even so, dear Romney. Lady
Waldemar
Has sent me in haste to find a
cousin of mine
Who shall be.’

‘Lady Waldemar is good.’

‘Here’s one, at least, who is good,’
I sighed, and touched
Poor Marian’s happy head, as, dog-
like, she [on,
Most passionately patient, waited
A-tremble for her turn of greeting
words;

‘I’ve sat a full hour with your Ma-
rian Erle,

And learnt the thing by heart,—
and, from my heart,
Am therefore competent to give
you thanks

For such a cousin.’

‘You accept at last
A gift from me, Aurora, without
scorn?

At last I pleased you?’—How his
voice was changed!

‘You cannot please a woman
against her will,

And once you vexed me. Shall we
speak of that?

We’ll say, then, you were noble in
it all

And I not ignorant—let it pass.
And now

You please me, Romney, when you
please yourself;

So, please you, be fanatical, in
love,

And I’m well pleased. Ah, cous-
in! at the old hall,
Among the gallery portraits of our
Leighs,

We shall not find a sweeter signory
Than this pure forehead’s.’

Not a word he said.

How arrogant men are!—Even
philanthropists,

Who try to take a wife up in the
way

They put down a subscription
cheque,—if once

She turns and says, ‘I will not tax
you so,

Most charitable sir,—feel ill at
ease,

As though she had wronged them
somehow. I suppose

We women should remember
what we are,

And not throw back an obolus in-
scribed

With Cæsar’s image, lightly. I re-
sumed.

‘It strikes me, some of those sub-
lime Vandykes

Were not too proud to make good
saints in heaven;

And if so, then they’re not too
proud to-day

To bow down (now the ruffs are
off their necks)

And own this good, true, noble
Marian . . yours,

And mine, I’ll say!—For poets
(bear the word),

Half-poets even, are still whole
democrats,— [high,

Oh, not that we’re disloyal to the
But loyal to the low, and cognisant

Of the less scrutable majesties.
For me,

I comprehend your choice—I justify
Your right in choosing.’

‘No, no, no,’ he sighed,

With a sort of melancholy impa-
tient scorn,

As some grown man, who never
 had a child,
 Puts by some child who plays at
 being a man,
 —‘ You did not, do not, cannot
 comprehend
 My choice, my ends, my motives,
 nor myself :
 No matter now—we’ll let it pass,
 you say.
 I thank you for your generous
 cousinship [for her
 Which helps this present; I accept
 Your favourable thoughts. We’re
 fallen on days,
 We two who are not poets, when
 to wed
 Requires less mutual love than
 common love, [once
 For two together to bear out at
 Upon the loveless many. Work in
 pairs,
 In galley-couplings or in marriage-
 rings,
 The difference lies in the honour,
 not the work,—
 And such we’re bound to, I and
 she. But love,
 (You poets are benighted in this
 age;
 The hour’s too late for catching
 even moths,
 You’ve gnats instead,) love!—love’s
 fools’ paradise
 Is out of date, like Adam’s. Set a
 swan
 To swim the Trenton, rather than
 true love
 To float its fabulous plumage safely
 down
 The cataracts of this loud transition-
 time,—
 Whose roar, for ever henceforth in
 my ears
 Must keep me deaf to music.’
 There, I turned
 And kissed poor Marian, out of
 discontent.

The man had baffled, chafed me,
 till I flung
 For refuge to the woman,—as,
 sometimes,
 Impatient of some crowded room’s
 close smell, [out
 You throw a window open and lean
 To breathe a long breath in the
 dewy night
 And cool your angry forehead.
 She, at least,
 Was not built up as walls are, brick
 by brick;
 Each fancy squared, each feeling
 ranged by line,
 The very heat of burning youth ap-
 plied
 To indurate forms and systems!
 excellent bricks,
 A well-built wall,—which stops you
 on the road, [inch
 And, into which, you cannot see an
 Although you beat your head
 against it—pshaw!

‘ Adieu,’ I said, ‘ for this time, cous-
 ins both ;
 And, cousin Romney, pardon me
 the word,
 Be happy!—oh, in some esoteric
 sense
 Of course!—I mean no harm in
 wishing well.
 Adieu, my Marian :—may she come
 to me,
 Dear Romney, and be married from
 my house ?
 It is not part of your philosophy
 To keep your bird upon the black-
 thorn ?’

‘ Ay,’
 He answered, ‘ but it is :—I take
 my wife
 Directly from the people,—and she
 comes [France,
 As Austria’s daughter to imperial
 Betwixt her eagles, blinking not her
 race.

From Margaret's Court at garret-
 height, to meet
 And wed me at St. James's, nor put
 off
 Her gown of serge for that. The
 things we do,
 We do: we'll wear no mask, as if
 we blushed.
 'Dear Romney, you're the poet,' I
 replied, [my word,
 But felt my smile too mournful for
 And turned and went. Ay, masks,
 I thought,—beware
 Of tragic masks we tie before the
 glass,
 Uplifted on the cothurn half a yard
 Above the natural stature! we
 would play
 Heroic parts to ourselves,—and end,
 perhaps,
 As impotently as Athenian wives
 Who shrieked in fits at the Eumen-
 ides.
 His foot pursued me down the stair.
 'At least,
 You'll suffer me to walk with you
 beyond
 These hideous streets, these graves,
 where men alive,
 Packed close with earthworms, burr
 unconsciously
 About the plague that slew them;
 let me go. [mud
 The very women pelt their souls in
 At any woman who walks here
 alone.
 How came you here alone?—you
 are ignorant.'
 We had a strange and melancholy
 walk:
 The night came drizzling downward
 in dark rain;
 And, as we walked, the colour of
 the time,
 The act, the presence, my hand up-
 on his arm,
 His voice in my ear, and mine to
 my own sense,
 Appeared unnatural. We talked
 modern books,
 And daily papers; Spanish mar-
 riage-schemes,
 And English climate—was't so cold
 last year?
 And will the wind change by to-
 morrow morn?
 Can Guizot stand? is London full?
 is trade
 Competitive? has Dickens turned
 his hinge [great?
 A-pinch upon the fingers of the
 And are potatoes to grow mythical
 Like moly? will the apple die out
 too?
 Which way is the wind to-night?
 southeast? due east?
 We talked on fast, while every
 common word
 Seemed tangled with the thunder at
 one end,
 And ready to pull down upon our
 heads
 A terror out of sight. And yet to
 pause
 Were surelier mortal: we tore
 greedily up
 All silence, all the innocent breath-
 ing-points,
 As if, like pale conspirators in haste,
 We tore up papers where our sig-
 natures
 Imperilled us to an ugly shame or
 death.
 I cannot tell you how it was. 'Tis
 plain
 We had not loved nor hated:
 wherefore dread
 To spill gunpowder on ground safe
 from fire?
 Perhaps we had lived too closely
 to diverge
 So absolutely: leave two clocks
 they say,

Wound up to different hours, upon
 one shelf,
 And slowly, through the interior
 wheels of each, [itself
 The blind mechanic motion sets
 A-throb to feel out for the mutual
 time.

It was not so with us, indeed.
 While he
 Struck midnight, I kept striking six
 at dawn,
 While he marked judgment, I, re-
 demption-day ;
 And such exception to a general
 law,
 Imperious upon inert matter even,
 Might make us, each to either, in-
 secure,
 A beckoning mystery or a troubling
 fear.

I mind me, when we parted at the
 door,
 How strange his good-night sound-
 ed,—like good-night
 Beside a deathbed, where the mor-
 row's sun
 Is sure to come too late for more
 good days.
 And all that night I thought ..
 'Good-night,' said he.

And so, a month passed. Let me
 set it down
 At once,—I have been wrong, I
 have been wrong.

We are wrong always when we
 think too much
 Of what we think or are ; albeit our
 thoughts

Be verily bitter as self-sacrifice,
 We're not less selfish. If we sleep
 on rocks [noon
 Or roses, sleeping past the hour of
 We're lazy. This I write against
 myself.

I had done a duty in the visit paid
 To Marian, and was ready other-
 wise

To give the witness of my presence
 and name

Whenever she should marry.—
 Which, I thought,
 Sufficed. I even had cast into the
 scale

An overweight of justice toward
 the match ;

The Lady Waldemar had missed
 her tool,

Had broken it in the lock as being
 too straight

For a crooked purpose, while poor
 Marian Erle

Missed nothing in my accents or
 my acts :

I had not been ungenerous on the
 whole, [felt

Nor yet untender ; so, enough. I
 Tired, overworked : this marriage

somewhat jarred,
 Or, if it did not, all the bridal noise.

The pricking of the map of life with
 pins,

In schemes of .. 'Here we'll go,'
 and 'There we'll stay,'

And 'everywhere we'll prosper in
 our love,' [order it ;

Was scarce my business. Let them
 Who else should care? I threw

myself aside,
 As one who had done her work and

shut her eyes
 To rest the better.

I, who should have known,
 Forereckoned mischief! Where we

disavow
 Being keeper to our brother we're
 his Cain.

I might have held that poor child
 to my heart

A little longer! 'twould have hurt
 me much

To have hastened by its beats the
 marriage day,

And kept her safe meantime from
 tampering hands

Or, peradventure, traps. What
 drew me back
 From telling Romney plainly the
 designs
 Of Lady Waldemar, as spoken out
 To me . . . me? had I any right, ay,
 right, [serve
 With womanly compassion and re-
 To break the fall of woman's im-
 pudence?—
 To stand by calmly, knowing what
 I knew,
 And hear him call her *good*?
 Distrust that word.
 'There is none good save God,'
 said Jesus Christ.
 If He once, in the first creation-
 week,
 Called creatures good,—for ever
 afterward, [heirs.
 The Devil only has done it, and his
 The knaves who win so, and the
 fools who lose;
 The world's grown dangerous. In
 the middle age,
 I think they called malignant fays
 and imps
 Good people. A good neighbour,
 even in this,
 Is fatal sometimes,—cuts your
 morning up
 To mince-meat of the very smallest
 talk, [night
 Then helps to sugar her bohea at
 With your reputation. I have
 known good wives,
 As chaste, or nearly so, as Poti-
 phar's;
 And good, good mothers, who
 would use a child
 To better an intrigue; good friends,
 beside,
 (Very good) who hung succinctly
 round your neck
 And sucked your breath, as cats
 are fabled to do
 By sleeping infants. And we all
 have known

Good critics who have stamped out
 poet's hopes;
 Good statesmen who pulled ruin on
 the state;
 Good patriots who for a theory
 risked a cause;
 Good kings who disembowelled for
 a tax;
 Good popes who brought all good
 to jeopardy;
 Good Christians who sate still in
 easy chairs
 And damned the general world for
 standing up.—
 Now may the good God pardon all
 good men!
 How bitterly I speak,—how cer-
 tainly
 The innocent white milk in us is
 turned, [sun!
 By much persistent shining of the
 Shake up the sweetest in us long
 enough
 With men, it drops to foolish curd,
 too sour
 To feed the most untender of
 Christ's lambs.
 I should have thought . . . a woman
 of the world
 Like her I'm meaning,—centre to
 herself,
 Who has wheeled on her own pivot
 half a life
 In isolated self-love and self-will,
 As a windmill seen at distance ra-
 diating
 Its delicate white vans against the
 sky, [tiful.
 So soft and soundless, simply beau-
 Seen nearer . . . what a roar and tear
 it makes,
 How it grinds and bruises! . . . if she
 loves at last
 Her love's a re-adjustment of self-
 love,
 No more; a need felt of another's
 use

To her one advantage,—as the mill
wants grain,
The fire wants fuel, the very wolf
wants prey, [pulous
And none of these is more unscrupulous
Than such a charming woman when
she loves.
She'll not be thwarted by an obstacle
So trifling as . . . her soul is, . . . much
less yours!—
Is God a consideration?—she loves
you,
Not God; she will not flinch for
Him indeed :
She did not for the Marchioness of
Perth, [ball.
When wanting tickets for the fancy-
She loves you, sir, with passion, to
lunacy ;
She loves you like her diamonds . . .
almost.

Well,
A month passed so, and then the
notice came :
On such a day the marriage at the
church.

I was not backward.

Half St. Giles in frieze
Was bidden to meet St. James in
cloth of gold,
And, after contract at the altar, pass
To eat a marriage feast on Hamp-
stead Heath.

Of course the people came in un-
compelled,

Lame, blind, and worse—sick, sor-
rowful, and worse,

The humours of the peccant social
wound

All pressed out, poured down upon
Pimlico,

Exasperating the unaccustomed air
With hideous interfusion : you'd
suppose [plague,

A finished generation, dead of
Swept outward from their graves
into the sun,

The moil of death upon them.
What a sight !

A holiday of miserable men
Is sadder than a burial-day of kings

They clogged the streets, they oozed
into the church

In a dark slow stream like blood.
To see that sight,

The noble ladies stood up in their
pews. [hate,

Some pale for fear, a few as red for
Some simply curious, some just in-
solent,

And some in wondering scorn,—
'What next? what next?'

These crushed their delicate rose-
lips from the smile

That misbecame them in a holy
place,

With brodered hems of perfumed
handkerchiefs :

Those passed the salts with confi-
dence of eyes

And simultaneous shiver of moire
silk ;

While all the aisles, alive and black
with heads,

Crawled slowly toward the altar
from the street,

As bruised snakes crawl and hiss
out of a hole

With shuddering involution, sway-
ing slow

From right to left, and then from
left to right,

In pants and pauses. What an
ugly crest

Of faces rose upon you everywhere
From that crammed mass ! you did
not usually

See faces like them in the open day :
They hide in cellars, not to make
you mad

As Romney Leigh is.—Faces !—O
my God,

We call those, faces? men's and
women's . . . ay,

And children's;—babies, hanging
 like a rag
 Forgotten on their mother's neck.
 —poor mouths,
 Wiped clean of mother's milk by
 mother's blow
 Before they are taught her cursing.
 Faces? . . . phew,
 We'll call them vices festering to
 despairs,
 Or sorrows petrifying to vices: not
 A finger-touch of God left whole
 on them; [worn out
 All ruined, lost—the countenance
 As the garment, the will dissolute
 as the act;
 The passions loose and draggling
 in the dirt [step!
 To trip the foot up at the first free
 Those, faces! 'twas as if you had
 stirred up hell
 To heave its lowest dreg-fiends
 uppermost
 In fiery swirls of slime,—such
 strangled fronts,
 Such obdurate jaws were thrown
 up constantly
 To twit you with your race, corrupt
 your blood,
 And grind to devilish colours all
 your dreams
 Henceforth, . . . though, haply, you
 should drop asleep
 By clink of silver waters, in a muse
 On Raffael's mild Madonna of the
 Bird.

I've waked and slept through many
 nights and days
 Since then,—but still that day will
 catch my breath
 Like a nightmare. There are fatal
 days, indeed,
 In which the fibrous years have
 taken root [tops
 So deeply, that they quiver to their
 Whene'er you stir the dust of such
 a day.

My cousin met me with his eyes
 and hand,
 And then, with just a word, . . . that
 'Marian Erle
 Was coming with her bridesmaids
 presently,'
 Made haste to place me by the altar-
 stair,
 Where he and other noble gentle-
 men
 And high-born ladies, waited for
 the bride.

We waited. It was early: there
 was time
 For greeting, and the morning's
 compliment;
 And gradually a ripple of women's
 talk [spray
 Arose and fell, and tossed about a
 Of English s's, soft as a silent hush,
 And, notwithstanding, quite as
 audible
 As louder phrases thrown out by
 the men.
 —'Yes, really, if we need to wait
 in church,
 We need to talk there.'—'She?
 'Tis Lady Ayr,
 In blue—not purple! that's the
 dowager.'
 —'She looks as young.'—'She flirts
 as young, you mean.
 Why if you had seen her upon
 Thursday night,
 You'd call Miss Norris modest.'—
 'You again!
 I waltzed with you three hours back.
 Up at six,
 Up still at ten: scarce time to
 change one's shoes.
 I feel as white and sulky as a ghost,
 So pray don't speak to me, Lord
 Belcher.'—'No,
 I'll look at you instead, and it's
 enough
 While you have that face.'—'In
 church, my lord! fie, fie!'

—‘ Adair, you stayed for the Division? ’—‘ Lost
By one.’—‘ The devil it is! I’m
sorry for’t.
As if I had not promised Mistress
Grove’ . . .
—‘ You might have kept your word
to Liverpool.’
—‘ Constituents must remember,
after all,
We’re mortal.’—‘ We remind them
of it.’—‘ Hark,
The bride comes! Here she comes,
in a stream of milk!’
—‘ There? Dear, you are asleep
still; don’t you know
The five Miss Granvilles? always
dressed in white
To show they’re ready to be mar-
ried.’—‘ Lower!
The aunt is at your elbow.’—‘ Lady
Maud,
Did Lady Waldemar tell you she
had seen
This girl of Leigh’s?’—‘ No,—
wait! ’twas Mistress Brookes,
Who told me Lady Waldemar told
her—
No, ’twasn’t Mrs. Brookes.’—‘ She’s
pretty?’—‘ Who?
Mrs. Brookes? Lady Waldemar?’
—‘ How hot!
Pray isn’t the law to-day we’re not
to breathe?
You’re treading on my shawl—I
thank you, sir.’
—‘ They say the bride’s a mere
child, who can’t read,
But knows the things she shouldn’t,
with wide-awake
Great eyes. I’d go through fire to
look at her.’
—‘ You do, I think.’—‘ And Lady
Waldemar
(You see her; sitting close to
Romney Leigh;
How beautiful she looks, a little
flushed!)

Has taken up the girl and metho-
dised
Leigh’s folly. Should I have come
here, you suppose,
Except she’d asked me!’—‘ She’d
have served him more
By marrying him herself.’
‘ Ah—there she comes,
The bride, at last!’
‘ Indeed, no. Past eleven.
She puts off her patched petticoat
to-day
And puts on May-fair manners, so
begins
By setting us to wait.’—‘ Yes, yes,
this Leigh
Was always odd; it’s in the blood,
I think; [son
His father’s uncle’s cousin’s second
Was, was . . . you understand me—
and for him
He’s stark!—has turned quite lu-
natic upon
This modern question of the poor
—the poor:
An excellent subject when you’re
moderate;
You’ve seen Prince Albert’s model
lodging-house?
Does honour to his royal highness.
Good!
But would he stop his carriage in
‘Cheapside [fist
To shake a common fellow by the
Whose name was . . . Shakespeare?
no. We draw a line,
And if we stand not by our order,
we
In England, we fall headlong.
Here’s a sight,—
A hideous sight, a most indecent
sight.
My wife would come, sir, or I had
kept her back.
By heaven, sir, when poor Damiens’
trunk and limbs
Were torn by horses, women of the
court

Stood by and stared, exactly as to-day

On this dismembering of society,
With pretty troubled faces.'

'Now, at last.

She comes now.'

'Where? who sees? you push me, sir,

Beyond the point of what is man-nerly.

You're standing, madam, on my second flounce

I do beseech you.'

'No—it's not the bride.

Half-past eleven. How late. The bridegroom, mark,

Gets anxious and goes out.'

'And as I said,

These Leighs! our best blood run-ning in the rut!

It's something awful. We had pardoned him

A simple misalliance, got up aside For a pair of sky-blue eyes; our House of Lords

Has winked at such things, and we've all been young.

But here's an inter-marriage rea-soned out,

A contract (carried boldly to the light

To challenge observation, pioneer Good acts by a great example)

'twixt the extremes

Of martyrised society,—on the left

The well-born, on the right the merest mob,

To treat as equals!—'tis anarchi-cal!

It means more than it says—'tis damnable.

Why, sir, we can't have even our coffee good,

Unless we strain it.'

'Here, Miss Leigh!'

'Lord Howe,

You're Romney's friend. What's all this waiting for?'

'I cannot tell. The bride has lost her head

(And way perhaps!) to prove her sympathy

With the bridegroom.'

'What,—you also disapprove!'

'Oh, I approve of nothing in the world,'

He answered; 'not of you, still less of me,

Nor even of Romney—though he's worth us both.

We're all gone wrong. The tune in us is lost:

And whistling down back alleys to the moon,

Will never catch it.'

Let me draw Lord Howe;

A born aristocrat, bred radical, And educated socialist, who still

Goes floating, on traditions of his kind,

Across the theoretic flood from France,

Though, like a drenched Noah on a rotten deck,

Scarce safer for his place there. He, at least,

Will never land on Ararat, he knows,

To recommence the world on the new plan:

Indeed, he thinks, said world had better end; [fish

He sympathises rather with the Outside, than with the drowned

paired beasts within

Who cannot couple again or multiply:

And that's the sort of Noah he is, Lord Howe. [plete,

He never could be anything com-Except a loyal, upright gentleman,

A liberal landlord, graceful diner-out,

And entertainer more than hospita-ble.

Whom authors dine with and forget the hock
 Whatever he believes, and it is much,
 But no-wise certain . . . now here and now there,
 He still has sympathies beyond his creed
 Diverting him from action. In the House,
 No party counts upon him, while for all [weight.
 His speeches have a noticeable Men like his books too, (he has written books)
 Which, safe to lie beside a bishop's chair,
 At times outreach themselves with jets of fire
 At which the foremost of the progressists
 May warm audacious hands in passing by. [ease;
 —Of stature over-tall, lounging for Light hair, that seems to carry a wind in it,
 And eyes that, when they look on you, will lean
 Their whole weight half in indolence and half
 In wishing you unmitigated good, Until you know not if to flinch from him
 Or thank him.—'Tis Lord Howe.
 'We're all gone wrong,'
 Said he, 'and Romney, that dear friend of ours,
 Is no-wise right. There's one true thing on earth;
 That's love! He takes it up, and dresses it, [let did,
 And acts a play with it, as Ham- To show what cruel uncles we have been,
 And how we should be uneasy in our minds
 While he, Prince Hamlet, weds a pretty maid

(Who keeps us too long waiting, we'll confess)
 By symbol, to instruct us formally
 To fill the ditches up 'twixt class and class,
 And live together in phalansteries.
 What then?—he's mad, our Hamlet! clap his play,
 And bind him.'
 'Ah, Lord Howe, this spectacle
 Pulls stronger at us than the Dane's.
 See there!
 The crammed aisles heave and strain and stream with life—
 Dear Heaven, what life!'
 'Why, yes,—a poet sees;
 Which makes him different from a common man.
 I, too, see somewhat, though I cannot sing; [that
 I should have been a poet, only
 My mother took fright at the ugly world,
 And bore me tongue-tied. If you'll grant me now
 That Romney gives us a fine actor-piece
 To make us merry on his marriage morn,
 The fable's worse than Hamlet's, I'll concede.
 The terrible people, old and poor and blind,
 Their eyes eat out with plague and poverty [sights.
 From seeing beautiful and cheerful
 We'll liken to a brutalised King Lear,
 Led out,—by no means to clear scores with wrong—
 His wrongs are so far back, . . . he has forgot;
 All's past like youth; but just to witness here [side,
 A simple contract,—he, upon his
 And Regan with his sister Goneril
 And all the dappled courtiers and court-fools,

On their side. Not that any of
 these would say
 They're sorry, neither. What is
 done, is done,
 And violence is now turned privi-
 lege,
 As cream turns cheese, if buried
 long enough.
 What could such lovely ladies have
 to do
 With the old man there, in those
 ill-odorous rags,
 Except to keep the wind-side of
 him? Lear
 Is flat and quiet, as a decent grave;
 He does not curse his daughters
 in the least.
Be these his daughters? Lear is
 thinking of [cold
 His porridge chiefly . . . is it getting
 At Hampstead? will the ale be
 served in pots?
 Poor Lear, poor daughters! Bravo,
 Romney's play!'
 A murmur and a movement drew
 around;
 A naked whisper touched us.
 Something wrong!
 What's wrong? The black crowd,
 as an overstrained
 Cord, quivered in vibration, and I
 saw . . .
 Was that *his* face I saw? . . . his . . .
 Romney Leigh's . . .
 Which tossed a sudden horror like
 a sponge
 Into all eyes,—while himself stood
 white upon
 The topmost altar-stair, and tried
 to speak, [his head
 And failed, and lifted higher above
 A letter, . . . as a man who drowns
 and gasps.
 'My brothers, bear with me! I
 am very weak.
 I meant but only good. Perhaps
 I meant

Too proudly,—and God snatched
 the circumstance
 And changed it therefore. There's
 no marriage—none.
 She leaves me,—she departs,—she
 disappears, [‘ay,
 I lose her. Yet I never forced her
 To have her ‘no’ so cast into my
 teeth,
 In manner of an accusation, thus.
 My friends, you are dismissed. Go,
 eat and drink
 According to the programme,—and
 farewell!'
 He ended. There was silence in
 the church:
 We heard a baby sucking in its
 sleep
 At the farthest end of the aisle.
 Then spoke a man,
 ‘Now, look to it, coves, that all the
 beef and drink
 Be not filched from us like the
 other fun;
 For beer's spilt easier than a
 woman's lost!
 This gentry is not honest with the
 poor;
 They bring us up, to trick us.’—
 ‘Go it, Jim,’
 A woman screamed back,—‘I'm a
 tender soul, [old
 I never banded a child at two years
 And drew blood from him, but I
 sobbed for it
 Next moment,—and I've had a
 plague of seven.
 I'm tender; I've no stomach even
 for beef,
 Until I know about the girl that's
 lost,
 That's killed, mayhap I did mis-
 doubt, at first,
 The fine lord meant no good by her
 or us.
 He, maybe, got the upper hand of
 her

By holding up a wedding-ring, and
then . . .

A choking finger on her throat last
night,

And just a clever tale to keep us
still,

As she is, poor lost innocent. 'Dis-
appear!'

Who ever disappears except a
ghost?

And who believes a story of a
ghost?

I ask you—would a girl go off, in-
stead

Of staying to be married? A fine
tale! [man!

A wicked man, I say, a wicked
For my part I would rather starve

on gin
Than make my dinner on his beef
and beer.—

At which a cry rose up—'We'll
have our rights.

We'll have the girl, the girl! Your
ladies there

Are married safely and smoothly
every day,

And *she* shall not drop through in-
to a trap

Because she's poor and of the
people: shame!

We'll have no tricks played off by
gentlefolks;

We'll see her righted.'

Through the rage and roar
I heard the broken words which

Romney flung
Among the turbulent masses, from
the ground

He held still with his masterful
pale face—

As huntsmen throw the ration to
the pack,

Who, falling on it headlong, dog
on dog [up

In heaps of fury, rend it, swallow it
With yelling hound-jaws,—his in-
dignant words,

His suppliant words, his most pa-
thetic words,

Whereof I caught the meaning
here and there

By his gesture . . . torn in morsels,
yelled across,

And so devoured. From end to
end, the church

Rocked round us like the sea in
storm, and then

Broke up like the earth in earth-
quake. Men cried out,

'Police'—and women stood and
shrieked for God,

Or dropt and swooned; or, like a
herd of deer,

(For whom the black woods sud-
denly grow alive,

Unleashing their wild shadows
down the wind

To hunt the creatures into corners,
back [fell,

And forward) madly fled, or blindly
Trode screeching underneath the

feet of those
Who fled and screeched.

The last sight left to me
Was Romney's terrible calm face
above

The tumult!—the last sound was
'Pull him down!

Strike—kill him!' Stretching my
unreasoning arms,

As men in dreams, who vainly in-
terpose [with a cry

'Twixt gods and their undoing,
I struggled to precipitate myself

Head-foremost, to the rescue of
my soul

In that white face . . . till some one
caught me back,

And so the world went on,—I felt
no more.

What followed, was told after by
Lord Howe,

Who bore me senseless from the
strangling crowd

In church and street, and then re-
turned alone
To see the tumult quelled. The
men of law [fire,
Had fallen as thunder on a roaring
And made all silent,—while the
people's smoke
Passed eddying slowly from the
emptied aisles.

Here's Marian's letter, which a rag-
ged child
Brought running, just as Romney
at the porch
Looked out expectant of the bride.
He sent
The letter to me by his friend Lord
Howe [sheet
Some two hours after, folded in a
On which his well known hand had
left a word.
Here's Marian's letter.
'Noble friend, dear saint,
Be patient with me. Never think
me vile,
Who might to-morrow morning be
your wife
But that I loved you more than
such a name.
Farewell, my Romney. Let me
write it once,—
My Romney.
'Tis so pretty a coupled word,
I have no heart to pluck it with a
blot.
We say 'my God' sometimes, upon
our knees,
Who is not therefore vexed: so
bear with it . . .
And me. I know I'm foolish, weak,
and vain; [self
Yet most of all I'm angry with my-
For losing your last footstep on
the stair
The last time of your coming,—
yesterday!
The very first time I lost step of
yours,

(Its sweetness comes the next to
what you speak)
But yesterday sobs took me by the
throat
And cut me off from music.
'Mister Leigh,
You'll set me down as wrong in
many things.
You've praised me, sir, for truth,—
and now you'll learn
I had not courage to be rightly
true. [came,
I once began to tell you how she
The woman . . . and you stared upon
the floor
In one of your fixed thoughts . . .
which put me out
For that day. After, some one
spoke of me,
So wisely, and of you, so tenderly,
Persuading me to silence for your
sake . . .
Well, well! it seems this moment I
was wrong [the truth :
In keeping back from telling you
There might be truth betwixt us
two, at least,
If nothing else. And yet 'twas
dangerous.
Suppose a real angel came from
heaven
To live with men and women! he'd
go mad, [blind
If no considerate hand should tie a
Across his piercing eyes. 'Tis thus
with you :
You see us too much in your heav-
enly light :
I always thought so, angel,—and
indeed
There's danger that you beat your-
self to death
Against the edges of this alien
world,
In some divine and fluttering pity.
'Yes.
It would be dreadful for a friend of
yours,

To see all England thrust you out
of doors
And mock you from the windows.
You might say,
Or think (that's worse,) 'There's
some one in the house
I miss and love still.' Dreadful!
'Very kind,
I pray you mark, was Lady Wal-
demar.
She came to see me nine times,
rather ten—
So beautiful, she hurts one like the
day
Let suddenly on sick eyes.
'Most kind of all,
Your cousin!—ah, most like you!
Ere you came
She kissed me mouth to mouth: I
felt her soul
Dip through her serious lips in holy
fire. [gant;
God help me, but it made me arro-
I almost told her that you would
not lose
By taking me to wife: though ever
since
I've pondered much a certain thing
she asked..
'He loves you, Marian?'.. in a sort
of mild
Derisive sadness.. as a mother asks
Her babe, 'You'll touch that star,
you think?'
'Farewell!
I know I never touched it.
'This is worst:
Babes grow, and lose the hope of
things above; •
A silver threepence sets them leap-
ing high—
But no more stars! mark that.
'I've writ all night,
Yet told you nothing. God, if I
could die,
And let this letter break off innocent
just here! But no—for your sake..
'Here's the last:

I never could be happy as your
wife,
I never could be harmless as your
friend,
I never will look more into your
face
Till God says, 'Look!' I charge
you, seek me not,
Nor vex yourself with lamentable
thoughts
That peradventure I have come to
grief;
Be sure I'm well, I'm merry, I'm
at ease,
But such a long way, long way,
long way off,
I think you'll find me sooner in
my grave;
And that's my choice, observe.
For what remains,
An over-generous friend will care
for me
And keep me happy.. happier..
'There's a blot!
This ink runs thick.. we light girls
lightly weep..
And keep me happier.. was the
thing to say,
Than as your wife I could be!—O,
my star,
My saint, my soul! for surely you're
my soul,
Through whom God touched me!
I am not so lost
I cannot thank you for the good
you did,
The tears you stopped, which fell
down bitterly,
Like these—the times you made
me weep for joy
At hoping I should learn to write
your notes
And save the tiring of your eyes, at
night;
And most for that sweet thrice you
kissed my lips
And said 'Dear Marian.'
'Twould be hard to read

This letter, for a reader half as
learn'd,
But you'll be sure to master it in
spite
Of ups and downs. My hand
shakes, I am blind,
I'm poor at writing at the best,—
and yet
I tried to make my *g*'s the way you
showed.
Farewell—Christ love you.—Say
'Poor Marian' now.

Poor Marian!—wanton Marian!—
was it so,
Or so? For days, her touching,
foolish lines
We mused on with conjectural
fantasy,
As if some riddle of a summer-
cloud [tudes
On which one tries unlike simili-
Of now a spotted Hydra-skin cast
off,
And now a screen of carven ivory
That shuts the heaven's conventual
secrets up
From mortals over-bold. We
sought the sense:
She loved him so perhaps (such
words mean love,)
That, worked on by some shrewd
perfidious tongue,
(And then I thought of Lady Wal-
demar)
She left him, not to hurt him; or
perhaps
She loved one in her class,—or did
not love,
But mused upon her wild bad
tramping life
Until the free blood fluttered at her
heart,
And black bread eaten by the road-
side hedge
Seemed sweeter than being put to
Romney's school
Of philanthropical self-sacrifice.

Irrevocably.—Girls are girls, be-
side,
Thought I, and like a wedding by
one rule.
You seldom catch these birds ex-
cept with chaff:
They feel it almost an immoral
thing [day,
To go out and be married in broad
Unless some winning special flat-
tery should
Excuse them to themselves for't,..
'No one parts
Her hair with such a silver line as
you,
One moonbeam from the forehead
to the crown!'
Or else.. 'You bite your lip in such
a way,
It spoils me for the smiling of the
rest'—
And so on. Then a worthless
gaud or two
To keep for love,—a ribbon for the
neck,
Or some glass pin,—they have their
weight with girls.
And Romney sought her many
days and weeks:
He sifted all the refuse of the town,
Explored the trains, inquired among
the ships,
And felt the country through from
end to end;
No Marian!—Though hinted what
I knew,—
A friend of his had reasons of her
own
For throwing back the match—he
would not hear:
The lady had been ailing ever since,
The shock had harmed her. Some-
thing in his tone
Repressed me; something in me
shamed my doubt
To a sigh repressed too. He went
on to say

That, putting questions where his
 Marian lodged,
 He found she had received for
 visitors, [mar
 Besides himself and Lady Walde-
 And, that once, me—a dubious
 woman dressed
 Beyond us both. The rings upon
 her hands
 Had dazed the children when she
 threw them pence ;
 ' She wore her bonnet as the queen
 might hers,
 To show the crown,' they said,—
 ' a scarlet crown
 Of roses that had never been in
 bud.'

When Romney told me that,—for
 now and then
 He came to tell me how the search
 advanced,
 His voice dropped : I bent forward
 for the rest : [appeared,
 The woman had been with her, it
 At first from week to week, then
 day by day,
 And last, 'twas sure. .

I looked upon the ground
 To escape the anguish of his eyes,
 and asked
 As low as when you speak to
 mourners new
 Of those they cannot bear yet to
 call dead,
 ' If Marian had as much as named
 to him [hers,
 A certain Rose, an early friend of
 A ruined creature.'

' Never.'—Starting up
 He strode from side to side about
 the room,
 Most like some prisoned lion sprung
 awake,
 Who has felt the desert sting him
 through his dreams.
 ' What was I to her that she should
 tell me aught ?

A friend ! was *I* a friend ? I see
 all clear.
 Such devils would pull angels out
 of heaven,
 Provided they could reach them ;
 'tis their pride ;
 And that's the odds 'twixt soul
 and body-plague !
 The veriest slave who drops in
 Cairo's street,
 Cries, ' Stand off from me,' to the
 passengers ;
 While these blotched souls are
 eager to infect,
 And blow their bad breath in a
 sister's face
 As if they got some ease by it.'

I broke through.
 ' Some natures catch no plagues.
 I've read of babes
 Found whole and sleeping by the
 spotted breast
 Of one a full day dead. I hold it
 true, [hood,
 As I'm a woman and know woman-
 That Marian Erle, however lured
 from place,
 Deceived in way, keeps pure in
 aim and heart
 As snow that's drifted from the
 garden-bank
 To the open road.'

'Twas hard to hear him laugh.
 ' The figure's happy. Well—a
 dozen carts
 And trampers will secure you pres-
 ently
 A fine white snow-drift. Leave it
 there, your snow !
 'Twill pass for soot ere sunset.
 Pure in aim ?
 She's pure in aim, I grant you,—
 like myself,
 Who thought to take the world up-
 on my back [ill
 To carry it o'er a chasm of social
 And end by letting slip through
 impotence

A single soul, a child's weight in
 a soul,
 Straight down the pit of hell ! yes,
 I and she
 Have reason to be proud of our
 pure aims.'

Then softly, as the last repenting
 drops
 Of a thunder-shower, he added,
 'The poor child ;
 Poor Marian ! 'twas a luckless day
 for her,
 When first she chanced on my
 philanthropy.'

He drew a chair beside me, and
 sate down ;
 And I, instinctively, as women use
 Before a sweet friend's grief,—
 when, in his ear,
 They hum the tune of comfort
 though themselves
 Most ignorant of the special words
 of such,
 And quiet so and fortify his brain
 And give it time and strength for
 feeling out
 To reach the availing sense beyond
 that sound,—
 Went murmuring to him what, if
 written here,
 Would seem not much, yet fetched
 him better help
 Than peradventure, if it had been
 more.

I've known the pregnant thinkers
 of our time,
 And stood by breathless, hanging
 on their lips,
 When some chromatic sequence of
 fine thought [self
 In learned modulation phrased it—
 To an un conjectured harmony of
 truth.
 And yet I've been more moved,
 more raised, I say,
 By a simple word . . . a broken easy
 thing

A three-years' infant might at need
 repeat,
 A look, a sigh, a touch upon the
 palm,
 Which meant less than 'I love
 you' . . . than by all
 The full-voiced rhetoric of those
 master-mouths,
 'Ah, dear Aurora,' he began at last,
 His pale lips fumbling for a sort of
 smile,
 'Your printer's devils have not
 spoilt your heart :
 That's well. And who knows but,
 long years ago,
 When you and I talked, you were
 somewhat right
 In being so peevish with me ? You,
 at least,
 Have ruined no one through your
 dreams. Instead,
 You've helped the facile youth live
 youth's day
 With innocent distraction, still per-
 haps
 Suggestive of things better than
 your rhymes.
 The little shepherd-maiden, eight
 years old,
 I've seen upon the mountain of
 Vaucluse,
 Asleep i' the sun, her head upon
 her knees,
 The flocks all scattered,—is more
 laudable
 Than any sheep-dog trained im-
 perfectly,
 Who bites the kids through too
 much zeal.'

'I look
 As if I had slept, then ?'

He was touched at once
 By something in my face. Indeed
 'twas sure [two
 That he and I,—despite a year or
 Of younger life on my side, and on
 his

The heaping of the years' work on
 the days,
 The three-hour speeches from the
 member's seat,
 The hot committees in and out of
 doors,
 The pamphlets, 'Arguments,' 'Col-
 lective Views,'
 Tossed out as straw before sick
 houses, just [to dirt
 To show one's sick and so be trod
 And no more use,—through this
 world's underground
 The burrowing, groping effort,
 whence the arm
 And heart come torn,—'twas sure
 that he and I
 Were, after all, unequally fatigued!
 That he, in his developed manhood,
 stood [life;
 A little sunburnt by the glare of
 While I . . . it seemed no sun had
 shone on me,
 So many seasons I had missed my
 Springs;
 My cheeks had pined and perished
 from their orbs,
 And all the youth-blood in them
 had grown white
 As dew on autumn cyclamens:
 alone
 My eyes and forehead answered
 for my face.

He said, 'Aurora, you are changed
 —are ill!'

'Not so, my cousin,—only not
 asleep,'

I answered, smiling gently. 'Let
 it be. [cluse
 You scarcely found the poet of Vau-
 As drowsy as the shepherds.
 What is art
 But life upon the larger scale, the
 higher,
 When, graduating up in a spiral line
 Of still expanding and ascending
 gyres,

It pushes toward the intense sig-
 nificance
 Of all things, hungry for the In-
 finite?
 Art's life,—and where we live, we
 suffer and toil.'

He seemed to sift me with his pain-
 ful eyes.

'You take it gravely, cousin; you
 refuse
 Your dreamland's right of common
 and green rest.

You break the mythic turf where
 danced the nymphs
 With crooked ploughs of actual
 life,—let in

The axes to the legendary woods,
 To pay the head-tax. You are
 fallen indeed

On evil days, you poets, if yourselves
 Can praise that art of yours no
 otherwise;
 And, if you cannot, . . . better take
 a trade
 And be of use: 'twere cheaper for
 your youth.'

'Of use!' I softly echoed, 'there's
 the point

We sweep about forever in an
 argument;
 Like swallows which the exasper-
 ate, dying year
 Sets spinning in black circles,
 round and round,
 Preparing for far flights o'er un-
 known seas.

And we . . . where tend we?'

'Where?' he said, and sighed.

'The whole creation, from the hour
 we are born,
 Perplexes us with questions. Not
 a stone [step,
 But cries behind us, every weary
 'Where, where?' I leave stones to
 reply to stones.

Enough for me and for my fleshly
 heart

To harken the invocations of my kind.

When men catch hold upon my shuddering nerves

And shriek, 'What help? what hope? what bread i' the house?

What fire i' the frost?' There must be some response,

Though mine fail utterly. This social Sphinx

Who sits between the sepulchres and stews,

Makes mock and mow against the crystal heavens,

And bullies God,—exacta a word at least

From each man standing on the side of God, [it.

However paying a sphinx-price for We pay it also if we hold our peace,

In pangs and pity. Let me speak and die. [instead.'

Alas! you'll say I speak and kill

I pressed in there. 'The best men, doing their best,

Know peradventure least of what they do:

Men usefulest i' the world, are simply used;

The nail that holds the wood, must pierce it first,

And He alone who wields the hammer, sees

The work advanced by the earliest blow. Take heart.'

'Ah, if I could have taken yours!' he said,

'But that's past now.' Then rising . . . 'I will take

At least your kindness and encouragement.

I thank you. Dear, be happy. Sing your songs,

If that's your way! but sometimes slumber too,

Nor tire too much with following, out of breath,

The rhymes upon your mountains of Delight.

Reflect, if Art be in truth the higher life,

You need the lower life to stand upon

In order to reach up unto that higher:

And none can stand a-tiptoe in the place

He cannot stand in with two stable feet.

Remember then!—for Art's sake, hold your life.'

We parted so. I held him in respect.

I comprehended what he was in heart

And sacrificial greatness. Ay, but *he*

Supposed me a thing too small to deign to know;

He blew me, plainly, from the crucible, [fly

As some intruding, interrupting Not worth the pains of his analysis

Absorbed on nobler subjects. Hurt a fly!

He would not for the world: he's pitiful

To flies even. 'Sing,' says he, and tease me still,

If that's your way, poor insect. That's your way.

FIFTH BOOK.

AURORA LEIGH, be humble. Shall I hope

To speak my poems in mysterious tune

With man and nature,—with the lava-lymph

That trickles from successive galaxies

Still drop by drop adown the finger of God

In still new worlds?—with summer-days in this,
 That scarce dare breathe they are so beautiful?
 With Spring's delicious trouble in the ground
 Tormented by the quickened blood of roots,
 And softly pricked by golden crocus-sheaves
 In token of the harvest-time of flowers?
 With winters and with autumns,—and beyond
 With the human heart's large seasons, when it hopes
 And fears, joys, grieves, and loves? —with all that strain
 Of sexual passion, which devours the flesh
 In a sacrament of souls? with mother's breasts
 Which, round the new-made creatures hanging there,
 Throb luminous and harmonious like pure spheres?—
 With multitudinous life, and finally
 With the great escaping of ecstatic souls,
 Who, in a rush of too long prisoned flame,
 Their radiant faces upward, burn away [world
 This dark of the body, issuing on a
 Beyond our mortal?—can I speak my verse
 So plainly in tune to these things and the rest,
 That men shall feel it catch them on the quick,
 As having the same warrant over them
 To hold and move them if they will or no,
 Alike imperious as the primal rhythm
 Of that theurgic nature? I must fail,
 Who fail at the beginning to hold and move
 One man,—and he my cousin, and he my friend,
 And he born tender, made intelligent, [sides
 Inclined to ponder the precipitous
 Of difficult questions; yet obtuse to *me*,
 Of *me*, incurious! likes me very well,
 And wishes me a paradise of good,
 Good looks, good means, and good digestion,—ay,
 But otherwise evades me, puts me off
 With kindness, with a tolerant gentleness,—
 Too light a book for a grave man's reading! Go,
 Aurora Leigh: be humble. There it is,
 We women are too apt to look to one,
 Which proves a certain impotence in art.
 We strain our natures at doing something great,
 Far less because it's something great to do,
 Than haply that we, so, commend ourselves
 As being not small, and more appreciable
 To some one friend. We must have mediators
 Betwixt our highest conscience and the judge:
 Some sweet saint's blood must quicken in our palms
 Or all the life in heaven seems slow and cold:
 Good only being perceived as the end of good,
 And God alone pleased,—that's too poor, we think,
 And not enough for us by any means.

Ay—Romney, I remember, told
me once
We miss the abstract, when we
comprehend.
We miss it most when we aspire, . .
and fail.

Yet, so, I will not.—This vile wom-
an's way
Of trailing garments, shall not trip
me up.

I'll have no traffic with the personal
thought

In art's pure temple. Must I work
in vain,

Without the approbation of a man ?
It cannot be ; it shall not. Fame
itself, [race,

That approbation of the general
Presents a poor end, (though the
arrow speed.

Shot straight with vigorous finger
to the white,)

And the highest fame was never
reached except

By what was aimed above it. Art
for art,

And good for God Himself, the
essential Good !

We'll keep our aims sublime, our
eyes erect,

Although our woman hands should
shake and fail ;

And if we fail . . . But must we ?—
Shall I fail ?

The Greeks said grandly in their
tragic phrase,

' Let no one be called happy till
his death.'

To which I add,—Let no one till
his death

Be called unhappy. Measure not
the work [done ;

Until the day's out and the labour
Then bring your gauges. If the
day's work's scant,

Why, call it scant ; affect no com-
promise ;

And, in that we have nobly stiven
at least, [we be,
Deal with us nobly, women though
And honour us with truth if not with
praise.

My ballads prospered ; but the
ballad's race

Is rapid for a poet who bears weights
Of thought and golden image. He
can stand [support

Like Atlas, in the sonnet,—and
His own heavens pregnant with dy-
nastic stars ;

But then he must stand still, nor
take a step.

In that descriptive poem called
' The Hills,'

The prospects were too far and in-
distinct.

'Tis true my critics said, ' A fine
view, that ! '

The public scarcely cared to climb
the book

For even the finest ; and the pub-
lic's right,

A tree's mere fir-wood, unless hu-
manised ;

Which well the Greeks knew when
they stirred its bark

With close-pressed bosoms of sub-
siding nymphs, [lous

And made the forest-rivers garru-
With babble of gods. For us, we
are called to mark

A still more intimate humanity
In this inferior nature,—or, our-
selves,

Must fall like dead leaves trodden
underfoot

By veritable artists. Earth, shut up
By Adam, like a fakir in a box

Left too long buried, remained stiff
and dry,

A mere dumb corpse, till Christ the
Lord came down,

Unlocked the doors, forced open
the blank eyes,

And used His kingly chrim to
straighten out

The leathery tongue turned back
into the throat :

Since when, she lives, remembers,
palpitates, [breath,

In every limb, aspires in every
Embraces infinite relations. Now

We want no half-gods, Panom-
phæan Joves,

Fauns, Naiads, Tritons, Oreads,
and the rest, [world

To take possession of a senseless
To unnatural vampyre-uses. See

the earth,
The body of our body, the green

earth,
Indubitably human like this flesh

And these articulated veins through
which

Our heart drives blood ! there's not
a flower of spring

That dies ere June, but vaunts itself
allied

By issue and symbol, by significance
And correspondence, to that spirit-
world

Outside the limits of our space and
time,

Whereto we are bound. Let poets
give it voice

With human meanings ; else they
miss the thought,

And henceforth step down lower,
stand confessed

Instructed poorly for interpreters,
Thrown out by an easy cowslip in

the text.

Even so my pastoral failed : it was
a book

Of surface-pictures—pretty, cold,
and false

With literal transcript,—the worse
done, I think,

For being not ill-done. Let me set
my mark [wise.

Against such doings, and do other-

This strikes me.—If the public
whom we know,

Could catch me at such admissions,
I should pass

For being right modest. Yet how
proud we are,

In daring to look down upon our-
selves !

The critics say that epics have died
out

With Agamemnon and the goat-
nursed gods—

I'll not believe it. I could never
deem

As Payne Knight did, (the mythic
mountaineer

Who travelled higher than he was
born to live,

And showed sometimes the goitre
in his throat

Discoursing of an image seen
through fog,)

That Homer's heroes measured
twelve feet high.

They were but men :—his Helen's
hair turned gray

Like any plain Miss Smith's, who
wears a front ;

And Hector's infant whimpered at
a plume.

All actual heroes are essential men,
And all men possible heroes : every

age,

Heroic in proportions, double-faced,
Looks backward and before, expects

a morn
And claims an epos.

Ay, but every age
Appears to souls who live in 't, (ask

Carlyle)

Most unheroic. Ours, for instance,
ours :

The thinkers scout it, and the poets
abound [tip :

Who scorn to touch it with a finger-
A pewter age,—mixed metal, silver-
washed :

An age of scum, spooned off the
 richer past, [dines,
 An age of patches for old gaber-
 An age of mere transition, meaning
 nought
 Except that what succeeds must
 shame it quite
 If God please. That's wrong think-
 ing, to my mind,
 And wrong thoughts make poor
 poems.

Every age,
 Through being beheld too close, is
 ill-discerned
 By those who have not lived past it.
 We'll suppose
 Mount Athos carved, as Alexander
 schemed,
 To some colossal statue of a man :
 The peasants, gathering brushwood
 in his ear,
 Had guessed as little as the brows-
 ing goats
 Of form or feature of humanity
 Up there,—in fact, had travelled
 five miles off
 Or ere the giant image broke on
 them, [distinct,
 Full human profile, nose and chin
 Mouth, muttering rhythms of silence
 up the sky,
 And fed at evening with the blood
 of suns ;
 Grand torso,—hand that flung per-
 petually
 The largesse of a silver river down
 To all the country pastures. 'Tis
 even thus
 With times we live in,—evermore
 too great
 To be apprehended near.

But poets should
 Exert a double vision ; should have
 eyes
 To see near things as comprehen-
 sively [sight,
 As if afar they took their point of

And distant things as intimately
 deep
 As if they touched them. Let us
 strive for this.

I do distrust the poet who discerns
 No character or glory in his times,
 And trundles back his soul five
 hundred years,
 Past moat and drawbridge, into a
 castle-court,
 To sing—oh not of lizard or of toad
 Alive i' the ditch there,—'twere ex-
 cusable ;
 But of some black chief, half knight,
 half sheep-lifter,
 Some beauteous dame, half chattel
 and half queen,
 As dead as must be, for the greater
 part,
 The poems made on their chivalric
 bones.
 And that's no wonder : death in-
 herits death.

Nay, if there's room for poets in this
 world
 A little overgrown, (I think here is)
 Their sole work is to represent the
 age
 Their age, not Charlemagne's, this
 live, throbbing age,
 That brawls, cheats, maddens, cal-
 culates, aspires,
 And spends more passion, more
 heroic heat,
 Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-
 rooms,
 Than Roland with his knights at
 Roncesvalles.
 To flinch from modern varnish,
 coat or flounce,
 Cry out for togas and the pictur-
 esque,
 Is fatal,—foolish too. King Ar-
 thur's self [ever ;
 Was commonplace to Lady Guen-
 And Camelot to minstrels seemed
 as flat,

As Fleet Street to our poets.

Never flinch,
But still, unscrupulously epic, catch
Upon the burning lava of a song
The full-veined, heaving, double-
breasted age :

That, when the next shall come, the
men of that

May touch the impress with rever-
ent hand, and say

'Behold,—behold, the paps we all
have sucked !

This bosom seems to beat still, or
at least [art,

It sets ours beating. This is living
Which thus presents and thus re-
cords true life.'

What form is best for poems?
Let me think

Of forms less, and the external.
Trust the spirit,

As sovran nature does, to make the
form ;

For otherwise we only imprison
spirit

And not embody. Inward ever-
more

To outward,—so in life, and so in
art,

Which still is life.

Five acts to make a play.
And why not fifteen ? why not ten ?
or seven ?

What matter for the number of the
leaves,

Supposing the tree lives and grows ?
exact

The literal unities of time and place,
When 'tis the essence of passion to
ignore

Both time and place ? Absurd.
Keep up the fire,

And leave the generous flames to
shape themselves.

'Tis true the stage requires obse-
quiousness [here

To this or that convention ; 'exit'

And 'enter' there ; the points for
clapping, fixed,

Like Jacob's white-peeled rods be-
fore the rams ;

And all the close-curved imagery
clipped

In manner of their fleece at shear-
ing-time.

Forget to prick the galleries to the
heart

Precisely at the fourth act,—culmi-
nate

Our five pyramidal acts with one
act more,—

We're lost so ! Shakspeare's ghost
could scarcely plead

Against our just damnation.
Stand aside ;

We'll muse for comfort that, last
century,

On this same tragic stage on which
we have failed,

A wigless Hamlet would have failed
the same.

And whosoever writes good poetry,
Looks just to art. He does not

write for you [burgh ;
Or me,—for London or for Edin-

He will not suffer the best critic
known

To step into his sunshine of free
thought

And self-absorbed conception, and
exact

An inch-long swerving of the holy
lines.

If virtue done for popularity
Defiles like vice, can art for praise

or hire
Still keep its splendour, and remain
pure art ?

Eschew such serfdom. What the
poet writes,

He writes : mankind accepts it if it
suits,

And that's success : if not, the
poem's passed

From hand to hand, and yet from
hand to hand,
Until the unborn snatch it, crying
out
In pity on their fathers' being so
dull,
And that's success too.

I will write no plays ;
Because the drama, less sublime in
this,
Makes lower appeals, defends more
menially, [taste
Adopts the standard of the public
To chalk its height on, wears a dog-
chain round
Its regal neck, and learns to carry
and fetch
The fashions of the day to please
the day ;
Fawns close on pit and boxes, who
clap hands ;
Commending chiefly its docility
And humour in stage-tricks ; or
else indeed
Gets hissed at, howled at, stamped
at like a dog,
Or worse, we'll say. For dogs, un-
justly kicked,
Yell, bite at need ; but if your dram-
atist
(Being wronged by some five hun-
dred nobodies
Because their grosser brains most
naturally
Misjudge the fineness of his subtle
wit)
Shows teeth an almond's breadth,
protests the length
Of a modest phrase,—My gentle
countrymen,
There's something in it haply of
your fault,—
Why, then, beside five hundred no-
bodies,
He'll have five thousand and five
thousand more
Against him,—the whole public,—
all the hoofs

Of King Saul's father's asses, in full
drove, [pealed
And obviously deserve it. He ap-
To these,—and why say more if
they condemn,
Than if they praise him?—Weep,
my Æschylus,
But low and far, upon Sicilian
shores !
For since 'twas Athens (so I read
the myth)
Who gave commission to that fatal
weight.
The tortoise, cold and hard, to drop
on thee
And crush thee,—better cover thy
bald head ;
She'll hear the softest hum of Hyb-
lan bee
Before thy loudest protestation.
Then
The risk's still worse upon the mod-
ern stage ; [cess,
I could not, for so little, accept suc-
Nor would I risk so much, in ease
and calm,
For manifer gains ; let those
whose prize,
Pursue them : I stand off.
And yet, forbid,
That any irreverent fancy or conceit
Should litter in the Drama's throne-
room where
The rulers of our art, in whose full
veins
Dynastic glories mingle, sit in
strength
And do their kingly work,—con-
ceive, command,
And, from the imagination's crucial
heat,
Catch up their men and women all
a-flame [prove
For action, all alive and forced to
Their life by living out heart, brain,
and nerve,
Until mankind makes witness,
' These be men

As we are,' and vouchsafes the
greeting due
To Imogen and Juliet—sweetest kin
On art's side.

'Tis that, honouring to its worth
The drama, I would fear to keep it
down

To the level of the footlights. Dies
no more [slain,

The sacrificial goat, for Bacchus
His filmed eyes fluttered by the
whirling white

Of choral vestures,—troubled in his
blood,

While tragic voices that clanged
keen as swords,

Leapt high together with the altar-
flame

And made the blue air wink. The
waxen mask,

Which set the grand still front of
Themis' son [player;—

Upon the puckered visage of a
The buskin, which he rose upon
and moved,

As some tall ship first conscious of
the wind

Sweeps slowly past the piers;—the
mouth-piece, where

The mere man's voice with all its
breaths and breaks

Went sheathed in brass, and clash-
ed on even heights

Its phraséd thunders;—these things
are no more,

Which once were. And conclud-
ing, which is clear,

The growing drama has outgrown
such toys

Of simulated stature, face, and
speech,

It also peradventure may outgrow
The simulation of the painted scene,

Boards, actors, prompters, gaslight,
and costume;

And take for a worthier stage the
soul itself,

Its shifting fancies and celestial
lights,

With all its grand orchestral silences
To keep the pauses of the rhyth-
mic sounds.

Alas, I still see something to be
done,

And what I do falls short of what
I see

Though I waste myself on doing.
Long green days,

Worn bare of grass and sunshine,
—long calm nights,

From which the silken sleeps were
fretted out,

Be witness for me, with no ama-
teur's

Irreverent haste and busy idleness
I set myself to art! What then?
what's done?

What's done, at last?
Behold, at last, a book.

If life-blood's necessary,—which it
is,

(By that blue vein athrob on Ma-
homet's brow,

Each prophet-poet's book must
show man's blood!)

If life-blood's fertilising, I wrung
mine

On every leaf of this,—unless the
drops

Slide heavily on one side and left it
dry.

That chances often: many a fervid
man

Writes books as cold and flat as
graveyard stones

From which the lichen's scraped,
and if St. Preux

Had written his own letters, as he
might,

We had never wept to think of the
little mole

'Neath Julie's drooping eyelid. Pas-
sion is

But something suffered, after all.

While art
 Sets action on the top of suffering :
 The artist's part is both to be and
 do, [power
 Transfixing with a special, central
 The flat experience of the common
 man,
 And turning outward, with a sud-
 den wrench,
 Half agony, half ecstasy, the thing
 He feels the inmost : never felt the
 less
 Because he sings it. Does a torch
 less burn [steel,
 For burning next reflectors of blue
 That *he* should be the colder for his
 place
 "Twixt two incessant fires,—his
 personal life's,
 And that intense refraction which
 burns back [round
 Perpetually against him from the
 Of crystal conscience he was born
 into
 If artist-born? O sorrowful great
 gift
 Conferred on poets, of a twofold life,
 When one life has been found
 enough for pain!
 We staggering 'neath our burden
 as mere men,
 Being called to stand up straight as
 demi-gods,
 Support the intolerable strain and
 stress [up
 Of the universal, and send clearly
 With voices broken by the human
 sob,
 Our poems to find rhymes among
 the stars!
 But soft!—a 'poet' is a word soon
 said;
 A book's a thing soon written.
 Nay, indeed.
 The more the poet shall be ques-
 tionable,
 The more unquestionably comes his
 book.

And this of mine—well, granting
 to myself
 Some passion in it, furrowing up
 the flats,
 Mere passion will not prove a vol-
 ume worth
 Its gall and rags even. Bubbles
 round a keel
 Mean nought, excepting that the
 vessel moves.
 There's more than passion goes to
 make a man
 Or book, which is a man too.
 I am sad,
 I wonder if Pygmalion had these
 doubts,
 And, feeling the hard marble first
 relent, [arms,
 Grow supple to the straining of his
 And tingle through its cold to his
 burning lip,
 Supposed his senses mocked, and
 that the toil
 Of stretching past the known and
 seen to reach
 The archetypal Beauty out of sight,
 Had made his heart beat fast enough
 for two,
 And with his own life dazed and
 blinded him!
 Not so; Pygmalion loved,—and
 whoso loves
 Believes the impossible.
 And I am sad :
 I cannot thoroughly love a work of
 mine,
 Since none seems worthy of my
 thought and hope
 More highly mated. He has shot
 them down, [soul,
 My Phœbus Apollo, soul within my
 Who judges by the attempted,
 what's attained,
 And with the silver arrow from his
 height
 Has struck down all my works be-
 fore my face

While *I* said nothing. Is there
aught to say?

I call the artist but a greatedened
man :

He may be childless also, like a man.

I laboured on alone. The wind
and dust

And sun of the world beat blistering
in my face ;

And hope, now for me, now against
me, dragged

My spirits onward,—as some fallen
balloon,

Which, whether caught by blossoming
tree or bare,

Is torn alike. I sometimes touched
my aim,

Or seemed,—and generous souls
cried out, ' Be strong,

Take courage ; now you're on our
level,—now !

The next step saves you !' I was
flushed with praise,

But, pausing just a moment to draw
breath, [myself

I could not choose but murmur to
' Is this all ? all that's done ? and all

that's gained ?

If this then be success, 'tis dismaller
' Than any failure.'

O my God, my God !

O Supreme Artist, who as sole re-
turn [work,

For all the cosmic wonder of Thy
Demandest of us just a word . . . a

name,
My Father !—thou has knowl-
edge, only thou.'

How dreary 'tis for women to sit
still

On winter nights by solitary fires,
And hear the nations praising them

far off,

Too far ! ay, praising our quick
sense of love,

Our very heart of passionate wom-
anhood,

Which could not beat so in the
verse without

Being present also in the un-kissed
lips,

And eyes undried because there's
none to ask

The reason they grow moist.

To sit alone,

And think for comfort how, that
very night, [face

Affianced lovers, leaning face to
With sweet half-listenings for each

other's breath

Are reading haply from a page of
ours,

To pause with a thrill, as if their
cheeks had touched,

When such a stanza, level to their
mood,

Seems floating their own thoughts
out—' So I feel

For thee,'—' And I, for thee : this
poet knows

What everlasting love is !'—how,
that night, [roads

A father, issuing from the misty
Upon the luminous round of lamp

and hearth

And happy children, having caught
up first

The youngest there until it shrink
and shriek

To feel the cold chin prick its dim-
ples through

With winter from the hills, may
throw i' the lap

Of the eldest, (who has learnt to
drop her lids

To hide some sweetness newer than
last year's)

Our book and cry, . . . ' Ah you, you
care for rhymes ;

So here be rhymes to pour on under
trees,

When April comes to let you ! I've
been told

They are not idle as so many are,

But set hearts beating pure as well
as fast :

'Tis yours, the book ; I'll write
your name in it,

That so you may not lose, however
lost

In poet's lore and charming reverie,
The thought of how your father
thought of *you*

In riding from the town.'

To have our books

Appraised by love, associated with
love,

While *we* sit loveless ! is it hard,
you think ?

At least 'tis mournful. Fame, in-
deed, 'twas said,

Means simply love. It was a man
said that.

And then, there's love and love :
the love of all [dox.]

(To risk in turn a woman's para-
ls but a small thing to the love of
one. [fied

You bid a hungry child be satis-
With a heritage of many corn-
fields : nay,

He says he's hungry,—he would
rather have

That little barley-cake you keep
from him

While reckoning up his harvests.
So with us ;

(Here, Romney, too, we fail to
generalise !)

We're hungry.

Hungry ! but it's pitiful

To wail like unweaned babes and
suck our thumbs

Because we're hungry. Who in all
this world,

(Wherein we are haply set to pray
and fast,

And learn what good is by its
opposite)

Has never hungered ? Woe to him
who has found

The meal enough : if Ugolino's full,

His teeth have crunched some foul
unnatural thing :

For here satiety proves penury
More utterly irremediable. And
since

We needs must hunger,—better,
for man's love

Than God's truth ! better, for com-
panions sweet,

Than great convictions ! let us bear
our weights,

Preferring dreary hearths to desert
souls.

Well, well, they say we're envious,
we who rhyme ;

But I, because I am a woman
perhaps,

And so rhyme ill, am ill at envying.
I never envied Graham his breadth

of style,

Which gives you, with a random
smutch or two,

(Near-sighted critics analyse to
smutch)

Such delicate perspectives of full
life ;

Nor Belmore, for the unity of aim
To which he cuts his cedarn poems,
fine

As sketchers do their pencils ; nor
Mark Gage,

For that caressing colour and tranc-
ing tone

Whereby you're swept away and
melted in

The sensual element, which with a
back wave

Restores you to the level of pure
souls

And leaves you with Plotinus.
None of these,

For native gifts or popular applause,
I've envied ; but for this,—that

when by chance

Says some one,—' There goes Bel-
more, a great man !

He leaves clean work behind him,
and requires

No sweeper up of the chips,' . . a
 girl I know,
 Who answers nothing, save with
 her brown eyes, [saint
 Smiles unaware as if a guardian
 Smiled in her :—for this, too,—that
 Gage comes home
 And lays his last book's prodigal
 review
 Upon his mother's knees, where,
 years ago,
 He laid his childish spelling-book
 and learned
 To chirp and peck the letters from
 her mouth,
 As young birds must. 'Well done,'
 she murmured then,
 She will not say it now more won-
 deringly ;
 And yet the last 'Well done,' will
 touch him more,
 As catching up to-day and yester-
 day
 In a perfect cord of love ; and so,
 Mark Gage,
 I envy you your mother !—and you,
 Graham,
 Because you have a wife who loves
 you so,
 She half forgets, at moments, to be
 proud
 Of being Graham's wife, until a
 friend observes,
 'The boy here, has his father's mas-
 sive brow,
 Done small in wax . . if we push
 back the curls.'
 Who loves *me* ? Dearest father,—
 mother sweet,—
 I speak the names out sometimes
 by myself,
 And make the silence shiver : they
 sound strange,
 As Hindostanee to an Ind-born
 man
 Accustomed many years to English
 speech ;

Or lovely poet-words grown obso-
 lete,
 Which will not leave off singing.
 Up in heaven
 I have my father,—with my
 mother's face
 Beside him in a blotch of heavenly
 light ;
 No more for earth's familiar house-
 hold use,
 No more ! The best verse written
 by this hand
 Can never reach them where they
 sit, to seem
 Well-done to *them*. Death quite
 unfellows us,
 Sets dreadful odds betwixt the live
 and dead,
 And makes us part as those at
 Babel did
 Through sudden ignorance of a
 common tongue.
 A living Cæsar would not dare to
 play
 At bowls with such as my dead
 father is.
 And yet this may be less so than
 appears,
 This change and separation. Spar-
 rows five
 For just two farthings, and God
 cares for each.
 If God is not too great for little
 cares, [God?
 Is any creature, because gone to
 I've seen some men, veracious, no-
 wise mad,
 Who have thought or dreamed,
 declared and testified,
 They heard the Dead a ticking like
 a clock
 Which strikes the hours of the
 eternities,
 Beside them, with their natural ears,
 and known
 That human spirits feel the human
 way,

And hate the unreasoning awe
 which waves them off
 From possible communion. It
 may be.
 At least, earth separates as well as
 heaven.
 For instance, I have not seen Rom-
 ney Leigh
 Full eighteen months . . . add six,
 you get two years.
 They say he's very busy with good
 works,—
 Has parted Leigh Hall into alms-
 houses.
 He made an almshouse of his
 heart one day,
 Which ever since is loose upon the
 latch
 For those who pull the string.—I
 never did.
 It always makes me sad to go
 abroad ;
 And now I'm sadder that I went
 to-night
 Among the lights and talkers at
 Lord Howe's.
 His wife is gracious, with her glossy
 braids,
 And even voice, and gorgeous eye-
 balls, calm
 As her other jewels. If she's
 somewhat cold,
 Who wonders, when her blood has
 stood so long [line
 In the ducal reservoir she calls her
 By no means arrogantly? she's
 not proud ;
 Not prouder than the swan is of
 the lake
 He has always swum in ; 'tis her
 element,
 And so she takes it with a natural
 grace,
 Ignoring tadpoles. She just knows
 perhaps
 There *are* who travel without
 outriders,

Which isn't her fault. Ah, to
 watch her face,
 When good Lord Howe expounds
 his theories
 Of social justice and equality—
 'Tis curious, what a tender, toler-
 ant bend
 Her neck takes : for she loves him,
 likes his talk,
 'Such clever talk—that dear, odd
 Algernon !'
 She listens on, exactly as if he
 talked
 Some Scandinavian myth of Le-
 mures,
 Too pretty to dispute, and too ab-
 surd.
 She's gracious to me as her hus-
 band's friend,
 And would be gracious, were I not
 a Leigh,
 Being used to smile just so, with-
 out her eyes,
 On Joseph Strangways, the Leeds
 mesmerist,
 And Delia Dobbs, the lecturer
 from 'the States'
 Upon the 'Woman's question.
 Then, for him,
 I like him . . . he's my friend.
 And all the rooms
 Were full of crinkling silks that
 swept about
 The fine dust of most subtle court-
 esies.
 What then?—why then, we come
 home to be sad.
 How lovely One I love not looked
 to-night !
 She's very pretty, Lady Walde-
 mar.
 Her maid must use both hands to
 twist that coil
 Of tresses, then be careful lest the
 rich
 Bronze rounds should slip :—she
 missed, though, a gray hair,

A single one,—I saw it ; otherwise
The woman looked immortal.

How they told,

Those alabaster shoulders and bare
breasts,

On which the pearls, drowned out
of sight in milk,

Were lost, excepting for the ruby-
clasp !

They split the amaranth velvet-
boddice down

To the waist or nearly, with the
audacious press

Of full-breathed beauty. If the
heart within

Were half as white !—but, if it
were, perhaps

The breasts were closer covered,
and the sight

Less aspectable, by half, too.

I heard

The young man with the German
student's look—

A sharp face, like a knife in a cleft
stick,

Which shot up straight against the
parting line

So equally dividing the long hair,—
Say softly to his neighbor, (thirty-

five

And mediæval) 'Look that way,
Sir Blaise.

She's Lady Waldemar—to the
left,—in red—

Whom Romney Leigh, our ablest
man just now,

Is soon about to marry.'

Then replied

Sir Blaise Delorme, with quiet,
priestlike voice,

Too used to syllable damnations
round

To make a natural emphasis worth
while :

'Is Leigh your ablest man? the
same, I think,

Once jilted by a recreant pretty
maid

Adopted from the people? Now,
in change,

He seems to have plucked a flower
from the other side

Of the social hedge.'

'A flower, a flower,' exclaimed
My German student,—his own

eyes full-blown

Bent on her. He was twenty,
certainly.

Sir Blaise resumed with gentle ar-
rogance,

As if he had dropped his alms into
a hat

And gained the right to counsel,—
'My young friend,

I doubt your ablest man's ability
To get the least good or help meet

for him,

For pagan phalanstery or Christian
home,

From such a flowery creature.'

'Beautiful !'

My student murmured, rapt,—
'Mark how she stirs!

Just waves her head, as if a flower
indeed,

Touched far of by the vain breath
of our talk.'

At which that bilious Grimwald,
(he who writes

For the Renovator) who had seem-
ed absorbed

Upon the table-book of autographs,
(I dare say mentally he crouched

the bones [alive
Of all those writers, wishing them

To feel his tooth in earnest) turn-
ed short round

With low carnivorous laugh,—'a
flower, of course !

She neither sews nor spins,—and
takes no thought

Of her garments . . . falling off.'

The student flinched,

Sir Blaise, the same ; then both,
drawing back their chairs

As if they spied black-beetles on
the floor,
Pursued their talk, without a word
being thrown
To the critic.

Good Sir Blaise's brow is high
And noticeably narrow : a strong
wind, [denly,
You fancy, might unroof him sud-
And blow that great top attic off
his head
So piled with feudal relics. You
admire

His nose in profile, though you
miss his chin ;

But, though you miss his chin, you
seldom miss

His ebon cross worn innermost,ly,
(carved [monk

For penance by a saintly Styrian
Whose flesh was too much with
him,) slipping through

Some unaware unbuttoned casualty
Of the under-waistcoat. With an
absent air

Sir Blaise sate fingering it and
speaking low,

While I, upon the sofa, heard it
all.

' My dear young friend, if we could
bear our eyes [plate,

Like blessedest St. Lucy, on a
They would not trick us into choos-
ing wives,

As doubtlets, by the colour.
Otherwise

Our fathers chose,—and therefore,
when they had hung

Their household keys about a lady's
waist, [ty :

The sense of duty gave her digni-
She kept her bosom holy to her
babes ;

And, if a moralist reproved her
dress,

'T'was, 'Too much starch!'—and
not, 'Too little lawn !'

' Now, pshaw ! ' returned the other
in a heat,

A little fretted by being called
' young friend,'

Or so I took it,—' for St. Lucy's
sake,

If she's the saint to swear by, let
us leave

Our fathers,—plagued enough
about our sons !'

(He stroked his beardless chin)
' yes, plagued, sir, plagued :

The future generations lie on us
As heavy as the nightmare of a
seer ;

Our meat and drink grow painful
prophecy :

I ask you,—have we leisure, if we
liked,

To hollow out our weary hands to
keep

Your intermittent rushlight of the
past

From draughts in lobbies? Prej-
udice of sex

And marriage-law . . the socket
drops them through

While we two speak,—however
may protest

Some over-delicate nostrils, like
your own,

'Gainst odours thence arising.'
' You are young,'

Sir Blaise objected.
' If I am,' he said

With fire,—' though somewhat less
so than I seem,

The young run on before, and see
the thing

That's coming. Reverence for
the young, I cry.

In that new church for which the
world's near ripe,

You'll have the younger in the Eld-
er's chair, [hope

Presiding with his ivory front of
O'er foreheads clawed by cruel
carrion birds

Of life's experience.'

'Pray your blessing, sir,'

Sir Blaise replied good-humouredly,

—' I plucked

A silver hair this morning from my beard,

Which left me your inferior.

Would I were

Eighteen and worthy to admonish you !

If young men of your order run before

[dice

To see such sights as sexual prejudice
And marriage-law dissolved,—in plainer words,

A general concubinage expressed
In a universal pruriency,—the thing
Is scarce worth running fast for,
and you'd gain

By loitering with your elders.'

' Ah,' he said,

' Who, getting to the top of Pisgah-hill,

Can talk with one at bottom of the view,

To make it comprehensible? Why, Leigh

Himself, although our ablest man, I said;

[this,

Is scarce advanced to see as far as which some are : he takes up imperfectly

The social question—by one handle—leaves

The rest to trail. A Christian socialist,

Is Romney Leigh, you understand.'

' Not I.

I disbelieve in Christian-pagans, much

As you in women-fishes. If we mix two colours, we lose both, and make a third

Distinct from either. Mark you ! to mistake

A colour is the sign of a sick brain, and mine, I thank the saints, is clear and cool ;

A neutral tint is here impossible.

The church,—and by the church, I mean of course

The catholic, apostolic, mother-church,—

Draws lines as plain and straight as her own wall ;

Inside of which are Christians, obviously,

And outside . . . dogs.'

' We thank you. Well I know

The ancient mother-church would fain still bite,

For all her toothless gums,—as Leigh himself

Would fain be a Christian still, for all his wit ;

[for me.

Pass that ; you two may settle it, You're slow in England. In a

month I learnt

At Gottingen enough philosophy

To stock your English schools for fifty years :

Pass that, too. Here alone, I stop you short,

—Supposing a true man like Leigh could stand

Unequal in the stature of his life

To the height of his opinions. Choose a wife

Because of a smooth skin?—not he, not he !

He'd rail at Venus' self for creaking shoes,

Unless she walked his way of righteousness ;

And if he takes a Venus Meretrix, (No imputation on the lady there)

Be sure that, by some sleight of Christian art,

He has metamorphosed and converted her

To a Blessed Virgin.'

' Soft !' Sir Blaise drew breath As if it hurt him,—' Soft ! no blasphemy,

I pray you !'

' The first Christians did the thing :

Why not the last?' asked he of
 Gottingen,
 With just that shade of sneering on
 the lip,
 Compensates for the lagging of the
 beard,—
 'And so the case is. If that fairest
 fair
 Is talked of as the future wife of
 Leigh, [tainly
 She's talked of too, at least as cer-
 As Leigh's disciple. You may find
 her name
 On all his missions and commissions,
 schools,
 Asylums, hospitals,—he had her
 down, [lead
 With other ladies whom her starry
 Persuaded from their spheres, to
 his country-place
 In Shropshire, to the famed pha-
 lanstery
 At Leigh Hall, christianised from
 Fourier's own,
 (In which he has planted out his
 sapling stocks
 Of knowledge into social nurseries)
 And there, they say, she has tarried
 half a week,
 And milked the cows, and churned,
 and pressed the curd,
 And said 'my sister' to the lowest
 drab
 Of all the assembled castaways;
 such girls!
 Ay, sided with them at the washing-
 tub—
 Conceive, Sir Blaise, those naked
 perfect arms,
 Round glittering arms, plunged
 elbow deep in suds,
 Like wild swans hid in lilies all a-
 shake.'

Lord Howe came up. 'What,
 talking poetry
 So near the image of the unfavorable
 Muse?

That's you, Miss Leigh: I've
 watched you half an hour,
 Precisely as I watched the statue
 called
 A Pallas in the Vatican;—you mind
 The face, Sir Blaise?—intensely
 calm and sad,
 As wisdom cut it off from fellow-
 ship,—
 But *that* spoke louder. Not a word
 from *you*!
 And these two gentlemen were bold,
 I marked,
 And unabashed by even your
 silence.'

'Ah,'
 Said I, 'my dear Lord Howe, you
 shall not speak
 To a printing woman who has lost
 her place,
 (The sweet safe corner of the
 household fire
 Behind the heads of children) com-
 pliments
 As if she were a woman. We who
 have clipt
 The curls before our eyes, may see
 at least
 As plain as men do: 'speak out,
 man to man;
 No compliments, beseech you.'

'Friend to friend,
 Let that be. We are sad to-night,
 I saw,
 (—Good night, Sir Blaise! Ah,
 Smith—he has slipped away)
 I saw you across the room, and
 stayed, Miss Leigh,
 To keep a crowd of lion-hunters off,
 With faces toward your jungle.
 There were three; [fat,
 A spacious lady, five feet ten and
 Who has the devil in her (and there's
 room)
 For walking to and fro upon the
 earth, [quires
 From Chippewa to China; she re-
 Your autograph upon a united leaf

"Twixt Queen Pomare's and Emperor Soulouque's :

Pray give it ; she has energies, though fat :

For me, I'd rather see a rick on fire Than such a woman angry. Then a youth

Fresh from the backwoods, green as the underboughs,

Asks modestly, Miss Leigh, to kiss your shoe, [parts,

And adds, he has an epic in twelve Which when you've read, you'll do it for his boot,—

All which I saved you, and absorb next week

Both manuscript and man,—because a lord

Is still more potent than a poetess With any extreme republican. Ah, ah,

You smile at last, then.'

'Thank you.'

'Leave the smile.

I'll lose the thanks for't, ay, and throw you in [eyes,

My transatlantic girl, with golden That draw you to her splendid whiteness as

The pistil of a water-lily draws, Adust with gold. Those girls across the sea

Are tyrannously pretty,—and I swore

(She seemed to me an innocent, frank girl)

To bring her to you for a woman's kiss,

Not now, but on some other day or week :

—We'll call it perjury ; I give her [up.'

'No, bring her.'

'Now,' said he, 'you make it hard To touch such goodness with a grimy palm.

I thought to tease you well, and fret you cross,

And steel myself, when rightly vexed with you, For telling you a thing to tease you more.'

'Of Romney ?'

'No, no ; nothing worse,' he cried, 'Of Romney Leigh than what is buzzed about,—

That *he* is taken in an eye-trap too,

Like many half as wise. The thing I mean

Refers to you, not him.'

'Refers to me.'

He echoed,—'Me ! You sound it like a stone

Dropped down a dry well very listlessly [toad

By one who never thinks about the Alive at the bottom. Presently perhaps

You'll sound your 'me' more proudly—till I shrink.'

'Lord Howe's the toad, then, in this question ?'

'Brief,

We'll take it graver. Give me sofa-room,

And quiet hearing. You know Eglinton,

John Eglinton, of Eglinton in Kent ?'

'Is *he* the toad ?—he's rather like the snail : [his back :

Known chiefly for the house upon Divide the man and house—you kill the man ;

That's Eglinton of Eglinton, Lord Howe.'

He answered grave. 'A reputable man,

An excellent landlord of the olden stamp,

If somewhat slack in new philanthropies ;

Who keeps his birthdays with a
 tenants' dance,
 Is hard upon them when they miss
 the church
 Or hold their children back from
 catechism,
 But not ungentle when the aged
 poor
 Pick sticks at hedge-sides; nay,
 I've heard him say,
 'The old dame has a twinge because
 she stoops :
 'That's punishment enough for fel-
 ony.''
 'O tender-hearted landlord ! May
 I take
 My long lease with him, when the
 time arrives
 For gathering winter fagots !'
 'He likes art,
 Buys books and pictures . . of a
 certain kind ;
 Neglects no patent duty ; a good
 son' . . .
 'To a most obedient mother. Born
 to wear
 His father's shoes, she wears her
 husband's too :
 Indeed I've heard it's touching.
 Dear Lord Howe,
 You shall not praise *me* so against
 your heart,
 When I'm at worst for praise and
 fagots.'

'Be
 Less bitter with me, for . . in short,'
 he said,
 'I have a letter, which he urged me
 so
 To bring you . . I could scarcely
 choose but yield ;
 Insisting that a new love passing
 through
 The hand of an old friendship,
 caught from it
 Some reconciling odour.'

'Love, you say ?

My lord, I cannot love. I only find
 The rhyme for love,—and that's
 not love, my lord.
 Take back your letter.'

'Pause : you'll read it first ?'
 'I will not read it : it is stereotyped ;
 The same he wrote to,—anybody's
 name,
 Anne Blythe the actress, when she
 died so true,
 A duchess fainted in a private box :
 Pauline the dancer, after the great
pas
 In which her little feet winked
 overhead [pit .
 Like other fireflies, and amazed the
 Or Baldinacci, when her F in alt
 Had touched the silver tops of
 heaven itself
 With such a pungent spirit-dart,
 the Queen
 Laid softly, each to each, her white-
 gloved palms,
 And sighed for joy : or else (I thank
 your friend)
 Aurora Leigh,—when some indif-
 ferent rhymes,
 Like those the boys sang round
 the holy ox
 On Memphis-highway, chance per-
 haps to set
 Our Apis-public lowing. Oh, he
 wants, [home,
 Instead of any worthy wife at
 A star upon his stage of Eglinton !
 Advise him that he is not over-
 shrewd
 In being so little modest : a dropped
 star
 Makes bitter waters, says a book
 I've read,—
 And there's his unread letter.'

'My dear friend,'
 Lord Howe began . .
 In haste I tore the phrase.
 'You mean your friend of Eglin-
 ton, or me ?'

'I mean you, you,' he answered
with some fire.

'A happy life means prudent com-
promise ;

The tare runs through the farmer's
garnered sheaves .

But though the gleaner's apron
holds pure wheat,

We count her poorer. Tare with
wheat, we cry,

And good with drawbacks. You,
you love your art,

And, certain of vocation, set your
soul

On utterance. Only, . . in this
world we have made,

(They say God made it first, but if
He did

'Twas so long since, . . and, since,
we have spoiled it so,

He scarce would know it, if He
looked this way,

From hells we preach of, with the
flames blown out,)

In this bad, twisted, topsy-turvy
world,

Where all the heaviest wrongs get
uppermost,—

In this uneven, unfostering Eng-
land here.

Where ledger-strokes and sword-
strokes count indeed,

But soul-strokes merely tell upon
the flesh

They strike from,—it is hard to
stand for art,

Unless some golden tripod from
the sea

Be fished up, by Apollo's divine
chance,

To throne such feet as yours, my
prophetess,

At Delphi. Think,—the god comes
down as fierce

As twenty bloodhounds ! shakes
you, strangles you,

Until the oracular shriek shall ooze
in froth !

At best 'tis not all ease,—at worst
too hard :

A place to stand on is a 'vantage
gained,

And here's your tripod. To be
plain, dear friend,

You're poor except in what you
richly give ;

You labour for your own bread
painfully,

Or ere you pour our wine. For
art's sake, pause.'

I answered slow,—as some wayfar-
ing man,

Who feels himself at night too far
from home,

Makes steadfast face against the
bitter wind, [is,

'Is art so less a thing than virtue
That artists first must cater for

their ease

Or ever they make issue past them-
selves

To generous use ? alas, and is it
so,

That we, who would be somewhat
clean, must sweep

Our ways as well as walk them,
and no friend

Confirm us nobly,—' Leave results
to God,

But you, be clean ?' What ! ' pru-
dent compromise

Makes acceptable life,' you say,
instead,

You, you, Lord Howe ?—in things
indifferent, well.

For instance, compromise the
wheaten bread

For rye, the meat for lentils, silk
for serge,

And sleep on down, if needs, for
sleep on straw ;

But there, end compromise. I will
not bate

One artist-dream on straw or down,
my lord,

He never loved her,—never. By
 the way,
 You have not heard of *her*? . . .
 quite out of sight.
 And out of saving? lost in every
 sense?'

She might have gone on talking
 half-an-hour,
 And I stood still, and cold, and
 pale, I think,
 As a garden-statue a child pelts
 with snow
 For pretty pastime. Every now
 and then
 I put in 'yes' or 'no.' I scarce
 knew why ;
 The blind man walks wherever the
 dog pulls,
 And so I answered. Till Lord
 Howe broke in :
 'What penance takes the wretch
 who interrupts
 The talk of charming women? I,
 at last,
 Must brave it. Pardon, Lady
 Waldemar!
 The lady on my arm is tired, un-
 well, [say
 And loyally I've promised she shall
 Nor harder word this evening, than
 . . . goodnight ;
 The rest her face speaks for her.'—
 Then we went.

And I breathe large at home. I
 drop my cloak,
 Unclasp my girdle, loose the band
 that tie.
 My hair . . . now could I but un-
 loose 'y soul!
 We are epulchred alive in this
 close world,
 And want more room.
 The charming woman there—
 This reckoning up and writing
 down her talk
 Affects me singularly. How she
 talked

To pain me ! woman's spite !—You
 wear steel-mail ;
 A woman takes a housewife from
 her breast,
 And plucks the delicatest needle
 out
 As 'twere a rose, and pricks you
 carefully
 'Neath nails, 'neath eyelids, in your
 nostrils,—say,
 A beast would roar so tortured,—
 but a man,
 A human creature, must not, shall
 not flinch,
 No, not for shame.
 What vexes after all,
 Is just that such as she, with such
 as I,
 Knows how to vex. Sweet heaven,
 she takes me up
 As if she had fingered me and dog-
 eared me [a life !
 And spelled me by the fireside half
 She knows my turns, my feeble
 points. What then ?
 The knowledge of a thing implies
 the thing :
 Of course, she found *that* in me,
 she saw *that*,
 Her pencil underscored *this* for a
 fault,
 And I, still ignorant. Shut the
 book up—close !
 And crush that beetle in the leaves.
 O heart,
 At last we shall grow hard too,
 like the rest,
 And call it self-defence because we
 are soft.

And after all, now, . . . why should
 I be pained
 That Romney Leigh, my cousin,
 should espouse
 This Lady Waldemar ? And, say,
 she held
 Her newly-blossomed gladness in
 my face, . . .

'Twas natural surely, if not gener-
 ous,
 Considering how, when winter held
 her fast,
 I helped the frost with mine, and
 pained her more
 Than she pains me. Pains me—!
 but wherefore pained?
 'Tis clear my cousin Romney wants
 a wife,—
 So, good!—The man's need of the
 woman, here,
 Is greater than the woman's of the
 man,
 And easier served; for where the
 man discerns
 A sex, (ah, ah, the man can gener-
 alise,
 Said she) we see but one, ideally
 And really; where we yearn to
 lose ourselves
 And melt like white pearls in an-
 other's wine,
 He seeks to double himself by what
 he loves,
 And make his drink more costly by
 our pearls.
 At board, at bed, at work and holi-
 day,
 It is not good for man to be alone,
 And that's his way of thinking, first
 and last;
 And thus my cousin Romney wants
 a wife.
 But then my cousin sets his dignity
 On personal virtue. If he under-
 stands
 By love, like others, self-aggrandise-
 ment,
 It is that he may verily be great
 By doing rightly and kindly. Once
 he thought,
 For charitable ends set duly forth
 In heaven's white judgment-book,
 to marry . . . ah,
 We'll call her name Aurora Leigh,
 although

She's changed since 'then'!—and
 once, for social ends,
 Poor Marian Erle, my sister Marian
 Erle, [Marian,
 My woodland sister, sweet Maid
 Whose memory moans on in me
 like the wind
 Through ill-shut casements, mak-
 ing me more sad
 Than ever I find reason for. Alas,
 Poor pretty plantive face, embodied
 ghost,
 He finds it easy then, to clap thee
 off
 From pulling at his sleeve and
 book and pen,—
 He locks thee out at night into the
 cold,
 Away from butting with thy horny
 eyes
 Against his crystal dreams,—that
 now he's strong [mar
 To love anew? that Lady Walde-
 Succeeds my Marian?
 After all, why not?
 He loved not Marian, more than
 once he loved
 Aurora. If he loves at last that
 Third,
 Albeit she prove as slippery as spilt
 oil [him
 On marble floors, I will not augur
 Ill luck for that. Good love,
 howe'er ill-placed,
 Is better for a man's soul in the
 end,
 Than if he loved ill what deserves
 love well.
 A pagan, kissing for a step of Pan
 The wild-goat's hoof-print on the
 loamy down,
 Exceeds our modern thinker who
 turns back
 The strata . . . granite, limestone,
 coal and clay,
 Concluding, coldly with, 'Here's
 law! Where's God?'

And then at worse,—if Romney
loves her not,—

At worst,—if he's incapable of love,
Which may be—then indeed, for
such a man

Incapable of love, she's good
enough; [still,

For she, at worst too, is a woman
And loves him . . . as the sort of
woman can.

My loose long hair began to burn
and creep,

Alive to the very ends, about my
knees :

I swept it backward as the wind
sweeps flame

With the passion of my hands.
Ah, Romney laughed

One day . . . (how full the memories
come up !)

'—Your Florence fire-flies live on
in your hair,'

He said, 'It gleams so.' Well, I
wrung them out,

My fire-flies; made a knot as hard
as life [curls,

Of those loose, soft, impracticable
And then sat down and thought . . .

'She shall not think
Her thoughts of me,'—and drew
my desk and wrote.

'Dear Lady Waldemar, I could not
speak

With people round me, nor can
sleep to-night

And not speak, after the great news
I heard

Of you and of my cousin. May
you be

Most happy; and the good he
meant the world,

Replenish his own life. Say what
I say,

And let my word be sweeter for
your mouth,

As you are *you* . . . I only Aurora
Leigh.'

That's quiet, guarded. Though
she hold it up

Against the light, she'll not see
through it more

Than lies there to be seen. So
much for pride ;

And now for peace, a little ! Le-
me stop

All writing back . . . 'Sweet thanks,
my sweetest friend,

You've made more joyful my great
joy itself.'

—No, that's too simple ! she would
twist it thus,

'My joy would still be as sweet as
thyme in drawers,

However shut up in the dark and
dry ;

But violets, aired and dewed by
love like yours,

Out-smell all thyme : we keep that
in our clothes,

But drop the other down our
bosoms till

They smell like' . . . ah, I see her
writing back

Just so. She'll make a nosegay of
her words, [end

And tie it with blue ribbons at the
To suit a poet ;—pshaw !

And then we'll have
The call to church ; the broken,
sad, bad dream

Dreamed out at last ; the marriage-
vow complete

With the marriage-breakfast ; pray-
ing in white gloves,

Drawn off in haste for drinking
pagan toasts

In somewhat stronger wine than
any sipped

By gods since Bacchus had his way
with grapes.

A postscript stops all that and res-
cues me.

'You need not write. I have been
overworked,

And think of leaving London, Eng-
land even,
And hastening to get nearer to the
sun,

Where men sleep better. So,
adieu.—I fold

And seal,—and now I'm out of all
the coil ;

I breathe now ; I spring upward
like a branch

A ten-year school-boy with a stick
May pull down to his level in
search of nuts,

But cannot hold a moment. How
we twang

Back on the blue sky, and assert
our height,

While he stares after ! Now, the
wonder seems

That I could wrong myself by such
a doubt.

We poets always have uneasy
hearts ;

Because our hearts, large-rounded
as the globe,

Can turn but one side to the sun
at once. [in gall

We are used to dip our artist-hands
And potash, trying potentialities

Of alternated color, till at last
We get confused, and wonder for
our skin

How nature tinged it first. Well
—here's the true

Good flesh-color : I recognise my
hand,

Which Romney Leigh may clasp
as just a friend's,

And keep his clean.

And now, my Italy.
Alas, if we could ride with naked
souls

And make no noise and pay no
price at all,

I would have seen thee sooner,
Italy,—

For still I have heard thee crying
through my life.

Thou piercing silence of ecstatic
graves,

Men call that name !

But even a witch to-day
Must melt down golden pieces in
the nard

Wherewith to anoint her broom-
stick ere she rides ;

And poets evermore are scant of
gold,

And if they find a piece behind the
door [leaf.

It turns by sunset to a withered
The Devil himself scarce trusts his

patented
Gold-making art to any who make

rhymes,
But culls his Faustus from philoso-
phers

And not from poets. 'Leave my
Job,' said God,

And so the Devil leaves him
without pence,

And poverty proves plainly special
grace.

In these new, just, administrative
times

Men clamour for an order of merit ;
Why ?

Here's black bread on the table
and no wine !

At last I am a poet in being poor ;
Thank God. I wonder if the man-

uscript
Of my long poem, if 'twere sold
outright,

Would fetch enough to buy me
shoes, to go

A-foot, (thrown in, the necessary
patch

For the other side the Alps) ? it
cannot be ;

I fear that I must sell this residue
Of my father's books ; although the
Elzevirs

Have fly-leaves over-written by his
hand

In faded notes as thick and fine
and brown
As cobwebs on a tawny monument
Of the old Greeks—*conferenda hæc*
cum his—
Corrupte citat—lege potius,
And so on, in the scholar's regal
way
Of giving judgment on the parts of
speech, [uppiled,
As if he sate on all twelve thrones
Arraigning Israel. Ay, but books
and notes
Must go together. And this Pro-
clus too
In these dear quaint contracted
Grecian types,
Fantastically crumpled, like his
thoughts
Which would not seem too plain ;
you go round twice
For one step forward, then you
take it back
Because you're somewhat giddy ;
there's the rule
For Proclus. Ah, I stained this
middle leaf [bell,
With pressing in't my Florence iris-
Long stalk and all ; my father
chided me
For that stain of blue blood,—I
recollect
The peevish turn his voice took,—
'Silly girls,
Who plant their flowers in our
philosophy
To make it fine, and only spoil the
book! [more!
No more of it, Aurora.' Yes—no
Ah, blame of love, that's sweeter
than all praise
Of those who love not ! 'tis so lost
on me, [afford
I cannot, in such beggared life,
To lose my Proclus. Not for
Florence even.
The kissing Judas, Wolff, shall go
instead,

Who builds us such a royal book
as this
To honour a chief-poet, folio-built,
And writes above, 'The house of
Nobody ;' [sucked
Who floats in cream, as rich as any
From Juno's breasts, the broad
Homeric lines,
And, while with their spondaic
prodigious mouths
They lap the lucent margins as
babe-gods,
Proclaims them bastards. Wolff's
an atheist ;
And if the Iliad fell out, as he says,
By mere fortuitous concourse of
old songs,
Conclude as much too for the uni-
verse.

That Wolff, those Platos : sweep
the upper shelves
As clean as this, and so I am almost
rich,
Which means, not forced to think
of being poor
In sight of ends. To-morrow : no
delay.
I'll wait in Paris till good Carrington
Dispose of such, and, having chaf-
fered for
My book's price with the publisher,
direct [ask
All proceeds to me. Just a line to
His help.
And now I come, my Italy,
My own hills ! Are you 'ware of
me, my hills,
How I burn toward you ? do you
feel to-night
The urgency and yearning of my
soul,
As sleeping mothers feel the suck-
ing babe
And smile ?—Nay, not so much as
when in heat
Vain lightnings catch at your in-
volute tops

And tremble while ye are steady—
 fast. Still, ye go
 Your own determined, calm, indif-
 ferent way
 Toward sunrise, shade by shade,
 and light by light ;
 Of all the grand progression nought
 left out ;
 As if God verily made you for
 yourselves,
 And would not interrupt your life
 with ours.

SIXTH BOOK.

THE English have a scornful in-
 sular way
 Of calling the French light. The
 levity
 Is in the judgment only, which yet
 stands ; [enough
 For say a foolish thing but oft
 (And here's the secret of a hun-
 dred creeds,
 Men get opinions as boys learn to
 spell, [thing
 By re-iteration chiefly) the same
 Shall pass at last for absolutely
 wise,
 And not with fools exclusively.
 And so
 We say the French are light, as if
 we said
 The cat mews or the milch-cow
 gives us milk :
 Say rather, cats are milked and
 milch-cows mew ;
 For what is lightness but inconse-
 quence,
 Vague fluctuation 'twixt effect and
 cause, [light,
 Compelled by neither ? Is a bullet
 That dashes from the gun-mouth,
 while the eye
 Winks and the heart beats one, to
 flatten itself
 To a wafer on the white speck on
 a wall

A hundred paces off ? Even so
 direct,
 So sternly undivertible of aim,
 Is this French people.

All idealists
 Too absolute and earnest, with
 them all
 The idea of a knife cuts real flesh ;
 And still, devouring the safe inter-
 val
 Which nature placed between the
 thought and act
 With those too fiery and impatient
 souls,

They threaten conflagration to the
 world

And rush with most unscrupulous
 logic on [ators

Impossible practice. Set your or-
 To blow upon them with loud
 windy mouths

Through watchword phrases, jest
 or sentiment,

Which drives our burly brutal
 English mobs

Like so much chaff, whichever way
 they blow,—

This light French people will not
 thus be driven.

They turn indeed ; but then they
 turn upon

Some central pivot of their thought
 and choice,

And veer out by the force of hold-
 ing fast.

—That's hard to understand, for
 Englishmen

Unused to abstract questions, and
 untrained [valve

To trace the involutions, valve by
 In each orb'd bulb-root of a gen-
 eral truth, [ment

And mark what subtly fine integu-
 Divides opposed compartments.

Freedom's self
 Comes concrete to us, to be under-
 stood.

Fixed in a feudal form incarnately

To suit our ways of thought and
reverence,

The special form, with us, being
still the thing.

With us, I say, though I'm of Italy
By mother's birth and grave, by
father's grave

And memory; let it be,—a poet's
heart

Can swell to a pair of nationalities,
However ill-lodged in a woman's
breast.

And so I am strong to love this
noble France.

This poet of the nations, who
dreams on

And wails on (while the household
goes to wreck)

For ever, after some ideal good,—
Some equal poise of sex, some un-
wowed love

Inviolable, some spontaneous broth-
er-hood,

Some wealth, that leaves none poor
and finds none tired,

Some freedom of the many that
respects

The wisdom of the few. Heroic
dreams!

Sublime, to dream so; natural, to
wake:

And sad, to use such lofty scaffold-
Erected for the building of a church,

To build instead a brothel . . or a
prison—

May God save France!

And if at last she sighs
Her great soul up into a great man's
face,

To flush his temples out so glo-
riously

That few dare carp at Cæsar for
being bald,

What then?—this Cæsar repre-
sents, not reigns,

And is no despot, though twice ab-
solute:

This Head has all the people for a
heart;

This purple's lined with the democ-
racy,—

Now let him see to it! for a rent
within

Must leave irreparable rags with-
out.

A serious riddle: find such any-
where

Except in France; and when 'tis
found in France,

Be sure to read it rightly. So I
mused

Up and down, up and down, the
terraced streets,

The glittering Boulevards, the white
colonnades

Of fair fantastic Paris who wears
trees

Like plumes, as if man made them,
spire and tower

As if they had grown by nature,
tossing up

Her fountains in the sunshine of
the squares,

As if in beauty's game she tossed
the dice,

Or blew the silver down-balls of
her dreams

To sow futurity with the seeds of
thought

And count the passage of her fes-
tive hours.

The city swims in verdure, beautiful
As Venice on the waters, the sea-
swan.

What bosky gardens dropped in
close-walled courts

As plums in ladies' laps, who start
and laugh:

What miles of streets that run on
after trees,

Still carrying all the necessary
shops,

Those open caskets with the jewels
seen!

And trade is art, and art's philo-
sophy,

In Paris. There's a silk, for in-
stance, there, [folds,

As worth an artist's study for the
As that bronze opposite! nay, the
bronze has faults;

Art's here too artful,—conscious as
a maid

Who leans to mark her shadow on
the wall

Until she lose a 'vantage in her step.

Yet Art walks forward, and knows
where to walk:

The artists also are idealists,
Too absolute for nature, logical

To austerity in the application of
The special theory; not a soul con-
tent [ass,

To paint a crooked pollard and an
As the English will, because they
find it so

And like it somehow.—There the
old Tuileries

Is pulling its high cap down on its
eyes,

Confounded, conscience-stricken,
and amazed

By the apparition of a new fair face
In those devouring mirrors.

Through the grate
Within the gardens, what a heap
of babes,

Swept up like leaves beneath the
chestnut trees

From every street and alley of the
town,

By ghosts perhaps that blow too
bleak this way

A-looking for their heads! Dear
pretty babes,

I wish them luck to have their ball-
play out

Before the next change. Here the
air is thronged

With statues poised upon their col-
umns fine,

As if to stand a moment were a
feat,

Against that blue! What squares!
what breathing-room

For a nation that runs fast,—ay,
runs against

The dentist's teeth at the corner in
pale rows,

Which grin at progress in an epi-
gram.

I walked the day out, listening to
the chink

Of the first Napoleon's dry bones
in his second grave

By victories guarded 'neath the
golden dome

That caps all Paris like a bubble.
'Shall

These dry bones live,' thought
Louis Philippe once,

And lived to know. Herein is ar-
gument

For kings and politicians, but still
more [well

For poets, who bear buckets to the
Of ampler draught.

These crowds are very good
For meditation, (when we are very
strong)

Though love of beauty makes us
timorous,

And draws us backward from the
coarse town-sights

To count the daisies upon dappled
fields,

And hear the streams bleat on
among the hills

In innocent and indolent repose;
While still with silken elegiac

thoughts

We wind out from us the distract-
ing world

And die into the chrysalis of a man,
And leave the best that may, to
come of us

In some brown moth. I would be
bold and bear

To look into the swarthiest face of things.

For God's sake who has made them.

Six days' work ;

The last day shutting 'twixt its dawn and eve,

The whole work bettered of the previous five !

Since God collected and resumed in man

The firmaments, the strata, and the lights,

Fish, fowl, and beast, and insect,—all their trains

Of various life caught back upon His arm,

Reorganised, and constituted MAN,

The microcosm, the adding up of works ;

Within whose fluttering nostrils, then, at last

Consummating Himself the Maker sighed,

As some strong winner at the foot race sighs

Touching the goal.

Humanity is great ;

And, if I would not rather pour upon

An ounce of common, ugly, human dust,

An artisan's palm or a peasant's brow,

Unsmooth, ignoble, save to me and God,

Than track old Nilus to his silver roots,

And wait on all the changes of the moon

Among the mountain-peaks of Thessaly,

(Until her magic crystal round itself

For many a witch to see in)—set it down

As weakness,—strength by no means. How is this

That men of science, osteologists

And surgeons, beat some poets in respect

For nature,—count nought common or unclean,

Spend raptures upon perfect specimens

Of indurated veins, distorted joints,

Or beautiful new cases of curved spine ;

While we, we are shocked at nature's falling off,

We dare to shrink back from her warts and blains,

We will not, when she sneezes, look at her,

Not even to say, 'God bless her' ?

That's our wrong,

For that, she will not trust us often with

Her larger sense of beauty and

But tethers us to a lily or a rose

And bids us diet on the dew inside

Left ignorant that the hungry beggar-boy

(Who stares unseen against our absent eyes,

And wonders at the gods that we must be,

To pass so carelessly for the oranges !)

Bears yet a breastful of a fellow-world

To this world, undisparaged, undespoiled,

And (while we scorn him for a flower or two,

As being, Heaven help us, less poetical)

Contains himself both flowers and firmaments

And surging seas and aspectable stars

And all that we would push him out of sight

In order to see nearer. Let us pray

God's grace to keep God's image in repute :

That so the poet and philanthropist
 (Even I and Romney) may stand
 side by side,
 Because we both stand face to face
 with men
 Contemplating the people in the
 rough,
 Yet each so follow a vocation,—his
 And mine.

I walked on, musing with myself
 On life and art, and whether after
 all [help
 A larger metaphysics might not
 Our physics, a completer poetry
 Adjust our daily life and vulgar
 wants
 More fully than the special outside
 plans,
 Phalansteries, material institutes,
 The civil conscriptions and lay
 monasteries
 Preferred by modern thinkers, as
 they thought
 The bread of man indeed made all
 his life,
 And washing seven times in the
 'People's Baths'
 Were sovereign for a people's
 leprosy,
 Still leaving out the essential proph-
 et's word
 That comes in power. On which,
 we thunder down,
 We prophets, poets,—Virtue's in
 the *word!*
 The maker burnt the darkness up
 with His,
 To inaugurate the use of vocal life;
 And, plant a poet's word even, deep
 enough [ently
 In any man's breast, looking pres-
 For offshoots, you have done more
 for the man
 Than if you dressed him in a broad-
 cloth coat
 And warmed his Sunday potage
 at your fire.

Yet Romney leaves me . . .
 God! what face is that?
 O Romney, O Marian!

Walking on the quays
 And pulling thoughts to pieces
 leisurely,
 As if I caught at grasses in a field
 And bit them slow between my
 absent lips,
 And shred them with my hands . . .

What face is that?
 What a face, what a look, what a
 likeness! Full on mine
 The sudden blow of it came down,
 till all
 My blood swam, my eyes dazzled.
 Then I sprang—

It was as if a meditative man
 Were dreaming out a summer
 afternoon
 And watching gnats a-prick upon
 a pond,
 When something floats up sud-
 denly, out there,
 Turns over . . . a dead face, known
 once alive— [ful now
 So old, so new! It would be dread-
 To lose the sight and keep the
 doubt of this.
 He plunges—ha! he has lost it in
 the splash.

I plunged—I tore the crowd up,
 either side,
 And rushed on,—forward, for-
 ward . . . after her.

Her? whom?
 A woman sauntered siow in front.
 Munching an apple,—she left off
 amazed

As if I had snatched it: that's not
 she, at least.

A man walked arm-linked with a
 lady veiled,

Both heads dropped closer than
 the need of talk:

They started; he forgot her with
 his face,

And she, herself,—and clung to
 him as if
 My look were fatal. Such a stream
 of folk,
 And all with cares and business of
 their own!
 I ran the whole quay down against
 their eyes;
 No Marian; nowhere Marian.
 Almost, now,
 I could call Marian, Marian, with
 the shriek
 Of desperate creatures calling for
 the Dead.
 Where is she, was she? was she
 anywhere?
 I stood still, breathless, gazing,
 straining out
 In every uncertain distance, till at
 last,
 A gentleman abstracted as myself
 Came full against me, then resolved
 the clash
 In voluble excuses,—obviously
 Some learned member of the Insti-
 tute
 Upon his way there, walking, for
 his health,
 While meditating on the last ‘Dis-
 course;’
 Pinching the empty air ’twixt finger
 and thumb,
 From which the snuff being ousted
 by that shock,
 Defiled his snow-white waistcoat
 duly pricked
 At the button-hole with honourable
 red;
 ‘Madame, your pardon,’—there he
 swerved from me
 A metre, as confounded as he had
 heard
 That Dumas would be chosen to
 fill up
 The next chair vacant, by his ‘men
in us,
 Since when was genius found
 respectable?

It passes in its place, indeed,—
 which means
 The seventh floor back, or else the
 hospital:
 Revolving pistols are ingenious
 things, [are]
 But prudent men (Academicians
 Scarce keep them in the cupboard
 next the prunes.
 And so, abandoned to a bitter
 mirth, [world,
 I loitered to my inn. O world, O
 O jurists, rhymers, dreamers, what
 you please,
 We play a weary game of hide and
 seek!
 We shape a figure of our fantasy,
 Call nothing something, and run
 after it
 And lose it, lose ourselves too in
 the search,
 Till clash against us, comes a some-
 body
 Who also has lost something and
 is lost,
 Philosopher against Philanthropist,
 Academician against poet, man
 Against woman, against the living
 the dead,—
 Then home, with a bad headache
 and worst jest,
 To change the water for my helio-
 tropes
 And yellow roses. Paris has such
 flowers.
 But England, also. ’Twas a yel-
 low rose,
 By that south window of the little
 house,
 My cousin Romney gathered with
 his hand
 On all my birthdays for me, save
 the last;
 And then I shook the tree too
 rough, too rough,
 For roses to stay after.
 Now, my maps.

I must not linger here from Italy
 Till the last nightingale is tired of
 song,
 And the last fire-fly dies off in the
 maize. [sun
 My soul's in haste to leap into the
 And scorch and seethe itself to a
 finer mood,
 Which here, in this chill north, is
 apt to stand
 Too stiffly in former moulds.

That face persists.
 It floats up, it turns over in my
 mind,
 As like to Marian, as one dead is
 like [face
 The same alive. In very deed a
 And not a fancy, though it van-
 ished so ;
 The small fair face between the
 darks of hair,
 I used to liken, when I saw her first,
 To a point of moonlit water down
 a well :
 The low brow, the frank space be-
 tween the eyes,
 Which always had the brown pa-
 thetic look
 Of a dumb creature who had been
 beaten once [world.
 And never since was easy with the
 Ah, ah—now I remember perfectly
 Those eyes to-day,—how overlarge
 they seemed,
 As if some patient passionate despair
 (Like a coal dropt and forgot on
 tapestry,
 Which slowly burns a widening
 circle out)
 Had burnt them larger, larger.
 And those eyes
 To-day, I do remember, saw me too,
 As I saw them, with conscious lids
 astrain
 In recognition. Now a fantasy.
 A simple shade or image of the
 brain,

Is merely passive, does not retro-
 act,
 Is seen, but sees not.

'Twas a real face,
 Perhaps a real Marian.
 Which being so
 I ought to write to Romney, 'Ma-
 rian's here.
 Be comforted for Marian.'

My pen fell,
 My hands struck sharp together as
 hands do
 Which hold at nothing. Can I
 write to *him*
 A half truth? can I keep my own
 soul blind
 To the other half, . . . the worse?
 What are our souls,
 If still, to run on straight a sober
 pace
 Nor start at every pebble or dead
 leaf,

They must wear blinkers, ignore
 facts, suppress
 Six tenths of the road? Confront
 the truth, my soul!
 And oh, as truly as that was Ma-
 rian's face,
 The arms of that same Marian
 clasped a thing
 . . . Not hid so well beneath the scan-
 ty shawl,
 I cannot name it now for what it
 was.

A child. Small business has a
 castaway
 Like Marian with that crown of
 prosperous wives,
 At which the gentlest she grows
 arrogant
 And says, 'my child.' Who'll find
 an emerald ring
 On a beggar's middle finger, and
 require
 More testimony to convict a thief?
 A child's too costly for so mere a
 wretch ;

She filched it somewhere; and it means, with her,
 Instead of honour, blessing, . . . merely shame.
 I cannot write to Romney, 'Here she is,
 Here's Marian found! I'll set you on her track;
 I saw her here, in Paris, . . . and her child. [ago,
 She put away your love two years
 But, plainly, not to starve. You suffered then;
 And, now that you've forgot her utterly
 As any last year's annual in whose place
 You've planted a thick flowering evergreen,
 I chose being kind, to write and tell you this
 To make you wholly easy—she's not dead,
 But only . . . damned.'
 Stop there: I go too fast,
 I'm cruel like the rest,—in haste to take
 The first stir in the arras for a rat,
 And set my barking, biting thoughts upon't.
 —A child! what then? Suppose a neighbour's sick
 And asked her, 'Marian, carry out my child
 In this Spring air,'—I punish her for that?
 Or say, the child should hold her round the neck
 For good child-reasons, that he liked it so
 And would not leave her—she had winning ways—
 I brand her therefore that she took the child?
 Not so.
 I will not write to Romney Leigh.
 For now he's happy,—and she may indeed

Be guilty,—and the knowledge of her fault
 Would draggle his smooth time.
 But I, whose days
 Are not so fine they cannot bear the rain, [face
 And who moreover having seen her
 Must see it again, . . . will see it, by my hopes
 Of one day seeing heaven too.
 The police
 Shall track her, hound her, ferret their own soil;
 We'll dig this Paris to its catacombs
 But certainly we'll find her, have her out,
 And save her, if she will or will not—child
 Or no child,—if a child, then one to save!

 The long weeks passed on without consequence.
 As easy find a footstep on the sand
 The morning after spring-tide, as the trace [sant surfs
 Of Marian's feet between the incessant
 Of this live flood. She may have moved this way,—
 But so the star-fish does, and crosses out
 The dent of her small shoe. The foiled police
 Renounced me; 'Could they find a girl and child,
 No other signalment but a girl and child?
 No data shown but noticeable eyes
 And hair in masses, low upon the brow, [pressed?
 As if it were an iron crown and Friends heighten, and suppose they specify
 Why girls with hair and eyes, are everywhere
 In Paris; they had turned me up in vain [tainly
 No Marian Erle indeed, but cer-

Mathildes, Justines, Victoires, . . or,
 if I sought
 The English Betsis, Saras, by the
 score. [fields
 They might as well go out into the
 To find a speckled bean, that's
 somehow speckled,
 And somewhere in the pod.'—They
 left me so.
 Shall I leave Marian? have I
 dreamed a dream?
 —I thank God I have found her?
 I must say
 'Thank God, for finding her, al-
 though 'tis true
 I find the world more sad and wick-
 ed for't.
 But she—
 I'll write about her, presently;
 My hand's a-tremble as I had just
 caught up
 My heart to write with, in the place
 of it.
 At least you'd take these letters to
 be writ
 At sea, in storm!—wait now . .
 A simple chance
 Did all. I could not sleep last
 night, and tired
 Of turning on my pillow and harder
 thoughts,
 Went out at early morning, when
 the air [touch,
 Is delicate with some last starry
 To wander through the Market-
 place of Flowers
 (The prettiest haunt in Paris), and
 make sure
 At worst that there were roses in
 the world
 So wandering, musing with the ar-
 tist's eye,
 That keeps the shade-side of the
 thing it loves,
 Half-absent, whole-observing, while
 the crowd
 Of young vivacious and black-
 braided heads

Dipped, quick as finches in a blos-
 somed tree,
 Among the nosegays, cheapening
 this and that
 In such a cheerful twitter of rapid
 speech,—
 My heart leapt in me, startled by a
 voice
 That slowly, faintly, with long
 breaths that marked
 The interval between the wish and
 word,
 Inquired in stranger's French,
 'Would *that* be much,
 That branch of flowering mountain-
 gorse?—so much?'
 Too much for me, then!' turning
 the face round [sigh
 So close upon me, that I felt the
 It turned with.
 'Marian, Marian!'—face to face—
 'Marian! I find you. Shall I let
 you go?'
 I held her two slight wrists with
 both my hands;
 'Ah Marian, Marian, can I let you
 go?'
 —She fluttered from me like a cy-
 clamen,
 As white, which taken in a sudden
 wind
 Beats on against the palisade.—
 'Let pass,'
 She said at last. 'I will not,' I re-
 plied;
 'I lost my sister Marian many days,
 And sought her ever in my walks
 and prayers,
 And now I find her . . do we throw
 away
 The bread we worked and prayed
 for,—crumble it
 And drop it, . . to do even so by
 thee
 Whom still I've hungered after
 more than bread,
 My sister Marian?—Can I hurt thee,
 dear?

Then why distrust me? Never
tremble so.

Come with me rather where we'll
talk and live

And none shall vex us. I've a home
for you

And me and no one else' . . .

She shook her head.

'A home for you and me and no
one else

Ill-suits one of us: I prefer to such,
A roof of grass on which a flower
might spring,

Less costly to me than the cheapest
here; [afford

And yet I could not, at this hour,
A like home even. That you offer
yours,

I thank you. You are good as heav-
en itself—

As good as one I knew before . .
Farewell!

I loosed her hands.—'In *his* name,
no farewell!' [sake,

(She stood as if I held her,) 'for his
For his sake, Romney's! by the
good he meant,

Ay, always! by the love he pressed
for once,—

And by the grief, reproach, abandon-
ment,

He took in change' . .

'He, Romney! who grieved
him?

Who had the heart for't? what re-
proach touched *him*?

Be merciful,—speak quickly.'

'Therefore come.'

I answered with authority,—'I think
We dare to speak such things and
name such names

In the open squares of Paris!'

Not a word

She said, but in a gentle humbled
way,

(As one who had forgot herself in
grief)

Turned round and followed closely
where I went,

As if I led her by a narrow plank
Across devouring waters, step by
step,—

And so in silence we walked on a
mile.

And then she stopped: her face was
white as wax.

'We go much further?'

'You are ill,' I asked,

'Or tired?'

She looked the whiter for her
smile.

'There's one at home,' she said,
'has need of me

By this time,—and I must not let
him wait.'

'Not even,' I asked, 'to hear of
Romney Leigh?'

'Not even,' she said, 'to hear of
Mister Leigh.'

'In that case,' I resumed, 'I go
with you,

And we can talk the same thing
there as here.

None waits for me: I have my day
to spend.'

Her lips moved in a spasm without
a sound,—

But then she spoke. 'It shall be
as you please;

And better so—'tis shorter seen
than told.

And though you will not find me
worth your pains,

That even, may be worth some
pains to know

For one as good as you are.'

Then she led

The way, and I, as by a narrow
plank [her.

Across devouring waters, followed
Stepping by her footsteps, breath-
ing by her breath,

And holding her with eyes that
 would not slip ;
 And so, without a word, we walked
 a mile,
 And so, another mile, without a
 word.
 Until the peopled streets being all
 dismissed,
 House-rows and groups all scatter-
 ed like a flock,
 The market-gardens thickened, and
 the long
 White walls beyond, like spiders'
 outside threads,
 Stretched, feeling blindly toward
 the country-fields
 Through half-built habitations and
 half-dug
 Foundations,—intervals of trench-
 ant chalk. [turfs
 That bit betwixt the grassy uneven
 Where goats (vine tendrils trailing
 from their mouths)
 Stood perched on edges of the cel-
 larage
 Which should be, staring as about
 to leap
 To find their coming Bacchus. All
 the place
 Seemed less a cultivation than a
 waste :
 Men work here, only,—scarce begin
 to live :
 All's sad, the county struggling
 with the town,
 Like an untamed hawk upon a
 strong man's fist,
 That beats its wings and tries to
 get away, [soon
 And cannot choose be satisfied so
 To hop through court-yards with
 its right foot tied,
 The vintage plains and pastoral
 hills in sight.
 We stopped beside a house too high
 and slim [till
 To stand there by itself, but waiting

Five others, two on this side, three
 on that,
 Should grow up from the sullen
 second floor
 They pause at now, to build it to a
 row.
 The upper windows partly were un-
 glazed
 Meantime,—a meagre, unripe
 house : a line
 Of rigid poplars elbowed it behind,
 And just in front, beyond the lime
 and bricks
 That wronged the grass between it
 and the road,
 A great acacia with its slender trunk
 And overpoise of multitudinous
 leaves,
 (In which a hundred fields might
 spill their dew
 And intense verdure, yet find room
 enough)
 Stood reconciling all the place with
 green.
 I followed up the stair upon her step.
 She hurried upward, shot across a
 face,
 A woman's on the landing,—' How
 now, now !
 Is no one to have holidays but you ?
 You said an hour, and stayed three
 hours, I think, [here ?
 And Julie waiting for your betters
 Why if he had waked, he might
 have waked, for me.'
 —Just murmuring an excusing
 word she passed
 And shut the rest out with the
 chamber-door,
 Myself shut in beside her.
 'Twas a room
 Scarce larger than a grave, and
 near as bare ;
 Two stools, a pallet-bed ; I saw
 the room :
 A mouse could find no sort of shel-
 ter in't.

Much less a greater secret ; cur-
tainless,
The window fixed you with its tor-
turing eye,
Defying you to take a step apart
If peradventure you would hide a
thing.

I saw the whole room, I and Ma-
rian there
Alone.

Alone ? She threw her bonnet off,
Then sighing as 'twere sighing the
last time,

Approached the bed, and drew a
shawl away :

You could not peel a fruit you fear
to bruise

More calmly and more carefully
than so,—

Nor would you find within, a rosier
flushed

Pomegranate—

There he lay upon his back,
The yearling creature, warm and
moist with life

To the bottom of his dimples,—
to the ends

Of the lovely tumbled curls about
his face ;

For since he had been covered
over-much

To keep him from the light glare,
both his cheeks

Were hot and scarlet as the first
live rose

The shepherd's heart-blood ebbed
away into,

The faster for his love. And love
was here

An instant : in the pretty baby-
mouth,

Shut close as if for dreaming that
it sucked ;

The little naked feet drawn up the
Of nestled birdlings ; everything
so soft

And tender.—to the tiny holdfast
hands,

Which, closing on the finger into
sleep,

Had kept the mould of't.

While we stood there dumb,
For oh, that it should take such in-
nocence

To prove just guilt, I thought, and
stood there dumb ;

The light upon his eyelids pricked
them wide,

And staring out at us with all their
blue,

As half perplexed between the an-
gelhood

He had been away to visit in his
sleep,

And our most mortal presence,—
gradually

He saw his mother's face, accept-
ing it

In change for heaven itself, with
such a smile

As might have well been learnt
there,—never moved,

But smiled on in a drowse of ec-
stasy,

So happy (half with her and half
with heaven)

He could not have the trouble to
be stirred,

But smiled and lay there. Like a
rose, I said :

As red and still indeed as any rose,
That blows in all the silence of its

leaves,
Content, in blowing, to fulfil its life.

She leaned above him (drinking
him as wine)

In that extremity of love, 'twill pass
For agony or rapture, seeing that

love

Includes the whole of nature,
rounding it

To love . . no more,—since more
can never be

Than just love. Self-forgot, cast
out of self,

And drowning in the transport of
the sight,

Her whole pale passionate face,
mouth, forehead, eyes,

One gaze, she stood : then, slowly
as he smiled,

She smiled too, slowly, smiling un-
aware,

And drawing from his countenance
to hers

A fainter red, as if she watched a
flame

And stood in it a-glow. 'How
beautiful,'

Said she.

I answered, trying to be cold.
(Must sin have compensations, was
my thought,

As if it were a holy thing like
grief?

And is a woman to be fooled aside
From putting vice down, with that
woman's toy

A baby?)—'Ay! the child is
well enough,'

I answered. 'If his mother's palms
are clean

They need be glad of course in
clasping such :

But if not,—I would rather lay my
hand,

Were I she,—on God's brazen al-
tar-bars

Red-hot with burning sacrificial
lambs,

Than touch the sacred curls of
such a child.'

She plunged her fingers in his
clustering locks,

As one who would not be afraid of
fire ;

And then with indrawn steady ut-
terance said,

'My lamb, my lamb! although,
through such as thou,

The most unclean got courage and
approach

To God, once,—now they cannot,
even with men,

Find grace enough for pity and
gentle words.'

'My Marian,' I made answer, grave
and sad,

'The priest who stole a lamb to
offer him,

Was still a thief. And if a woman
steals

(Through God's own barrier-
hedges of true love,

Which fence out license in securing
love)

A child like this, that smiles so in
her face,

She is no mother, but a kidnapper,
And he's a dismal orphan . . . not

a son ;

Whom all her kisses cannot feed
so full

He will not miss hereafter a pure
home

To live in, a pure heart to lean
against,

A pure good mother's name and
memory

To hope by, when the world grows
thick and bad,

And he feels out for virtue.'

'Oh,' she smiled
With bitter patience, 'the child

takes his chance,

Not much worse off in being fath-
erless

Than I was, fathered. He will
say, belike,

His mother was the saddest creat-
ure born ;

He'll say his mother lived so con-
trary

To joy, that even the kindest, see-
ing her,

Grew sometimes almost cruel
he'll not say

She flew contrarious in the face of
God

With bat-wings of her vices. Stole
 my child,—
 My flower of earth, my only flower
 on earth,
 My sweet, my beauty! . . . Up she
 snatched the child,
 And, breaking on him in a storm
 of tears,
 Drew out her long sobs from their
 shivering roots,
 Until he took it for a game, and
 stretched
 His feet and flapped his eager arms
 like wings,
 And crowed and gurgled through
 his infant laugh:
 'Mine, mine,' she said; 'I have as
 sure a right
 As any glad proud mother in the
 world.
 Who sets her darling down to cut
 his teeth
 Upon her church-ring. If she talks
 of law,
 I talk of law! I claim my mother
 dues
 By law,—the law which now is
 paramount;
 The common law, by which the
 poor and weak
 Are trodden underfoot by vicious
 men, [good.
 And loathed for ever after by the
 Let pass! I did not filch . . . I
 found the child.'

'You found him, Marian?'
 'Ay, I found him where
 I found my curse,—in the gutter,
 with my shame!
 What have you, any of you, to say
 to that,
 Who all are happy, and sit safe and
 high
 And never spoke before to arraign
 my right
 To grief itself? What, what, . . .
 being beaten down

By hoofs of maddened oxen into a
 ditch,
 Half-dead, whole mangled, . when
 a girl at last,
 Breathes, sees . . . and finds there,
 bedded in her flesh,
 Because of the extremity of the
 shock,
 Some coin of price! . . . and when a
 good man comes
 (That's God! the best men are not
 quite as good)
 And says, 'I dropped the coin
 there: take it you,
 And keep it,—it shall pay you for
 the loss,'—
 You all put up your finger—'See
 the thief!
 Observe that precious thing she
 has come to filch:
 How bad those girls are!' Oh,
 my flower, my pet,
 I dare forget I have you in my
 arms,
 And fly off to be angry with the
 world,
 And fright you, hurt you with my
 tempers till
 You double up your lip? Why,
 that indeed
 Is bad: a naughty mother!'
 'You mistake,'
 I interrupted, 'If I loved you not,
 I should not, Marian, certainly be
 here.'

'Alas,' she said, 'you are so very
 good;
 And yet I wish indeed you had
 never come
 To make me sob until I vex the
 child.
 It is not wholesome for these pleas-
 ure-plats
 To be so early watered by our
 brine.
 And then, who knows? he may not
 like me now

As well, perhaps, as ere he saw me
fret,
One's ugly fretting! he has eyes
the same
As angels, but he cannot see as deep,
And so I've kept for ever in his sight
A sort of smile to please him, as
you place [cup,
A green thing from the garden in a
To make believe it grows there.
Look, my sweet,
My cowslip-ball! we've done with
that cross face,
And here's the face come back you
used to like.
Ah, ah! he laughs! he likes me.
Ah, Miss Leigh,
You're great and pure; but were
you purer still,—
As if you had walked, we'll say, no
otherwhere
Than up and down the new Jeru-
salem,
And held your trailing lutestring up
yourself
From brushing the twelve stones,
for fear of some
Small speck as little as a needle-
prick,
White stitched on white,—the child
would keep to *me*,
Would choose his poor lost Marian,
like me best,
And, though you stretched your
arms, cry back and cling,
As we do when God says it's time
to die
And bids us go up higher. Leave
us, then;
We two are happy. Does *he* push
me off?
He's satisfied with me, as I with
him.'

'So soft to one, so hard to others!
Nay,'
I cried, more angry that she melted
me,

'We make henceforth a cushion of
our faults
To sit and practise easy virtues on?
I thought a child was given to
sanctify
A woman,—set her in the sight of
all
The clear-eyed heavens, a chosen
minister
To do their business and lead
spirits up
The difficult blue heights. A
woman lives,
Not bettered, quickened toward the
truth and good
Through being a mother? . . . then
she's none! although
She damps her baby's cheeks by
kissing them,
As we kill roses.'

'Kill! O Christ,' she said,
And turned her wild sad face from
side to side
With most despairing wonder in
it—'What,
What have you in your souls
against me then,
All of you? am I wicked, do you
think?
God knows me, trusts me with a
child: but you,
You think me really wicked?'

'Complaisant,'
I answered softly, 'to a wrong
you've done,
Because of certain profits,—which
is wrong
Beyond the first wrong, Marian.
When you left
The pure place and the noble heart,
to take
The hand of a seducer' . . .
'Whom? whose hand?
I took the hand of' . . .
Springing up erect
And lifting up the child at full
arm's length,
As if to bear him like an oriflamme

Unconquerable to armies of re-
 proach,—
 ‘By *him*,’ she said, ‘my child’s head
 and its curls,
 By those blue eyes no woman born
 could dare
 A perjury on, I make my mother’s
 oath, [it,
 That if I left that Heart, to lighten
 The blood of mine was still, except
 for grief!
 No cleaner maid than I was, took a
 step
 To a sadder end,—no matron-
 mother now
 Looks backward to her early
 maidenhood
 Through chaster pulses. I speak
 steadily:
 And if I lie so, . . . if, being fouled
 in will
 And paltered with in soul by devil’s
 lust,
 I dared to bid this angel take my
 part, . . .
 Would God sit quiet, let us think,
 in heaven,
 Nor strike me dumb with thunde: ?
 Yet I speak:
 He clears me therefore. What,
 ‘seduced’ ’s your word?
 Do wolves seduce a wandering
 fawn in France?
 Do eagles, who have pinched a
 lamb with claws,
 Seduce it into carrion? So with
 me.
 I was not ever, as you say, seduced,
 But simply, murdered.’
 There she paused, and sighed.
 With such a sigh as drops from
 agony
 To exhaustion,—sighing while she
 let the babe
 Slide down upon her bosom from
 her arms,
 And all her face’s light fell after
 him,

Like a torch quenched in falling.
 Down she sank,
 And sate upon the bedside with
 the child.
 But I, convicted, broken utterly,
 With woman’s passion clung about
 her waist,
 And kissed her hair and eyes,—‘I
 have been wrong,
 Sweet Marian’ . . . (weeping in a
 tender rage)
 ‘Sweet holy Marian! And now,
 Marian, now,
 I’ll use your oath although my lips
 are hard,
 And by the child, my Marian, by
 the child, [cent
 I’ll swear his mother shall be inno-
 Before my conscience, as in the
 open Book
 Of Him who reads our judgment.
 Innocent,
 My sister! let the night be ne’er so
 dark,
 The moon is surely somewhere in
 the sky:
 So surely is your whiteness to be
 found
 Through all dark facts. But pardon,
 pardon me,
 And smile a little, Marian,—for the
 child,
 If not for me, my sister.’
 The poor lip
 Just motioned for the smile and let
 it go:
 And then, with scarce a stirring of
 the mouth,
 As if a statue spoke that could not
 breathe,
 But spoke on calm between its
 marble lips,—
 ‘I’m glad, I’m very glad you clear
 me so.
 I should be sorry that you set me
 down
 With harlots, or with even a better
 name

Which misbecomes his mother.
 For the rest
 I am not on a level with your love,
 Nor ever was, you know,—but now
 am worse,
 Because that world of yours has
 dealt with me
 As when the hard sea bites and
 chews a stone
 And changes the first form of it.
 I've marked [shape
 A shore of pebbles bitten to one
 From all the various life of madre-
 pores ;
 And so, that little stone, called Ma-
 rian Erle,
 Picked up and dropped by you
 another friend,
 Was ground and tortured by the
 incessant sea
 And bruised from what she was,—
 changed ! death's a change,
 And she, I said, was murdered ;
 Marian's dead.
 What can you do with people when
 they are dead,
 But, if you are pious, sing a hymn
 and go,
 Or, if you are tender, heave a sigh
 and go,
 But go by all means,—and permit
 the grass
 To keep its green feud up 'twixt
 them and you ?
 Then leave me,—let me rest. I'm
 dead, I say.
 And if, to save the child from death
 as well,
 The mother in me has survived the
 rest,
 Why, that's God's miracle you
 must not tax,
 I'm not less dead for that : I'm
 nothing more
 But just a mother. Only for the
 child,
 I'm warm, and cold, and hungry,
 and afraid,

And smell the flowers a little, and
 see the sun,
 And speak still, and am silent,—
 just for him ! [not,
 I pray you therefore to mistake me
 And treat me haply as I were alive ;
 For though you ran a pin into my
 soul, [me.
 I think it would not hurt or trouble
 Here's proof, dear lady,—in the
 market-place
 But now, you promised me to say
 a word
 About . . . a friend, who once long
 years ago,
 Took God's place toward me, when
 He leans and loves
 And does not thunder, . . . whom at
 last I left,
 As all of us leave God. You
 thought perhaps
 I seemed to care for hearing of that
 friend ?
 Now, judge me ! we have sate here
 half an hour
 And talked together of the child
 and me,
 And I not asked as much as,
 ' What's the thing
 You had to tell me of the friend . . .
 the friend ? '
 He's sad, I think you said,—he's
 sick perhaps ? [or sick.
 'Tis nought to Marian if he's sad
 Another would have crawled beside
 your foot
 And prayed your words out. Why,
 a beast, a dog,
 A starved cat, if he had fed it once
 with milk,
 Would show less hardness. But
 I'm dead, you see,
 And that explains it.'
 Poor, poor thing, she spoke
 And shook her head, as white and
 calm as frost
 Or days too cold for raining any
 more,

But still with such a face, so much
 alive,
 I could not choose but take it on
 my arm
 And stroke the placid patience of
 its cheeks,—
 And told my story out, of Romney
 Leigh,
 How, having lost her, sought her,
 missed her still, [her,
 He, broken-hearted for himself and
 Had drawn the curtains of the
 world awhile
 As if he had done with morning.
 There I stopped,
 For when she gasped, and pressed
 me with her eyes,
 ‘And now . . . how is it with him?
 tell me now,’ [grief,
 I felt the shame of compensated
 And chose my words with scruple
 —slowly stepped
 Upon the slippery stones set here
 and there
 Across the sliding water. ‘Certainly
 As evening empties morning into
 night, [up
 Another morning takes the evening
 With healthful, providential inter-
 change :
 And though he thought still, of
 her,—
 ‘Yes, she knew,
 She understood : she had supposed,
 indeed, [flute,
 That, as one stops a hole upon a
 At which a new note comes and
 shapes the tune,
 Excluding her would bring a wor-
 thier in,
 And, long ere this, that Lady Wal-
 demar
 He loved so’ . . .
 ‘Loved,’ I started, ‘loved her so !
 Now tell me’ . . .
 ‘I will tell you,’ she replied :
 ‘But since we’re taking oaths, you’ll
 promise first

That he in England, he, shall never
 learn
 In what a dreadful trap his creature
 here,
 Round whose unworthy neck he
 had meant to tie
 The honourable ribbon of his name,
 Fell unaware and came to butchery ;
 Because,—I know him,—as he
 takes to heart
 The grief of every stranger, he’s
 not like [choose
 To banish mine as far as I could
 In wishing him most happy. Now
 he leaves
 To think of me, perverse, who went
 my way,
 Unkind, and left him,—but if once
 he knew . . .
 Ah, then, the sharp nail of my cruel
 wrong
 Would fasten me forever in his sight
 Like some poor curious bird,
 through each spread wing
 Nailed high up over a fierce hunter’s
 fire,
 To spoil the dinner of all tenderer
 folk
 Come in by chance. Nay, since
 your Marian’s dead,
 You shall not hang her up, but dig
 a hole
 And bury her in silence ! ring no
 bells.’
 I answered gaily, though my whole
 voice wept ;
 ‘We’ll ring the joy-bells, not the
 funeral-bells,
 Because we have her back, dead or
 alive.’
 She never answered that, but shook
 her head ;
 Then low and calm, as one who,
 safe in heaven,
 Shall tell a story of his lower life,
 Unmoved by shame or anger,—so
 she spoke,

She told me she had loved upon
 her knees,
 As others pray, more perfectly ab-
 sorbed [his
 In the act and inspiration. She felt
 For just his uses, not her own at all,
 His stool, to sit on or put up his
 foot, [gar,
 His cup, to fill with wine or vine-
 Whichever drink might please him
 at the chance,
 For that should please her always ;
 let him write
 His name upon her . . . it seemed
 natural :
 It was most precious, standing on
 his shelf, [hand.
 To wait until he chose to lift his
 Well, well,—I saw her then, and
 must have seen
 How bright her life went floating
 on her love,
 Like wicks the housewives send
 afloat on oil
 Which feeds them to a flame that
 lasts the night.

To do good seemed so much his
 business,
 That, having done it, she was fain
 to think,
 Must fill up his capacity for joy.
 At first she never mooted with her-
 self [so,
 If *he* was happy, since he made her
 Or if *he* loved her, being so much
 beloved :
 Who thinks of asking if the sun is
 light,
 Observing that it lightens ? who's
 so bold,
 To question God of His felicity ?
 Still less. And thus she took for
 granted first,
 What first of all she should have
 put to proof,
 And sinned against him so, but
 only so.

'What could you hope,' she said,
 'of such as she ?'
 You take a kid you like, and turn
 it out
 In some fair garden ; though the
 creature's fond [beds
 And gentle, it will leap upon the
 And break your tulips, bite your
 tender trees ;
 The wonder would be if such in-
 nocence
 Spoiled less. A garden is no place
 for kids.'

And, by degrees, when he who
 had chosen her,
 Brought in his courteous and be-
 nignant friends
 To spend their goodness on her,
 which she took
 So very gladly, as a part of his,—
 By slow degrees it broke on her
 slow sense, [light
 That she too in that Eden of de-
 Was out of place, as like the silly
 kid,
 Still did most mischief where she
 meant most love.
 A thought enough to make a
 woman mad,
 (No beast in this but she may well
 go mad)
 That saying 'I am thine to love
 and use'
 May blow the plague in her pro-
 testing breath
 To the very man for whom she
 claims to die,—
 That, clinging round his neck, she
 pulls him down
 And drowns him,—and that, lavish-
 ing her soul,
 She hales perdition on him. 'So,
 being mad,'
 Said Marian . . . [you ask ?
 'Ah—who stirred such thoughts,
 Whose fault it was that she should
 have such thoughts ?'

None's fault, none's fault. The
 light comes, and we see ;
 But if it were not truly for our eyes,
 There would be nothing seen, for
 all the light ;
 And so with Marian. If she saw
 at last, [demar
 The sense was in her,—Lady Wal-
 Had spoken all in vain else.
 'O my heart,
 O prophet in my heart,' I cried
 aloud,
 'Then Lady Waldemar spoke !'
 'Did she speak,'
 Mused Marian softly—'or did she
 only sign ?
 Or did she put a word into her face
 And look, and so impress you with
 the word ?
 Or leave it in the foldings of her
 gown,
 Like rosemary smells, a movement
 will shake out
 When no one's conscious ? who
 shall say or guess ?
 One thing alone was certain,—from
 the day
 The gracious lady paid a visit first,
 She, Marian, saw things different,—
 felt distrust
 Of all that sheltering roof of circum-
 stance
 Her hopes were building into with
 clay nests ;
 Her heart was restless, pacing up
 and down
 And fluttering, like dumb creatures
 before the storms,
 Not knowing wherefore she was
 ill at ease.'
 'And still the lady came,' said
 Marian Erle,
 'Much oftener than *he* knew it,
 Mister Leigh.
 She bade me never tell him she
 had come,
 She liked to love me better than he
 knew,

So very kind was Lady Waldemar.
 And every time she brought with
 her more light,
 And every light made sorrow
 clearer . . Well,
 Ah, well ! we cannot give her blame
 for that ;
 'Twould be the same thing if an
 angel came,
 Whose right should prove our
 wrong. And every time
 The lady came, she looked more
 beautiful,
 And spoke more like a flute among
 green trees,
 Until at last, as one, whose heart
 being sad
 On hearing lovely music, suddenly
 Dissolves in weeping, I brake out
 in tears
 Before her . . asked her counsel . .
 'had I erred
 'In being too happy ? would she
 set me straight ?
 'For she, being wise and good and
 born above
 'The flats I had never climbed from,
 could perceive
 'If such as I might grow upon the
 hills :
 'And whether such poor herb suf-
 ficed to grow
 'For Romney Leigh to break his
 fast upon't,—
 'Or would he pine on such, or
 haply starve ?'
 She wrapped me in her generous
 arms at once,
 And let me dream a moment how
 it feels [girls ;
 To have a real mother, like some
 But when I looked, her face was
 younger . . ay,
 Youth's too bright not to be a lit-
 tle hard, [most,
 And beauty keeps itself still upper-
 That's true!--though Lady Wal-
 demar was kind,

She hurt me, hurt as if the morn-
 ing-sun
 Should smite us on the eyelids
 when we sleep,
 And wake us up with headache.
 Ay, and soon
 Was light enough to make my
 heart ache too :
 She told me truths I asked for . .
 'twas my fault . .
 ' That Romney could not love me
 if he would,
 ' As men call loving ; there are
 bloods that flow
 ' Together like some rivers and not
 mix,
 Through contraries of nature.
 He indeed
 Was set to wed me, to espouse
 my class,
 ' Act out a rash opinion,—and,
 once wed,
 ' So just a man and gentle could
 not choose
 ' But make my life as smooth as
 marriage-ring,
 ' Bespeak me mildly, keep me a
 cheerful house,
 ' With servants, brooches, all the
 flowers I liked,
 And pretty dresses, silk the whole
 year round' . .
 At which I stopped her,—' This for
 me. And now
 ' For *him*.'—She hesitated,—truth
 grew hard ;
 She owned, ' 'Twas plain a man like
 Romney Leigh
 ' Required a wife more level to
 himself.
 ' If day by day he had to bend his
 height
 ' To pick up sympathies, opinions,
 thoughts,
 And interchange the common talk
 of life
 Which helps a man to live as well
 as talk,
 ' His days were heavily taxed.
 Who buys a staff
 ' To fit the hand, that reaches but
 the knee ?
 ' He'd feel it bitter to be forced to
 ' The perfect joy of married suited
 pairs,
 ' Who bursting through the separa-
 ting hedge
 ' Of personal dues with that sweet
 eglantine
 ' Of equal love, keep saying, ' So
we think,
 ' ' It strikes *us*,—that's *our* fancy.''
 —When I asked
 If earnest will, devoted love, em-
 ployed
 In youth like mine, would fail to
 raise me up,
 As two strong arms will always
 raise a child
 To a fruit hung overhead ? she
 sighed and sighed . .
 ' That could not be,' she feared.
 ' You take a pink, [it,
 ' You dig about the roots and water
 ' And so improve it to a garden-
 pink,
 ' But will not change it to a helio-
 trope,
 ' The kind remains. And then,
 the harder truth—
 ' This Romney Leigh, so rash to
 leap a pale,
 ' So bold for conscience, quick for
 martyrdom,
 ' Would suffer steadily and never
 flinch,
 ' But suffer surely and keenly, when
 his class
 ' Turned shoulder on him for a
 shameful match,
 ' And set him up as nine-pin in
 their talk,
 ' To bowl him down with jestings.'
 —There, she paused ;
 And when I used the pause in
 doubting that

We wronged him after all in what
 we feared—
 ' Suppose such things should never
 touch him more
 ' In his high conscience (if the thing
 should be,)
 ' Than, when the queen sits in an
 upper room,
 ' The horse in the street can spatter
 her!'—
 A moment, hope came,—but the
 lady closed
 The door and nicked the lock and
 shut it out,
 Observing wisely that, ' the tender
 heart
 ' Which made him over-soft to a
 lower class,
 ' Would scarcely fail to make him
 sensitive
 ' To a higher,—how they thought
 and how they felt.'

' Alas, alas,' said Marian, rocking
 slow [asleep,
 The pretty baby who was near
 The eyelids creeping over the blue
 balls,—
 ' She made it clear, too clear,—I
 saw the whole!
 And yet who knows if I had seen
 my way
 Straight out of it by looking though
 'twas clear,
 Unless the generous lady, 'ware of
 this,
 Had set her own house all a-fire
 for me,
 To light me forwards? Leaning
 on my face
 Her heavy agate eyes which crush-
 ed my will,
 She told me tenderly, (as when
 men come
 To a bedside to tell people they
 must die)
 ' She knew of knowledge,—ay, of
 knowledge knew,

' That Romney Leigh had loved
her formerly:
 ' And *she* loved *him*, she might
 say, now the chance
 ' Was past . . . but that, of course,
 he never guessed,—
 ' For something came between
 them . . . something thin
 ' As a cobweb . . . catching every
 fly of doubt [pane
 ' To hold it buzzing at the window-
 ' And help to dim the daylight.
 Ah, man's pride
 ' Or woman's—which is greatest?
 most averse
 ' To brushing cobwebs? Well,
 but she and he
 ' Remained fast friends; it seemed
 not more than so,
 ' Because he had bound his hands
 and could not stir:
 ' An honourable man, if somewhat
 rash;
 ' And she, not even for Romney,
 would she spill
 ' A blot . . . as little even as a tear. .
 ' Upon his marriage-contract—not
 to gain
 ' A better joy for two than came
 by that:
 ' For, though I stood between her
 heart and heaven,
 ' She loved me wholly.'

Did I laugh or curse?
 I think I sate there silent, hearing
 all,
 Ay, hearing double,—Marian's tale,
 at once,
 And Romney's marriage-vow, ' *I'll
 keep to THEE,*'
 Which means that woman-serpent.
 Is it time
 For church now?
 ' Lady Waldemar spoke more,'
 Continued Marian, ' but as when a
 soul
 Will pass out through the sweetness
 of a song

Beyond it, voyaging the uphill
road,—
Even so mine wandered from the
things I heard
To those I suffered. It was after-
ward
I shaped the resolution to the act.
For many hours we talked. What
need to talk?
The fate was clear and close; it
touched my eyes;
But still the generous lady tried to
keep [it go,
The case afloat, and would not let
And argued, struggled upon Mari-
an's side,
Which was not Romney's! though
she little knew
What ugly monster would take up
the end,—
What griping death within the
drowning death
Was ready to complete my sum of
death.'
I thought,—Perhaps he's sliding
now the ring
Upon that woman's finger . .

She went on :

'The lady, failing to prevail her
way,
Upgathered my torn wishes from
the ground
And pieced them with her strong
benevolence;
And, as I thought I could breathe
freer air
Away from England, going with-
out pause,
Without farewell,—just breaking
with a jerk
The blossomed offshoot from my
thorny life,—
She promised kindly to provide
the means, [nies
With instant passage to the colo-
And full protection, would commit
me straight

'To one who once had been her
waiting-maid
'And had the customs of the world,
intent
'On changing England for Austra-
lia, [so.
'Herself to carry out her fortune
For which I thanked the Lady
Waldemar,
As men upon their death-beds
thank last friends
Who lay the pillow straight: it is
not much,
And yet 'tis all of which they are
capable, [die.
This lying smoothly in a bed to
And so, 'twas fixed;—and so, from
day to day,
The woman named came in to
visit me.'

Just then, the girl stopped speak-
ing,—sate erect,
And stared at me as if I had been
a ghost,
(Perhaps I looked as white as any
ghost)
With large-eyed horror. 'Does
God make,' she said,
'All sorts of creatures really, do
you think?
Or is it that the Devil slavers them
So excellently, that we come to
doubt
Who's stronger, He who makes, or
he who mars?
I never liked the woman's face or
voice
Or ways: it made me blush to look
at her;
It made me tremble if she touched
my hand;
And when she spoke a fondling
word I shrank
As if one hated me who had power
to hurt;
And every time she came, my veins
ran cold

As somebody were walking on my grave.
 At last I spoke to Lady Waldemar:
 'Could such an one be good to trust?' I asked.
 Whereat the lady stroked my cheek and laughed
 Her silver-laugh,—(one must be born to laugh, [girl,
 To put such music in it) 'Foolish
 'Your scattered wits are gathering wool beyond
 'The sheep-walk reaches!—leave the thing to me.'
 And therefore, half in trust, and half in scorn
 That I had heart still for another fear
 In such a safe despair, I left the thing.
 The rest is short. I was obedient: I wrote my letter which delivered *him* [ties,
 From Marian to his own prosperity—And followed that bad guide. The lady?—hush,
 I never blame the lady. Ladies who
 Sit high, however willing to look down,
 Will scarce see lower than their dainty feet: [I,
 And Lady Waldemar saw less than With what a Devil's daughter I went forth
 Along the swine's road, down the precipice,
 In such a curl of hell-foam caught and choked,
 No shriek of soul in anguish could pierce through
 To fetch some help. They say there's help in heaven
 For all such cries. But if one cries from hell . . .
 What then?—the heavens are deaf upon that side.

'A woman . . . hear me,—let me make it plain,—
 A woman . . . not a monster . . . both her breasts
 Made right to suckle babes . . . she took me off
 A woman also, young and ignorant And heavy with my grief, my two poor eyes
 Near washed away with weeping, till the trees,
 The blessed unaccustomed trees and fields
 Ran either side the train like stranger dogs [off,
 Unworthy of any notice,—took me So dull, so blind, so only half alive,
 Not seeing by what road, nor by what ship,
 Nor toward what place, nor to what end of all.
 Men carry a corpse thus,—past the doorway, past
 The garden-gate, the children's play-ground, up
 The green lane,—then they leave it in the pit,
 To sleep and find corruption, cheek to cheek
 With him who stinks since Friday. 'But suppose;
 To go down with one's soul into the grave,
 To go down half dead, half alive, I say,
 And wake up with corruption, . . . cheek to cheek
 With him who stinks since Friday! There it is,
 And that's the horror of't, Miss Leigh.
 'You feel?
 You understand?—no, do not look at me,
 But understand. The blank, blind weary way
 Which led . . . where'er it led . . . away at least;

The shifted ship .. to Sydney or to
 France,
 Still bound, wherever else, to an-
 other land ;
 The swooning sickness on the dis-
 mal sea,
 The foreign shore, the shameful
 house, the night,
 The feeble blood, the heavy-headed
 grief, . . .
 No need to bring their damnable
 drugged cup,
 And yet they brought it. Hell's so
 prodigal
 Of devils' gifts . . . hunts liberally
 in packs,
 Will kill no poor small creature of
 the wilds,
 But fifty red wide throats must
 smoke at it,
 As HIS at me .. when waking up
 at last . . .
 I told you that I waked up in the
 grave.
 ' Enough so !—it is plain enough
 so. True,
 We wretches cannot tell out all our
 wrong
 Without offence to decent happy
 folk. [hint
 I know that we must scrupulously
 With half-words, delicate reserves,
 the thing
 Which no one scrupled we should
 feel in full.
 Let pass the rest, then ; only leave
 my oath
 Upon this sleeping child—man's
 violence,
 Not man's seduction, made me
 what I am,
 As lost as .. I told *him* I should
 be lost :
 When mothers fail us, can we help
 ourselves ?
 That's fatal !—And you call it being
 lost,

That down came next day's noon
 and caught me there
 Half gibbering and half raving on
 the floor,
 And wondering what had happen-
 ed up in heaven,
 That suns should dare to shine
 when God himself
 Was certainly abolished.
 ' I was mad,
 How many weeks, I know not,—
 many weeks.
 I think they let me go, when I was
 mad,
 They feared my eyes and loosed me,
 as boys might
 A mad dog which they had tortur-
 ed. Up and down
 I went by road and village, over
 tracts
 Of open foreign country, large and
 strange,
 Crossed everywhere by long thin
 poplar-lines
 Like fingers of some ghastly skele-
 ton Hand
 Through sunlight and through
 moonlight evermore
 Pushed out from hell itself to pluck
 me back, [sure ;
 And resolute to get me, slow and
 While every roadside Christ upon
 his cross
 Hung reddening through his gory
 wounds at me,
 And shook his nails in anger and
 came down
 To follow a mile after, wading up
 The low vines and green wheat,
 crying ' Take the girl !
 ' She's none of mine from hence-
 forth.' Then I knew
 (But this is somewhat dimmer than
 the rest)
 The charitable peasants gave me
 bread
 And leave to sleep in straw . and
 twice they tied,

At parting, Mary's image round my neck—
 How heavy it seemed! as heavy as
 a stone;
 A woman has been strangled with
 less weight,
 I threw it in a ditch to keep it clean
 And ease my breath a little, when
 none looked;
 I did not need such safeguards:—
 brutal men
 Stopped short, Miss Leigh, in insult,
 when they had seen
 My face,—I must have had an awful
 look.
 And so I lived: the weeks passed
 on,—I lived.
 'Twas living my old tramp-life o'er
 again,
 But, this time, in a dream, and
 hunted round
 By some prodigious Dream-fear at
 my back,
 Which ended yet: my brain cleared
 presently,
 And there I sate, one evening, by
 the road, [done,
 I, Marian Erle, myself, alone, un-
 facing a sunset low upon the flats
 As if it were the finish of all time,
 The great red stone upon my sep-
 ulchre,
 Which angels were too weak to
 roll away.'

SEVENTH BOOK.

'THE woman's motive? shall we
 daub ourselves
 With finding roots for nettles? 'tis
 soft clay
 And easily explored. She had the
 means, [grace,
 The monies, by the lady's liberal
 In trust for that Australian scheme
 and me,
 Which so, that she might clutch
 with both her hands

And chink to her naughty uses un-
 disturbed,
 She served me (after all it was not
 strange;
 'Twas only what my mother would
 have done)
 A motherly, right damnable goose
 turn.
 'Well, after. There are nettles
 everywhere,
 But smooth green grasses are more
 common still;
 The blue of heaven is larger than
 the cloud; [in
 A miller's wife at Clichy took me
 And spent her pity on me,—made
 me calm
 And merely very reasonably sad.
 She found me a servant's place in
 Paris, where
 I tried to take a cast-off life again,
 And stood as quiet as a beaten ass
 Who, having fallen through over-
 loads, stands up
 To let them charge him with an-
 other pack.
 'A few months, so. My mistress,
 young and light,
 Was easy with me, less for kindness
 than [time
 Because she led, herself, an easy
 Betwixt her lover and her looking-
 glass,
 Scarce knowing which way she was
 praised the most.
 She felt so pretty and so pleased all
 day
 She could not take the trouble to
 to be cross,
 But sometimes, as I stooped to tie
 her shoe,
 Would tap me softly with her slen-
 der foot
 Still restless with the last night's
 dancing in't,
 And say, 'Fie, pale-face! are you
 English girls

' All grave and silent? mass-book
 still, and Lent?
 ' And first-communion pallor on
 your cheeks,
 Worn past the time for't? little
 fool, be gay!'

At which she vanished, like a fairy
 through
 A gap of silver laughter.
 ' Came an hour
 When all went otherwise. She
 did not speak,
 But clenched her brows, and clip-
 ped me with her eyes
 As if a viper, with a pair of tongs,
 Too far for any touch, yet near
 enough
 To view the writhing creature,—
 then at last,
 ' Stand still there, in the holy Vir-
 gin's name,
 ' Thou Marian; thou'rt no reputa-
 ble girl,
 ' Although sufficient dull for twenty
 saints!
 ' I think thou mock'st me and my
 house.
 Confess thou'lt be a mother in a
 month,
 ' Thou mask of saintship.'

' Could I answer her?
 The light broke in so: it meant
that then, *that*?
 I had not thought of that, in all my
 thoughts,
 Through all the cold, numb aching
 of my brow,
 Through all the heaving of impa-
 tient life
 Which threw me on death at inter-
 vals, through all
 The upbreak of the fountains of my
 heart
 The rains had swelled too large: it
 could mean *that*?
 Did God make mothers out of vic-
 tims, then,

And set such pure amens to hide-
 ous deeds?
 Why not? He overblows an ugly
 grave
 With violets which blossom in the
 spring.
 And *I* could be a mother in a
 month!
 I hope it was not wicked to be glad.
 I lifted up my voice and wept, and
 laughed,
 To heaven, not her, until it tore my
 throat.
 ' Confess, confess!' what was there
 to confess,
 Except man's cruelty, except my
 wrong?
 Except this anguish, or this ecstasy,
 This shame or glory? The light
 woman there
 Was small to take it in: an acorn-
 cup
 Would take the sea in sooner.
 ' Good,' she cried;
 Unmarried and a mother, and she
 laughs!
 ' These unchaste girls are always
 impudent.
 ' Get out, intriguer! leave my house
 and trot:
 ' I wonder you should look me in
 the face,
 ' With such a filthy secret.'

' Then I rolled
 My scanty bundle up and went my
 way,
 Washed white with weeping, shud-
 dering head and foot
 With blind hysteric passion, stag-
 gering forth
 Beyond those doors. 'Twas nat-
 ural of course
 She would not ask me where I
 meant to sleep:
 I might sleep well beneath the
 heavy Seine,
 Like others of my sort; the bed was
 laid

For us. But any woman, womanly,
Had thought of him who should be
in a month,
The sinless babe that should be in
a month,
And if by chance he might be
warmer housed
Than underneath such dreary,
dripping eaves.'

I broke on Marian there. 'Yet
she herself,
A wife, I think, had scandals of
her own,
A lover not her husband.'

'Ay,' she said.
'But gold and meal are measured
otherwise ;
I learnt so much at school,' said
Marian Erle.

'O crooked world,' I cried, 'ridicu-
lous
If not so lamentable ! It's the way
With these light women of a thrifty
vice,

My Marian,—always hard upon
the rent
In any sister's virtue ! while they
keep

Their own so darned and patched
with perfidy,
That, though a rag itself, it looks as
well

[coach,
Across a street, in balcony or
As any perfect stuff might. For
my part,

I'd rather take the wind-side of the
stews
Than touch such women with my
finger-end !

They top the poor street-walker by
their lie,
And look the better for being so
much worse :

The devil's most devilish when re-
spectable.
But you, dear, and your story.'

'All the rest

Is here,' she said, and signed upon
the child.

'I found a mistress-sempstress who
was kind.

And let me sew in peace among her
girls ;

And what was better than to draw
the threads

All day and half the night for him
and him ?

And so I lived for him, and so he
lives,

And so I know, by this time, God
lives too.'

She smiled beyond the sun and
ended so.

And all my soul rose up to take her
part

Against the world's successes, vir-
tues, fames.

'Come with me, sweetest sister,'
I returned,

'And sit within my house, and do
me good

From henceforth, thou and thine .
ye are my own

From henceforth. I am lonely in
the world,

And thou art lonely, and the child
is half

An orphan ! Come,—and hence-
forth thou and I

Being still together will not miss a
friend,

Nor he a father, since two mothers
shall

Make that up to him. I am jour-
neying south,

And in my Tuscan home I'll find a
niche

And set thee there, my saint, the
child and thee,

And burn the lights of love before
thy face,

And ever at thy sweet look cross
myself

From mixing with the world's pros-
perities ;

That so, in gravity and holy calm,
We two may live on toward the
truer life.'

She looked me in the face and answered not,
Nor signed she was unworthy, nor
gave thanks,

But took the sleeping child and
held it out [me
To meet my kiss, as if requiting
And trusting me at once. And
thus at once,

I carried him and her to where I
lived;

She's there now, in the little room,
asleep,

I hear the soft child-breathing
through the door;

And all three of us, at to-morrow's
break,

Pass onward, homeward, to our
Italy.

Oh, Romney Leigh, I have your
debts to pay,

And I'll be just and pay them.

To pay your debts is scarcely diffi-
cult; [ble,

To buy your life is nearly impossi-
ble—Being sold away to Lamia. My
headaches;

I cannot see my road along this
dark;

Nor can I creep and grope, as fits
the dark,

For these foot-catching robes of
womanhood:

A man might walk a little . . . but
I!—He loves

The Lamia-woman,—and I, write to
him

What stops his marriage, and de-
stroys his peace,—

Or what perhaps shall simply
trouble him,

Until she only need to touch his
sleeve

With just a finger's tremulous
white flame,

Saying, 'Ah,—Aurora Leigh! a
pretty tale,

'A very pretty poet! I can guess
'The motive,—then, to catch his
eyes in hers,

And vow she does not wonder,—
and they two

To break in laughter as the sea
along

A melancholy coast, and float up
higher,

In such a laugh, their fatal weeds
of love!

Ay, fatal, ay. And who shall an-
swer me

Fate has not hurried tides; and if
to-night [late,

My letter would not be a night too
An arrow shot into a man that's
dead,

To prove a vain intention; would
I show

The new wife vile, to make the
husband mad?

No, Lamia! shut the shutters, bar
the doors

From every glimmer on thy ser-
pent skin!

I will not let thy hideous secret out
To agonise the man I love—I mean
The friend I love . . . as friends love.

It is strange,

To-day while Marian told her story
like

To absorb most listeners, how I
listened chief

To a voice not hers, nor yet that
enemy's,

Nor God's in wrath, . . . but one that
mixed with mine

Long years ago, among the garden-
trees,

And said to *me*, to *me*, too, 'Be my
wife,

Aurora.' It is strange with what
a swell

Yearning passion, as a snow of
 ghosts
 Might beat against the impervious
 doors of heaven,
 I thought, 'Now, if I had been a
 woman, such
 As God made women, to save men
 by love,—
 By just my love I might have saved
 this man,
 And made a nobler poem for the
 world
 Than all I have failed in.' But I
 failed besides
 In this; and now he's lost! through
 me alone!
 And, by my only fault, his empty
 house
 Sucks in, at this same hour, a wind
 from hell
 To keep his hearth cold, make his
 casements creak
 Forever to the tune of plague and
 sin—
 O Romney, O my Romney, O my
 friend!
 My cousin and friend! my helper,
 when I would,
 My love, that might be! mine!
 Why, how one weeps
 When one's too weary! Were a
 witness by,
 He'd say some folly . . . that I loved
 the man,
 Who knows? . . . and make me
 laugh again for scorn.
 At strongest, women are as weak
 in flesh,
 As men, at weakest, vilest, are in
 soul:
 So, hard for women to keep pace
 with men!
 As well give up at once, sit down
 at once,
 And weep as I do. Tears, tears!
why we weep?
 'Tis worth inquiry?—That we've
 shamed a life,

Or lost a love, or missed a world,
 perhaps?
 By no means. Simply, that we've
 walked too far,
 Or talked too much, or felt the
 wind i' the east,—
 And so we weep, as if both body
 and soul
 Broke up in water—this way.
 Poor mixed rags
 Forsooth we're made of, like those
 other dolls
 That lean with pretty faces into
 fairs.
 It seems as if I had a man in me,
 Despising such a woman.
 Yet indeed,
 To see a wrong or suffering moves
 us all
 To undo it, though we should undo
 ourselves;
 Ay, all the more, that we undo our-
 selves;
 That's womanly, past doubt, and
 not ill-moved.
 A natural movement therefore, on
 my part,
 To fill the chair up of my cousin's
 wife,
 And save him from a devil's com-
 pany!
 We're all so,—made so,—'tis our
 woman's trade
 To suffer torment for another's ease.
 The world's male chivalry has per-
 ished out,
 But women are knight-errant to the
 last;
 And if Cervantes had been Shake-
 speare too,
 He had made his Don a Donna.
 So it clears,
 And so we rain our skies blue.
 Put away
 This weakness. If, as I have just
 now said,
 A man's within me,—let him act
 himself,

Ignoring the poor conscious trouble
of blood
That's called the woman merely.
I will write
Plain words to England.—if too
late, too late,
If ill-accounted, then accounted ill:
We'll trust the heavens with some-
thing.

Dear Lord Howe.

You'll find a story on another leaf
Of Marian Erle,—what noble friend
of yours
She trusted once, through what
flagitious means
To what disastrous ends ;—the
story's true.

I found her wandering on the Paris
quays,

A babe upon her breast.—unnatural
Unseasonable outcast on such snow
Unthawed to this time. I will tax

in this

Your friendship, friend.—if that
convicted She

Be not his wife yet, to denounce
the facts

To himself,—but, otherwise, to let
them pass

On tip-toe like escaping murderers,
And tell my cousin merely—Marian
lives,

Is found, and finds her home with
such a friend.

Myself, Aurora. Which good news,
'She's found.'

Will help to make him merry in his
love :

[gift.

I send it, tell him, for my marriage
As good as orange water for the
nerves,

Or perfumed gloves for headaches,
—though aware

That he, except of love, is scarcely
sick :

I mean the new love this time. . .
since last year.

Such quick forgetting on the part
of men !

Is any shrewder trick upon the cards
To enrich them ? pray instruct me
how 'tis done.

First, clubs,—and while you look at
clubs, 'tis spades ;

That's prodigy. The lightning
strikes a man,

And when we think to find him
dead and charred . .

Why, there he is on a sudden, play-
ing pipes

Beneath the splintered elm-tree !
Crime and shame

And all their hoggery trample your
smooth world,

Nor leave more foot-marks than
Apollo's kine,

Whose hoofs were muffled by the
thieving god

In tamarisk-leaves and myrtle. I'm
so sad,

So weary and sad to-night, I'm
somewhat sour,—

Forgive me. To be blue and shrew
at once,

Exceeds all toleration except yours ;
But yours, I know, is infinite.

Farewell.

To-morrow we take train for Italy.
Speak gently of me to your gracious

wife, [near

As one, however far, shall yet be
In loving wishes to your house.'

I sign.

And now I loose my heart upon a
page.

This—
'Lady Waldemar, I'm very glad

I never liked you ; which you knew
so well

You spared me, in your turn, to like
me much.

Your liking surely had done worse
for me

Than has your loathing, though the
last appears

Sufficiently unscrupulous to hurt,
 And not afraid of judgment. Now,
 there's space [if
 Between our faces,—I stand off, as
 I judged a stranger's portrait and
 pronounced [bad :
 Indifferently the type was good or
 What matter to me that the lines
 are false,
 I ask you? Did I ever ink my lips
 By drawing your name through
 them as a friend's,
 Or touch your hands as lovers do?
 thank God
 I never did: and, since you're
 proved so vile,
 Ay, vile, I say,—we'll show it pres-
 ently,
 I'm not obliged to nurse my friend
 in you,
 Or wash out my own blots, in count-
 ing yours, [souls
 Or even excuse myself to honest
 Who seek to touch my lip or clasp
 my palm,—
 'Alas, but Lady Waldemar came
 first!'
 'Tis true, by this time you may near
 me so
 That you're my cousin's wife.
 You've gambled deep
 As Lucifer, and won the morning-
 star
 In that case,—and the noble house
 of Leigh
 Must henceforth with its good roof
 shelter you: [tween
 I cannot speak and burn you up be-
 Those rafters, I who am born a
 Leigh,—nor speak
 And pierce your breast through
 Romney's, I who live
 His friend and cousin!—so, you're
 safe. You two
 Must grow together like the tares
 and wheat
 Till God's great fire.—But make
 the best of time

And hide this letter! let it speak
 no more
 Than I shall, how you tricked poor
 Marian Erle,
 And set her own love digging her
 own grave
 Within her green hope's pretty gar-
 den-ground; [your sort
 Ay, sent her forth with some one of
 To a wicked house in France,—
 from which she fled
 With curses in her eyes and ears
 and throat,
 Her whole soul choked with curses,
 —mad in short,
 And madly scouring up and down
 for weeks
 The foreign hedgeless country, lone
 and lost,—
 So innocent, male-fiends might
 slink within
 Remote hell-corners, seeing her so
 defiled.
 'But you,—you are a woman and
 more bold.
 To do you justice you'd not shrink
 to face . .
 We'll say the unfledged life in the
 other room,
 Which, treading down God's corn,
 you trod in sight
 Of all the dogs, in reach of all the
 guns,—
 Ay, Marian's babe, her poor un-
 fathered child,
 Her yearling babe!—you'd face him
 when he wakes [eyes:
 And opens up its wonderful blue
 You'd meet them and not wink per-
 haps, nor fear
 God's triumph in them and supreme
 revenge,
 When righting His creation's bal-
 ance-scale
 (You pulled as low as Tophet) to
 the top [me
 Of most celestial innocence. For

Who am not as bold, I own those
infant eyes

Have set me praying.

‘While they look at heaven,
No need of protestation in my words
Against the place you’ve made
them! let them look!

They’ll do your business with the
heavens, be sure:

I spare you common curses.

‘Ponder this.

If haply you’re the wife of Romney
Leigh, [birth

(For which inheritance beyond your
You sold that poisonous porridge
called your soul)

I charge you be his faithful and
true wife!

Keep warm his hearth and clean
his board, and, when

He speaks, be quick with your obe-
dience;

Still grind your paltry wants and
low desires

To dust beneath his heel; though
even thus,

The ground must hurt him,—it was
writ of old,

‘Ye shall not yoke together ox and
ass,’ [you

The nobler and ignobler. Ay, but
Shall do your part as well as such
ill things

Can do aught good. You shall not
vex him,—mark,

You shall not vex him . . . jar him
when he’s sad,

Or cross him when he’s eager.
Understand

To trick him with apparent sym-
pathies,

Nor let him see thee in the face too
near

And unlearn thy sweet seeming.
Pay the price

Of lies, by being constrained to lie
on still: [more

‘Tis easy for thy sort: a million

Will scarcely damn thee deeper.

‘Doing which

You are very safe from Marian and
myself; [here

We’ll breathe as softly as the infant
And stir no dangerous embers.

Fail a point,

And show our Romney wounded,
ill-content,

Tormented in his home, . . . we open
mouth,

And such a noise will follow the last
trump’s

Will scarcely seem more dreadful,
even to you;

You’ll have no pipers after: Rom-
ney will

(I know him) push you forth as
none of his, [done;

All other men declaring it well
While women, even the worst, your

like, will draw

Their skirts back, not to brush you
in the street;

And so I warn you. I’m . . .
Aurora Leigh.’

The letter written, I felt satisfied.

The ashes smouldering in me, were
thrown out

By handfuls from me: I had writ
my heart

And wept my tears, and now was
cool and calm;

And, going straightway to the
neighbouring room,

I lifted up the curtains of the bed
Where Marian Erle, the babe upon

her arm,

Both faces leaned together like a
pair

Of folded innocences, self-complete,
Each smiling from the other, smiled
and slept.

There seemed no sin, no shame,
no wrath, no grief.

I felt she too had spoken words
that night,

But softer certainly, and said to
 God,
 Who laughs in heaven perhaps that
 such as I
 Should make ado for such as she.
 —' Defiled '
 I wrote ? ' defiled ' I thought her ?
 Stoop,
 Stoop lower, Aurora ! get the
 angels' leave
 To creep in somewhere, humbly,
 on your knees,
 Within this round of sequestration
 white
 In which they have wrapt earth's
 foundlings, heaven's elect.

The next day we took train to Italy
 And fled on southward in the roar
 of steam.

The marriage-bells of Romney
 must be loud,

To sound so clear through all. I
 was not well ;

And truly, though the truth is like
 a jest,

I could not choose but fancy, half
 the way,

I stood alone in the belfry, fifty bells
 Of naked iron, mad with merriment,
 (As one who laughs and cannot
 stop himself)

All clanking at me, in me, over me,
 Until I shrieked a shriek I could
 not hear,

And swooned with noise,—but
 still, along my swoon,

'Was 'ware the baffled changes
 backward rang,

Prepared, at each emerging sense,
 to beat

And crash it out with clangour. I
 was weak ;

! struggled for the posture of my
 In upright consciousness of place
 and time,

But evermore, 'twixt waking and
 asleep,

Slipped somehow, staggered,
 caught at Marian's eyes

A moment, (it is very good for
 strength

To know that some one needs you
 to be strong)

And so recovered what I called
 myself,

For that time.

I just knew it when we swept
 Above the old roof of Dijon.

Lyons dropped
 A spark into the night, half trodden
 out

Unseen. But presently the wind-
 ing Rhone

Washed out the moonlight large
 along his banks,

Which strained their yielding
 curves out clear and clean

To hold it,—shadow of town and
 castle blurred

Upon the hurrying river. Such an
 air

Blew thence upon the forehead,—
 half an air

And half a water,—that I leaned
 and looked ;

Then, turning back on Marian,
 smiled to mark

That she looked only on her child,
 who slept,

His face toward the moon too.

So we passed
 The liberal open country and the
 close,

And shot through tunnels, like a
 lightning-wedge

By great Thor-hammers driven
 through the rock,

Which, quivering through the intes-
 tine blackness, splits,

And lets it in at once : the train
 swept in

Athrob with effort, trembling with
 resolve,

The fierce denouncing whistle wail-
 ing on

And dying off smothered in the
 shuddering dark,
 While we, self-awed, drew troubled
 breath, oppressed
 As other Titans underneath the pile
 And nightmare of the mountains.
 Out, at last,
 To catch the dawn afloat upon the
 land!
 —Hills, slung forth broadly and
 gauntly everywhere,
 Not cramp't in their foundations,
 pushing wide
 Rich outspreads of the vineyards
 and the corn,
 (As if they entertained i' the name
 of France)
 While, down their straining sides,
 streamed manifest
 A soil as red as Charlemagne's
 knightly blood,
 To consecrate the verdure. Some
 one said
 'Marseilles!' And lo, the city of
 Marseilles,
 With all her ships behind her, and
 beyond,
 The scimitar of ever-shining sea
 For right-hand use, bared blue
 against the sky!

 That night we spent between the
 purple heaven
 And the purple water: I think
 Marian slept;
 But I, as a dog a-watch for his
 master's foot,
 Who cannot sleep or eat before he
 hears,
 I sate upon the deck and watched
 the night, [Italy.
 And listened through the stars for
 Those marriage-bells I spoke of,
 sounded far,
 As some child's go-cart in the
 street beneath
 To a dying man who will not pass
 the day,

And knows it, holding by a hand
 he loves.
 I too sate quiet, satisfied with
 death,
 Sate silent: I could hear my own
 soul speak,
 And had my friend,—for Nature
 comes sometimes
 And says, 'I am ambassador for
 God.'
 I felt the wind soft from the land
 of souls;
 The old miraculous mountains
 heaved in sight,
 One straining past another along
 the shore,
 The way of grand dull Odyssean
 ghosts
 Athirst to drink the cool blue wine
 of seas
 And stare on voyagers. Peak
 pushing peak
 They stood: I watched beyond that
 Tyrian belt
 Of intense sea betwixt them and the
 ship,
 Down all their sides the misty olive-
 woods
 Dissolving in the weak congenial
 moon,
 And still disclosing some brown
 convent-tower
 That seems as if it grew from some
 brown rock,
 Or many a little lighted village
 dropt
 Like a fallen star, upon so high a
 point,
 You wonder what can keep it in its
 place
 From sliding headlong with the
 waterfalls
 Which powder all the myrtle and
 orange groves
 With spray of silver. Thus my
 Italy
 Was stealing on us. Genoa broke
 with day;

The Doria's long pale palace striking out,
From green hills in advance of the white town,
A marble finger dominant to ships,
Seen glimmering through the uncertain gray of dawn.

And then I did not think, 'my Italy,'
I thought, 'my father!' O my father's house,
Without his presence!—Places are too much
Or else too little, for immortal man;
Too little, when love's May o'er-grows the ground,—
Too much, when that luxuriant robe of green
Is rustling to our ankles in dead leaves.
'Tis only good to be or here or there,
Because we had a dream on such a stone,
Or this or that,—but, once being wholly waked,
And come back to the stone without a dream,
We trip upon't,—alas! and hurt ourselves;
Or else it falls on us and grinds us flat,
The heaviest grave-stone on this burying earth.
—But while I stood and mused, a quiet touch
Fell light upon my arm, and, turning round,
A pair of moistened eyes convicted mine.
'What, Marian! is the babe astir so soon?'
'He sleeps,' she answered; 'I have crept up thrice,
And seen you sitting, standing, still at watch.

I thought it did you good till now, but now' . . .
'But now,' I said, 'you leave the child alone.'
'And *you're* alone,' she answered, —and she looked
As if I too were something. Sweet the help
Of one we have helped! Thanks, Marian, for such help.

I found a house at Florence on the hill
Of Bellosguardo. 'Tis a tower that keeps
A post of double-observation o'er
The valley of Arno (holding as a hand
The outspread city) straight toward Fiesole
And Mount Morello and the setting sun,
The Vallombrosan mountains opposite, [cups
Which sunrise fills as full as crystal
Turned red to the brim because their wine was red.
No sun could die nor yet be born unseen [eve
By dwellers at my villa: morn and
Were magnified before us in the pure
Illimitable space and pause of sky,
Intense as angels' garments blanched with God,
Less blue and radiant. From the outer wall
Of the garden, drops the mystic floating gray
Of olive-trees, (with interruptions green
From maize and vine) until 'tis caught and torn
Upon the abrupt black line of cypresses
Which signs the way to Florence.
Beautiful
The city lies along the ample vale,

<p>Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza and street, The river trailing like a silver cord Through all, and curling loosely, both before And after, over the broad stretch of land Sown whitely up and down its op- posite slopes With farm and villas. Many weeks had passed, No word was granted.—Last, a letter came From Vincent Carrington :—‘ My dear Miss Leigh, You’ve been as silent as a poet should, [speak. When any other man is sure to If sick, if vexed, if dumb, a silver- piece Will split a man’s tongue,—straight he speaks and says, ‘ Received that cheque.’ But you! . . . I send you funds To Paris, and you make no sign at all. [wait Remember I’m responsible and A sign of you, Miss Leigh. ‘ Meantime your book Is eloquent as if it were not dumb ; And common critics, ordinarily deaf To such fine meanings, and, like deaf men, loth To seem deaf, answering chance- wise. yes or no, ‘ It must be,’ or ‘ it must not,’ (most pronounced When least convinced) pronounced for once aright : You’d think they really heard,— and so they do . . . The burr of three or four who really hear And praise your book aright : Fame’s smallest trump Is a great ear-trumpet for the deaf as posts,</p>	<p>No other being effective. Fear not, friend ; We think here you have written a good book, And you, a woman ! It was in you—yes, I felt ’twas in you : yet I doubted half If that od-force of German Reich- enbach Which still from female finger-tips burns blue, Could strike out as our masculine white heats, To quicken a man. Forgive me. All my heart Is quick with yours since, just a fortnight since, I read your book and loved it. ‘ Will you love My wife, too ? Here’s my secret I might keep A month more from you ! but I yield it up Because I know you’ll write the sooner for’t, Most women (of your height even) counting love Life’s only serious business. Who’s my wife That shall be in a month ? you ask ? nor guess ? Remember what a pair of topaz eyes You once detected, turned against the wall, That morning in my London paint- ing-room ; The face half-sketched, and slurred : the eyes alone ! But you . . . you caught them up with yours, and said ‘ Kate Ward’s eyes, surely.’—Now, I own the truth, I had thrown them there to keep them safe from Jove : They would so naughtily find out their way</p>
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To both the heads of both my Danaes,
 Where just it made me mad to look
 at them.
 Such eyes! I could not paint or
 think of eyes
 But those,—and so I flung them
 into paint
 And turned them to the wall's care.
 Ay, but now
 I've let them out, my Kate's: I've
 painted her,
 (I'll change my style, and leave
 mythologies)
 The whole sweet face; it looks
 upon my soul
 Like a face on water, to beget itself,
 A half-length portrait, in a hang-
 ing cloak
 Like one you wore once; 'tis a little
 frayed;
 I pressed too for the nude harmo-
 nious arm—
 But she . . . she'd have her way, and
 have her cloak;
 She said she could be like you only
 so,
 And would not miss the fortune.
 Ah, my friend,
 You'll write and say she shall not
 miss your love
 Through meeting mine? in faith,
 she would not change:
 She has your books by heart more
 than my words,
 And quotes you up against me till
 I'm pushed
 Where, three months since, her
 eyes were: nay, in fact,
 Nought satisfied her but to make
 me paint
 Your last book folded in her dim-
 pled hands [wished,
 Instead of my brown palette, as I
 And, granted me, the presentment
 had been newer;
 She'd grant me nothing: I've com-
 pounded for

The naming of the wedding-day
 next month,
 And gladly too. 'Tis pretty, to
 remark
 How women can love women of
 your sort,
 And tie their hearts with love-knots
 to your feet,
 Grow insolent about you against
 men, [the lip,
 And put us down by putting up
 As if a man,—there *are* such, let
 us own,
 Who write not ill,—remains a man,
 poor wretch,
 While you—! Write weaker
 than Aurora Leigh,
 And there'll be women who believe
 of you
 (Besides my Kate) that if you
 walked on sand
 You would not leave a foot-print.
 'Are you put
 To wonder by my marriage, like
 poor Leigh?
 'Kate Ward!' he said. 'Kate
 Ward!' he said anew.
 'I thought . . .' he said, and stopped,
 —'I did not think . . .'
 And then he dropped to silence.
 'Ah, he's changed.
 I had not seen him, you're aware,
 for long,
 But went of course. I have not
 touched on this
 Through all this letter,—conscious
 of your heart, [fact,
 And writing lightlier for the heavy
 As clocks are voluble with lead.
 'How poor,
 To say I'm sorry. Dear Leigh,
 dearest Leigh!
 In those old days of Shropshire,—
 pardon me,—
 When he and you fought many a
 field of gold
 On what you should do, or you
 should not do,

<p>Make bread or verses, (it just came to that) I thought you'd one day draw a silken peace Through a golden ring. I thought so. Foolishly, The event proved,—for you went more opposite To each other, month by month, and year by year, Until this happened. God knows best, we say, But hoarsely. When the fever took him first, [France. Just after I had writ to you in They tell me Lady Waldemar mixed drinks And counted grains, like any salaried nurse, Excepting! that she wept too. Then Lord Howe, You're right about Lord Howe, Lord Howe's a trump; And yet, with such in his hand, a man like Leigh May lose, as <i>he</i> does. There's an end to all,— Yes, even this letter, though this second sheet May find you doubtful. Write a word for Kate; She reads my letters always, like a wife, And if she sees her name, I'll see her smile And share the luck. So, bless you, friend of two! [is I will not ask you what your feeling At Florence with my pictures, I can hear Your heart a-flutter over the snow-hills: And, just to pace the Pitti with you once, I'd give a half-hour of to-morrow's walk With Kate. .I think so. Vincent Carrington.'</p>	<p>The noon was hot; the air scorched like the sun And was shut out. The closed persiani threw Their long-scored shadows on my villa-floor, And interlined the golden atmosphere Straight, still,—across the pictures on the wall The statuette on the console, (of young Love And Psyche made one marble by a kiss) The low couch where I leaned, the table near, The vase of lilies Marian pulled last night (Each green leaf and each white leaf ruled in black As if for writing some new text of fate) And the open letter resting on my knee, But there, the lines, swerved, trembled, though I sate Untroubled . . plainly, . . reading it again And three times. Well, he's married; that is clear. No wonder that he's married, nor much more That Vincent's therefore 'sorry.' Why, of course. The lady nursed him when he was not well, Mixed drinks,— unless nepenthe was the drink 'Twas scarce worth telling. But a man in love Will see the whole sex in his mistress' hood, The prettier for its lining of fair rose; Although he catches back and says at last, 'I'm sorry.' Sorry. Lady Waldemar</p>
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At prettiest, under the said hood,
 preserved
 From such a light as I could hold
 to her face
 To flare its ugly wrinkles out to
 shame,
 Is scarce a wife for Romney, as
 friends judge, [ton,
 Aurora Leigh, or Vincent Carrington—
 That's plain. And if he's 'conscious
 of my heart' . . .
 It may be natural, though the phrase
 is strong ;
 (One's apt to use strong phrases,
 being in love)
 And even that stuff of ' fields of
 gold,' ' gold rings,'
 And what he ' thought,' poor Vin-
 cent ! what he ' thought.'
 May never mean enough to ruffle
 me.
 —Why this room stifles. Better
 burn than choke :
 Best have air, air, although it comes
 with fire,
 Throw open blinds and windows
 to the noon
 And take a blister on my brow
 instead
 Of this dead weight ! best, perfectly
 be stunned
 By those insufferable cicale, sick
 And hoarse with rapture of the
 summer heat,
 That sing like poets, till their hearts
 break, . . . sing
 Till men say, ' It's too tedious.'
 Books succeed,
 And lives fail. Do I feel it so, at
 last ?
 Kate loves a worn-out cloak for
 being like mine,
 While I live self-despised for being
 myself,
 And yearn toward some one else,
 who yearns away
 From what he is, in his turn.
 Strain a step

For ever, yet gain no step ? Are
 we such,
 We cannot, with our admirations
 even, [thing
 Our tip-top aspirations, touch a
 That's higher than we ? is all a
 dismal flat,
 And God alone above each,—as the
 sun
 O'er level lagunes, to make them
 shine and stink,—
 Laying stress upon us, with imme-
 diate flame,
 While we respond with our mias-
 mal fog,
 And call it mounting higher because
 we grow
 More highly fatal ?
 Tush, Aurora Leigh !
 You wear your sackcloth looped in
 Cæsar's way,
 And brag your failings as man-
 kind's. Be still.
 There *is* what's higher, in this very
 world,
 Than you can live, or catch at.
 Stand aside,
 And look at others—instance little
 Kate !
 She'll make a perfect wife for Car-
 rington.
 She always has been looking round
 the earth,
 For something good and green to
 alight upon
 And nestle into, with those soft-
 winged eyes
 Subsiding now beneath his manly
 hand
 'Twixt trembling lids of inexpress-
 ive joy : [much,
 I will not scorn her, after all, too
 That so much she should love me.
 A wise man
 Can pluck a leaf, and find a lecture
 in't ;
 And I, too . . . God has made me,—
 I've a heart

<p>That's capable of worship, love and loss ; We say the same of Shakspeare's. I'll be meek, And learn to reverence, even this poor myself.</p> <p>The book, too,—pass it. 'A good book,' says he, 'And you a woman.' I had laughed at that, But long since. I'm a woman,—it is true :</p> <p>Alas, and woe to us, when we feel it most ! Then, least care have we for the crowns and goals And compliments on writing our good books.</p> <p>The book has some truth in it, I believe : And truth outlives pain, as the soul does life. I know we talk our Phædons to the end Through all the dismal faces that we make, O'er-wrinkled with dishonouring agony From decomposing drugs. I have written truth, And I a woman ; feebly, partially, Inapty in presentation, Romney'll add, Because a woman. For the truth itself, That's neither man's nor woman's, but just God's ; None else has reason to be proud of truth : Himself will see it sifted, disen- thrall'd, And kept upon the height and in the light, As far as and no farther than 'tis truth ; For,—now He has left off calling firmaments</p>	<p>And strata, flowers and creatures, very good, He says it still of truth, which is His own.</p> <p>Truth, so far, in my book ;—the truth which draws Through all things upwards ; that a twofold world Must go to a perfect cosmos. Natural things And spiritual,—who separates those two In art, in morals, or the social drift, Tears up the bond of nature and brings death, [verse, Paints futile pictures, writes unreal Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly with men, Is wrong, in short, at all points. We divide This apple of life, and cut it through the pips,— The perfect round which fitted Venus' hand Has perished as utterly as if we ate Both halves. Without the spirit- ual, observe, The natural's impossible ; no form, No motion ! Without sensuous, spiritual Is inappreciable ;—no beauty or power : And in this twofold sphere the two- fold man (And still the artist is intensely a man) Holds firmly by the natural, to reach The spiritual beyond it,—fixes still The type with mortal vision, to pierce through, With eyes immortal, to the ante- type Some call the ideal,—better called the real, And certain to be called so pres- ently</p>
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<p>When things shall have their names. Look long enough On any peasant's face here, coarse and lined, You'll catch Antinous somewhere in that clay, As perfect featured as he yearns at Rome From marble pale with beauty ; then persist, And, if your apprehension's com- petent, You'll find some fairer angel at his back, As much exceeding him as he the boor, And pushing him with imperial disdain For ever out of sight. Ay, Car- rington Is glad of such a creed : an artist must, Who paints a tree, a leaf, a common stone, With just his hand, and finds it suddenly A-piece with and conterminous to his soul. Why else do these things move him, leaf or stone ? The bird's not moved, that pecks at a spring-shoot ; Nor yet the horse before a quarry a-graze : But man, the twofold creature, apprehends The twofold manner, in and out- wardly, And nothing in the world comes single to him, A mere itself,—cup, column, or candlestick, All patterns of what shall be in the Mount ; The whole temporal show related royally, And built up to eterne signifi- cance</p>	<p>Through the open arms of God. ' There's nothing great Nor small,' has said a poet of our day, Whose voice will ring beyond the curfew of eve And not be thrown out by the matin's bell : And truly, I reiterate, . . . nothing's small ! [bee, No lily-muffled hum of a summer- But finds some coupling with the spinning stars ; No pebble at your foot, but proves a sphere ; No chaffinch, but implies the cher- ubim : And,—glancing on my own thin, veined wrist,— In such a little tremour of the blood The whole strong clamour of a vehement soul Doth utter itself distinct. Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God : But only he who sees, takes off his shoes, The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries, And daub their natural faces un- aware More and more from the first simi- litude. Truth so far, in my book ! a truth which draws From all things upward. I, Aurora, still Have felt it hound me through the wastes of life As Jove did Io : and, until that Hand Shall overtake me wholly, and on my head Lay down its large unfluctuating peace,</p>
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The feverish gad-fly pricks me up
 and down,
 It must be. Art's the witness of
 what is
 Behind this show. If this world's
 show were all,
 Then imitation would be all in Art;
 There, Jove's hand gripes us!—
 for we stand here, we,
 If genuine artists, witnessing for
 God's
 Complete, consummate, undivided
 work :
 —That every natural flower which
 grows on earth,
 Implies a flower upon the spiritual
 side,
 Substantial, archetypal, all a-glow
 With blossoming causes,—not so
 far away,
 That we, whose spirit-sense is some-
 what cleared,
 May catch at something of the
 bloom and breath,—
 Too vaguely apprehended, though
 indeed
 Still apprehended, consciously or
 not,
 And still transferred to picture,
 music, verse,
 For thrilling audient and beholding
 souls
 By signs and touches which are
 known to souls.
 How known they know not,—why,
 they cannot find,
 So straight call out on genius, say,
 'A man
 Produced this,' when much rather
 they should say,
 'Tis insight, and he saw this.'
 Thus is Art
 Self-magnified in magnifying a
 truth
 Which, fully recognised, would
 change the world
 And shift its morals. If a man
 could feel,

Not one day, in the artist's ecstasy,
 But every day, feast, fast, or work-
 ing-day,
 The spiritual significance burn
 through
 The hieroglyphic of material shows,
 Henceforward he would paint the
 globe with wings,
 And reverence fish and fowl, the
 bull, the tree,
 And even his very body as a man,—
 Which now he counts so vile, that
 all the towns
 Make offal of their daughters for
 its use
 On summer-nights, when God is
 sad in heaven
 To think what goes on in his re-
 creant world
 He made quite other; while that
 moon He made
 To shine there, at the first love's
 covenant,
 Shines still, convictive as a mar-
 riage-ring
 Before adulterous eyes.
 How sure it is,
 That, if we say a true word, in-
 stantly
 We feel 'tis God's, not ours, and
 pass it on
 As bread at sacrament we taste
 and pass | deed
 Nor handle for a moment, as in-
 We dared to set up any claim to
 such! | talk.
 And I—my poem;—let my readers
 I'm closer to it—I can speak as
 well :
 I'll say with Romney, that the book
 is weak,
 The range uneven, the points of
 sight obscure,
 The music interrupted.
 Let us go.
 The end of woman (or of man, I
 think) | books
 Is not a book. Alas, the best of

Is but a word in Art, which soon
grows cramped,
Stiff, dubious-statured with the
weight of years,
And drops an accent or digamma
down

Some cranny of unfathomable time,
Beyond the critic's reaching. Art
itself,

We've called the higher life, must
feel the soul!

Live past it. For more's felt than
is perceived,

And more's perceived than can be
interpreted,

And Love strikes higher with his
lambent flame

Than Art can pile the fagots.

Is it so?

When Jove's hand meets us with
composing touch,

And when at last we are hushed
and satisfied,

Then Io does not call it truth, but
love?

Well, well! my father was an
Englishman;

My mother's blood in me is not so
strong

That I should bear this stress of
Tuscan noon

And keep my wits. The town,
there, seems to seethe

In this Medæan boil-pot of the sun,
And all the patient hills are bub-
bling round

As if a prick would leave them flat.
Does heaven

Keep far off, not to set us in a
blaze?

Not so,—let drag your fiery fringes,
heaven,

And burn us up to quiet! Ah, we
know

Too much here, not to know what's
best for peace;

We have too much light here, not
to want more fire

To purify and end us. We talk,
talk,

Conclude upon divine philosophies,
And get the thanks of men for
hopeful books;

Whereat we take our own life up,
and . . . pshaw!

Unless we piece it with another's
life,

(A yard of silk to carry out our
lawn) [chief

As well suppose my little handker-
Would cover Samminiato, church
and all,

If out I threw it past the cypresses,
As, in this ragged, narrow life of

mine,

Contain my own conclusions.

But at least

We'll shut up the persiani and sit
down,

And when my head's done aching
in the cool,

Write just a word to Kate and
Carrington.

May joy be with them! she has
chosen well,

And he not ill.

I should be glad, I think,

Except for Romney. Had *he* mar-
ried Kate,

I surely, surely, should be very glad.
This Florence sits upon me easily,

With native air and tongue. My
graves are calm,

And do not too much hurt me.
Marian's good,

Gentle and loving,—lets me hold
the child.

Or drags him up the hills to find
me flowers

And fill those vases ere I'm quite
awake,—

The grandiose red tulips, which
grow wild, [blew

Or Dante's purple lilies, which he
To a larger bubble with his prophet
breath;

Or one of those tall flowering reeds
 that stand
 In Arno like a sheaf of sceptres left
 By some remote dynasty of dead
 gods,
 To suck the stream for ages and
 get green,
 And blossom wheresoe'er a hand
 divine
 Had warmed the place with ichor.
 Such I find
 At early morning laid across my
 bed, [laugh
 And woke up pelted with a childish
 Which even Marian's low precipi-
 tous 'hush'
 Had vainly interposed to put
 away,—
 While I, with shut eyes, smile and
 motion for
 The dewy kiss that's very sure to
 come
 From mouth and cheeks, the whole
 child's face at once
 Dissolved on mine,—as if a nose-
 gay burst
 Its string with the weight of roses
 overblown,
 And dropt upon me. Surely I
 should be glad.
 The little creature almost loves me
 now,
 And calls my name. . 'Alola,' strip-
 ping off
 The *rs* like thorns, to make it
 smooth enough
 To take between his dainty, milk-
 fed lips.
 God love him! I should certainly
 be glad,
 Except, God help me, that I'm sor-
 rowful,
 Because of Romney.
 Romney, Romney! Well,
 This grows absurd!—too like a tune
 that runs
 I' the head, and forces all things in
 the world,

Wind, rain, the creaking gnat or
 stuttering fly,
 To sing itself and vex you;—yet
 perhaps
 A paltry tune you never fairly liked.
 Some 'I'd be a butterfly,' or 'C'est
 l'amour.'
 We're made so,—not such tyrants
 to ourselves
 But still we are slaves to nature.
 Some of us
 Are turned, too, overmuch like
 some poor verse
 With a trick of ritournelle: the
 same thing goes
 And comes back ever.
 Vincent Carrington
 Is 'sorry,' and I'm sorry; but *he's*
 strong
 To mount from sorrow to his heav-
 en of love,
 And when he says at moments,
 'Poor, poor Leigh,
 Who'll never call his own so true a
 heart,
 So fair a face even,'—he must
 quickly lose
 The pain of pity in the blush he
 makes
 By his very pitying eyes. The snow,
 for him,
 Has fallen in May, and finds the
 whole earth warm,
 And melts at the first touch of the
 green grass. [all.
 But Romney,—he has chosen, after
 I think he had as excellent a sun
 To see by, as most others, and
 perhaps
 Has scarce seen really worse than
 some of us,
 When all's said. Let him pass
 I'm not too much
 A woman, not to be a man for once
 And bury all my Dead like Alaric,
 Depositing the treasures of my soul
 In this drained water-course, their
 letting flow

The river of life again with com-
merce-ships
And pleasure-barges, full of silks
and songs.

Blow winds, and help us.

Ah, we mock ourselves
With talking of the winds! per-
haps as much

With other resolutions. How it
weighs,

This hot, sick air! and how I covet
here [couch

The Dead's provision on the river-
With silver curtains drawn on tink-
ling rings!

Or else their rest in quiet crypts,—
laid by

From heat and noise:—from those
cicale, say,

And this more vexing heart-beat.

So it is:

We covet for the soul, the body's
part, [ends

To die and rot. Even so, Aurora,
Our aspiration, who bespoke our
place

So far in the east. The occidental
flats

Had fed us fatter, therefore? we
have climbed

Where herbage ends? we want the
beast's part now

And tire of the angel's?—Men de-
fine a man,

The creature who stands front-
ward to the stars.

The creature who looks inward to
himself,

The tool-wright, laughing creature.
'Tis enough:

We'll say, instead, the inconse-
quent creature, man,

For that's his speciality. What
creature else

Conceives the circle, and then walks
the square?

Loves things proved bad, and leaves
a thing proved good?

You think the bee makes honey
half a year, [desire

To loathe the comb in winter and
The little ant's food rather? But
a man—

Note men!—they are but women
after all.

As women are but Auroras!—
there are men

Born tender, apt to pale at a trod-
den worm,

Who paint for pastime, in their fa-
vourite dream,

Spruce auto-vestments flowered
with crocus-flames:

There are, too, who believe in heav-
en, and fear:

There are, who waste their souls
in working out

Life's problem on these sands be-
twixt two tides,

Concluding,—'Give us the oyster's
part, in death.'

Alas, long-suffering and most pa-
tient God,

Thou need'st be surelier God to
bear with us

Than even to have made us! thou
aspire, aspire

From henceforth for me! thou who
hast thyself

Endured this fleshhood, knowing
how as a soaked

And sucking vesture it can drag
us down [Deep,

And choke us in the melancholy
Sustain me, that with thee I walk

these waves,
Resisting!—breathe me upward,
thou in me

Aspiring, who art the way, the
truth, the life—

That no truth henceforth seem in-
different,

No way to truth laborious, and no
life,

Not even this life I live, intolerable!

The days went by. I took up the
 old days
 With all their Tuscan pleasures
 worn and spoiled
 Like some lost book we dropt in
 the long grass
 On such a happy summer-after-
 noon
 When last we read it with a loving
 friend,
 And find in autumn when the friend
 is gone,
 The grass cut short, the weather
 changed, too late,
 And stare at, as at something won-
 derful
 For sorrow,—thinking how two
 hands before
 Had held up what is left to only
 one,
 And how we smiled when such a
 vehement nail
 Impressed the tiny dint here which
 presents
 This verse in fire for ever. Ten-
 derly
 And mournfully I lived. I knew
 the birds
 And insects,—which looked father-
 ed by the flowers
 And emulous of their hues : I rec-
 ognized
 The moths, with the great over-
 poise of wings
 Which makes a mystery of them
 how at all
 They can stop flying : butterflies,
 that bear
 Upon their blue wings such red
 embers round,
 They seem to scorch the blue air
 into holes
 Each flight they take : and fire-
 flies that suspire
 In short soft lapses of transported
 flame,
 Across the tingling Dark, while
 overhead

The constant and inviolable stars
 Outburn those lights-of-love : me-
 lodious owls,
 (If music had but one note and
 was sad,
 'Twould sound just so) and all the
 silent swirl [air
 Of bats that seem to follow in the
 Some grand circumference of a
 shadowy dome
 To which we are blind : and then
 the nightingales,
 Which pluck our heart across a gar-
 den-wall
 (When walking in the town) and
 carry it
 So high into the bowery almond-
 trees,
 We tremble and are afraid, and feel
 as if
 The golden flood of moonlight una-
 ware [earth
 Dissolved the pillars of the steady
 And made it less substantial. And
 I knew
 The harmless opal snakes, and
 large mouthed frogs
 (Those noisy vaunters of their shal-
 low streams)
 And lizards, the green lightnings of
 the wall,
 Which, if you sit down quiet nor
 sigh loud,
 Will flatter you and take you for a
 stone,
 And flash familiarly about your feet
 With such prodigious eyes in such
 small heads !—
 I knew them, though they had
 somewhat dwindled from
 My childish imagery,—and kept in
 mind
 How last I sat among them equally,
 In fellowship and mateship, as a
 child
 Feels equal still toward insect,
 beast, and bird, [gone
 Before the Adam in him has fore-

<p>All privilege of Eden,—making friends And talk, with such a bird or such a goat, And buying many a two-inch-wide rush-cage To let out the caged cricket on a tree, Saying, 'Oh, my dear grillino, were you cramped? And are you happy with the ilex-leaves? And do you love me who have let you go? Say <i>yes</i> in singing, and I'll understand.' But now the creatures all seemed farther off, No longer mine, nor like me; only <i>there</i>, A gulf between us. I could yearn indeed, [dew Like other rich men, for a drop of To cool this heat,—a drop of the early dew, The irrecoverable child innocence (Before the heart took fire and withered life) When childhood might pair equally with birds; But now . . . the birds were grown too proud for us! Alas, the very sun forbids the dew. And I, I had come back to an empty nest, Which every bird's too wise for. How I heard My father's step on that deserted ground, [told His voice along that silence, as he The names of bird and insect, tree and flower, And all the presentations of the stars Across Valdarno, interposing still 'My child,' 'my child.' When fathers say 'my child,'</p>	<p>'Tis easier to conceive the universe, And life's transitions down the steps of law. I rode once to the little mountain-house As fast as if to find my father there, But when in sight of't, within fifty yards, I dropped my horse's bridle on his neck And paused upon his flank. The house's front Was cased with lingots of ripe Indian corn In tessellated order and device Of golden patterns: not a stone of wall Uncovered,—not an inch of room to grow A vine-leaf. The old porch had disappeared; And right in the open doorway, sate a girl At plaiting straws,—her black hair strained away To a scarlet kerchief caught beneath her chin In Tuscan fashion,—her full ebon eyes, Which looked too heavy to be lifted so, Still dropt and lifted toward the mulberry-tree On which the lads were busy with their staves In shout and laughter, stripping every bough As bare as winter, of those summer leaves My father had not changed for all the silk In which the ugly silkworms hide themselves. Enough. My horse recoiled before my heart. I turned the rein abruptly. Back we went as fast, to Florence.</p>
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That was trial enough
 Of graves. I would not visit, if I
 could, [more,
 My father's, or my mother's any
 To see if stone-cutter or lichen beat
 So early in the race, or throw my
 flowers,
 Which could not out-smell heaven
 or sweeten earth.
 They live too far above, that I
 should look
 So far below to find them: let me
 think [grave,
 That rather they are visiting my
 This life here, (undeveloped yet to
 life)
 And that they drop upon me, now
 and then,
 For token or for solace, some small
 weed
 Least odorous of the growths of
 paradise,
 To spare such pungent scents as kill
 with joy.
 My old Assunta, too, was dead,
 was dead—
 O land of all men's past! for me
 alone, [past,
 It would not mix its tenses. I was
 It seemed, like others,—only not in
 heaven,
 And, many a Tuscan eve I wander-
 ed down [ghost
 The cypress alley like a restless
 That tries its feeble ineffectual
 breath
 Upon its own charred funeral-
 brands put out
 Too soon,—where black and stiff
 stood up the trees
 Against the broad vermilion of the
 skies.
 Such skies!—all clouds abolished
 in a sweep
 Of God's skirt, with a dazzle to
 ghosts and men,
 As down I went, saluting on the
 bridge

The hem of such before 'twas caught
 away
 Beyond the peaks of Lucca. Un-
 derneath,
 The river just escaping from the
 weight
 Of that intolerable glory, ran
 In acquiescent shadow murmur-
 ously:
 While up beside it, streamed the
 festa-folk
 With fellow-murmurs from their
 feet and fans,
 And *issimo* and *ino* and sweet poise
 Of vowels in their pleasant scandal-
 ously talk;
 Returning from the grand-duke's
 dairy-farm
 Before the trees grew dangerous at
 eight,
 (For, 'trust no tree by moonlight,'
 Tuscans say)
 To eat their ice at Donay's tender-
 ly,—
 Each lovely lady close to a cavalier
 Who holds her dear fan while she
 feeds her smile
 On meditative spoonfuls of vanille,
 And listens to his hot-breathed vows
 of love,
 Enough to thaw her cream and
 scorch his beard.
 'Twas little matter. I could pass
 them by [known.
 Indifferently, not fearing to be
 No danger of being wrecked upon
 a friend,
 And forced to take an iceberg
 for an isle!
 The very English, here, must wait
 and learn [out
 To hang the cobweb of their gossip
 And catch a fly. I'm happy. It's
 sublime,
 This perfect solitude of foreign
 lands!
 To be, as if you had not been till
 then,

And were then, simply what you
 choose to be ;
 To spring up, not be brought forth
 from the ground
 Like grasshoppers at Athens, and
 skip thrice [you
 Before a woman makes a pounce on
 And plants you in her hair !—pos-
 sess, yourself,
 A new world all alive with creatures
 new,
 New sun, new moon, new flowers,
 new people—ah,
 And be possessed by none of them !
 no right
 In one, to call your name, enquire
 your where,
 Or what you think of Mister Some-
 one's book,
 Or Mister Other's marriage or de-
 cease,
 Or how's the headache which you
 had last week,
 Or why you look so pale still, since
 it's gone ?
 —Such most surprising riddance of
 one's life
 Comes next one's death ; 'tis dis-
 embodiment
 Without the pang. I marvel, peo-
 ple choose
 To stand stock-still like fakirs, till
 the moss
 Grows on them and they cry out,
 self-admired,
 'How verdant and how virtuous !'
 Well, I'm glad,
 Or should be, if grown foreign to
 myself
 As surely as to others.

Musing so,

I walked the narrow unrecognising
 streets,
 Where many a palace-front peers
 gloomily
 Through stony vizors iron-barred,
 (prepared [way
 Alike, should foe or lover pass that

For guest or victim) and came wan-
 dering out
 Upon the churches with mild open
 doors
 And plaintive wail of vespers, where
 a few,
 Those chiefly women, sprinkled
 round in blots
 Upon the dusky pavement, knelt
 and prayed [a ray
 Toward the altar's silver glory. Oft
 I liked to sit and watch would
 tremble out,
 Just touch some face more lifted,
 more in need,
 Of course a woman's—while I
 dreamed a tale
 To fit its fortunes. There was one
 who looked
 As if the earth had suddenly grown
 too large
 For such a little humpbacked thing
 as she ; [neck
 The pitiful black kerchief round her
 Sole proof she had had a mother.
 One, again,
 Looked sick for love,—seemed pray-
 ing some soft saint [scarf
 To put more virtue in the new fine
 She spent a fortnight's meals on,
 yesterday,
 That cruel Gigi might return his
 eyes
 From Giuliana. There was one,
 so old,
 So old, to kneel grew easier than to
 stand,—
 So solitary she accepts at last
 Our Lady for her gossip, and frets
 on
 Against the sinful world which goes
 its rounds
 In marrying and being married, just
 the same
 As when 'twas almost good and
 had the right,
 (Her Gian alive, and she herself
 eighteen).

And yet, now even, if Madonna
willed,
She'd win a tern in Thursday's lot-
tery
'And better all things. Did she
dream for nought,
That, boiling cabbage for the fast-
day's soup,
It smelt like blessed entrails? such
a dream
For nought! would sweetest Mary
cheat her so,
And lose that certain candle,
straight and white | teens,
As any fair grand-duchess in her
Which otherwise should flare here
in a week?
Benigna sis, thou beauteous Queen
of heaven!

I sate there musing and imagining
Such utterance from such faces:
poor blind souls
That writhed toward heaven along
the devil's trail,—
Who knows, I thought, but He may
stretch his hand
And pick them up? 'tis written in
the Book
He heareth the young ravens when
they cry;
And yet they cry for carrion.—O my
God, [rest,
And we, who make excuses for the
We do it in our measure. Then I
knelt,
And dropped my head upon the
pavement too,
And prayed, since I was foolish in
desire
Like other creatures, craving offal-
food,
That He would stop his ears to
what I said,
And only listen to the run and beat
Of this poor, passionate, helpless
blood—

And then

I lay, and spoke not. But He
heard in heaven.
So many Tuscan evenings passed
the same.
I could not lose a sunset on the
bridge,
And would not miss a vigil in the
church,
And liked to mingle with the out-
door crowd
So strange and gay and ignorant of
my face,
For men you know not are as good
as trees.
And only once, at the Santissima,
I almost chanced upon a man I
knew,
Sir Blaise Delorme. He saw me
certainly,
And somewhat hurried, as he cross-
ed himself,
The smoothness of the action,—
then half bowed,
But only half, and merely to my
shade,
I slipped so quick behind the por-
phyry plinth | I,
And left him dubious if 'twas really
Or peradventure Satan's usual trick
To keep a mounting saint uncanon-
ised. [too:
But he was safe for that time, and I
The argent angels in the altar-flare
Absorbed his soul next moment.
The good man!
In England we were scarce ac-
quaintances,
That here in Florence he should
keep my thought
Beyond the image on his eye, which
came
And went: and yet his thought dis-
turbed my life:
For, after that, I oftener sat at home
On evenings, watching how they
fined themselves
With gradual conscience to a per-
fect night,

Until the moon, diminished to a
curve,
Lay out there like a sickle for His
hand
Who cometh down at last to reap
the earth.
At such times, ended seemed my
trade of verse ;
I feared to jingle bells upon my
robe [bim :
Before the four-faced silent cheru-
With God so near me, could I sing
of God ?
I did not write, nor read, nor even
think,
But sate absorbed amid the quick-
ening glooms,
Most like some passive broken
lump of salt
Dropt in by chance to a bowl of
œnomel,
To spoil the drink a little and lose
itself,
Dissolving slowly, slowly, until lost.

EIGHTH BOOK.

ONE eve it happened when I sate
alone,
Alone upon the terrace of my tower,
A book upon my knees to counter-
feit
The reading that I never read at all,
While Marian, in the garden down
below,
Knelt by the fountain I could just
hear thrill [day,
The drowsy silence of the exhausted
And peeled a new fig from that
purple heap
In the grass beside her,—turning
out the red
To feed her eager child, who sucked
at it
With vehement lips across a gap
of air
As he stood opposite, face and curls
a-flame

With that last sun-ray, crying, ' give
me, give,'
And stamping with imperious baby-
feet,
(We're all born princes)—some-
thing startled me,—
The laugh of sad and innocent
souls, that breaks
Abruptly, as if frightened at itself ;
'Twas Marian laughed. I saw her
glance above
In sudden shame that I should
hear her laugh,
And straightway dropped my eyes
upon my book,
And knew, the first time, 'twas Boc-
caccio's tale,
The Falcon's,—of the lover who
for love
Destroyed the best that loved him.
Some of us
Do it still, and then we sit and
laugh no more.
Laugh *you*, sweet Marian ! you've
the right to laugh,
Since God himself is for you, and
a child !
For me there's somewhat less,—
and so I sigh.
The heavens were making room to
hold the night,
The seven-fold heavens unfolding
ail their gates [sied
To let the stars out slowly (prophe-
In close-approaching advent, not
discerned),
While still the cue-owls from the
cypresses
Of the poggio called and counted
every pulse
Of the skyey palpitation. Gradually
The purple and transparent shad-
ows slow
Had filled up the whole valley to
the brim,
And flooded all the city, which you
saw

As some drowned city in some enchanted sea,
 Cut off from nature,—drawing you who gaze,
 With passionate desire, to leap and plunge
 And find a sea-king with a voice of waves,
 And treacherous soft eyes, and slippery locks
 You cannot kiss but you shall bring away
 Their salt upon your lips. The duomo-bell
 Strikes ten, as if it struck ten fathoms down, [it
 So deep; and fifty churches answer
 The same with twenty various instances.
 Some gaslights tremble along squares and streets;
 The Pitti's palace-front is drawn in fire:
 And, past the quays, Maria Novella Place, [up
 In which the mystic obelisks stand
 Triangular, pyramidal, each based
 Upon its four-square brazen tortoisés,
 To guard that fair church, Buonarrotti's Bride,
 That stares out from her large blind dial-eyes,
 Her quadrant and armillary dia's, black
 With rhythms of many suns and moons, in vain
 Enquiry for so rich a soul as his.
 Methinks I have plunged, I see it all so clear. . .
 And, oh my heart, . . . the sea-king!
In my ears
 The sound of waters. There he stood, my king!
 I felt him, rather than beheld him.
 Up
 I rose, as if he were my king indeed,

And then sate down, in trouble at myself,
 And struggling for my woman's empery. [made:
 'Tis pitiful; but women are so We'll die for you perhaps,—'tis
 probable;
 But we'll not spare you an inch of our full height:
 We'll have our whole just stature, —five feet four,
 Though laid out in our coffins: pitiful!
 —'You, Romney!—Lady Waldemar is here?'

He answered in a voice which was not his,
 'I have her letter; you shall read it soon.
 But first, I must be heard a little, I, Who have waited long and travelled far for that,
 Although you thought to have shut a tedious book
 And farewell. Ah, you dog-eared such a page,
 And here you find me.'

Did he touch my hand,
 Or but my sleeve? I trembled, hand and foot,—
 He must have touched me.—'Will you sit?' I asked,
 And motioned to a chair; but down he sate,
 A little slowly, as a man in doubt.
 Upon the couch beside me,—couch and chair
 Being wheeled upon the terrace.
 'You are come, My cousin Romney?—this is wonderful.
 But all is wonder on such summer-nights;
 And nothing should surprise us any more,
 Who see that miracle of stars
 Behold.'

I signed above, where all the stars
were out,
As if an urgent heat had started
there
A secret writing from a sombre
page,
A blank last moment, crowded sud-
denly
With hurrying splendors.

'Then you do not know'—
He murmured.

'Yes, I know,' I said, 'I know.
I had the news from Vincent Car-
rington.

And yet I did not think you'd
leave the work

In England, for so much even,—
though of course

You'll make a work-day of your
holiday,

And turn it to our Tuscan people's
use,—

Who much need helping since the
Austrian boar

(So bold to cross the Alp to Lom-
bardy

And dash his brute front unabash-
ed against

The steep snow-bosses of that
shield of God

Who soon shall rise in wrath and
shake it clear,)

Came hither also,—raking up our
grape

And olive-gardens with his tyran-
nous tusk,

And rolling on our maize with all
his swine.'

'You had the news from Vincent
Carrington,'

He echoed,—picking up the phrase
beyond,

As if he knew the rest was merely
talk

To fill a gap and keep out a strong
wind,

'You had, then, Vincent's personal
news?'

'His own,'

I answered. 'All that ruined world
of yours

Seems crumbling into marriage.
Carrington

Has chosen wisely.'

'Do *you* take it so?

He cried, 'and is it possible at
last'..

He paused there,—and then, in-
ward to himself,

'Too much at last, too late!—yet
certainly'..

(And there his voice swayed as an
Alpine plank

That feels a passionate torrent un-
derneath)

'The knowledge, had I known it
first or last,

Had never changed the actual case
for *me*.

And best for *her* at this time.'

Nay, I thought,

He loves Kate Ward, it seems, now,
like a man,

Because he has married Lady
Waldemar.

Ah, Vincent's letter said how Leigh
was moved

To hear that Vincent was betrothed
to Kate,

With what cracked pitchers go we
to deep wells

In this world! Then I spoke—'I
did not think,

My cousin, you had ever known
Kate Ward.'

'In fact I never knew her. 'Tis
enough

That Vincent did, and therefore
chose his wife

For other reasons than those topaz
eyes

I've heard of. Not to undervalue
them,

For all that. One takes up the
world with eyes.'

—Including Romney Leigh, I
thought again,
Albeit he knows them only by re-
pute.
How vile must all men be, since
he's a man.

His deep pathetic voice, as if he
guessed [word ;
I did not surely love him, took the
'You never got a letter from Lord
Howe
A month back, dear Aurora ?'

'None,' I said.

'I felt it so,' he replied: 'Yet,
strange!
Sir Blaise Delorme has passed
through Florence?'

'Ay,

By chance I saw him in Our Lady's
church,
(I saw him, mark you, but he saw
not me)
Clean-washed in holy water from
the count
Of things terrestrial,—letters and
the rest ;
He had crossed us out together
with his sins.
Ay, strange ; but only strange that
good Lord Howe
Preferred him to the post because
of pauls.
For me I'm sworn never to trust a
man—
At least with letters.'

There were facts to tell,
To smooth with eye and accent.
Howe supposed . . .
Well, well, no matter ! there was
dubious need ;
You heard the news from Vincent
Carrington.
And yet perhaps you had been
startled less
To see me, dear Aurora, if you had
read

That letter.'

—Now he sets me down as vex-
ed.

I think I've draped myself in wom-
an's pride

To a perfect purpose. Oh, I'm
vexed, it seems !

My friend Lord Howe deposes his
friend Sir Blaise

To break as softly as a sparrow's
egg [news

That lets a bird out tenderly, the
Of Romney's marriage to a certain
saint ;

To *smooth with eye and accent*,—
indicate

His possible presence. Excellently
well

You've played your part, my Lady
Waldemar,—

As I've played mine.

'Dear Romney,' I began,
'You did not use, of old, to be so
like

A Greek king coming from a taken
Troy.

'Twas needful that precursors
spread your path

With three-piled carpets, to receive
your foot

And dull the sound of't. For my-
self, be sure,

Although it frankly grinds the
gravel here, [too

I still can bear it. Yet I'm sorry
To lose this famous letter, which
Sir Blaise

Has twisted to a lighter absently
To fire some holy taper: dear Lord
Howe

Writes letters good for all things
but to lose ;

And many a flower of London
gossipry

Has dropt wherever such a stem
broke off.

Of course I feel that, lonely among
my vines,

Where nothing's talked of, save
the blight again.

And no more Chianti! Still the
letter's use

As preparation. . . . Did I start in-
deed?

Last night I started at a cockchafer,
And shook a half-hour after. Have
you learnt

No more of woman, 'spite of privi-
lege,

Than still to take account too
seriously

Of such weak flutterings? Why,
we like it, sir,

We get our powers and our effects
that way.

The trees stand stiff and still at
time of frost,

If no wind tears them; but, let
summer come,

When trees are happy,—and a
breath avails

To set them trembling through a
million leaves

In luxury of emotion. Something
less

It takes to move a woman: let her
start

And shake at pleasure,—nor con-
clude at yours,

The winter's bitter,—but the sum-
mer's green.'

He answered, 'Be the summer ever
green

With you, Aurora!—though you
sweep your sex

With somewhat bitter gusts from
where you live

Above them, whirling downward
from your heights

Your very own pine-cones, in a
grand disdain

Of the lowland burrs with which
you scatter them. [yourself,

So high and cold to others and
A little less to Romney were unjust,

And thus, I would not have you.
Let it pass:

I feel content so. You can bear in-
deed

My sudden step beside you: but foi
me,

'T would move me sore to hear your
softened voice,—

Aurora's voice,—if softened una-
ware

In pity of what I am.'

Ah friend, I thought,
As husband of the Lady Waldemar

You're granted very sorely pitiable!
And yet Aurora Leigh must guard

her voice [case,

From softening in the pity of your
As if from lie or license. Certainly

We'll soak up all the slush and soil
of life

With softened voices, ere we come
to you.

At which I interrupted my own
thought

And spoke out calmly. 'Let us
ponder, friend,

Whate'er our state we must have
made it first;

And though the thing displease us,
ay, perhaps [doubt

Displease us warrantably, never
That other states, though possible

once, and then
Rejected by the instinct of our lives,

If then adopted had displeased us
more

Than this in which the choice, the
will, the love,

Has stamped the honour of a patent
act

From henceforth. What we
choose may not be good;

But, that we choose it, proves it
good for us

Potentially, fantastically, now
Or last year, rather than a thing we

saw,

And saw no need for choosing.
Moths will burn

Their wings,—which proves that
light is good for moths,
Or else they had flown not where
they agonise.'

'Ay, light is good,' he echoed, and
there paused.

And then abruptly, . . . 'Marian.
Marian's well?'

I bowed my head but found no
word. 'Twas hard

To speak of *her* to Lady Walde-
mar's

New husband. How much did he
know, at last?

How much? how little?—He
would take no sign,

But straight repeated,—'Marian.
Is she well?'

'She's well,' I answered.

She was there in sight
An hour back, but the night had
drawn her home;

Where still I heard her in an upper
room,

Her low voice singing to the child
in bed,

Who, restless with the summer-heat
and play

And slumber snatched at noon, was
long sometimes [songs

At falling off, and took a score of
And mother-hushes ere she saw

him sound.

'She's well,' I answered.

'Here?' he asked.

'Yes, here.'

He stopped and sighed. 'That
shall be presently,

But now this must be. I have
words to say,

And would be alone to say them, I
with you,

And no third troubling.'

'Speak then,' I returned,
'She will not vex you.'

At which, suddenly,
He turned his face upon me with
its smile,

As if to crush me. 'I have read
your book,
Aurora.'

'You have read it,' I replied,
'And I have writ it,—we have done
with it.

And now the rest?'

'The rest is like the first,'
He answered,—'for the book is in
my heart,

Lives in me, wakes in me, and
dreams in me:

My daily bread tastes of it,—and my
wine [out;

Which has no smack of it, I pour it
It seems unnatural drinking.'

Bitterly

I took the word up; 'Never waste
your wine.

The book lived in me ere it lived in
you;

I know it closer than another does,
And how it's foolish, feeble, and
afraid,

And all unworthy so much compli-
ment.

Beseech you, keep your wine,—and,
when you drink,

Still wish some happier fortune to
a friend,

Than even to have written a far
better book.'

He answered gently, 'That is con-
sequent:

The poet looks beyond the book he
has made, [man

Or else he had not made it. If a
Could make a man, he'd henceforth
be a god

In feeling what a little thing is man:

It is not my case. And this special
book,

I did not make it, to make light of
it :

It stands above my knowledge,
draws me up ;

'Tis high to me. It may be that
the book

Is not so high, but I so low, instead ;
Still high to me. I mean no com-
pliment :

I will not say there are not, young
or old,

Male writers, ay or female,—let it
Who'll write us richer and complet-
er books.

A man may love a woman perfectly,
And yet by no means ignorantly
maintain

A thousand women have not larger
Enough that she alone has looked
at him

With eyes that, large or small, have
won his soul.

And so, this book, Aurora,—so,
your book.'

'Alas,' I answered, 'is it so, in-
deed ?'

And then was silent.

'Is it so, indeed,'

He echoed, 'that *alas* is all your
word ?'

I said,—'I'm thinking of a far-off
June,

When you and I, upon my birthday
Discours'd of life and art, with both
untried.

I'm thinking, Romney, how 'twas
morning then,

And now 'tis night.'

'And now,' he said, 'tis night.'

'I'm thinking,' I resumed, 'tis
somewhat sad

That if I had known, that morning
in the dew,

My cousin Romney would have
said such words

On such a night at close of many

In speaking of a future book of
mine,

It would have pleased me better as
a hope,

Than as an actual grace it can at all.
That's sad, I'm thinking.'

'Ay,' he said, 'tis night.'

'And there,' I added lightly 'are
the stars !

And here we'll talk of stars a .d not
of books.'

'You have the stars,' he murmured,
—'it is well :

Be like them ! shine, Aurora, on my
dark

Though high and cold and only like
a star,

And for this short night only,—you,
who keep

The same Aurora of the bright June
That withered up the flowers before
my face,

And turned me from the garden
evermore

Because I was not worthy. Oh,
deserved,

Deserved ! That I, who verily had
not learnt

God's lesson half, attaining as a
dunce

To obliterate good works with
fractious thumbs

And cheat myself of the context,—
I should push

Aside, with male ferocious impu-
dence,

The world's Aurora, who had con-
ned her part

On the other side the leaf ! Ig-
nore her so,

Because she was a woman and a
queen,

And had no beard to bristle through
her song,

My teacher, who has taught me
with a book,

My Miriam, whose sweet mouth,
 when nearly drowned,
 I still heard singing on the shore!
 Deserved,
 That here I should look up unto
 the stars
 And miss the glory' . .

 ' Can I understand? '
 I broke in. ' You speak wildly,
 Romney Leigh,
 Or I hear wildly. In that morn-
 ing-time
 We recollect, the roses were too
 red,
 The trees too green, reproach too
 natural
 If one should see not what the
 other saw :
 And now, it's night, remember ;
 we have shades
 In place of colours ; we are now
 grown cold,
 And old, my cousin Romney.
 Pardon me,—
 I'm very happy that you like my
 book,
 And very sorry that I quoted back
 A ten years' birthday ; 'twas so
 mad a thing
 In any woman, I scarce marvel
 much
 You took it for a venturous piece
 of spite,
 Provoking such excuses as indeed
 I cannot call you slack in.'
 He answered sadly, ' Understand,'
 but so.
 This night is softer than an English
 day,
 And men may well come hither
 when they're sick,
 To draw in easier breath from
 larger air.
 'Tis thus with me ; I've come to
 you,—to you,
 My Italy of women, just to breathe

My soul out once before you, ere I
 go,
 As humble as God makes me at
 the last
 (I thank Him) quite out of the way
 of men ;
 And yours, Aurora,—like a punish-
 ed child,
 His cheeks all blurred with tears
 and naughtiness,
 To silence in a corner. I am come
 To speak, beloved' . .
 ' Wisely, cousin Leigh,
 And worthily of us both !'
 ' Yes, worthily ;
 For this time I must speak out and
 confess
 That I, so truculent in assumption
 once,
 So absolute in dogma, proud in aim,
 And fierce in expectation,—I, who
 felt
 The whole world tugging at my
 skirts for help,
 As if no other man than I, could
 pull,
 Nor woman, but I led her by the
 hand,
 Nor cloth hold, but I had it in my
 coat,
 Do know myself to-night for what
 I was
 On that June-day, Aurora. Poor
 bright day,
 Which meant the best . . a woman
 and a rose,
 And which I smote upon the cheek
 with words
 Until it turned and rent me :
 Young you were,
 That birthday, poet, but you talked
 the right :
 While I, . . I built up follies like a
 wall
 To intercept the sunshine and your
 face.
 Your face ! that's worse.'
 ' Speak wisely, cousin Leigh.'

' Yes, wisely, dear Aurora, though
 too late :
 But then, not wisely. I was heavy
 then,
 And stupid, and distracted with
 the cries
 Of tortured prisoners in the polish-
 ed brass
 Of that Phalarian bull, society,
 Which seems to bellow bravely
 like ten bulls,
 But, if you listen, moans and cries
 instead
 Despairingly, like victims tossed
 and gored
 And trampled by their hoofs. I
 heard the cries
 Too close : I could not hear the
 angels lift
 A fold of rustling air, nor what
 they said
 To help my pity. I beheld the
 world
 As one great famishing carnivorous
 mouth,—
 A huge, deserted, callow, blind,
 bird Thing,
 With piteous open beak that hurt
 my heart,
 Till down upon the filthy ground I
 dropped,
 And tore the violets up to get the
 worms.
 Worms, worms, was all my cry :
 an open mouth,
 A gross want, bread to fill it to the
 lips,
 No more ! That poor men nar-
 rowed their demands
 To such an end, was virtue, I sup-
 posed,
 Adjudicating that to see it so
 Was reason. Oh, I did not push
 the case
 Up higher, and ponder how it
 answers when
 The rich take up the same cry for
 themselves,

Professing equally,—' an open
 mouth
 A gross need, food to fill us, and
 no more.' [vice
 Why that's so far from virtue, only
 Can find excuse for't ! That makes
 libertines :
 And slurs our cruel streets from
 end to end
 With eighty thousand women in
 one smile,
 Who only smile at night beneath
 the gas :
 The body's satisfaction and no more,
 Is used for argument against the
 soul's,
 Here too ; the want, here too, im-
 plies the right.
 —How dark I stood that morning
 in the sun.
 My best Aurora, though I saw
 your eyes,
 When first you told me . . oh, I
 recollect
 The sounds, and how you lifted
 your small hand,
 And how your white dress and
 your burnished curls
 Went greating round you in the
 still blue air,
 As if an inspiration from within
 Had blown them all out when you
 spoke the words,
 Even these,—' You will not com-
 pass your poor ends
 ' Of barley-feeding and material
 ease,
 ' Without the poet's individualism
 ' To work your universal. It takes
 a soul,
 ' To move a body,—it takes a high-
 souled man,
 ' To move the masses . . even to a
 cleaner style :
 ' It takes the ideal, to blow an inch
 inside
 ' The dust of the actual : and your
 Fouriers failed,

' Because not poets enough to understand
 That life develops from within.'
 I say
 Your words,—I could say other
 words of yours ;
 For none of all your words will let
 me go ;
 Like sweet verbena which, being
 brushed against,
 Will hold us three hours after by
 the smell
 In spite of long walks upon windy
 hills,
 But these words dealt in sharper
 perfume,—these
 Were ever on me, stinging through
 my dreams,
 And saying themselves for ever
 o'er my acts
 Like some unhappy verdict. That
 I failed,
 Is certain. Style or no style, to
 contrive
 The swine's propulsion toward the
 precipice,
 Proved easy and plain. I subtly
 organised
 And ordered, built the cards up
 high and higher,
 Till, some one breathing, all fell
 flat again !
 In setting right society's wide
 wrong,
 Mere life's so fatal ! So I failed in-
 deed
 Once, twice, and oftener,—hearing
 through the rents
 Of obstinate purpose, still those
 words of yours,
 ' You will not compass your poor
 ends, not you !'
 But harder than you said them ;
 every time
 Still farther from your voice, until
 they came
 To overcrow me with triumphant
 scorn

Which vexed me to resistance. Set
 down this
 For condemnation,—I was guilty
 here :
 I stood upon my deed and fought
 my doubt,
 As men will,—for I doubted,—till
 at last
 My deed gave way beneath me
 suddenly
 And left me what I am. The cur-
 tain dropped,
 My part quite ended, all the foot-
 lights quenched,
 My own soul hissing at me through
 the dark,
 I, ready for confession,—I was
 wrong,
 I've sorely failed, I've slipped the
 ends of life,
 I yield, you have conquered.'
 ' Stay,' I answered him ;
 ' I've something for your hearing,
 also. I
 Have failed too.'
 ' You !' he said, ' you're very great ;
 The sadness of your greatness fits
 you well :
 As if the plume upon a hero's
 casque
 Should nod a shadow upon his vic-
 tor face.'
 I took him up austere,—' You
 have read
 My book, but not my heart ; for rec-
 ollect,
 'Tis writ in Sanscrit which you
 bungle at.
 I've surely failed, I know, if failure
 means
 To look back sadly on work gladly
 done,—
 To wander on my mountains of
 Delight,
 So called, (I can remember a
 friend's words
 As well as you, sir,) weary and in
 want

Of even a sheep-path, thinking bitterly . . .

Well, well! no matter. I but say so much,

To keep you, Romney Leigh, from saying more,

And let you feel I am not so high indeed,

That I can bear to have you at my foot,—

Or safe, that I can help you. That June-day, [sets now

Too deeply sunk in craterous sun-For you or me to dig it up alive ;

To pluck it out all bleeding with spent flame

At the roots, before those moralising stars

We have got instead,—that poor lost day, you said

Some words as truthful as the thing of mine

You cared to keep in memory : and I hold

If I, that day, and, being the girl I was,

Had shown a gentler spirit, less arrogance,

It had not hurt me. You will scarce mistake

The point here. I but only think, you see,

More justly, that's more humbly, of myself,

Than when I tried a crown on and supposed . . .

Nay, laugh sir,—I'll laugh with you!—pray you, laugh.

I've had so many birthdays since that day,

I've learnt to prize mirth's opportunities,

Which come too seldom. Was it you who said

I was not changed? the same Aurora? Ah,

We could laugh there, too! Why, Ulysses' dog

Knew *him*, and wagged his tail and died : but if

I had owned a dog, I too, before my Troy,

And, if you brought him here, . . . I warrant you

He'd look into my face, bark lustily, And live on stoutly, as the creatures will

Whose spirits are not troubled by long loves.

A dog would never know me, I'm so changed,

Much less a friend . . . except you're misled

By the colour of the hair, the trick of the voice,

Like that Aurora Leigh's.'

'Sweet trick of voice ! I would be a dog for this, to know it at last,

And die upon the falls of it. O love,

O best Aurora! are you then so sad,

You scarcely had been sadder as my wife ?'

'Your wife, sir! I must certainly be changed

If I, Aurora, can have said a thing So light, it catches at the knightly spurs

Of a noble gentleman like Romney Leigh,

And trips him from his honourable sense

Of what befits' . . .

'You wholly misconceive,' He answered.

I returned,— 'I'm glad of it ; But keep from misconception, too, yourself :

I am not humbled to so low a point, Nor so far saddened. If I am sad at all,

Ten layers of birthdays on a woman's head

Are apt to fossilise her girlish
 mirth,
 Though ne'er so merry : I am per-
 force more wise,
 And that, in truth, means sadder.
 For the rest,
 Look here, sir : I was right upon the
 whole
 That birthday morning. 'Tis im-
 possible
 To get at men excepting through
 their souls,
 However open their carnivorous
 jaws :
 And poets get directlier at the soul,
 Than any of your œconomists :—
 for which [work
 You must not overlook the poet's
 When scheming for the world's ne-
 cessities,
 The soul's the way. Not even
 Christ Himself
 Can save man else than as He
 holds man's soul ;
 And therefore did He come into our
 flesh,
 As some wise hunter creeping on
 his knees
 With a torch, into the blackness of
 a cave,
 To face and quell the beast there.
 —take the soul.
 And so possess the whole man,
 body and soul.
 I said, so far, right, yes ; not far-
 ther, though
 We both were wrong that June-
 day,—both as wrong
 As an east wind had been. I who
 talked of art,
 And you who grieved for all men's
 griefs . . . what then ?
 We surely made too small a part
 for God
 In these things. What we are, im-
 ports us more
 Than what we eat ; and life, you've
 granted me,

Develops from within. But inner-
 most
 Of the inmost, most interior of the
 interne,
 God claims his own, Divine hu-
 manity
 Renewing nature,—or the pierc-
 ingest verse,
 Prest in by subtlest poet, still must
 keep
 As much upon the outside of a
 man
 As the very bowl in which he dips
 his beard.
 '—And then, . . the rest ; I cannot
 surely speak.
 Perhaps I doubt more than you
 doubted then,
 If I, the poet's veritable charge,
 Have borne upon my forehead. If
 I have
 It might feel somewhat liker to a
 crown,
 The foolish green one even.—Ah,
 I think,
 And chiefly when the sun shines,
 that I've failed.
 But what then, Romney ? Though
 we fail indeed,
 You . . I . . a score of such weak
 workers, . . He
 Fails never. If He cannot work by
 us,
 He will work over us. Does He
 want a man,
 Much less a woman, think you ?
 Every time
 The star winks there, so many souls
 are born,
 Who all shall work too. Let our
 own be calm.
 We should be ashamed to sit be-
 neath those stars,
 Impatient that we're nothing.'
 ' Could we sit
 Just so for ever, sweetest friend
 he said,

' My failure would seem better than
 success.
 And yet indeed your book has
 dealt with me
 More gently, cousin, than you ever
 will !
 The book brought down entire the
 bright June-day,
 And set me wandering in the gar-
 den-walks,
 And let me watch the garland in
 a place,
 You blushed so . . . nay, forgive me ;
 do not stir :
 I only thank the book for what it
 taught,
 And what permitted. Poet, doubt
 yourself,
 But never doubt that you're a poet
 to me
 From henceforth. You have writ-
 ten poems, sweet,
 Which moved me in secret, as the
 sap is moved
 In still March-branches, signless as
 a stone :
 But this last book o'ercame me like
 soft rain
 Which falls at midnight, when the
 tightened bark
 Breaks out into unhesitating buds
 And sudden protestations of the
 spring. [you :
 In all your other books, I saw but
 A man may see the moon so, in a
 pond,
 And not the nearer therefore to the
 moon,
 Nor use the sight . . . except to drown
 himself.
 And so I forced my heart back from
 the sight,
 For what had I, I thought, to do
 with *her*,
 Aurora . . . Romney? But, in this
 last book,
 You showed me something sepa-
 rate from yourself,

Beyond you, and I bore to take it
 in,
 And let it draw me. You have
 shown me truths,
 O June-day friend, that help me
 now at night
 When June is over ! truths not
 yours, indeed,
 But set within my reach by means
 of you,
 Presented by your voice and verse
 the way
 To take them clearest. Verily I
 was wrong ;
 And verily many thinkers of this
 age,
 Ay, many Christian teachers, half
 in heaven,
 Are wrong in just my sense who
 understood [if
 Our natural world too insularly, as
 No spiritual counterpart complet-
 ed it
 Consummating its meaning, round-
 ing all
 To justice and perfection, line by
 line,
 Form by form, nothing single nor
 alone,
 The great below clenched by the
 great above,
 Shade here authenticating sub-
 stance there,
 The body proving spirit, as the ef-
 fect
 The cause : we meantime being too
 grossly apt
 To hold the natural, as dogs a bone,
 (Though reason and nature beat us
 in the face)
 So obstinately, that we'll break our
 teeth
 Or ever we let go. For every-
 where
 We're too materialistic, -earing
 clay
 (Like men of the west) instead of
 Adam's corn

'I hope,' he answered: 'I am come
 to think
 That God will have his work done,
 as you said,
 And that we need not be disturbed
 too much
 For Romney Leigh or others hav-
 ing failed
 With this or that quack nostrum,—
 recipes
 For keeping summits by annulling
 depths,
 For wrestling with luxurious loung-
 ing sleeves,
 And acting heroism without a
 scratch.
 We fail,—what, then? Aurora, if
 I smiled
 To see you, in your lovely morning-
 pride,
 Try on the poet's wreath which
 suits the noon,
 (Sweet cousin, walls must get the
 weather-stain
 Before they grow the ivy!) certainly
 I stood myself there worthier of
 contempt,
 Self-rated, in disastrous arrogance,
 As competent to sorrow for man-
 kind
 And even their odds. A man may
 well despair,
 Who counts himself so needful to
 success.
 I failed. I throw the remedy back
 on God,
 And sit down here beside you in
 good hope.'
 And yet, take heed,' I answered,
 'lest we lean
 Too dangerously on the other side,
 And so fail twice. Be sure, no
 earnest work
 Of any honest creature, howbeit
 weak.
 Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much,
 It is not gathered as a grain of
 sand

To enlarge the sum of human action
 used
 For carrying out God's end. No
 creature works
 So ill, observe, that therefore he's
 cashiered.
 The honest earnest man must stand
 and work,
 The woman also: otherwise she
 drops
 At once below the dignity of man,
 Accepting serfdom. Free men
 freely work.
 Whoever fears God, fears to sit at
 ease.'
 He cried, 'True. After Adam,
 work was curse;
 The natural creature labours,
 sweats and frets.
 But after Christ, work turns to
 privilege,
 And henceforth one with our
 humanity,
 The Six-day Worker, working still
 in us,
 Has called us freely to work on
 with Him
 In high companionship. So, hap-
 piest! [work
 I count that Heaven itself is only
 To a surer issue. Let us work,
 indeed,
 But no more work as Adam. nor
 as Leigh
 Erewhile, as if the only man on
 earth,
 Responsible for all the thistles
 blown
 And tigers couchant,—struggling
 in amaze
 Against disease and winter,—snarl-
 ing on
 For ever, that the world's not para-
 dise,
 Oh cousin, let us be content, in work,
 To do the thing we can, and not
 presume

To fret because it's little. 'Twill
 employ
 Seven men, they say, to make a
 perfect pin :
 Who makes the head, content to
 miss the point,
 Who makes the point, agreed to
 leave the join :
 And if a man should cry, ' I want a
 pin,
 ' And I must make it straightway,
 head and point,'
 His wisdom is not worth the pin he
 wants.
 Seven men to a pin,—and not a
 man too much !
 Seven generations, haply, to this
 world,
 To right it visibly a finger's breadth,
 And mend its rents a little. Oh, to
 storm
 And say, ' This world here is intoler-
 erable ;
 ' I will not eat this corn, nor drink
 this wine,
 ' Nor love this woman, flinging her
 soul
 ' Without a bond for 't as a lover
 should, [piness
 ' Nor use the generous leave of hap-
 ' As not too good for using gener-
 ously'—
 (Since virtue kindles at the touch
 of joy,
 Like a man's cheek laid on a wom-
 an's hand,
 And God, who knows it, looks for
 quick returns
 From joys)—to stand and claim
 to have a life
 Beyond the bounds of the individ-
 ual man,
 And raze all personal cloisters of
 the soul
 To build up public stores and mag-
 azines,
 As if God's creatures otherwise
 were lost,

The builder surely saved by any
 means !
 To think,—I have a pattern on my
 nail,
 And I will carve the world new
 after it,
 And solve so, these hard social ques-
 tions,—nay,
 Impossible social questions,—since
 their roots
 Strike deep in Evil's own existence
 here,
 Which God permits because the
 question's hard
 To abolish evil nor attain free-will.
 Ay, hard to God, but not to Rom-
 ney Leigh !
 For Romney has a pattern on his
 nail,
 (Whatever may be lacking on the
 Mount)
 And not being overnice to separate
 What's element from what's con-
 vention, hastes
 By line on line to draw you out a
 world,
 Without your help indeed, unless
 you take
 His yoke upon you and will learn
 of him,
 So much he has to teach ! so good
 a world !
 The same, the whole creation's
 groaning for !
 No rich nor poor, no gain nor loss
 nor stint,
 No potage in it able to exclude
 A brother's birthright, and no right
 of birth,
 The potage—both secured to every
 man,
 And perfect virtue dealt out like the
 rest
 Gratuitously, with the soup at six.
 To whoso does not seek it.'
 'Softly, sir,'
 I interrupted,—' I had a cousin
 once

I held in reverence. If he strained
 too wide,
 It was not to take honour, but to
 give help ;
 The gesture was heroic. If his
 hand
 Accomplished nothing . . (well, it
 is not proved)
 That empty hand thrown impotent-
 ly out
 Were sooner caught, I think, by
 One in heaven,
 Than many a hand that reaped a
 harvest in
 And keeps the scythe's glow on it.
 Pray you, then,
 For my sake merely, use less bit-
 terness
 In speaking of my cousin.'
 ' Ah,' he said,
 ' Aurora ! when the prophet beats
 the ass,
 The angel intercedes.' He shook
 his head—
 ' And yet to mean so well and fail
 so foul,
 Expresses ne'er another beast than
 man ; [dear ;
 The antithesis is human. Hearken,
 There's too much abstract willing,
 purposing,
 In this poor world. We talk by
 aggregates,
 And think by systems ; and, being
 used to face
 Our evils in statistics, are inclined
 To cap them with unreal remedies
 Drawn out in haste on the other
 side the slate.'

That's true,' I answered, fain to
 throw up thought,
 And make a game of't,—' yes, we
 generalise
 Enough to please you. If we pray
 at all,
 We pray no longer for our daily
 bread,

But next centenary's harvests. If
 we give,
 Our cup of water is not tendered till
 We lay down pipes and found a
 Company
 With Branches. Ass or angel, 'tis
 the same :
 A woman cannot do the thing she
 ought,
 Which means whatever perfect
 thing she can,
 In life, in art, in silence, but she fears
 To let the perfect action take her
 part
 And rest there : she must prove
 what she can do
 Before she does it,—prate of
 woman's rights,
 Of woman's mission, woman's
 function, till
 The men (who are prating too on
 their side) cry,
 ' A woman's function plainly is . . to
 talk.'
 Poor souls, they are very reasonably
 vexed ;
 They cannot hear each other speak.'
 ' And you,
 An artist, judge so ?'
 ' I, an artist,—yes,
 Because, precisely, I'm an artist, sir,
 And woman,—if another sate in
 sight,
 I'd whisper,—Soft, my sister ! not
 a word !
 By speaking we prove only we can
 speak :
 Which he, the man here, never
 doubted. What
 He doubts is whether we can *do*
 the thing
 With decent grace we've not yet
 done at all.
 Now, do it ; bring your statue,—
 you have room !
 He'll see it even by the starlight
 here ;

And if 'tis e'er so little like the
 god
 Who looks out from the marble
 silently
 Along the track of his own shining
 dart
 Through the dusk of ages,—there's
 no need to speak ;
 The universe shall henceforth speak
 for you,
 And witness, 'She who did this
 thing, was born
 To do it,—claims her license in her
 work.'
 —And so with more works. Who
 cures the plague,
 Though twice a woman, shall be
 called a leech :
 Who rights a land's finances, is ex-
 cused
 For touching coppers, though her
 hands be white,—
 But we, we talk !'
 ' It is the age's mood,'
 He said ; ' we boast, and do not.
 We put up
 Hostelry signs where'er we lodge a
 day, [paps
 Some red colossal cow with mighty
 A Cyclops' fingers could not strain
 to milk ;
 Then bring out presently our sauc-
 er-full
 Of curds. We want more quiet in
 our works,
 More knowledge of the bounds in
 which we work ;
 More knowledge that each individ-
 ual man
 Remains an Adam to the general
 race,
 Constrained to see, like Adam, that
 he keep [estly,
 His personal state's condition hon-
 Or vain all thoughts of his to help
 the world.
 Which still must be developed from
 its *own*

If bettered in its many. We indeed,
 Who think to lay it out new like a
 park,
 We take a work on us which is not
 man's,
 For God alone sits far enough
 above [us
 To speculate so largely. None of
 (Not Romney Leigh) is mad enough
 to say,
 We'll have a grove of oaks upon
 that slope
 And sink the need of acorns. Gov-
 ernment,
 If veritable and lawful, is not given
 By imposition of the foreign hand,
 Nor chosen from a pretty pattern-
 book
 Of some domestic ideologue who
 sits
 And coldly chooses empire, where
 as well
 He might republic. Genuine gov-
 ernment
 Is but the expression of a nation,
 good
 Or less good,—even as all society,
 Howe'er unequal, monstrous,
 crazed, and cursed,
 Is but the expression of men's sin-
 gle lives,
 The loud sum of the silent units.
 What,
 We'd change the aggregate and
 yet retain
 Each separate figure ? Whom do
 we cheat by that ?
 Now, not even Romney.'
 ' Cousin, you are sad.
 Did all your social labour at Leigh
 Hall
 And elsewhere, come to nought
 then ?'
 ' It *was* nought,'
 He answered mildly. ' There is
 room indeed
 For statues still, in this large world
 of God's,

<p>But not for vacuums,—so I am not sad :</p> <p>Nor sadder than is good for what I am.</p> <p>My vain phalanstery dissolved it- self ;</p> <p>My men and women of disordered lives,</p> <p>I brought in orderly to dine and sleep,</p> <p>Broke up those waxen masks I made them to wear,</p> <p>With fierce contortions of the nat- ural face ;</p> <p>And cursed me for my tyrannous constraint</p> <p>In forcing crooked creatures to live straight ;</p> <p>And set the country hounds upon my back</p> <p>To bite and tear me for my wicked deed</p> <p>Of trying to do good without the church</p> <p>Or even the squires, Aurora. Do you mind</p> <p>Your ancient neighbours? The great book-club teems</p> <p>With 'sketches,' 'summaries,' and 'last tracts' but twelve,</p> <p>On socialistic troublers of close bonds</p> <p>Betwixt the generous rich and grateful poor.</p> <p>The vicar preached from 'Revela- tions,' (till</p> <p>The doctor woke) and found me with 'the frogs'</p> <p>On three successive Sundays ; ay, and stopped</p> <p>To weep a little (for he's getting old)</p> <p>That such perdition should o'ertake a man</p> <p>Of such fair acres,—in the parish, too!</p> <p>He printed his discourses 'by re- quest,'</p>	<p>And if your book shall sell as his did, then</p> <p>Your verses are less good than I suppose.</p> <p>The women of the neighbourhood subscribed,</p> <p>And sent me a copy bound in scar- let silk,</p> <p>Tooled edges, blazoned with the arms of Leigh :</p> <p>I own that touched me.'</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">'What, the pretty ones ?</p> <p>Poor Romney!'</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">'Otherwise the effect was small.</p> <p>I had my windows broken once or twice [censed</p> <p>By liberal peasants naturally in- At such a vexer of Arcadian peace,</p> <p>Who would not let men call their wives their own</p> <p>To kick like Britons, and made ob- stacles</p> <p>When things went smoothly as a baby drugged,</p> <p>Toward freedom and starvation ; bringing down</p> <p>The wicked London tavern-thieves and drabs</p> <p>To affront the blessed hillside drabs and thieves</p> <p>With mended morals, quotha,—fine new lives !—</p> <p>My windows paid for't. I was shot at once,</p> <p>By an active poacher who had hit a hare</p> <p>From the other barrel, (tired of springeing game</p> <p>So long upon my acres, undis- turbed,</p> <p>And restless for the country's vir- tue,—yet</p> <p>He missed me)—ay, and pelted very oft</p> <p>In riding through the village.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">'There he goes</p> <p>'Who'd drive away our Christian gentlefolks,</p>
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'—To see this, almost moved myself to clap!

The 'vale et plaude' came too with effect

When, in the roof fell, and the fire that paused,

Stunned momentarily beneath the stroke of slates

And tumbling rafters, rose at once and roared,

And wrapping the whole house, (which disappeared

In a mounting whirlwind of dilated flame.)

Blew upward, straight, its drift of fiery chaff

In the face of heaven, . . . which 'blenched, and ran up higher.'

'Poor Romney!'

'Sometimes when I dream,' he said. [still.

I hear the silence after, 'twas so For all those wild beasts, yelling, cursing round,

—Were suddenly silent, while you counted five,

So silent, that you heard a young bird fall

From the top-nest in the neighbouring rookery,

Through edging over-rashly toward the light. [far

The old rooks had already fled too To hear the screech they fled with, though you saw

Some flying still, like scatterings of dead leaves

In autumn-gusts, seen dark against the sky

All flying,—ousted, like the house of Leigh.'

'Dear Romney!'

'Evidently 'twould have been A fine sight for a poet, sweet, like you,

To make the verse blaze after. I myself,

Even I, felt something in the grand old trees,

Which stood that moment like brute Druid gods

Amazed upon the rim of ruin, where,

As into a blackened socket, the great fire

Had dropped,—still throwing up splinters now and then

To show them grey with all their centuries,

Left there to witness that on such a day

The House went out.'

'Ah!'

'While you counted five I seemed to feel a little like a Leigh,—

But then it passed, Aurora. A child cried,

And I had enough to think of what to do

With all those houseless wretches in the dark,

And ponder where they'd dance the next time, they

Who had burnt the viol.'

'Did you think of that? Who burns his viol will not dance,

I know,

To cymbals, Romney.'

'O my sweet sad voice,' He cried,—'O voice that speaks and overcomes!

The sun is silent, but Aurora speaks.'

'Alas,' I said; 'I speak I know not what:

I'm back in childhood, thinking as a child,

A foolish fancy—will it make you smile?

I shall not from the window of my room

Catch sight of those old chimneys any more.'

'No more,' he answered. 'If you pushed one day Through all the green hills to our father's house, You'd come upon a great charred circle where The patient earth was singed an acre round; With one stone-stair, symbolic of my life, Ascending, winding, leading up to nought! I 'Tis worth a poet's seeing. Will you go?'

I made no answer. Had I any right To weep with this man, that I dared to speak! A woman stood between his soul and mine, And waved us off from touching evermore With those unclean white hands of hers. Enough. We had burnt our viols and were silent.

So, The silence lengthened till it pressed. I spoke, To breathe: 'I think you were ill afterward.'

'More ill,' he answered, 'had been scarcely ill. I hoped this feeble fumbling at life's knot Might end concisely,—but I failed to die, [thus As formerly I failed to live,—and Grew willing, having tried all other ways, To try just God's. Humility's so good, When pride's impossible. Mark us, how we make Our virtues, cousin, from our worn-out sins,

Which smack of them from henceforth. Is it right, For instance, to wed here while you love there? And yet because a man sins once, the sin Cleaves to him, in necessity to sin, That if he sinned not so, to damn himself, He sins so, to damn others with himself: And thus to wed here, loving there, becomes A duty. Virtue buds a dubious leaf Round mortal brows; your ivy's better, dear. —Yet she, 'tis certain, is my very wife, The very lamb left mangled by the wolves Through my own bad shepherd-ing: and could I choose But take her on my shoulder past this stretch Of rough, uneasy wilderness, poor lamb, Poor child, poor child?—Aurora, my beloved, I will not vex you any more to-night, But having spoken what I came to say, The rest shall please you. What she can in me,— Protection, tender liking, freedom, ease, [her She shall have surely, liberally, for And hers, Aurora. Small amends they'll make For hideous evils which she had not known Except by me, and for this imminent loss, This forfeit presence of a gracious friend, Which also she must forfeit for my sake,

Since, . . . drop your hand in mine
 a moment, sweet,
 We're parting!—Ah, my snow-
 drop, what a touch,
 As if the wind had swept it off!
 you grudge
 Your gelid sweetness on my palm
 but so,
 A moment? angry, that I could
 not bear
You . . . speaking, breathing, living,
 side by side
 With some one called my wife . .
 and live, myself?
 Nay, be not cruel—you must under-
 stand! [mine
 Your lightest footfall on a floor of
 Would shake the house, my lintel
 being uncrossed
 'Gainst angels: henceforth it is
 night with me,
 And so, henceforth, I put the shut-
 ters up:
 Auroras must come not to spoil my
 dark.'

He smiled so feebly, with an empty
 hand
 Stretched sideways from me,—as
 indeed he looked
 To any one but me to give him
 help,—
 And while the moon came suddenly
 out full,
 The double rose of our Italian
 moons,
 Sufficient plainly for the heaven
 and earth,
 (The stars, struck dumb and washed
 away in dews
 Of glory, and the mountains steeped
 In divine languor) he the man, ap-
 peared
 So pale and patient, like the marble
 man [in
 A sculptor puts his personal sadness
 To join his grandeur of ideal
 thought,—

As if his mallet struck me from my
 height
 Of passionate indignation, I who
 had risen
 Pale,—doubting, paused, . . . Was
 Romney mad indeed?
 Had all this wrong of heart made
 sick the brain?

Then quiet, with a sort of tremulous
 pride,
 'Go, cousin,' I said coldly: 'a fare-
 well
 Was sooner spoke 'twixt a pair of
 friends
 In those old days, than seems to
 suit you now.
 Howbeit, since then, I've writ a
 book or two,
 I'm somewhat dull still in the manly
 art [any man
 Of phrase and metaphrase. Why,
 Can carve a score of white Loves
 out of snow,
 As Buonarotti in my Florence
 there,
 And set them on the wall in some
 safe shade,
 As safe, sir, as your marriage! very
 good:
 Though if a woman took one from
 the ledge
 To put it on the table by her flowers,
 And let it mind her of a certain
 friend,
 'Twould drop at once, (so better,)
 would not bear
 Her nail-mark even, where she
 took it up
 A little tenderly; so best, I say:
 For me, I would not touch the
 fragile thing,
 And risk to spoil it half an hour
 before
 The sun shall shine to melt it;
 leave it there.
 I'm plain at speech, direct in pur-
 pose: when

I speak, you'll take the meaning as
 it is, [silk
 And not allow for puckerings in the
 By clever stitches. I'm a woman,
 sir, [urally,
 And use the woman's figures nat-
 As you the male license. So, I
 wish you well.
 I'm simply sorry for the griefs
 you've had,
 And not for your sake only, but
 mankind's.
 This race is never grateful: from
 the first,
 One fills their cup at supper with
 pure wine,
 Which back they give at cross-time
 on a sponge,
 In vinegar and gall'
 He murmured,—'If gratefuller,'
 pitiable!
 God's self would never have come
 down to die,
 Could man have thanked him for it.'
 'Happily
 'Tis patent that, whatever,' I re-
 sumed,
 'You suffered from this thankless-
 ness of men,
 You sink no more than Moses' bul-
 rush-boat
 When once relieved of Moses; for
 you're light,
 You're light, my cousin! which is
 well for you,
 And manly. For myself,—now
 mark me, sir,
 They burnt Leigh Hall; but if,
 consummated
 To devils, heightened beyond Lu-
 cifers,
 They had burnt instead a star or
 two of those
 We saw above there just a moment
 back,
 Before the moon abolished them,—
 destroyed

And riddled them in ashes through
 a sieve
 On the head of the foundering uni-
 verse,—what then?
 If you and I remained still you and I,
 It could not shift our places as
 mere friends,
 Nor render decent you should toss
 a phrase
 Beyond the point of actual feeling!
 —nay, [said,
 You shall not interrupt me: as you
 We're parting. Certainly, not once
 or twice
 To-night you've mocked me some-
 what, or yourself,
 And I, at least, have not deserved
 it so
 That I should meet it unsurprised.
 But now,
 Enough: we're parting . . parting,
 Cousin Leigh,
 I wish you well through all the acts
 of life
 And life's relations, wedlock not
 the least,
 And it shall 'please me,' in your
 words, to know
 You yield your wife protection,
 freedom, ease, [live
 And very tender liking. May you
 So happy with her, Romney, that
 your friends
 May praise her for it. Meantime
 some of us
 Are wholly dull in keeping ignorant
 Of what she has suffered by you,
 and what debt
 Of sorrow your rich love sits down
 to pay:
 But if 'tis sweet for love to pay its
 debt,
 'Tis sweeter still for love to give its
 gift,
 And you, be liberal in the sweeter
 way,
 You can, I think. At least, as
 touches me,

You owe her, cousin Romney, no
amends.
She is not used to hold my gown
so fast, [go :
You need entreat her now to let it
The lady never was a friend of
mine,
Nor capable,— I thought you knew
as much,—
Of losing for your sake so poor a
prize
As such a worthless friendship.
Be content,
Good cousin, therefore, both for her
and you !
I'll never spoil your dark, nor dull
your noon,
Nor vex you when you're merry, or
at rest :
You shall not need to put a shutter
up
To keep out this Aurora,—though
your north
Can make Auroras which vex no-
body,
Scarce known from night, I fanc-
ied ! let me add,
My larks fly higher than some win-
dows. Well,
You've read your Leighs. Indeed
'twould shake a house,
If such as I came in with out-
stretched hand
Still warm and thrilling from the
clasp of one . .
Of one we know, . . to acknowledge,
palm to palm,
As mistress there . . the Lady Wal-
demar.'

' Now God be with us ' . . with a
sudden clash
Of voice he interrupted—' what
name's that ?
You spoke a name, Aurora.'
Pardon me ;
I would that, Romney. I could
name your wife

Nor wound you, yet be worthy.'
' Are we mad ?'
He echoed—' wife ! mine ! Lady
Waldemar !
I think you said my wife.' He
sprang to his feet,
And threw his noble head back
toward the moon
As one who swims against a stormy
sea,
And laughed with such a helpless,
hopeless scorn,
I stood and trembled.

' May God judge me so,'
He said at last,—' I came convicted
here,
And humbled sorely if not enough.
I came,
Because this woman from her
crystal soul
Had shown me something which
a man calls light :
Because too, formerly, I sinned by
her [God,
As then and ever since I have, by
Through arrogance of nature,—
though I loved . .
Whom best, I need not say, . . since
that is writ
Too plainly in the book of my mis-
deeds :
And thus I came here to abase
myself,
And fasten, kneeling, on her regent
brows
A garland which I started thence
one day
Of her beautiful June-youth. But
here again
I'm baffled !—fail in my abasement
as
My aggrandisement : there's no
room left for me
At any woman's foot who miscon-
ceives
My nature, purpose, possible ac-
tions. What !

Are you the Aurora who made
 large my dreams
 To frame your greatness? you
 conceive so small?
 You stand so less than woman,
 through being more,
 And lose your natural instinct, like
 a beast,
 Through intellectual culture? since
 indeed [she
 I do not think that any common
 Would dare adopt such monstrous
 forgeries
 For the legible life-signature of
 such
 As I, with all my blots: with all
 my blots!
 At last then, peerless cousin, we
 are peers—
 At last we're even. Ah, you've
 left your height,
 And here upon my level we take
 hands,
 And here I reach to forgive you,
 sweet, [ago
 And that's a fall, Aurora. Long
 You seldom understood me,—but
 before,
 I could not blame you. Then, you
 only seemed
 So high above, you could not see
 below;
 But now I breathe,—but now I
 pardon!—nay,
 We're parting. Dearest, men have
 burnt my house,
 Maligned my motives,—but not
 one, I swear,
 Has wronged my soul as this Au-
 rora has,
 Who called the Lady Waldemar
 my wife.'

'Not married to her! yet you
 said'..

'Again?

Nay, read the lines' (he held a
 letter out)

She sent you through me.'

By the moonlight there,
 I tore the meaning out with pas-
 sionate haste

Much rather than I read it. Thus
 it ran.

NINTH BOOK.

EVEN thus. I pause to write it
 out at length,

The letter of the Lady Waldemar.

'I prayed your cousin Leigh to
 take you this,

He says he'll do it. After years
 of love,

Or what is called so,—when a
 woman frets

And fools upon one string of a
 man's name,

And fingers it for ever till it
 breaks,—

He may perhaps do for her such
 thing, [ment

And she accept it without detri-
 Although she should not love him
 any more.

And I, who do not love him, nor
 love you,

Nor you, Aurora,—choose you
 shall repent

Your most ungracious letter and
 confess,

Constrained by his convictions, (he's
 convinced)

You've wronged me foully. Are
 you made so ill,

You woman—to impute such ill to
 me?

We both had mothers,—lay in
 their bosom once.

And, after all, I thank you, Aurora
 Leigh,

For proving to myself that there
 are things

I would not do,..not for my life..
 nor him..

Though something I have some-
 what overdone, —
 For instance, when I went to see
 the gods [step
 One morning on Olympus, with a
 That shook the thunder from a
 certain cloud,
 Committing myself vilely. Could
 I think,
 The Muse I pulled my heart out
 from my breast
 To soften, had herself a sort of
 heart,
 And loved my mortal? He, at
 least, loved her,
 I heard him say so; 'twas my rec-
 ompense,
 When, watching at his bedside four-
 teen days,
 He broke out like a flame at whiles
 Between the heats of fever. 'Is it
 thou?
 'Breathe closer, sweetest mouth!' —
 and when at last
 The fever gone, the wasted face
 extinct
 As if it irked him much to know
 me there,
 He said, 'Twas kind, 'twas good,
 'twas womanly,'
 (And fifty praises to excuse no
 love)
 'But was the picture safe he had
 ventured for?'
 And then, half wandering. 'I have
 loved her well,
 'Although she could not love me.'
 — 'Say instead,'
 I answered, 'she does love you,' —
 'Twas my turn
 To rave: I would have married
 him so changed,
 Although the world had jeered me
 properly
 For taking up with Cupid at his
 worst,
 The silver quiver worn off on his
 hair.

'No, no,' he murmured, 'no, she
 loves me not;
 'Aurora Leigh does better; bring
 her book [mar,
 'And read it softly, Lady Walde-
 'Until I thank your friendship more
 for that
 'Than even for harder service.'
 So I read
 Your book, Aurora, for an hour
 that day:
 I kept its pauses, marked its em-
 phasis;
 My voice, empaled upon its hooks
 of rhyme,
 Not once would writhe, nor quiver,
 nor revolt;
 I read on calmly, calmly shut it up,
 Observing, 'There's some merit in
 the book;
 'And yet the merit in't is thrown
 away
 'As chances still with women if we
 write
 'Or write not: we want string to
 tie our flowers,
 'So drop them as we walk, which
 serves to show
 'The way we went. Good morn-
 ing, Mister Leigh;
 'You'll find another reader the next
 time.
 'A woman who does better than to
 love,
 'I hate; she will do nothing very
 well:
 'Male poets are preferable, strain-
 ing less
 'And teaching more.' I triumphed
 o'er you both,
 And left him.
 'When I saw him afterward,
 I had read your shameful letter,
 and my heart.
 He came with health recovered,
 strong though pale,
 Lord Howe and he, a courteous
 pair of friends,

To say what men dare say to women, when
 Their debtors. But I stopped them
 with a word,
 And proved I had never trodden
 such a road
 To carry so much dirt upon my
 shoe.
 Then, putting into it something of
 disdain,
 I asked forsooth his pardon, and my
 own, [love,
 For having done no better than to
 And that not wisely,—though 'twas
 long ago,
 And had been mended radically
 since.
 I told him, as I tell you now, Miss
 Leigh,
 And proved I took some trouble for
 his sake
 .Because I knew he did not love the
 girl)
 To spoil my hands with working in
 the stream
 Of that poor bubbling nature,—till
 she went,
 Consigned to one I trusted, my own
 maid,
 Who once had lived full five months
 in my house,
 (Dressed hair superbly) with a lav-
 ish purse
 To carry to Australia where she had
 left
 A husband, said she. If the creat-
 ure lied, [and lie
 The mission failed, we all do fail
 More or less—and I'm sorry—
 which is all
 Expected from us when we fail the
 most
 And go to church to own it. What
 I meant,
 Was just the best for him, and me,
 and her . . .
 Best even for Marian!—I am sorry
 for't

And very sorry. Yet my creature
 said
 She saw her stop to speak in Oxford
 Street
 To one . . . no matter! I had sooner
 cut
 My hand off (though 'twere kissed
 the hour before,
 And promised a Duke's troth-ring
 for the next)
 Than crush her silly head with so
 much wrong.
 Poor child! I would have mended
 it with gold,
 Until it gleamed like St. Sophia's
 dome
 When all the faithful troop to morn-
 ing prayer:
 But he, he nipped the bud of such
 a thought
 With that cold Leigh look which I
 fancied once,
 And broke in, 'Henceforth she was
 called his wife.
 'His wife required no succour: he
 was bound
 'To Florence, to resume this broken
 bond:
 'Enough so. Both were happy, he
 and Howe,
 'To acquit me of the heaviest
 charge of all—'
 —At which I shut my tongue against
 my fly
 And struck him; 'Would he carry,
 —he was just,
 'A letter from me to Aurora Leigh,
 'And ratify from his authentic
 mouth
 'My answer to her accusation?'—
 'Yes, [time.'
 'If such a letter were prepared in
 —He's just, your cousin,—ay, ab-
 horrently.
 He'd wash his hands in blood to
 keep them clean,
 And so, cold, courteous, a mere
 gentleman,

He bowed, we parted.
 'Parted. Face no more,
 Voice no more, love no more! wiped
 wholly out
 Like some ill scholar's scrawl from
 heart and slate.—
 Ay, spit on and so wiped out utterly
 By some coarse scholar! I have
 been too coarse,
 Too human. Have we business,
 in our rank,
 With blood i' the veins? I will
 have henceforth none.
 Not even to keep the colour at my
 lip. [blood;
 A rose is pink and pretty without
 Why not a woman? When we've
 played in vain
 The game, to adore,—we have re-
 sources still,
 And can play on at leisure, being
 adored:
 Here's Smith already swearing at
 my feet
 That I'm the typic She. Away with
 Smith!—
 Smith smacks of Leigh,—and,
 henceforth, I'll admit
 No socialist within three crinolines,
 To live and have his being. But
 for you,
 Though insolent your letter and
 absurd,
 And though I hate you frankly,—
 take my Smith!
 For when you have seen this fa-
 mous marriage tied,
 A most unspotted Erle to a noble
 Leigh, [not love)
 (His love astray on one he should
 Howbeit you may not want his
 love, beware,
 You'll want some comfort. So I
 leave you Smith;
 Take Smith!—he talks Leigh's sub-
 jects, somewhat worse;
 Adopts a thought of Leigh's, and
 dwindles it;

Goes leagues beyond, to be no inch
 behind; [string may
 Will mind you of him, as a shoe-
 Of a man: and women, when they
 are made like you,
 Grow tender to a shoe-string, foot-
 print even,
 Adore averted shoulders in a glass,
 And memories of what, present
 once, was loathed.
 And yet, you loathed not Romney,
 —though you played
 At 'fox and goose' about him with
 your soul:
 Pass over fox, you rub out fox,—
 ignore
 A feeling, you eradicate it,—the act's
 Identical.

'I wish you joy, Miss Leigh;
 You've made a happy marriage for
 your friend,
 And all the honour, well-assorted
 love,
 Derives from you who love him,
 whom he loves!
 You need not wish *me* joy to think
 of it,
 I have so much. Observe, Aurora
 Leigh, [his
 Your droop of eyelid is the same as
 And, but for you, I might have
 won his love,
 And, to you, I have shown my na-
 ked heart,—
 For which three things I hate, hate,
 hate you. Hush,
 Suppose a fourth!—I cannot choose
 but think
 That, with him, I were virtuouser
 than you
 Without him: so I hate you from
 this gulf [out
 And hollow of my soul, which opens
 To what, except for you, had been
 my heaven,
 And is instead a place to curse by!
 LOVE.'

An active kind of curse. I stood
there cursed
Confounded. I had seized and
caught the sense
Of the letter with its twenty sting-
ing snakes,
In a moment's sweep of eyesight,
and I stood
Dazed.—' Ah!—not married?'

' You mistake,' he said,
' I'm married. Is not Marian Erle
my wife?
As God sees things, I have a wife
and child; [God,
And I, as I'm a man who honours
Am here to claim them as my child
and wife.'

I felt it hard to breathe, much less
to speak.
Nor word of mine was needed.
Some one else
Was there for answering. ' Rom-
ney,' she began,
' My great good angel, Romney.'
Then at first,
I knew that Marian Erle was beau-
tiful.

She stood there, still and pallid as
a saint,
Dilated, like a saint in ecstasy,
As if the floating moonshine inter-
posed
Betwixt her foot and the earth, and
raised her up [child,
To float upon it. ' I had left my
Who sleeps,' she said, ' and having
drawn this way

I heard you speaking, . . friend!—
Confirm me now.
You take this Marian, such as
wicked men
Have made her, for your honour-
able wife?'

The thrilling, solemn, proud, pa-
thetic voice.
He stretched his arms out toward
the thrilling voice,

As if to draw it on to his embrace.
—' I take her as God made her,
and as men
Must fail to unmake her, for my
honoured wife.'

She never raised her eyes, nor took
a step,
But stood there in her place, and
spoke again.
—' You take this Marian's child,
which is her shame
In sight of men and women, for
your child,
Of whom you will not ever feel
ashamed?'

The thrilling, tender, proud, pa-
thetic voice.
He stepped on toward it, still with
outstretched arms,
As if to quench upon his breast
that voice. [him,
—' May God so father me, as I do
And so forsake me as I let him feel
He's orphaned haply. Here I take
the child

To share my cup, to slumber on
my knee,
To play his loudest gambol at my
foot, [ways,
To hold my finger in the public
Till none shall need inquire,
' Whose child is this?'

The gesture saying so tenderly,
' My own.'
She stood a moment silent in her
place;
Then turning toward me very slow
and cold—
—' And you,—what say you?—will
you blame me much,
If, careful for that outcast child of
mine,
I catch this hand that's stretched
to me and him,
Nor dare to leave him friendless in
the world

<p>Where men have stoned me? Have I not the right To take so mere an aftermath from life, Else found so wholly bare? Or is it wrong To let your cousin, for a generous bent, [briars Put out his ungloved fingers among To set a tumbling bird's nest some- what straight? You will not tell him, though we're innocent We are not harmless, . . . and that both our harms Will stick to his good smooth noble life like burrs, Never to drop off though he shakes the cloak? You've been my friend: you will not now be his? You've known him that he's worthy of a friend, [all, And you're his cousin, lady, after And therefore more than free to take his part, Explaining, since the nest is surely spoilt, And Marian what you know her, —though a wife, The world would hardly under- stand her case Of being just hurt and honest; while for him, 'Twould ever twit him with his bastard child And married harlot. Speak, while yet there's time: You would not stand and let a good man's dog Turn round and rend him, because his, and reared Of a generous breed,—and will you let his act, Because it's generous? Speak. I'm bound to you. And I'll be bound by only you, in this.'</p>	<p>The thrilling solemn voice, so pas- sionless, Sustained, yet low, without a rise or fall, As one who had authority to speak, And not as Marian. I looked up to feel If God stood near me, and beheld his heaven As blue as Aaron's priestly robe appeared To Aaron when he took it off to die. And then I spoke—'Accept the gift, I say, My sister Marian, and be satisfied. The hand that gives, has still a soul behind Which will not let it quail for hav- ing given, Though foolish wordlings talk they know not what Of what they know not. Romney's strong enough For this: do you be strong to know he's strong: He stands on Right's side; never flinch for him. As if he stood on the other. You'll be bound By me? I am a woman of repute: No fly-blow gossip ever specked my life; My name is clean and open as this hand, Whose glove there's not a man dares blab about As if he had touched it freely. Here's my hand To clasp your hand, my Marian, owned as pure! As pure,—as I'm a woman and a Leigh!— And, as I'm both, I'll witness to the world That Romney Leigh is honoured in his choice Who chooses Marian for his hon- oured wife.'</p>
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Her broad wild woodland eyes shot
 out a light ;
 Her smile was wonderful for rap-
 ture. ' Thanks,
 My great Aurora.' Forward then
 she sprang,
 And dropping her impassioned
 spaniel head [curls
 With all its brown abandonment of
 On Romney's feet, we heard the
 kisses drawn
 Through sobs upon the foot, upon
 the ground—
 ' O Romney ! O my angel ! O un-
 changed,
 Though since we've parted I have
 passed the grave !
 But Death itself could only better
thee,
 Not change thee !—*Thee* I do not
 thank at all :
 I but thank God who made thee
 what thou art,
 So wholly godlike.'

When he tried in vain
 To raise her to his embrace, escap-
 ing thence
 As any leaping fawn from a hunts-
 man's grasp
 She bounded off and 'lighted be-
 yond reach,
 Before him with a staglike majesty
 Of soft, serene defiance,—as she
 knew
 He could not touch her, so was
 tolerant
 He had cared to try. She stood
 there with her great
 Drowned eyes, and dripping cheeks,
 and strange sweet smile
 That lived through all, as if one
 held a light
 Across a waste of waters,—shook
 her head
 To keep some thoughts down
 deeper in her soul,—
 Then, white and tranquil like a
 summer-cloud

Which, having rained itself to a
 tardy peace,
 Stands still in heaven as if it ruled
 the day,
 Spoke out again—' Although, my
 generous friend,
 Since last we met and parted you're
 unchanged,
 And, having promised faith to Ma-
 rian Erle,
 Maintain it, as she were not chang-
 ed at all ;
 And though that's worthy, though
 that's full of balm
 To any conscious spirit of a girl
 Who once has loved you as I loved
 you once,—
 Yet still it will not make her . . if
 she's dead,
 And gone away where none can
 give or take
 In marriage,—able to revive, return
 And wed you,—will it, Romney ?
 Here's the point ;
 O friend, we'll see it plainer : you
 and I [so.
 Must never, never, never join hands
 Nay, let me say it,—for I said it
 first
 To God, and placed it, rounded to
 an oath,
 Far, far above the moon there, at
 His feet,
 As surely as I wept just now at
 yours,— [so.
 We never, never, never join hands
 And now, be patient with me ; do
 not think
 I'm speaking from a false humility.
 The truth is, I am grown so proud
 with grief,
 And He has said so often through
 his nights
 And through his mornings, ' Weep
 a little still,
 ' Thou foolish Marian, because
 women must, [sin,—
 ' But do not blush at all except for

<p>That I, who felt myself unworthy once Of virtuous Romney and his high- born race, Have come to learn, . . . a woman poor or rich, Despised or honoured, is a human soul : And what her soul is,—that, she is herself, Although she should be spit upon of men, As is the pavement of the churches here, Still good enough to pray in. And being chaste And honest, and inclined to do the right, And love the truth, and live my life out green And smooth beneath his steps, I should not fear To make him thus a less uneasy time Than many a happier woman. Very proud You see me. Pardon, that I set a trap To hear a confirmation in your voice . . . Both yours and yours. It is so good to know 'Twas really God who said the same before : For thus it is in heaven, that first God speaks, And then his angels. Oh, it does me good, It wipes me clean and sweet from devil's dirt, That Romney Leigh should think me worthy still [wife ! Of being his true and honourable Henceforth I need not say, on leav- ing earth, I had no glory in it. For the rest, The reason's ready (master, angel. friend,</p>	<p>Be patient with me) wherefore you and I [so. Can never, never, never join hands I know you'll not be angry like a man (For <i>you</i> are none) when I shall tell the truth, Which is, I do not love you, Rom- ney Leigh, I do not love you. Ah well! catch my hands, Miss Leigh, and burn into my eyes with yours,— [once ? I swear I do not love him. Did I 'Tis said that women have been bruised to death, And yet, if once they loved, that love of theirs Could never be drained out with all their blood : I've heard such things and ponder- ed. Did I indeed Love once? or did I only worship? Yes, Perhaps, O friend, I set you up so high Above all actual good or hope of good Or fear of evil, all that could be mine, I haply set you above love itself And out of reach of these poor women's arms, Angelic Romney. What was in my thought? To be your slave, your help, your toy, your tool. To be your love . . . I never thought of that. To give you love . . . still less. I gave you love? I think I did not give you anything ; I was but only yours,—upon my knees, All yours, in soul and body, in head and heart, A creature you had taken from the ground,</p>
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Still crumbling through your fingers to your feet
 To join the dust she came from.
 Did I love, [Leigh!
 Or did I worship? judge, Aurora
 But, if indeed I loved, 'twas long ago,—
 So long! before the sun and moon were made,
 Before the hells were open,—ah, before
 I heard my child cry in the desert night,
 And knew he had no father. It may be
 I'm not as strong as other women are,
 Who, torn and crushed, are not undone from love.
 It may be, I am colder than the dead,
 Who, being dead, love always.
 But for me
 Once killed, . . . this ghost of Marian loves no more,
 No more . . . except the child! . . . no more at all. [dead;
 I told your cousin, sir, that I was
 And now, she thinks I'll get up from my grave,
 And wear my chin-cloth for a wedding veil,
 And glide along the churchyard like a bride,
 While all the dead keep whispering through the withes,
 'You would be better in your place with us,
 'You pitiful corruption!' At the thought,
 The damp breaks out on me like leprosy
 Although I'm clean. Ay, clean as Marian Erle:
 As Marian Leigh, I know, I were not clean:
 I have not so much life that I should love.

. . . Except the child. Ah God! I could not bear
 To see my darling on a good man's knees [a sigh,
 And know by such a look, or such Or such a silence, that he thought 'sometimes,
 'This child was fathered by some cursed wretch' . . .
 For, Romney,—angels are less tenderwise
 Than God and mothers: even *you* would think
 What *we* think never. He is ours, the child;
 And we would sooner vex a soul in heaven
 By coupling with it the dead body's thought [grave,
 It left behind it in a last month's Than, in my child, see other than . . . my child.
 We only, never call him fatherless Who has God and his mother. O my babe,
 My pretty, pretty blossom, an ill-wind
 Once blew upon my breast! can any think
 I'd have another,—one called happier,
 A fathered child, with father's love and race [smile,
 That's worn as bold and open as a To vex my darling when he's asked his name
 And has no answer? What! a happier child
 Than mine, my best,—who laughed so loud to-night
 He could not sleep for pastime: Nay, I swear
 By life and love, that, if I lived like some,
 And loved like . . . *some* . . . ay, loved you, Romney Leigh,
 As some love (eyes that have wept so much, see clear)

I've room for no more children in
 my arms,
 My kisses are all melted on one
 mouth,
 I would not push my darling to a
 stool
 To dandle babies. Here's a hand
 shall keep
 For ever clean without a marriage-
 ring,
 To tend my boy until he cease to
 need
 One steadying finger of it, and de-
 sert
 (Not miss) his mother's lap, to sit
 with men.
 And when I miss him (not he me)
 I'll come
 And say, 'Now give me some of
 Romney's work,
 To help your outcast orphans of the
 world,
 And comfort grief with grief.' For
 you, meantime, [wife,
 Most noble Romney, wed a noble
 And open on each other your great
 souls,—
 I need not farther bless you. If I
 dared
 But strain and touch her in her up-
 per sphere
 And say; 'Come down to Romney
 —pay my debt!'
 I should be joyful with the stream
 of joy
 Sent through me. But the moon is
 in my face . . .
 I dare not,—though I guess the
 name he loves;
 I'm learned with my studies of old
 days,
 Remembering how he crushed his
 underlip
 When some one came and spoke,
 or did not come:
 Aurora, I could touch her with my
 hand,
 And fly, because I dare not.'

She was gone.
 He smiled so sternly that I spoke
 in haste.
 'Forgive her—she sees clearly for
 herself:
 Her instinct's holy.'
 'I forgive?' he said.
 'I only marvel how she sees so
 sure,
 While others' . . . there he paused,—
 then hoarse, abrupt,—
 'Aurora, you forgive us, her and
 me?
 For her, the thing she sees, poor
 loyal child,
 If once corrected by the thing I
 know,
 Had been unspoken, since she loves
 you well,
 Has leave to love you:—while for
 me, alas,
 If once or twice I let my life escape
 This night, . . . remember, where
 hearts slip and fall
 They break beside: we're parting,
 —parting,—ah,
 You do not love, that you should
 surely know
 What that word means. Forgive,
 be tolerant;
 It had not been, but that I felt my-
 self [spair,
 So safe in impuissance and de-
 I could not hurt you though I toss-
 ed my arms
 And sighed my soul out. The
 most utter wretch
 Will choose his postures when he
 comes to die,
 However in the presence of a
 queen:
 And you'll forgive me some un-
 seemly spasms
 Which meant no more than dying.
 Do you think
 I had ever come here in my per-
 fect mind,

Unless I had come here in my settled mind
 Bound Marian's, bound to keep the bond and give
 My name, my house, my hand, the things I could,
 To Marian? For even *I* could give as much:
 Even I, affronting her exalted soul
 By a supposition that she wanted these,
 Could act the husband's coat and hat set up
 To creak i' the wind and drive the world-crows off
 From pecking in her garden. Straw can fill
 A hole to keep out vermin. Now, at last,
 I own heaven's angels round her life suffice
 To fight the rats of our society,
 Without this Romney: I can see at last; [which
 And here is ended my pretension
 The most pretended. Over-proud of course.
 Even so!—but not so stupid . . . blind . . . that I,
 Whom thus the great Taskmaster of the world
 Has set to meditate mistaken work,
 My dreary face against a dim blank wall
 Throughout man's natural lifetime, —could pretend
 Or wish . . . O love, I have loved you! O my soul,
 I have lost you!—but I swear by all yourself,
 And all you might have been to me these years
 If that June-morning had not failed my hope,—
 I'm not so bestial, to regret that day,
 This night,—this night, which still to you is fair;

Nay, not so blind, Aurora. I attest
 Those stars above us which I cannot see' . . .
 'You cannot.' . .
 'That if Heaven itself should stoop,
 Remix the lots, and give me another chance,
 I'd say, 'No other!'—I'd record my blank,
 Aurora never should be wife of mine.'
 'Not see the stars?'
 "'Tis worse still, not to see
 To find your hand, although we're parting, dear.
 A moment let me hold it ere we part;
 And understand my last words—these at last!
 I would not have you thinking when I'm gone
 That Romney dared to hanker for your love
 In thought or vision, if attainable,
 (Which certainly for me it never was) [day,
 And wished to use it for a dog to—
 To help the blind man stumbling.
 God forbid!
 And now I know he held you in his palm,
 And kept you open-eyed to all my faults,
 To save you at least from such a dreary end.
 Believe me, dear, that if I had known like Him
 What loss was coming on me, I had done
 As well in this as He has.—Farewell you
 Who are still my light,—farewell!
 How late it is;
 I know that, now: you've been too patient, sweet,

I will blow my whistle toward the
 lane,
 And some one comes..the same
 who brought me here.
 Get in—Good night.'
 'A moment. Heavenly Christ!
 A moment. Speak once, Romney.
 'Tis not true.
 I hold your hands, I look into your
 face—
 You see me?'
 'No more than the blessed stars.
 Be blessed too, Aurora. Nay, my
 sweet,
 You tremble. Tender-hearted!
 Do you mind
 Of yore, dear, how you used to
 cheat old John,
 And let the mice out slyly from his
 traps,
 Until he [marvelled at the soul in
 mice
 Which took the cheese and left the
 snare? The same
 Dear soft heart always! 'Twas
 for this I grieved
 Howe's letter never reached you.
 Ah, you had heard
 Of illness,—not the issue . . . not the
 extent:
 My life long sick with tossing up
 and down,
 The sudden revulsion in the blaz-
 ing house,
 The strain and struggle both of
 body and soul,
 Which left fire running in my veins
 for blood:
 Scarce lacked that thunderbolt of
 the falling beam
 Which nicked me on the forehead
 as I passed
 The gallery-door with a burden.
 Say heaven's bolt,
 Not William Erle's, not Marian's
 father's—tramp
 And poacher, whom I found for
 what he was,

And, eager for her sake to rescue
 him,
 Forth swept from the open high-
 way of the world,
 Road-dust and all,—till like a
 woodland boar
 Most naturally unwilling to be
 tamed,
 He notched me with his tooth.
 But not a word
 To Marian! and I do not think,
 besides,
 He turned the tilting of the beam
 my way,—
 And if he laughed, as many swear,
 poor wretch, [deep.
 Nor he nor I supposed the hurt so
 We'll hope his next laugh may be
 merrier,
 In a better cause.'
 'Blind, Romney?'
 'Ah, my friend,
 You'll learn to say it in a cheerful
 voice.
 I, too, at first desponded. To be
 blind,
 Turned out of nature, mulcted as
 a man,
 Refused the daily largesse of the
 sun
 To humble creatures! When the
 fever's heat
 Dropped from me, as the flame
 did from my house,
 And left me ruined like it, stripped
 of all [life,
 The hues and shapes of aspectable
 A mere bare blind stone in the
 blaze of day,
 A man, upon the outside of the
 earth,
 As dark as ten feet under, in the
 grave,—
 Why that seemed hard.'
 'No hope?'
 'A tear! you weep,
 Divine Aurora? tears upon my
 hand!

I've seen you weeping for a mouse-
 a bird,
 But, weep for me, Aurora? Yes,
 there's hope.
 Not hope of sight,—I could be
 learned, dear,
 And tell you in what Greek and
 Latin name
 The visual nerve is withered to the
 root,
 Though the outer eyes appear in-
 different,
 Unspotted in their crystals. But
 there's hope.
 The spirit, from behind this de-
 throned sense,
 Sees, waits in patience till the walls
 break up
 From which the bas-relief and fres-
 co have dropt :
 There' shope. The man here, once
 so arrogant
 And restless, so ambitious, for his
 part,
 Of dealing with statistically packed
 Disorders, (from a pattern on his
 nail,
 And packing such things quite an-
 other way,—
 Is now contented. From his per-
 sonal loss
 He has come to hope for others
 when they lose,
 And wear a gladder faith in what
 we gain . . .
 Through bitter experiences, com-
 pensation sweet,
 Like that tear, sweetest. I am
 quiet now,
 As tender surely for the suffering
 world, [learn,
 But quiet,—sitting at the wall to
 Content henceforth to do the thing
 I can :
 For, though as powerless, said I,
 as a stone,
 A stone can still give shelter to a
 worm,

And it is worth while being a stone
 for that :
 There's hope, Aurora.'
 'Is there hope for me ?
 For me?—and is there room be-
 neath the stone
 For such a worm?—And if I came
 and said . . .
 What all this weeping scarce will
 let me say, [at all
 And yet what women cannot say
 But weeping bitterly . . . (the pride
 keeps up,
 Until the heart breaks under it) . . .
 I love,—
 I love you, Romney' . . .
 'Silence!' he exclaimed.
 'A woman's pity sometimes makes
 her mad.
 A man's distraction must not cheat
 his soul
 To take advantage of it. Yet, 'tis
 hard—
 Farewell, Aurora.'
 'But I love you, sir'
 And when a woman says she loves
 a man,
 The man must hear her, though he
 love her not,
 Which . . . hush! . . . he has leave to
 answer in his turn :
 She will not surely blame him. As
 for me,
 You call it pity,—think I'm gener-
 ous ?
 'Twere somewhat easier, for a wom-
 an proud
 As I am, and I'm very vilely proud,
 To let it pass as such, and press on
 you
 Love born of pity,—seeing that ex-
 cellent loves
 Are born so, often, nor the quick-
 lier die,
 And this would set me higher by
 the head
 Than now I stand. No matter
 let the truth

Stand high ; Aurora must be humble : no,
 My love's not pity merely. Obviously
 I'm not a generous woman, never was,
 Or else, of old, I had not looked so near
 To weights and measures, grudging you the power
 To give, as first I scorned your power to judge
 For me, Aurora : I would have no gifts,
 Forsooth, but God's-- and I would use *them* too
 According to my pleasure and my choice,
 As He and I were equals,—you below,
 Excluded from that level of interchange
 Admitting benefaction. You were wrong
 In much ? you said so. I was wrong in most.
 Oh, most ! You only thought to rescue men
 By half-means, half-way, seeing half their wants,
 While thinking nothing of your personal gain.
 But I who saw the human nature broad
 At both sides, comprehending too the soul's,
 And all the high necessities of Art,
 Betrayed the thing I saw, and wronged my own life
 For which I pleaded. Passioned to exalt
 The artist's instinct in me at the cost
 Of putting down the woman's—*I forgot*
 No perfect artist is developed here
 From any imperfect woman. **Flow-
 er from root,**

And spiritual from natural, grade by grade
 In all our life. A handful of the earth
 To make God's image ! the despised poor earth,
 The healthy odorous earth,—I missed, with it,
 The divine Breath that blows the nostrils out
 To ineffable inflatus : ay, the breath
 Which love is. Art is much, but Love is more.
 O Art, my Art, thou'rt much, but Love is more !
 Art symbolises heaven, but Love is God
 And makes heaven. I, Aurora, fell from mine ;
 I would not be a woman like the rest, [love
 A simple woman who believes in
 And owns the right of love because she loves,
 And, hearing she's beloved, is satisfied
 With what contents God : I must analyse,
 Confront, and question ; just as if a fly
 Refused to warm itself in any sun
 Till such was *in leone* : I must fret
 Forsooth, because the month was only May ;
 Be faithless of the kind of proffered love,
 And captious, lest it miss my dignity,
 And scornful, that my lover sought a wife
 To use . . . to use ! O Romney, O my love,
 I am changed since then, changed wholly,—for indeed
 If now you'd stoop so low to take my love,
 And use it roughly, without stint or spare.

As men use common things with
 more behind,
 (And, in this, ever would be more
 behind)
 To any mean and ordinary end,—
 The joy would set me like a star,
 in heaven,
 So high up, I should shine because
 of height
 And not of virtue. Yet in one re-
 spect,
 Just one, beloved, I am in no wise
 changed :
 I love you, loved you . . . loved you
 first and last,
 And love you on for ever. Now
 I know
 I loved you always, Romney.
 She who died
 Knew that, and said so; Lady
 Waldemar
 knows that; . . . and Marian: I had
 known the same
 Except that I was prouder than I
 knew,
 And not so honest. Ay, and as I
 live,
 I should have died so, crushing in
 my hand
 This rose of love, the wasp inside
 and all,
 Ignoring ever to my soul and you
 Both rose and pain,—except for
 this great loss,
 This great despair,—to stand before
 your face
 And know you do not see me where
 I stand,
 You think, perhaps, I am not chang-
 ed from pride,
 And that I chiefly bear to say such
 words
 Because you cannot shame me with
 your eyes?
 O calm, grand eyes, extinguished
 in a storm,
 Blown out like lights o'er melan-
 choly seas,

Though shrieked for by the ship-
 wrecked,—O my Dark,
 My cloud,—to go before me every
 day [ness,—
 While I go ever toward the wilder-
 I would that you could see me bare
 to the soul!
 If this be pity, 'tis so for myself,
 And not for Romney; *he* can stand
 alone ;
 A man like *him* is never overcome :
 No woman like me, counts him pit-
 iable
 While saints applaud him. He
 mistook the world :
 But I mistook my own heart,—and
 that slip
 Was fatal. Romney,—will you
 leave me here ?
 So wrong, so proud, so weak, so
 unconsolated, [so,
 So mere a woman!—and I love you
 I love you, Romney.'
 Could I see his face,
 I wept so? Did I drop against his
 breast,
 Or did his arm constrain me?
 Were my cheeks [his?
 Hot, overflowed, with my tears, or
 And which of our two large explo-
 sive hearts
 So shook me? That, I know not.
 There were words
 That broke in utterance . . . melted,
 in the fire ;
 Embrace, that was convulsion, . .
 then a kiss
 As long and as silent as the ecstat-
 ic night,
 And deep, deep, shuddering breaths,
 which meant beyond
 Whatever could be told by word or
 . . . kiss.
 But what he said . I have written
 day by day,
 With somewhat even writing. Did
 I think

That such a passionate rain would
 intercept
 And dash this last page? What he
 said, indeed,
 I fain would write it down here like
 the rest
 To keep it in my eyes, as in my
 ears,
 The heart's sweet scripture, to be
 read at night
 When weary, or at morning when
 afraid,
 And lean my heaviest oath on when
 I swear
 That when all's done, all tried, all
 counted here,
 All great arts, and all good philo-
 sophies,
 This love just puts its hand out in a
 dream,
 And straight outstretches all things.
 What he said,
 I fain would write. But if an angel
 spoke
 In thunder, should we, haply, know
 much more
 Than that it thundered? If a
 cloud came down
 And wrapt us wholly, could we
 draw its shape,
 As if on the outside and not over-
 come?
 And so he spake. His breath
 against my face
 Confused his words, yet made them
 more intense,—
 As when the sudden finger of the
 wind
 Will wipe a row of single city-lamps
 To a pure white line of flame, more
 luminous
 Because of obliteration; more in-
 tense,
 The intimate presence carrying in
 itself [souls
 Complete communication, as with
 Who, having put the body off, per-
 ceive

Through simply being. Thus 'twas
 granted me
 To know he loved me to the depth
 and height
 Of such large natures, ever compe-
 tent [land,
 With grand horizons by the sea or
 To love's grand sunrise. Small
 spheres hold small fires;
 But he loved largely, as a man can
 love
 Who, baffled in his love, dares live
 his life,
 Accept the ends which God loves
 for his own,
 And lift a constant aspect.
 From the day
 I brought to England my poor
 searching face
 (An orphan even of my father's
 grave)
 He had loved me, watched me,
 watched his soul in mine,
 Which in me grew and heightened
 into love.
 For he, a boy still, had been told
 the tale
 Of how a fairy bride from Italy,
 With smells of oleanders in her
 hair,
 Was coming through the vines to
 touch his hand;
 Whereat the blood of boyhood on
 the palm
 Made sudden heats. And when at
 last I came,
 And lived before him, lived, and
 rarely smiled,
 He smiled and loved me for the
 thing I was,
 As every child will love the year's
 first flower,
 (Not certainly the fairest of the
 year,
 But, in which, the complete year
 seems to blow)
 The poor sad snowdrop,—growing
 between drifts,

Mysterious medium 'twixt the plant
 and frost,
 So faint with winter while so quick
 with spring,
 So doubtful if to thaw itself away
 With that snow near it. Not that
 Romney Leigh
 Had loved me coldly. If I thought
 so once,
 I was as if I had held my hand in
 fire
 And shook for cold. But now I
 understood
 For ever, that the very fire and
 heat
 Of troubling passion in him burned
 him clear,
 And shaped to dubious order, word
 and act.
 That, just because he loved me
 over all,
 All wealth, all lands, all social priv-
 ilege,
 To which chance made him unex-
 pected heir,
 And, just because on all these lesser
 gifts,
 Constrained by conscience and the
 sense of wrong
 He had stamped with steady hand
 God's arrow-mark
 Of dedication to the human need,
 He thought it should be so too,
 with his love :
 He, passionately loving, would bring
 down
 His love, his life, his best, (because
 the best)
 His bride of dreams, who walked
 so still and high
 Through flowery poems as through
 meadow-grass,
 The dust of golden lilies on her
 feet,
 That *she* should walk beside him
 on the rocks
 In all that clang and hewing out of
 men.

And help the work of help which
 was his life,
 And prove he kept back nothing,
 —not his soul.
 And when I failed him,—for I
 failed him, I—
 And when it seemed he had missed
 my love,—he thought,
 'Aurora makes room for a work-
 ing-noon ;'
 And so, self-girded with torn strips
 of hope,
 Took up his life as if it were for
 death,
 (Just capable of one heroic aim,)
 And threw it in the thickest of
 the world,
 At which men laughed as if he had
 drowned a dog.
 No wonder,—since Aurora failed
 him first !
 The morning and the evening made
 his day.

But oh, the night ! oh, bitter-sweet !
 oh, sweet !
 O dark, O moon and stars, O ec-
 stasy
 Of darkness ! O great mystery of
 love,
 In which absorbed, loss, anguish,
 treason's self
 Enlarges rapture,—as a pebble
 dropt
 In some full wine-cup over-brims
 the wine !
 While we two sate together, leaned
 that night
 So close, my very garments crept
 and thrilled
 With strange electric life ; and both
 my cheeks
 Grew red, then pale, with touches
 from my hair
 In which his breath was ; while the
 golden moon
 Was hung before our face as the
 badge

Of some sublime inherited despair,
 Since ever to be seen by only one,—
 A voice said, low and rapid as a
 sigh,

Yet breaking, I felt conscious, from
 a smile,

‘ Thank God, who made me blind,
 to make me see !

Shine on, Aurora, dearest light of
 souls,

Which rul’st for evermore both day
 and night !

I am happy.’

I flung closer to his breast,
 As sword that, after battle, flings to
 sheath ;

And, in that hurtle of united souls,
 The mystic motions which in com-
 mon moods

Are shut beyond our sense, broke
 in on us,

And, as we sate, we felt the old
 earth spin,

And all the starry turbulence of
 worlds

Swing round us in their audient
 circles, till

If that same golden moon were
 overhead !

Or if beneath our feet, we did not
 know.

And then calm, equal, smooth with
 weights of joy

His voice rose, as some chief musi-
 cian’s song

Amid the old Jewish temple’s Selah-
 pause,

And bade me mark how we two
 met at last

Upon this moon-bathed promon-
 tory of earth,

To give up much on each side, then
 take all.

‘ Beloved,’ it sang, ‘ we must be here
 to work ;

And men who work can only work
 for men,

And, not to work in vain, must
 comprehend

Humanity, and so work humanly,
 And raise men’s bodies still by
 raising souls,

As God did first.’

‘ But stand upon the earth,’
 I said, ‘ to raise them,—(this is hu-
 man too ;

There’s nothing high which has
 not first been low,

My humbleness, said One, has made
 me great !)

As God did last.’

‘ And work all silently,
 And simply,’ he returned, ‘ as God
 does all ;

Distort our nature never for our
 Nor count our right hands stronger
 for being hoofs.

The man most man, with tenderest
 human hands,

Works best for men,—as God in
 Nazareth.’

He paused upon the word, and then
 resumed :

‘ Fewer programmes, we who have
 no prescience,

Fewer systems, we who are held
 and do not hold.

Less mapping out of masses to be
 saved,

By nations or by sexes. Fourier’s
 void,

And Comte absurd,—and Cabet,
 puerile.

Subsists no law of life outside of
 No perfect manners, without Chris-
 tian souls :

The Christ himself had been no
 Lawgiver,

Unless he had given the life, too,
 with the law.’

I echoed thoughtfully—‘ The man,
 most man,

Works best for men : and, if most
 man indeed,

He gets his manhood plainest from
 his soul :
 While obviously this stringent soul
 itself
 Obeys our old law of development ;
 The Spirit ever witnessing in ours,
 And Love, the soul of soul, within
 the soul,
 Evolving it sublimely. First, God's
 love.'

' And next,' he smiled, ' the love of
 wedded souls,
 Which still presents that mystery's
 counterpart.
 Sweet shadow-rose, upon the water
 of life,
 Of such a mystic substance, Sharon
 gave
 A name to ! human, vital, fructu-
 ous rose,
 Whose calyx holds the multitude
 of leaves.
 Loves filial, loves fraternal, neigh-
 bour-loves,
 And civic, . . all fair petals, all good
 scents,
 All reddened, sweetened from one
 central Heart ! '

' Alas,' I cried, ' it was not long ago,
 You swore this very social rose
 smelt ill.'

' Alas,' he answered, ' is it a rose
 at all ?
 The filial's thankless, the fraternal's
 hard,
 The rest is lost. I do but stand
 and think,
 Across the waters of a troubled
 life
 The Flower of Heaven so vainly
 overhangs,
 What perfect counterpart would be
 in sight,
 If tanks were clearer. Let us clean
 the tubes,
 And wait for rains. O poet, O my
 love,

Since *I* was too ambitious in my
 deed,
 And thought to distance all men in
 success,
 Till God came on me, marked the
 place, and said,
 ' Ill-doer, henceforth keep within
 this line,
 Attempting less than others,'—and
 I stand
 And work among Christ's little
 ones, content,—
 Come thou, my compensation, my
 dear sight,
 My morning star, my morning ! rise
 and shine,
 And touch my hills with radiance
 not their own.
 Shine out for two, Aurora, and fulfil
 My falling-short that must be !
 work for two,
 As I, though thus restrained, for
 two, shall love !
 Gaze on, with inscient vision to-
 ward the sun,
 And, from his visceral heat, pluck
 out the roots
 Of light beyond him. Art's a serv-
 ice,—mark :
 A silver key is given to thy clasp,
 And thou shalt stand unwearied,
 night and day,
 And fix it in the hard, slow-turning
 wards,
 And open, so, that intermediate
 door
 Betwixt the different planes of sen-
 suous form
 And form insenuous, that inferior
 men
 May learn to feel on still through
 these to those,
 And bless thy ministration. The
 world waits
 For help. Beloved, let us love so
 well,
 Our work shall still be better for
 our love,

<p>And still our love be sweeter for our work, And both commended, for the sake of each, By all true workers and true lovers born. Now press thy clarion on thy woman's lip (Love's holy kiss shall still keep consecrate) And breathe the fine keen breath along the brass, And blow all class-walls level as Jericho's Past Jordan ; crying from the top of souls, To souls, that here assembled on earth's flats, To get them to some purer eminence Than any hitherto beheld for clouds ! What height we know not,—but the way we know, And how by mounting ever, we attain, And so climb on. It is the hour for souls ; That bodies, leavened by the will and love, Be lightened to redemption. The world's old ; But the old world waits the time to be renewed : Toward which, new hearts in in- dividual growth Must quicken, and increase to mul- titude</p>	<p>In new dynasties of the race of men,— Developed whence, shall grow spontaneously New churches, new œconomies, new laws Admitting freedom, new societies Excluding falsehood. HE shall make all new.'</p> <p>My Romney !—Lifting up my hand in his, As wheeled by Seeing spirits toward the east, He turned instinctively,—where, faint and far, Along the tingling desert of the sky, Beyond the circle of the conscious hills, Were laid in jasper-stone as clear as glass The first foundations of that new, near Day Which should be builded out of heaven to God. He stood a moment with erected brows, [gazed : In silence, as a creature might, who Stood calm, and fed his blind, ma- jestic eyes Upon the thought of perfect noon. And when I saw his soul saw,—' Jasper first, I said, ' And second, sapphire ; third, chal- cedony ; The rest in order, . . last, an ame- thyst.</p>
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LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

A poet writes to his friend. Place—A room in Wycombe Hall. Time—Late in the evening.

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I would lean my spirit o'er you ;
Down the purple of this chamber, tears should scarcely run at will :
I am humbled who was humble ! Friend,—I bow my head before
you !

You should lead me to my peasants !—but their faces are too still.

There's a lady—an earl's daughter ; she is proud and she is noble :
And she treads the crimson carpet, and she breathes the perfumed air ;
And a kingly blood sends glances up her princely eye to trouble,
And the shadow of a monarch's crown is softened in her hair.

She has halls among the woodlands, she has castles by the breakers,
She has farms and she has manors, she can threaten and command,
And the palpitating engines snort in steam across her acres,
As they mark upon the blasted heaven the measure of her land.

There are none of England's daughters who can show a prouder presence ;

Upon princely suitors praying, she has looked in her disdain :
She has sprung of English nobles, I was born of English peasants ;
What was I that I should love her—save for competence to pain !

I was only a poor poet, made for singing at her casement,
As the finches or the thrushes, while she thought of other things.
Oh, she walked so high above me, she appeared to my abasement,
In her lovely silken murmur, like an angel clad in wings !

Many vassals bow before her as her carriage sweeps their door-ways ;
She has blest their little children,—as a priest or queen were she.
Far too tender or too cruel far, her smile upon the poor was,
For I thought it was the same smile which she used to smile on me.

She has voters in the commons, she has lovers in the palace—
And of all the fair court-ladies, few have jewels half as fine :
Oft the prince has named her beauty, 'twixt the red wine and the chalice :

Oh, and what was I to love her ? my Beloved, my Geraldine !

Yet I could not choose but love her I was born to poet uses—
To love all things set above me, all of good and all of fair :
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley, we are wont to call the Muses—
And in nympholeptic climbing, poets pass from mount to star.

And because I was a poet, and because the people praised me,
With their critical deduction for the modern writer's fault ;
I could sit at rich men's tables,—though the courtesies that raised me,
Still suggested clear between us the pale spectrum of the salt.

And they praised me in her presence :—' Will your book appear this
summer ? '

Then returning to each other ' Yes, our plans are for the moors ; '
Then with whisper dropped behind me—' There he is ! the latest
comer ! '

Oh, she only likes his verses . what is over, she endures.

' Quite low born ! self-educated . somewhat gifted though by nature—
And we make a point by asking him—of being very kind ; '
You may speak, he does not hear you ; and besides, he writes no sa-
tire,—

All these serpents kept by charmers, leave their natural sting behind. '

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I stood up there among them,
Till as frost intense will burn you, the cold scorning scorched my brow
When a sudden silver speaking, gravely cadenced, overrung them.
And a sudden silken stirring touched my inner nature through.

I looked upward and beheld her ! With a calm and regnant spirit,
Slowly round she swept her eyelids, and said clear before them all—
' Have you such superfluous honour, sir, that able to confer it
You will come down, Mr. Bertram, as my guest to Wycombe Hall ? '

Here she paused,—she had been paler at the first word of her speak-
ing ;

But because a silence followed it, blushed somewhat as for shame ;
Then, as scorning her own feeling, resumed calmly—' I am seeking
More distinction than these gentlemen think worthy of my claim.

' Nevertheless, you see, I seek it—not because I am a woman, '
(Here her smile sprang like a fountain, and, so, overflowed her mouth)
' But because my woods in Sussex have some purple shades at gloam-
ing

Which are worthy of a king in state, or poet in his youth.

' I invite you, Mr. Bertram, to no scene for worldly speeches—
Sir, I scarce should dare—but only where God asked the thrushes
first—

And if *you* will sing beside them, in the covert of my beeches,
I will thank you for the woodlands, . . . for the human world at worst. '

Then she smiled around right childly, then she gazed around right
 queenly ;
 And I bowed—I could not answer ! Alternate light and gloom—
 While as one who quells the lions, with a steady eye serenely,
 She, with level fronting eyelids, passed out stately from the room.

Oh, the blessed woods of Sussex, I can hear them still around me.
 With their leafy tide of greenery still rippling up the wind !
 Oh, the cursed woods of Sussex ! where the hunter's arrow found me,
 When a fair face and a tender voice had made me mad and blind !

In that ancient hall of Wycombe, thronged the numerous guests in-
 vited,

And the lovely London ladies trod the floors with gliding feet ;
 And their voices low with fashion, not with feeling, softly freighted
 All the air about the windows, with elastic laughters sweet.

For at eve, the open windows flung their light out on the terrace,
 Which the floating orbs of curtains did with gradual shadow sweep ;
 While the swans upon the river, fed at morning by the heiress,
 Trembled downward through their snowy wings at music in their sleep.

And there evermore was music, both of instrument and singing ;
 Till the finches of the shrubberies grew restless in the dark ;
 But the cedars stood up motionless, each in a moonlight ringing,
 And the deer, half in the glimmer, strewed the hollows of the park.

And though sometimes she would bind me with her silver-corded
 speeches,
 To commix my words and laughter with the converse and the jest,
 Oft I sat apart, and gazing on the river through the beeches,
 Heard, as pure the swans swam down it, her pure voice o'erfloat the
 rest.

In the morn'ng, horn of huntsman, hoof of steed, and laugh of rider,
 Spread out cheery from the court-yard till we lost them in the hills ;
 While herself and other ladies, and her suitors left beside her,
 Went a-wandering up the gardens through the laurels and abeles.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown grass—bareheaded - with the flow
 ing
 Of the virginal white vesture gathered closely to her throat ;
 With the golden ringlets in her neck just quickened by her going,
 And appearing to breathe sun for air, and doubting if to float,—

With a branch of dewy maple, which her right hand held above her
 And which trembled a green shadow in betwixt her and the skies,
 As she turned her face in going, thus, she drew me on to love her,
 And to worship the divineness of the smile hid in her eyes.

For her eyes alone smile constantly : her lips have serious sweetness,
 And her front is calm—the dimple rarely ripples on her cheek :
 But her deep blue eyes smile constantly,—as if they in discreetness
 Kept the secret of a happy dream she did not care to speak.

Thus she drew me the first morning, out across into the garden :
 And I walked among her noble friends and could not keep behind ;
 Spake she unto all and unto me—' Behold, I am the warden
 Of the song birds in these lindens, which are cages to their mind.

' But within this swarded circle, into which the lime-walk brings us—
 Whence the beeches rounded greenly, stand away in reverent fear ;
 I will let no music enter, saving what the fountain sings us,
 Which the lilies round the basin may seem pure enough to hear.

' The live air that waves the lilies waves this slender jet of water
 Like a holy thought sent feebly up from soul of fasting saint !
 Whereby lies a marble Silence, sleeping ! (Lough the sculptor wrought
 her,)
 So asleep she is forgetting to say *Hush!*—a fancy quaint !

' Mark how heavy white her eyelids ! not a dream between them lingers
 And the left hand's index droppeth from the lips upon the cheek :
 And the right hand,—with the symbol rose held slack within the fingers,—
 Has fallen back within the basin—yet this Silence will not speak !

' That the essential meaning growing may exceed the special symbol,
 Is the thought as I conceive it : it applies more high and low.
 Our true noblemen will often through right nobleness grow humble,
 And assert an inward honour by denying outward show.'

' Nay, your Silence,' said I, ' truly holds her symbol rose but slackly,
 Yet *she holds it*—or would scarcely be a Silence to our ken !
 And your nobles wear their ermine on the outside, or walk blackly
 In the presence of the social law as most ignoble men.

' Let the poets dream such dreaming ! Madam, in these British Islands,
 'Tis the substance that wanes ever, 'tis the symbol that exceeds ;
 Soon we shall have nought but symbol ! and for statues like this Silence,
 Shall accept the rose's image—in another case, the weed's.'

' Not so quickly !' she retorted,—' I confess where'er you go, you
 Find for things, names—shows for actions, and pure gold for honour
 clear ;
 But when all is run to symbol in the Social, I will throw you
 The world's book which now reads drily, and sit down with Silence
 here.'

Half in playfulness she spoke, I thought, and half in indignation ;
 Friends who listened laughed her words off while her lovers deemed her
 fair.

A fair woman—flushed with feeling, in her noble-lighted station
 Near the statue's white reposing—and both bathed in sunny air !

With the trees round, not so distant but you heard their vernal murmur,
 And beheld in light and shadow the leaves in and outward move ;
 And the little fountain leaping toward the sun-heart to be warmer,
 And recoiling in a tremble from the too much light above.

'Tis a picture for remembrance ! and thus, morning after morning,
 Did I follow as she drew me by the spirit to her feet—
 Why, her grayhound followed also ! dogs—we both were dogs for
 scorning—
 To be sent back when she pleased it, and her path lay through the wheat.

And thus, morning after morning, spite of vows and spite of sorrow,
 Did I follow at her drawing, while the week-days passed along ;
 Just to feed the swans this noontide, or to see the fawns to-morrow,
 Or to teach the hill-side echo some sweet Tuscan in a song.

Ay, for sometimes on the hill-side, while we sat down in the gowans,
 With the forest green behind us, and its shadow cast before ;
 And the river running under ; and across it from the rowans
 A brown partridge whirring near us, till we felt the air it bore—

There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
 Made by Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of our own ;
 Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle interflowings
 Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the leaf is folded down !—

Or at times a modern volume.—Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted idyl,
 Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
 Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate,' which, if cut deep down the
 middle,
 Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.

Or at times I read there, hoarsely, some new poem of my making—
 Poets ever fail in reading their own verses to their worth,—
 For the echo in you breaks upon the words which you are speaking,
 And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate through which you drive them
 forth.

After, when we were grown tired of books, and silence round us flinging
 A slow arm of sweet compression, felt with beatings at the breast,
 She would break out on a sudden, in a gush of woodland singing,
 Like a child's emotion in a god—a naiad tired of rest.

Oh, to see or hear her singing ! scarce I know which is divinest—
 For her looks sing too—she modulates her gestures on the tune ;
 And her mouth stirs with the song, like song ; and when the notes are
 finest,

'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal light and seem to swell them on.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked ! her voice, so cadenced in the talking
 Made another singing—of the soul ! a music without bars—
 While the leafy sounds of woodlands, humming round where we were
 walking,

Brought interposition worthy sweet,—as skies about the stars.

And she spake such good thoughts natural, as if she always thought
 them—

And had sympathies so rapid, open, free as bird on branch
 Just as ready to fly east as west, whichever way besought them,
 In the birchen wood a chirrup, or the cock-crow in the grange.

In her utmost rightness there is truth—and often she speaks lightly,
 Has a grace in being gay, which even mournful souls approve,
 For the root of some grave earnest thought is under-struck so rightly,
 As to justify the foliage and the waving flowers above.

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather ! upon all things—substance—
 shadow—

Of the sheep that browsed the grasses—of the reapers in the corn—
 Of the little children from the schools, seen winding through the
 meadow—

Of the poor rich world beyond them, still kept poorer by its scorn.

So of men, and so, of letters—books are men of higher stature,
 And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear :
 So, of mankind in the abstract, which grows slowly into nature,
 Yet will lift the cry of 'progress,' as it trod from sphere to sphere.

And her custom was to praise me when I said,—' The Age culls simples
 With a broad clown's back turned broadly to the glory of the stars—
 We are gods by our own reck'ning,—and may well shut up the temples
 And wield on, amid the incense-steam, the thunder of our cars.

' For we throw out acclamations of self-thanking, self-admiring,
 With, at every mile run faster,—' O the wondrous wondrous age,
 Little thinking if we work our SOULS as nobly as our iron,
 Or if angels will commend us at the goal of pilgrimage.

' Why, what *is* this patient entrance into nature's deep resources,
 But the child's most gradual learning to walk upright without bane ?
 When we drive out from the cloud of steam, majestic white horses,
 Are we greater than the first men who led black ones by the mane ?

'If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we struck the stars in rising,
 If we wrapped the globe intensely with a hot electric breath,
 'Twere but power within our *tether*—no new spirit-power comprising—
 And in life we were not greater men, nor bolder men in death.'

She was patient with my talking; and I loved her—loved her *certes*,
 As I loved all Heavenly objects, with uplifted eyes and hands!
 As I loved pure inspirations—loved the graces, loved the virtues,
 In a Love content with writing his own name on desert sands.

Or at least I thought so purely!—thought no idiot Hope was raising
 Any crown to crown Love's silence—silent Love that sat alone—
 Out, alas! the stag is like me—he, that tries to go on grazing
 With the great deep gun-wound in his neck, then reels with sudden
 moan.

It was thus I reeled! I told you that her hand had many suitors—
 But she smiles them down imperially, as Venus did the waves—
 And with such a gracious coldness, that they cannot press their futures
 On the present of her courtesy, which yieldingly enslaves.

And this morning, as I sat alone within the inner chamber
 With the great saloon beyond it lost in pleasant thought serene—
 For I had been reading Camoens—that poem you remember,
 Which his lady's eyes are praised in, as the sweetest ever seen.

And the book lay open, and my thought flew from it, taking from it
 A vibration and impulsion to an end beyond its own,
 As the branch of a green osier, when a child would overcome it,
 Springs up freely from his clasping and goes swinging in the sun.

As I mused I heard a murmur,—it grew deep as it grew longer—
 Speakers using earnest language—'Lady Geraldine, you *would!*'
 And I heard a voice that pleaded ever on, in accents stronger
 As a sense of reason gave it power to make its rhetoric good.

Well I knew that voice—it was an earl's, of soul that matched his
 station—

Soul completed into lordship—might and right read on his brow:
 Very finely courteous—far too proud to doubt his domination
 Of the common people,—he atones for grandeur by a bow.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle, cold blue eyes, of less expression
 Than resistance, coldly casting off the looks of other men,
 As steel, arrows,—inelastic lips, which seem to taste possession,
 And be cautious lest the common air should injure or distract.

For the rest, accomplished, upright—ay, and standing by his order
 With a bearing not ungraceful; fond of art, and letters too;
 Just a good man made a proud man,—as the sandy rocks that border
 A wild coast, by circumstances, in a regnant ebb and flow.

Thus I knew that voice—I heard it—and I could not help the hearkening :
 In the room I stood up blindly, and my burning heart within
 Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses, till they ran on all sides darkening,
 And scorched, weighed like melted metal round my feet that stood
 therein.

And that voice, I heard it pleading, for love's sake—for wealth, position,
 For the sake of liberal uses, and great actions to be done—
 And she interrupted gently, 'Nay, my lord, the old tradition
 Of your Normans, by some worthier hand than mine is, should be won.'

'Ah, that white hand,' he said quickly,—and in his he either drew it
 Or attempted—for with gravity and instance she replied—
 'Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best eschew it,
 And pass on like friends, to other points less easy to decide.'

What he said again, I know not. It is likely that his trouble
 Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow scorn—
 'And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall be noble,
 Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was born.'

There, I maddened! her words stung me! Life swept through me into
 fever,

And my soul sprang up astonished; sprang full-statured in an hour :
 Know you what it is when anguish, with apocalyptic NEVER,
 To a Pythian height dilates you,—and despair sublimes to power?

From my brain the soul-wings budded!—waved a flame about my
 body,

Whence conventions coiled to ashes: I felt self-drawn out, as man,
 From amalgamate false natures; and I saw the skies grow ruddy
 With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits can.

I was mad—inspired—say either! anguish worketh inspiration—
 Was a man or beast—perhaps so, for the tiger roars when speared;
 And I walked on, step by step, along the level of my passion—
 Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never feared.

He had left her,—peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming—
 But for *her*—she half arose, then sat—grew scarlet and grew pale :
 Oh she trembled!—'tis so always with a worldly man or woman
 In the presence of true spirits—what else *can* they do but quail?

Oh, she fluttered like a tame bird, in among its forest brothers
 Far too strong for it! then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands—
 And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others!
 I, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted though leaf-verdant,
Trode them down with words of shaming,—all the purple and the gold,
All the 'landed stakes' and lordships—all that spirits pure and ardent
Are cast out of love and honour because chancing not to hold.

'For myself I do not argue,' said I, 'though I love you, madam;
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have trod.
And this age shows to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam,
Than directly, by profession, simple infidels to God.

'Yet, O God,' I said, 'O grave,' I said, 'O mother's heart and bosom,
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child!
We are fools to your deductions, in these figments of heart-closing!
We are traitors to your causes, in these sympathies defiled!

'Learn more reverence, madam, not for rank or wealth—*that* needs no
learning;

That comes quickly—quick as sin does, ay, and culminates to sin;
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me, 'tis a clay above your scorning,
With God's image stamped upon it, and God's kindling breath within.

'What right have you, madam, gazing in your palace mirror daily,
Getting so by heart your beauty which all others must adore,
While you draw the golden ringlets down your fingers, to vow gaily
You will wed no man that's only good to God,—and nothing more?

'Why, what right have you, made fair by that same God—the sweetest
woman

Of all women He has fashioned—with your lovely spirit-face,
Which would seem too near to vanish if its smile were not so human,
And your voice of holy sweetness, turning common words to grace,

'What right *can* you have, God's other works to scorn, despise, revile
them

In the gross, as mere men, broadly—not as *noble* men, forsooth,
As mere Parias of the outer world, forbidden to assoil them
In the hope of living, dying, near that sweetness of your mouth?

'Have you any answer, madam? If my spirit were less earthly,
If its instrument were gifted with a better silver string,
I would kneel down where I stand, and say—Behold me! I *am* worthy
Of thy loving, for I love thee! I am worthy as a king.

'As it is—your ermined pride, I swear, shall feel this stain upon her—
That I, poor, weak, tost with passion, scorned by me and you again.
Love you, Madam—dare to love you—to my grief and your dishonour—
To my endless desolation, and your impotent disdain!'

More mad words like these—more madness ! friend, I need not write them fuller ;

And I hear my hot soul dropping on the lines in showers of tears—
Oh, a woman ! friend, a woman ! Why, a beast had scarce been duller
Than roar bestial loud complaints against the shining of the spheres.

But at last there came a pause. I stood all vibrating with thunder
Which my soul had used. The silence drew her face up like a call.
Could you guess what word she uttered ? She looked up, as if in wonder,

With tears beaded on her lashes, and said ' Bertram ! ' it was all.

If she had cursed me—and she might have—or if even, with queenly bearing

Which at needs is used by women, she had risen up and said,
' Sir, you are my guest, and therefore I have given you a full hearing—
Now, beseech you, choose a name exacting somewhat less instead '—

I had borne it !—but that ' Bertram '—why it lies there on the paper
A mere word, without her accent,—and you cannot judge the weight
Of the calm which crushed my passion ! I seemed drowning in a vapor,—

And her gentleness destroyed me whom her scorn made desolate.

So, struck backward and exhausted by that inward flow of passion
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing, into forms of abstract truth,
With a logic agonising through unseemly demonstration,
And with youth's own anguish turning grimly gray the hairs of youth,—

By the sense accursed and instant, that if even I spake wisely
I spake basely—using truth,—if what I spake indeed was true—
To avenge wrong on a woman—*her*, who sat there weighing nicely
A full manhood's worth, found guilty of such deeds as I could do !—

With such wrong and wo exhausted—what I suffered and occasioned,—
As a wild horse through a city runs with lightning in his eyes,
And then dashing at a church's cold and passive wall, impassioned,
Strikes the death into his burning brain, and blindly drops and dies—

So I fell, struck down before her ! Do you blame me friend, for weakness ?

'Twas my strength of passion slew me !—fell before her like a stone ;
Fast the dreadful world rolled from me, on its roaring wheels of blackness !

When the light came I was lying in this chamber—and alone.

Oh, of course, she charged her lacqueys to bear out the sickly burden,
And to cast it from her scornful sight—but not *beyond* the gate—
She was too kind to be cruel, and too haughty not to pardon
Such a man as I—'twere something to be level to her hate.

But for *me*—you now are conscious why, my friend, I write this letter,
How my life is read all backward, and the charm of life undone!
I shall leave her house at dawn—I would to-night, if I were better—
And I charge my soul to hold my body strengthened for the sun.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I depart with no last gazes,
No weak moanings—one word only left in writing for her hands,
Out of reach of all derision, and some unavailing praises,
To make front against this anguish in the far and foreign lands.

Blame me not, I would not squander life in grief—I am abstemious:
I but nurse my spirit's falcon, that its wings may soar again:
There's no room for tears of weakness in the blind eyes of a Phemius:
'nto work the poet kneads them,—and he does not die *till then*.

CONCLUSION.

Bertram finished the last pages, while along the silence ever
Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell the tears on every leaf:
Having ended, he leans backward in his chair, with lips that quiver
From the deep unspoken, ay, and deep unwritten thoughts of grief.

Soh! how still the lady standeth! 'tis a dream!—a dream of mercies!
'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains, how she standeth still and pale!
'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies, sent to soften his self-curses—
Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the tossing of his wail.

'Eyes,' he said, 'now throbbing through me! are ye eyes that did undo
me?'

Shining eyes, like antique jewels set in Parian statue-stone!
Underneath that calm white forehead, are ye ever burning torrid
O'er the desolate sand-desert of my heart and life undone?'

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in the air, the purple curtain
Swelleth in and swelleth out around her motionless pale brows;
While the gliding of the river sends a rippling noise for ever
Through the open casement whitened by the moonlight's slant repose.

Said he—'Vision of a lady! stand there silent, stand there steady!
Now I see it plainly, plainly; now I cannot hope or doubt—
There, the brows of mild repression—there, the lips of silent passion,
Curved like an archer's bow to send the bitter arrows out.'

Ever evermore the while in slow silence she kept smiling,
And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding measured pace;
With her two white hands extended, as if praying one offended,
And a look of supplication, gazing earnest in his face.

Said he—' Wake me by no gesture,—sound of breath, or stir of vesture ;
 Let the blessed apparition melt not yet to its divine ! [in
 No approaching—hush ! no breathing ! or my heart must swoon to death
 That too utter life thou bringest—O thou dream of Geraldine !'

Ever, evermore the while in a slow silence she kept smiling—
 But the tears ran over lightly from her eyes, and tenderly ;
 ' Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me ? Is no woman far above me
 Found more worthy of thy poet-heart than such a one as I ?'

Said he—' I would dream so ever, like the flowing of that river,
 Flowing ever in a shadow greenly onward to the sea ;
 So, thou vision of all sweetness—princely to a full completeness,—
 Would my heart and life flow onward—deathward—through this dream
 of THEE !

Ever, evermore the while in slow silence she kept smiling,
 While the silver tears ran faster down the blushing of her cheeks ;
 Then with both her hands enfolding both of his, she softly told him,
 ' Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . . 'tis the vision only speaks.'

Softened, quickened to adore her, on his knee he fell before her—
 And she whispered low in triumph—' It shall be as I have sworn !
 Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble—noble, certes ;
 And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him lowly born !'

LORD WALTER'S WIFE.

' BUT why do you go ?' said the lady, while both sate under the yew,
 And her eyes were alive in their depth, as the kraken beneath the sea-blue.

' Because I fear you,' he answered ; ' because you are far too fair,
 And able to strangle my soul in a mesh of your gold-colored hair.'

' Oh, that,' she said, ' is no reason ! Such knots are quickly undone,
 And too much beauty, I reckon, is nothing but too much sun.'

' Yet, farewell so,' he answered ;—' the sun-stroke's fatal at times.
 I value your husband, Lord Walter, whose gallop rings still from the
 limes.'

' Oh, that,' she said, ' is no reason. You smell a rose through a fence :
 If two should smell it, what matter ? who grumbles ? and where's the
 pretence ?'

' But I,' he replied, ' have promised another, when love was free,
 To love her alone, alone. who alone and afar loves me.'

'Why, that,' she said, 'is no reason. Love's always free, I am told. Will you vow to be safe from the headache on Tuesday, and think it will hold?'

'But you,' he replied, 'have a daughter, a young little child, who was laid in your lap to be pure; so I leave you: the angels would make me afraid.'

'Oh, that,' she said, 'is no reason. The angels keep out of the way; And Dora, the child, observes nothing, although you should please me and stay.'

At which he rose up in his anger,—'Why, now, you no longer are fair! Why, now, you no longer are fatal, but ugly and hateful, I swear.'

As which she laughed out in her scorn,—'These men! Oh, these men overnice, Who are shocked if a colour not virtuous, is frankly put on by a vice.'

Her eyes blazed upon him—'And *you!* You bring us your vices so near That we smell them! You think in our presence a thought 'twould defame us to hear!

'What reason had you, and what right,—I appeal to your soul from my life,— To find me too fair as a woman? Why, sir, I am pure, and a wife.

'Is the day-star too fair above you? It burns you not. Dare you imply I brushed you more close than the star does, when Walter had set me as high?

'If a man finds a woman too fair, he means simply adapted too much To uses unlawful and fatal. The praise!—shall I thank you for such?

'Too fair!—not unless you misuse us! and surely if, once in a while, You attain to it, straightway you call us no longer too fair, but too vile.

'A moment,—I pray your attention!—I have a poor word in my head I must utter, though womanly custom would set it down better unsaid.

'You grew, sir, pale to impertinence, once when I showed you a ring. You kissed my fan when I dropped it. No matter!—I've broken the thing.

'You did me the honour, perhaps, to be moved at my side now and then In the senses—a vice, I have heard, which is common to beasts and some men.

'Love's a virtue for heroes!—as white as the snow on high hills, And immortal as every great soul is that struggles, endures and fulfils.

' I love my Walter profoundly,—you, Maud, though you faltered a week,
For the sake of . . . what was it? an eyebrow? or, still less, a mole on a
cheek?

' And since, when all's said, you're too noble to stoop to the frivolous cant:
About crimes irresistible, virtues that swindle, betray and supplant,

' I determined to prove to yourself that, whate'er you might dream or avow,
By illusion, you wanted precisely no more of me than you have now.

' There! Look me in the face!—in the face! Understand, if you can.
That the eyes of such women as I am, are clean as the palm of a man.

' Drop his hand, you insult him. Avoid us for fear we should cost you
a scar—

You take us for harlots, I tell you, and not for the women we are.

' You wronged me: but then I considered . . . there's Walter! And so
at the end,

I vowed that he should not be mulcted, by me, in the hand of a friend.

' Have I hurt you indeed? We are quits then. Nay, friend of my
Walter, be mine!

Come, Dora, my darling, my angel, and help me to ask him to dine.'

LAST POEMS.

*To "Grateful Florence," to the Municipality, her Representative, and
to Tommaseo, its Spokesman, Most gratefully.*

LITTLE MATTIE.

I.

DEAD! Thirteen a month ago!
Short and narrow her life's walk.
Lover's love she could not know
Even by a dream or talk:
Too young to be glad of youth;
Missing honour, labour, rest,
And the warmth of a babe's mouth
At the blossom of her breast.
Must you pity her for this,
And for all the loss it is—
You, her mother, with wet face,
Having had all in your case?

II.

Just so young but yesternight,
Now she is as old as death,
Meek, obedient in your sight,
Gentle to a beck or breath
Only on last Monday! yours,
Answering you like silver bells
Slightly touched! an hour matures
You can teach her nothing else.
She has seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid.
By those eyelids pale and close
Now she knows what Rhamses
knows,

III.

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth
 Down her patient locks of silk,
 Cold and passive as in truth
 You your fingers in spilt milk
 Drew along a marble floor ;
 But her lips you cannot wring
 Into saying a word more,
 'Yes' or 'no,' or such a thing.
 Though you call, and beg, and
 wreak
 Half your soul out in a shriek,
 She will lie there in default
 And most innocent revolt.

IV.

Ay, and if she spoke, may be
 She would answer like the SON,
 'What is now 'twixt thee and
 me ?'
 Dreadful answer ! better none.
 Yours on Monday, GOD'S to-day !
 Yours, your child, your blood,
 your heart,
 Called . . . you called her, did you
 say,
 'Little Mattie' for your part ?
 Now already it sounds strange,
 And you wonder, in this change,
 What He calls His angel-crea-
 ture
 Higher up than you can reach her.

V.

'Twas a green and easy world
 As she took it ! room to play,
 (Though one's hair might get un-
 curled
 At the far end of the day.)
 What she suffered she shook off
 In the sunshine ; what she sinned
 She could pray on high enough
 To keep safe above the wind.
 If reproved by God or you,
 'Twas to better her she knew ;
 And if crossed, she gathered still,
 'Twas to cross out something ill.

VI.

You, you had the right, you thought,
 To survey her with sweet scorn,
 Poor gay child, who had not caught
 Yet the octave-stretch forlorn
 Of your larger wisdom ! Nay,
 Now your places are changed so,
 In that same superior way
 She regards you dull and low
 As you did herself exempt
 From life's sorrows. Grand con-
 tempt
 Of the spirits risen awhile,
 Who look back with such a smile.

VII.

There's the sting of 't. That, I
 think,
 Hurts the most, a thousand-fold !
 To feel sudden, at a wink,
 Some dear child we used to scold,
 Praise, love both ways, kiss and
 tease,
 Teach and tumble as our own,
 All its curls about our knees,
 Rise up suddenly full-grown,
 Who could wonder such a sight
 Made a woman mad outright ?
 —Show me Michael with the
 sword,
 Rather than such angels, Lord !

MAY'S LOVE.

I.

YOU love all you say,
 Round, beneath, above me :
 Find me then some way
 Better than to love me,
 Me, too, dearest May !

II.

O world-kissing eyes
 Which the blue heavens melt to !
 I, sad, overwise,
 Loathe the sweet looks dealt to
 All things—men and flies,

III.

You love all, you say :
Therefore, Dear, abate me—
Just your love, I pray !
Shut your eyes and hate me
Only *me*—fair May !

A FALSE STEP.

I.

SWEET, thou hast trod on a heart.
Pass ! there's a world full of men ;
And women as fair as thou art
Must do such things now and
then.

II.

Thou only hast stepped unaware,—
Malice, not one can impute ;
And why should a heart have been
there
In the way of a fair woman's
foot ?

III.

It was not a stone that could trip,
Nor was it a thorn that could
rend :
Put up thy proud underlip !
'Twas merely the heart of a
friend.

IV.

And yet peradventure one day
Thou, sitting alone at the glass,
Remarking the bloom gone away,
Where the smile in its dimple-
ment was,

V.

And seeking around thee in vain
From hundreds who flattered be-
fore,
Such a word as, 'Oh, not in the
main
Do I hold thee less precious, but
more !'

VI.

Thou'lt sigh, very like, on thy part,
'Of all I have known or can
know,
I wish I had only that Heart
I trod upon ages ago !'

VOID IN LAW.

I.

SLEEP, little babe, on my knee,
Sleep, for the midnight is chill,
And the moon has died out in the
tree, [ill.
And the great human world goeth
Sleep, for the wicked agree :
Sleep, let them do as they will.
Sleep.

II.

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my
breast
The last drop of milk that was
good ;
And now, in a dream, suck the rest,
Lest the real should trouble thy
blood.
Suck, little lips dispossessed,
As we kiss in the air whom we
would.
Sleep.

III.

O lips of thy father ! the same,
So like ! Very deeply they swore
When he gave me his ring and his
name,
To take back, I imagined, no
more !
And now is all changed like a game,
Though the old cards are used as
of yore ?
Sleep.

IV.

'Void in law,' said the Courts.
Something wrong
In the forms ? Yet, 'Till death
part us two,

I, James, take thee, Jessie,' was
strong,
And ONE witness competent.
True [song,
Such a marriage was worth an old
Heard in Heaven though, as plain
as the New.
Sleep.

v.

Sleep, little child, his and mine !
Her throat has the antelope curve,
And her cheek just the colour and
line [swerve ;
Which fade not before him nor
Yet *she* has no child !—the divine
Seal of right upon loves that de-
serve.
Sleep.

vi.

My child ! though the world take
her part,
Saying, 'She was the woman to
choose,
He had eyes, was a man in his
heart,'—
We twain the decision refuse :
We . . . weak as I am, as thou art, . . .
Cling on to him, never to loose.
Sleep.

vii.

He thinks that, when done with this
place, [ore ?
All's ended ? he'll new-stamp the
Yes, Cæsar's—but not in our case.
Let him learn we are waiting be-
fore
The grave's mouth, the heaven's
gate, God's face,
With implacable love evermore.
Sleep.

viii.

He's ours, though he kissed her but
now ;
He's ours, though she kissed in
reply ;

He's ours, though himself disavow,
And God's universe favour the
lie ; [below,
Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours
Ours above, . . . if we live, if we
die.
Sleep.

ix.

Ah baby, my baby, too rough
Is my lullaby ? What have I said ?
Sleep ! When I've wept long
enough [stead,
I shall learn to weep softly in-
And piece with some alien stuff
My heart to lie smooth for thy
head.
Sleep.

x.

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet ;
Two loves led thee out to the sun :
Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,
If the one who remains (only one)
Set her grief at thee, turned in a
heat [done ?
To thine enemy,—were it well
Sleep.

xi.

May He of the manger stand near
And love thee ! An infant He
came
To His own who rejected Him here
But the Magi brought gifts all
the same.
I hurry the cross on my Dear !
My gifts are the griefs I declaim !
Sleep.

BIANCA AMONG THE
NIGHTINGALES.

i.

THE cypress stood up like a church
That night we felt our love would
hold, [search
And saintly moonlight seemed to
And wash the whole world clean
as gold ;

The olives crystallized the vales'
Broad slopes until the hills grew
strong:

The fire-flies and the nightingales
Throbbled each to either, flame
and song.

The nightingales, the nightingales.

II.

Upon the angle of its shade
The cypress stood, self-balanced
high

Half up, half down, as double-made,
Along the ground, against the
sky.

And *we*, too! from such soul-height
went

Such leaps of blood, so blindly
driven,

We scarce knew if our nature meant
Most passionate earth or intense
heaven.

The nightingales, the nightingales.

III.

We paled with love, we shook with
love,

We kissed so close we could not
vow;

Till Giulio whispered, 'Sweet, above
God's Ever guaranties this Now.'
And through his words the night-
ingales

Drove straight and full their long
clear call,

Like arrows through heroic mails,
And love was awful in it all.

The nightingales, the nightingales.

IV.

O cold white moonlight of the
north,

Refresh these pulses, quench this
hell!

O coverture of death drawn forth
Across this garden-chamber . .
well!

But what have nightingales to do
In gloomy England, called the
free, . . . [two

(Yes, free to die in! . . .) when we
Are sundered, singing still to me?
And still they sing, the nightingales.

V.

I think I hear him, how he cried
'My own soul's life' between
their notes.

Each man has but one soul supplied,
And that's immortal. Though
his throat's

On fire with passion now, to *her*

He can't say what to me he said!
And yet he moves her, they aver.

The nightingales sing through
my head,

The nightingales, the nightingales.

VI.

He says to *her* what moves her
most.

He would not name his soul
within

Her hearing,—rather pays her cost
With praises to her lips and chin.

Man has but one soul, 'tis ordained,
And each soul but one love, I
add;

Yet souls are damned and love's
profaned.

The nightingales will sing me
mad!

The nightingales, the nightingales.

VII.

I marvel how the birds can sing,

There's little difference, in their
view, [spring

Betwixt our Tuscan trees that
As vital flames into the blue,
And dull round blots of foliage
meant

Like saturated sponges here

To suck the fogs up. As content
Is *he* too in this land, 'tis clear.

And still they sing, the nightingales

VIII.

My native Florence! dear, fore-
gone!

I see across the Alpine ridge
How the last feast-day of St. John
Shot rockets from Carraia bridge.

The luminous city, tall with fire,
Trode deep down in that river of
ours, [choir

While many a boat with lamp and
Skimmed birdlike over glittering
towers.

I will not hear these nightingales.

IX.

I seem to float, *we* seem to float
Down Arno's stream in festive
guise;

A boat stikes flame into our boat,
And up that lady seems to rise
As then she rose. The shock had
flashed

A vision on us! What a head,
What leaping eyeballs!—beauty
dashed

To splendour by a sudden dread.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

X.

Too bold to sin, too weak to die;
Such women are so. As for me,
I would we had drowned there, he
and I.

That moment, loving perfectly.
He had not caught her with her
loosed [south . .

Gold ringlets . . rarer in the
Nor heard the 'Grazie tanto' bruised
To sweetness by her English
mouth.

And still they sing, the nightingales.

XI.

She had not reached him at my
heart [indeed

With her fine tongue, as snakes
Kill flies; nor had I, for my part,
Yearned after, in my desperate
need,

And followed him as he did her
To coasts left bitter by the tide,
Whose very nightingales elsewhere
Delighting, torture and deride!
For still they sing, the nightingales.

XII.

A worthless woman! Mere cold
clay [fair,

As all false things are! but so
She takes the breath of men away
Who gaze upon her unaware.

I would not play her larcenous
tricks

To have her looks! She lied and
stole,

And spat into my love's pure pyx
The rank saliva of her soul.
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XIII.

I would not for her white and pink,
Though such he likes—her grace
of limb,

Though such he has praised—nor
yet, I think,

For life itself, though spent with
him,

Commit such sacrilege, affront
God's nature which is love, intrude
'Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt
Like spiders, in the altar's wood.
I cannot bear these nightingales.

XIV.

If she chose sin, some gentler guise
She might have sinned in, so it
seems:

She might have pricked out both
my eyes,

And I still seen him in my
dreams! [wine,

—Or drugged me in my soup or
Nor left me angry afterward:

To die here with his hand in mine,
His breath upon me, were not
hard.

(Our Lady hush those nightin-
gales!)

XV.

But set a springe for *him*, 'mio
ben,'

My only good, my first last
love!—

Though Christ knows well what
sin is, when

He sees some things done they
must move

Himself to wonder. Let her pass.

I think of her by night and day.

Must *I* too join her . . . out, alas! . . .

With Giulio, in each word I say?

And evermore the nightingales!

XVI.

Giulio, my Giulio!—sing they so,

And you be silent? Do I speak,

And you not hear? An arm you
throw [weak?

Round some one, and I feel so

—Oh, owl-like birds! They sing
for spite,

They sing for hate, they sing for
doom!

They'll sing through death who sing
through night,

They'll sing and stun me in the
tomb—

The nightingales, the nightingales!

MY KATE.

I.

SHE was not as pretty as women I
know,

And yet all your best made of sun-
shine and snow

Drop to shade, melt to nought in
the long-trodden ways,

While she's still remembered on
warm and cold days—

My Kate.

II.

Her air had a meaning, her move-
ments a grace;

You turned from the fairest to gaze
on her face:

And when you had once seen her
forehead and mouth,

You saw as distinctly her soul and
her truth—

My Kate.

III.

Such a blue inner light from her
eyelids outbroke,

You looked at her silence and fancied she spoke:

When she did, so peculiar yet soft
was the tone,

Though the loudest spoke also, you
heard her alone—

My Kate.

IV.

I doubt if she said to you much that
could act

As a thought or suggestion she
did not attract

In the sense of the brilliant or wise.
I infer

'Twas her thinking of others, made
you think of her—

My Kate.

V.

She never found fault with you,
never implied

Your wrong by her right; and yet
men at her side

Grew nobler, girls purer, as through
the whole town

The children were gladder that
pulled at her gown—

My Kate.

VI.

None knelt at her feet confessed
lovers in thrall;

They knelt more to God than they
used,—that was all:

If you praised her as charming,
some asked what you meant,

But the charm of her presence was
felt when she went—

My Kate.

VII.

The weak and the gentle, the ri-
bald and rude,
She took as she found them, and
did them all good ;
It always was so with her—see what
you have !
She has made the grass greener
even here . . . with her grave—
My Kate.

VIII.

My dear one !—when thou wast
alive with the rest,
I held thee the sweetest and loved
thee the best :
And now thou art dead, shall I not
take thy part
As thy smiles used to do for thy-
self, my sweet Heart—
My Kate.

—
A SONG FOR THE RAGGED
SCHOOLS OF LONDON.

WRITTEN IN ROME.

I.

I AM listening here in Rome.
'England's strong,' say many
speakers,
'If she winks, the Czar must come,
Prow and topsail, to the breakers.'

II.

'England's rich in coal and oak,'
Adds a Roman, getting moody,
If she shakes a travelling cloak,
Down our Appian roll the scudi.'

III.

'England's righteous,' they rejoin,
'Who shall grudge her exalta-
tions,
When her wealth of golden coin
Works the welfare of the na-
tions ?'

IV.

I am listening here in Rome.
Over Alps a voice is sweeping—
'England's cruel! save us some
Of these victims in her keeping !

V.

As the cry beneath the wheel
Of an old triumphal Roman
Cleft the people's shouts like steel,
While the show was spoilt for
no man,

VI.

Comes that voice. Let others
shout,
Other poets praise my land here :
I am sadly sitting out,
Praying, 'God forgive her grand-
eur.'

VII.

Shall we boast of empire, where
Time with ruin seems commis-
sioned ?
In God's liberal blue air
Peter's dome itself looks wizen-
ed :

VIII.

And the mountains, in disdain,
Gather back their lights of opal
From the dumb, despondent plain,
Heaped with jawbones of a peo-
ple,

IX.

Lordly English, think it o'er.
Cæsar's doing is all undone,
You have cannons on your shore,
And free parliaments in London,

X.

Princes' parks, and merchants'
homes,
Tents her soldiers, ships for sea-
men,—
Ay, but ruins worse than Rome's
In your pauper men and women.

XI.

Women leering through the gas,
 (Just such bosoms used to nurse
 you)
 Men, turned wolves by famine—
 pass!
 Those can speak themselves, and
 curse you.

XII.

But these others—children small,
 Spilt like blots about the city,
 Quay and street, and palace-wall—
 Take them up into your pity!

XIII.

Ragged children with bare feet,
 Whom the angels in bright raiment
 Know the names of, to repeat
 When they come on you for pay-
 ment.

XIV.

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,
 Huddled up out of the coldness
 On your doorsteps, side by side,
 Till your footman damns their
 boldness.

XV.

In the alleys, in the squares,
 Begging, lying little rebels;
 In the noisy thoroughfares,
 Struggling on with piteous tre-
 bles.

XVI.

Patient children—think what pain
 Makes a young child patient—
 ponder!
 Wronged too commonly to strain
 After right, or wish, or wonder.

XVII.

Wicked children, with peaked
 chins, [many
 And old foreheads! there are
 With no pleasures except sins,
 Gambling with a stolen penny.

XVIII.

Sickly children, that whine low
 To themselves and not their
 Mothers,
 From mere habit,—never so
 Hoping help or care from others.

XIX.

Healthy children, with those blue
 English eyes, fresh from their
 Maker,
 Fierce and ravenous, staring
 through
 At the brown loaves of the baker.

XX.

I am listening here in Rome,
 And the Romans are confessing,
 'English children pass in bloom
 All the prettiest made for bless-
 ing.'

XXI.

'*Angli angeli!*' (resumed
 From the mediæval story)
 'Such rose angelhoods, plumpled
 In such ringlets of pure glory!'

XXII.

Can we smooth down the bright
 hair,
 O my sisters, calm, unthrilled in
 Our heart's pulses? Can we bear
 The sweet looks of our own
 children,

XXIII.

While those others, lean and small,
 Scurf and mildew of the city,
 Spot our streets, convict us all
 Till we take them into pity?

XXIV.

'Is it our fault?' you reply,
 'When, throughout civilization,
 Every nation's empery'
 Is asserted by starvation?

XXV.

'All these mouths we cannot feed,
And we cannot clothe these
bodies.'
Well, if man's so hard indeed,
Let them learn at least what
God is!

XXVI.

Little outcasts from life's fold,
The grave's hope they may be
joined in,
By Christ's covenant consoled
For our social contract's grinding.

XXVII.

If no better can be done,
Let us do but this,—endeavour
That the sun behind the sun
Shine upon them while they
shiver!

XXVIII.

On the dismal London flags,
Through the cruel social juggle,
Put a thought beneath their rags
To ennoble the heart's struggle.

XXIX.

O my sisters, not so much
Are we asked for—not a blossom
From our children's nosegay, such
As we gave it from our bosom,—

XXX.

Not the milk left in their cup,
Not the lamp while they are
sleeping,
Not the little cloak hung up
While the coat's in daily keep-
ing,—

XXXI.

But a place in RAGGED SCHOOLS,
Where the outcasts may to-
morrow
Learn by gentle words and rules
Just the uses of their sorrow.

XXXII.

O my sisters! children small, [city,
Blue-eyed, wailing through the
Our own babes cry in them all:
Let us take them into pity.

AMY'S CRUELTY.

I.

FAIR Amy in the terraced house,
Assist me to discover [mouse
Why you who would not hurt a
Can torture so your lover.

II.

You give your coffee to the cat,
You stroke the dog for coming,
And all your face grows kinder at
The little brown bee's humming.

III.

But when *he* haunts your door . .
the town [ing . .
Marks coming and marks go-
You seem to have stitched your
eyelids down
To that long piece of sewing!

IV.

You never give a look, not you,
Nor drop him a 'Good morning,'
To keep his long day warm and
blue,
So fretted by your scorning.

V.

She shook her head—'The mouse
and bee
For crumb or flower will linger:
The dog is happy at my knee,
The cat purrs at my finger.

VI.

'But *he* . . to *him*, the least thing
given
Means great things at a distance;
He wants my world, my sun, my
heaven,
Soul, body, whole existence.

VII.

They say love gives as well as
takes;
But I'm a simple maiden,—
My mother's first smile when she
wakes
I still have smiled and prayed in.

VIII.

I only know my mother's love
Which gives all and asks nothing;
And this new loving sets the groove
Too much the way of loathing.

IX.

'Unless he gives me all in change,
I forfeit all things by him.
The risk is terrible and strange—
I tremble, doubt, . . . deny him.

X.

'He's sweetest friend or hardest
foe,
Best angel, or worst devil;
I either hate or . . . love him so
I can't be merely civil!

XI.

'You trust a woman who puts forth
Her blossoms thick as summer's?
You think she dreams what love is
worth
Who casts it to new-comers?

XII.

Such love's a cowslip-ball to fling,
A moment's pretty pastime;
I give . . . all me, if anything,
The first time and the last time.

XIII.

Dear neighbour of the trellised
house,
A man should murmur never,
Though treated worse than dog
and mouse,
Till doted on forever!

THE BEST THING IN THE
WORLD.

WHAT'S the best thing in the
world?
June-rose by May-dew impearled,
Sweet south-wind that means no
rain;
Truth, not cruel to a friend;
Pleasure not in haste to end;
Beauty not self-decked and curled
Till its pride is over-plain;
Light that never makes you wink;
Memory, that gives no pain;
Love, when, *so*, you're loved again.
What's the best thing in the world?
—Something out of it, I think.

WHERE'S AGNES?

I.

NAV, if I had come back so,
And found her dead in her grave,
And if a friend I know
Had said, 'Be strong, nor rave!
She lies there, dead below:

II.

'I saw her, I who speak,
While, stiff, the face one blank:
The blue shade came to her cheek
Before they nailed the plank,
For she had been dead a week.'

III.

Why, if he had spoken so,
I might have believed the thing,
Although her look, although
Her step, laugh, voice's ring
Lived in me still as they do.

IV.

But dead that other way,
Corrupted thus and lost?
That sort of worm in the clay?
I cannot count the cost,
That I should rise and pay.

V.

My Agnes false? such shame?
 She? Rather be it said
 That the pure saint of her name
 Has stood there in her stead,
 And tricked you to this blame.

VI.

Her very gown, her cloak
 Fell chastely: no disguise,
 But expression! while she broke
 With her clear gray morning-eyes
 Full upon me and then spoke.

VII.

She wore her hair away
 From her forehead,—like a cloud
 Which a little wind in May
 Peels off finely: disallowed
 Though bright enough to stay.

VIII.

For the heavens must have the
 place [in,
 To themselves, to use and shine
 As her soul would have her face
 To press through upon mine, in
 That orb of angel grace.

IX.

Had she any fault at all,
 'Twas having none, I thought
 too—
 There seemed a sort of thrall;
 As she felt her shadow ought to
 Fall straight upon the wall.

X.

Her sweetness strained the sense
 Of common life and duty;
 And every day's expense
 Of moving in such beauty,
 Required, almost, defence.

XI.

What good, I thought, is done
 By such sweet things if any?
 This world smells ill i' the sun
 Though the garden-flowers are
 many,—
She is only one.

XII.

Can a voice so low and soft
 Take open actual part
 With Right,—maintain aloft
 Pure truth in life or art,
 Vexed always wounded oft?—

XIII.

She fit, with that fair pose
 Which melts from curve to curve
 To stand, run, work with those
 Who wrestle and deserve,
 And speak plain without glose?

XIV.

But I turned round on my fear
 Defiant, disagreeing—
 What if God had sent her here
 Less for action than for Being?
 For the eye and for the ear.

XV.

Just to show what beauty may,
 Just to prove what music can,—
 And then to die away
 From the presence of a man,
 Who shall learn, henceforth, to
 pray?

XVI.

As a door, left half ajar
 In heaven, would make him think
 How heavenly-different are
 Things glanced at through the
 chink,
 Till he pined from near to far.

XVII.

That door could lead to hell?
 That shining merely meant
 Damnation? What! She fell
 Like a woman, who was sent
 Like an angel by a spell?

XVIII.

She, who scarcely trod the earth,
 Turned mere dirt? My Agnes,—
 mine
 Called so! felt of too much worth
 To be used so! too divine
 To be breathed near, and so forth:

XIX.

Why, I dared not name a sin
 In her presence : I went round,
 Clipped its name and shut it in
 Some mysterious crystal sound,—
 Changed the dagger for the pin.

XX.

Now you name herself *that word*?
 O my Agnes! O my saint!
 Then the great joys of the Lord
 Do not last? Then all this paint
 Runs off nature? leaves a board?

XXI.

Who's dead here? No, not she:
 Rather I! or whence this damp
 Cold corruption's misery?
 Why my very mourners stamp
 Closer in the clods on me.

XXII.

And my mouth is full of dust
 Till I cannot speak and curse—
 Speak and damn him . . . 'Blame's
 unjust'?
 Sin blots out the universe,
 All because she would and must?

XXIII.

She, my white rose, dropping off
 The high rose-tree branch! and
 not
 That the night-wind blew too rough,
 Nor the noon-sun burnt too hot,
 But, that being a rose—'twas
 enough!

XXIV.

Then henceforth, may earth grow
 trees!
 No more roses!—hard straight
 lines
 To score lies out! none of these
 Fluctuant curves! but firs and
 pines,
 Poplars, cedars, cypresses!

DE PROFUNDIS.

I.

THE face, which duly as the sun,
 Rose up for me with life begun,
 To mark all bright hours of the day
 With daily love, is dimmed away
 And yet my days go on, go on.

II.

The tongue which like a stream
 could run [stone,
 Smooth music from the roughest
 And every morning with 'Good day'
 Made each day good, is hushed
 away—
 And yet my days go on, go on.

III.

The heart, which like a staff, was
 one
 For mine to lean and rest upon;
 The strongest on the longest day
 With steadfast love, is caught
 away—
 And yet my days go on, go on.

IV.

And cold before my summer's done
 And deaf in nature's general tune.
 And fallen too low for special fear,
 And here, with hope no longer
 here—
 While the tears drop, my days go on.

V.

The world goes whispering to its
 own,
 'This anguish pierces to the bone
 And tender friends go sighing
 round, [wound?'
 'What love can ever cure this
 My days go on, my days go on.

VI.

The past rolls forward on the sun
 And makes all night. O dreams
 begun,
 Not to be ended! Ended bliss!
 And life, that will not end in this!
 My days go on, my days go on.

VII.

Breath freezes on my lips to moan.
As one alone, once not alone,
I sit and knock at Nature's door,
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very
poor,
Whose desolated days go on.

VIII.

I knock and cry, . . . Undone, un-
done!
Is there no help, no comfort—none?
No gleaning in the wide wheat-
plains [wains?
Where others drive their loaded
My vacant days go on, go on.

IX.

This nature, though the snows be
down,
Thinks kindly of the bird of June.
The little red hip on the tree
Is ripe for such. What is for me,
Whose days so winterly go on?

X.

No bird am I to sing in June,
And dare not ask an equal boon.
Good nests and berries red are
Nature's
To give away to better creatures—
And yet my days go on, go on.

XI.

I ask less kindness to be done—
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon
(Too early worn and grimed) with
sweet [feet,
Cool deathly touch to these tired
Till days go out which now go on.

XII.

Only to lift the turf unmown
From off the earth where it has
grown,
Some cubic space, and say, 'Behold,
Creep in poor Heart, beneath that
fold,
Forgetting how the days go on.'

XIII.

What harm would *that* do? Green
anon
The sward would quicken, over-
shone
By skies as blue; and crickets might
Have leave to chirp there day and
night [on.
While my new rest went on, went

XIV.

From gracious nature have I won
Such liberal bounty? May I run
So, lizard-like, within her side,
And there be safe who now am
tried
By days that painfully go on?

XV.

A voice reproves me thereupon,
More sweet than Nature's when
the drone
Of bees is sweetest, and more deep,
Than when the rivers overleap
The shuddering pines, and thunder
on.

XVI.

God's Voice, not Nature's—night
and noon
He sits upon the great white throne
And listens for the creature's praise.
What babble we of days and days?
The Dayspring He, whose days go
on.

XVII.

He reigns above, He reigns alone:
Systems burn out and leave His
throne:
Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall
Around Him, changeless amid
all!—
Ancient of days, whose days go on!

XVIII.

He reigns below, He reigns alone—
And having life in love forgone

Beneath the crown of sovran thorns,
He reigns the jealous God. Who
mourns
Or rules with HIM, while days go
on?

XIX.

By anguish which made pale the
sun,
I hear him charge his saints that
none
Among the creatures anywhere
Blaspheme against him with de-
spair,
However darkly days go on.

XX.

Take from my head the thorn-
wreath brown,
No mortal grief deserves that
crown.
O supreme Love, chief misery,
The sharp regalia are for *Thee*
Whose days eternally go on!

XXI.

For us, . . whatever's undergone,
Thou knowest, willest what is done
Grief may be joy misunderstood:
Only the Good discerns the good.
I trust Thee while my days go on.

XXII.

Whatever's lost, it first was won!
We will not struggle nor impugn.
Perhaps the cup was broken here
That Heaven's new wine might
show more clear.
I praise thee while my days go on.

XXIII.

I praise Thee while my days go on;
I love Thee while my days go on!
Through dark and dearth, through
fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure
lost
I thank Thee while my days go on!

XXIV.

And, having in thy life-depth
thrown
Being and suffering (which are
one),
As a child drops some pebble small
Down some deep well and hears it
fall
Smiling . . . so I! THY DAYS GO
ON!

A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

I.

WHAT was he doing, the great god
Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs
of a goat,
And breaking the golden lilies
afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river?

II.

He tore out a reed, the great god
Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the
river.
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

III.

High on the shore sate the great
god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river,
And hacked and hewed as a great
god can
With his hard bleak steel at the
patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of a leaf
indeed
To prove it fresh from the river

IV.

He cut it short did the great god
Pan,

(How tall it stood in the river !)
Then drew the pith like the heart
of a man,

Steadily from the outside ring,
Then notched the poor dry empty
thing

In holes as he sate by the river.

V.

' This is the way,' laughed the great
god Pan,

(Laughed while he sate by the riv-
er !)

' The only way since gods began
To make sweet music, they could
succeed,'

Then dropping his mouth to a hole
in the reed,

He blew in power by the river.

VI.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan,
Piercing sweet by the river !

Blinding sweet, O great god
Pan !

The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the
dragon-fly

Came back to dream on the riv-
er.

VII.

Yet half a beast is the great god
Pan

To laugh, as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man.

The true gods sigh for the cost and
the pain—

For the reed that grows never
more again

As a reed with the reeds of the
river.

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLA-
FRANCA.

I.

PEACE, peace, peace, do you say ?
What ! with the enemy's guns in
our ears ?

With the country's wrong not
rendered back ? [bay

What ! while Austria stands at
In Mantua, and our Venice bears
The cursed flag of the yellow and
black ?

II.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
And this the Mincio ? Where's
the fleet ?

And where's the sea ? Are we
all blind [terday,

Or mad with the blood shed yes-
Ignoring Italy under our feet,
And, seeing things before, be-
hind ?

III.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say ?
What uncontested, undenied ?

Because we triumph, we suc-
cumb ? [way

A pair of emperors stand in the
(One of whom is a man beside)

To sign and seal our cannons
dumb ?

IV.

No, not Napoleon ! he who mused
At Paris, and at Milan spake,
And at Solferino led the fight.

Not he we trusted, honoured, used
Our hopes and hearts for. till
they break,

Even so you tell us . . in his sight !

V.

Peace, peace, peace, is still your
word ?

We say you lie, then, that is
plain :

There is no peace and shall be
none,

Our very dead would cry, ' Absurd,'
And clamour that they died in
vain,
And whine to come back to the
sun.

VI.

Hush! more reverence for the
dead!

They've done the most for Italy
Evermore since the earth was
fair,

Now would that *we* had died in-
stead, [erty,
Still dreaming peace meant lib-
And did not, could not, mean
despair?

VII.

Peace, you say! Yes, peace in
truth! [achieve

But such a peace as the ear can
'Twixt the rifle's click and the
rush of the ball,

'Twixt the tiger's spring and the
crunch of the tooth, [tive

'Twixt the dying atheist's nega-
And God's face . . . waiting, after
all.

KING VICTOR EMANUEL

ENTERING FLORENCE, APRIL,
1860.

I.

KING of us all, we cried to thee,
cried to thee,

Trampled to earth by the beasts
impure,

Dragged by the chariots which
shame as they roll,

The dust of our torment far and
wide to thee

Went up dark'ning the royal soul.

Was it *not* so, Cavour,

That the King was sad for the peo-
ple in thrall,

This King of us all?

II.

King, we cried to thee!—Strong in
replying,

Thy word and sword sprang rap-
id and sure, [place.

Cleaving our way to a nation's
O first soldier of Italy, crying

Now grateful, exultant, we look
in thy face.

Is it *not* so, Cavour,

That, freedom's first soldier, the
freed should call

First King of them all?

III.

This is our beautiful Italy's birth-
day: [or fewer,

Generous souls, whether many
Bring her the gift and wish her
the good;

And heaven presents on this sunny
earth-day [newed.

The noble King to the land re-
Is it *not* so, Cavour?

Roar, cannon-mouths!—proclaim,
install

The King of us all!

IV.

Grave he rides through Florence
gateway,

Clenching his face into calm, to
immure

His struggling heart till it half
disappears.

If he relaxed for a moment,
straightway

He would break out into passion-
ate tears—

(Is it *not* so, Cavour?

While rings the cry without inter-
val,

'Live King of us all!'

V.

Cry, free peoples!--honor the na-
tion

By crowning the true man—and
none is true!

Pisa is here, and Livorna is here,
And thousands of faces in wild ex-
ultation,

Burn over the windows to feel
him near—

(It is *not* so, Cavour?)

Burn over from terrace, roof, win-
dow and wall,
On this King of us all.

VI.

Grave! A good man's ever the
graver

For bearing a nation's trust se-
cure:

And *he*, he thinks of the Heart,
beside,

Which broke for Italy, failing to
save her,

And pining away by Oporto's
tide.

Is it *not* so, Cavour,

That he thinks of his vow on that
royal pall,

This king of us all?

VII.

Flowers, flowers, from the flowery
city!

Such innocent thanks for a deed
so pure.

As melting away for joy into
flowers

The nation invites him to enter his
Pitti

And evermore reign on this Flor-
ence of ours.

Is it *not* so, Cavour?

He'll stand where the reptiles were
used to crawl,

This King of us all.

VIII.

Grave as the manner of noble men
is—

The deed unfinished will weigh
on the doer:

And, baring his head to those
crape-veiled flags,

He bows to the grief of the South
and Venice.

—Let's riddle the last of the yel-
low to rags,

And swear by Cavour

That the King shall reign where
oppressors fall,

True King of us all.

THE SWORD OF CASTRUCCIO CASTRUCANI.

'Questa e per me.'—VICTOR EMANUEL.

I.

WHEN Victor Emanuel, the King,
Went down to his Lucca that
day,

The people, each vaunting the thing
As he gave it, gave all things
away

In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,
As they tore out their hearts for
the king.

II.

Gave the green forest-walk on the
wall,

With the Apennine blue through
the trees:

Gave palaces, churches and all
The great pictures which burn
out of these;

But the eyes of the King seemed
to freeze

As he glanced upon ceiling and
wall.

III.

'Good,' said the King as he passed.
Was he cold to the arts? or else

coy

To possession? or crossed at the
last,

Whispered some, by the vote in
Savoy?

Shout!—love him enough for his
joy!
'Good,' said the King as he passed.

IV.

He, travelling the whole day
through flowers,
And protesting amenities, found,
At Pistoia, betwixt the two show-
ers
Of red roses, 'the Orphans' (re-
nowned
As the heirs of Puccini) who
wound
With a sword through the crowd
and the flowers.

V.

'Tis the sword of Castruccio, O
King!
In old strife of the intestine hate
Very famous. Accept what we
bring, [fate,
We, who cannot be sons by our
Tendered citizens by thee of
late,
And endowed with a country and
King.

VI.

'Read:—Puccini has willed that
this sword
(Which once made in an ignorant
feud
Many orphans) remain in our
ward
Till some patriot its pure civic
blood
Wipe away in the foe's and make
good,
In delivering the land by the sword.'

VII.

Then the King exclaimed: 'This
is for *me*!'
And he dashed out his sword on
the hilt,
While his blue eye shot fire openly

And his heart overboiled till it
spilt

A hot prayer,—'God, the rest as
thou wilt!

But grant me this!—this is for *me*!

VIII.

O Victor Emanuel, the King,
The sword be for *thee*, and the
deed,
And naught for the alien next
spring,
Naught for Hapsburg and Bour-
bon agreed;
But, for us, a great Italy freed,
With a hero to head us, . . our
King.

SUMMING UP IN ITALY.

(INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT
PUBLICS OUT OF IT.)

I.

OBSERVE how it will be at last,
When our Italy stands at full
stature,
A year ago tied down so fast
That the cord cut the quick of
her nature!
You'll honour the deed and its
scope, [it,
Then, in logical sequence upon
Will use up the remnants of rope
By hanging the men who have
done it.

II.

The speech in the Commons which
hits you
A sketch off, how dungeons must
feel,—
The official dispatch which commits
you
From stamping out groans with
your heel—

Suggestions in journal or book for
 Good efforts,—are praised . . . as
 is meet. [look for
 But what in this world can men
 Who only achieve and complete ?

III.

True, you've praise for the fireman
 who sets his
 Brave face to the axle of the
 flame, [fetches
 Disappears in the smoke and then
 A babe down, or idiot that's
 lame,—

For the boor even, who rescues
 through pity
 A sheep from the brute who
 would kick it :
 But saviours of nations !—'tis pretty
 And doubtful : they *may* be so
 wicked !

IV.

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,
 Ricasoli,—doubt by the dozen !
 —here's
 Pepoli too, and Cipriani,
 Imperial cousins and congeners ;
 Arese, Laiatico, courtly
 Of manners, if stringent of mouth,
 Garibaldi—we'll come to him
 shortly,
 (As soon as he ends in the south.)

V.

Napoleon,—as strong as ten arm-
 ies,
 Corrupt as seven devils,—a fact
 You accede to, then seek where the
 harm is
 Drained off from the man to his
 act, [pose
 And find . . . a free nation. Sup-
 Some hell-brood in Eden's sweet
 greenery,
 Convoked for creating . . . a rose !—
 Would it suit the infernal ma-
 chinery ?

VI.

Cavour, —to the despot's desire,
 Who his own thought so craftily
 marries.
 What is he but just a thin wire
 For conducting the lightning
 from Paris ? [peers.
 Yes, write down the two as com-
 Confessing (you would not per-
 mit a lie)
 He bore up his Piedmont ten years
 Till she suddenly smiled and was
 Italy.

VII.

And the King, with that " stain on
 his 'scutcheon " *
 Savoy . . . as the calumny runs !
 If it be not his blood,—with his
 clutch on
 The sword, and his face to the
 guns. [ers,
 O first where the battle-storm gath-
 O loyal of hearts on the throne,
 Let those keep the ' graves of their
 fathers,'
 Who quail, in the nerve, from
 their own !

VIII.

For *thee* ;—through the dim Hades-
 portal
 The dream of a voice,—' Blessed
 thou
 Who hast made all thy race thrice
 immortal !
 No need of the sepulchres now !
 Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs,
 who fester
 Above-ground with worm-eaten
 souls,
 While the ghost of some poor feu-
 dal jester
 Before them strews treaties in
 holes.'

* See Diplomatical Correspondence.

IX.

—But hush!—am I dreaming a
 poem [I.
 Of Hades, heaven, justice?—not
 I began too far off, in my proem,
 With what men believe and de-
 ny,
 And, on earth, whatsoever the meed
 is,
 (To sum us as thoughtful review-
 ers.)
 The moral of every great deed is
 The virtue of slandering the doers.

‘DIED . . .’

(*The Times’ Obituary.*)

I.

WHAT shall we add now? He is
 dead.
 And I who praise and you who
 blame,
 With wash of words across his
 name,
 Find suddenly declared instead—
 ‘*On Sunday, third of August,*
dead!’

II.

Which stops the whole we talked
 to-day.
 I, quickened to a plausible glance
 At his large general tolerance
 By common people’s narrow way,
 Stopped short in praising. Dead,
 they say.

III.

And you, who had just put in a sort
 Of cold deduction—‘rather, large
 Through weakness of the conti-
 nent marge,
 Than greatness of the thing con-
 tained’—
 Broke off. Dead!—there, you stood
 restrained.

IV.

As if we had talked in following
 one
 Up some long gallery. ‘Would
 you choose
 An air like that? The gait is
 loose—
 Or noble.’ Sudden in the sun
 An oubliette winks. Where *is* he?

V.

Dead. Man’s ‘I was’ by God’s
 ‘I am’—
 All hero-worship comes to that.
 High heart, high thought, high
 fame, as flat
 As a gravestone. Bring your *Jacet*
jam—
 The epitaph’s an epigram.

VI.

Dead. There’s an answer to arrest
 All carping. Dust’s his natura’
 place;
 He’ll let the flies buzz round his
 face,
 And though you slander, not pro-
 test!
 —From such an one, exact the
 Best!

VII.

Opinions gold or brass are null
 We chuck our flattery or abuse,
 Called Cæsar’s due, as Charon’s
 dues,
 I’ the teeth of some dead sage or
 fool,
 To mend the grinning of a skull.

VIII.

Be abstinent in praise and blame.
 The man’s still mortal, who
 stands first,
 And mortal only, if last and
 worst.
 Then slowly lift so frail a fame,
 Or softly drop so poor a shame.

A FORCED RECRUIT AT
SOLFERINO.

I.

IN the ranks of the Austrian you
found him ;

He died with his face to you all :
Yet bury him here where around
him,

You honour your bravest that fall.

II.

Venetian, fair-featured and slender.
He lies shot to death in his youth,
With a smile on his lips over-tender
For any mere soldier's dead
mouth.

III.

No stranger, and yet not a traitor !
Though alien the cloth on his
breast, [er
Underneath it how seldom a great-
Young heart, has a shot sent to
rest !

IV.

By your enemy tortured and goad-
ed

To march with them, stand in
their file,

His musket (see !) never was load-
ed—

He facing your guns with that
smile.

V.

As orphans yearn on their mothers,
He yearned to your patriot
bands,—

Let me die for one Italy, brothers,
If not in your ranks, by your
hands !

VI.

Aim straightly, fire steadily ; spare
me,

A ball in the body, which may
Deliver my heart here and tear me
This badge of the Austrian away.'

VII.

So thought he, so died he this
morning.

What then ? many others have
died. [ing

Ay—but easy for men to die scorn-
The death-stroke, who fought
side by side ;

VIII.

One tricolor floating above them ;
Struck down mid triumphant ac-
claims

Of an Italy rescued to love them,
And brazen the brass with their
names.

IX.

But he—without witness or honour,
Mixed, shared in his country's
regard,

With the tyrants who march in up-
on her—

Died faithful and passive : 'twas
hard.

X.

'Twas sublime. In a cruel restric-
tion

Cut off from the guerdon of sons,
With most filial obedience, convic-
tion,

His soul kissed the lips of her
guns.

XI.

That moves you ? Nay, grudge
not to show it,

While digging a grave for him
here.

The others who died, says our poet,
Have glory : let *him* have a tear.

GARIBALDI.

I.

HE bent his head upon his breast
Wherein his lion-heart lay
sick :—

'Perhaps we are not ill-repaid—

Perhaps this is not a true test ;
 Perhaps that was not a foul trick ;
 Perhaps none wronged, and none
 betrayed.

II.

Perhaps the people's vote which
 here
 United, there may disunite,
 And both be lawful as they think,
 Perhaps a patriot statesman, dear
 For chartering nations, can with
 right
 Disfranchise those who hold the
 ink.

III.

' Perhaps men's wisdom is not
 craft ;
 Men's greatness, not a selfish
 greed ;
 Men's justice, not the safer side.
 Perhaps even women when they
 laughed,
 Wept, thanked us that the land
 was freed,
 Not wholly (though they kissed
 us) lied.

IV.

' Perhaps no more than this we
 meant,
 When up at Austria's guns we
 flew
 And spiked them with a cry
 apiece,
 '*Italia!*'—Yet a dream was sent..
 The little house my father knew
 'The olives and the palms of Nice.'

V.

He paused, and drew his sword out
 slow,—
 Then pored upon the blade intent
 As if to read some written thing :
 While many murmured, ' He will go
 In that despairing sentiment
 And break his sword before the
 King.'

VI.

He poring still upon the blade,
 His large lid quivered, something
 fell. [born
 ' Perhaps,' he said, ' I was not
 With such fine brains to treat and
 trade,
 And if a woman knew it well
 Her falsehood only meant her
 scorn.

VII.

Yet through Varese's cannon-smoke
 My eye saw clear : men feared
 this man [deal.
 At Como, where his sword could
 Death's protocol at every stroke.
 And now . . . the drop there,
 scarcely can
 Impair the keenness of the steel.

VIII.

' So man and sword may have their
 use ;
 And if the soil beneath my foot
 In valour's act is forfeited,
 I'll strike the harder, take my dues
 Out nobler, and the loss confute
 From ampler heavens above my
 head.

IX.

' My King, King Victor, I am thine !
 So much Nice-dust as what I am
 (To make our Italy) must cleave.
 Forgive that.—Forward with a sign
 He went.—You've seen the tele-
 gram ?
Palermo's taken, we believe.

ONLY A CURL.

I.

FRIENDS of faces unknown and a
 land
 Unvisited over the sea,
 Who tell me how lonely you stand,
 With a single gold curl in the hand
 Held up to be looked at by me !

II.

While you ask me to ponder and
say
What a father and mother can do,
With the bright yellow locks put
away
Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the
clay,
Where the violets press nearer
than you :—

III.

Shall I speak like a poet, or run
Into weak woman's tears for
relief?
Oh, children! I never lost one.
But my arm's round my own little
son,
And Love knows the secret of
Grief.

IV.

And I feel what it must be and is
When God draws a new angel so
Through the house of a man up to
His,
With a murmur of music you miss,
And a rapture of light you forego.

V.

How you think, staring on at the
door
Where the face of your angel
flashed in,
That its brightness, familiar before,
Burns off from you ever the more
For the dark of your sorrow and
sin.

VI.

God lent him and takes him,' you
sigh. . . .
—Nay, there let me break with
your pain.
God's generous in giving, say I,
And the thing which He gives, I
deny
That He can ever take back again.

VII.

He gives what He gives. I appeal
To all who bear babes! In the
hour
When the veil of the body we feel
Rent round us, while torments re-
veal
The motherhood's advent in
power;

VIII.

And the babe cries,—have all of us
known
By apocalypse (God being there,
Full in nature!) the child is *our*
own,—
Life of life, love of love, moan of
moan,
Through all changes, all times,
everywhere.

IX.

He's ours and forever. Believe,
O father!—O mother, look back
To the first love's assurance! To
give
Means, with God, not to tempt or
deceive
With a cup thrust in Benja-
min's sack.

X.

He gives what He gives. be con-
tent. [sure.
He resumes nothing given,—be
God lend?—where the usurers lent
In His temple, indignant he went
And scourged away all those im-
pure.

XI.

He lends not, but gives to the end,
As He loves to the end. If it
seem
That he draws back a gift, compre-
hend
'Tis to add to it rather. . . amend,
And finish it up to your dream,—

XII.

Or keep . . . as a mother may toys
 Too costly though given by herself,
 Till the room shall be stiller from
 noise,
 And the children more fit for such
 joys,
 Kept over their heads on the
 shelf.

XIII.

So look up, friends! You who in-
 deed
 Have possessed in your house a
 sweet piece
 Of the heaven which men strive for,
 must need
 Be more earnest than others are,
 speed
 Where they loiter, persist where
 they cease.

XIV.

You know how one angel smiles
 there.
 Then courage! 'Tis easy for you
 To be drawn by a single gold hair
 Of that curl, from earth's storm and
 despair
 To the safe place above us.
 Adieu!

 VIEW ACROSS THE ROMAN
 CAMPAGNA. 1861.

I.

OVER the dumb campagna sea,
 Out in the offing through mist
 and rain,
 St. Peter's church heaves silently
 Like a mighty ship in pain,
 Facing the tempest with struggle
 and strain.

II.

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,
 Soundless breakers of desolate
 land!
 The sullen surf of the mist devours
 That mountain range upon either
 hand,
 Eaten away from its outline
 grand.

III.

And over the dumb campagna sea
 Where the ship of the Church
 heaves on to wreck,
 Alone and silent as God must be
 The Christ walks!—Ay, but
 Peter's neck
 Is stiff to turn on the foundering
 deck.

IV.

Peter, Peter, if such be thy name,
 Now leave the ship for another
 to steer, [same
 And proving thy faith evermore the
 Come forth, tread out through the
 dark and drear,
 Since He who walks on the sea
 is here!

V.

Peter, Peter!—he does not speak—
 He is not as rash as in old Gali-
 lee.
 Safer a ship though it toss and leak,
 Than a reeling foot on a rolling
 sea!
 And he's got to be round in the
 girth, thinks he.

VI.

Peter, Peter!—he does not stir—
 His nets are heavy with silver
 fish; [to infer
 He reckons his gains, and is keen
 'The broil on the shore, if the
 Lord should wish—
 But the sturgeon goes to Cæsar's
 dish.'

VII.

Peter, Peter, thou fisher of men,
 Fisher of fish wouldst thou live
 instead— [Ten,
 Haggling for pence with the other
 Cheating the market at so much
 a head,
 Griping the Bag of the traitor
 Dead?

VIII.

At the triple crow of the Gallic
 cock
 Thou weep'st not, thou, though
 thine eyes be dazed :
 What bird comes next in the tem-
 pest shock ?
 . . . Vultures ! See—as when Rom-
 ulus gazed—
 To inaugurate ROME for a world
 amazed !

PARTING LOVERS.

SIENNA.

I.

I LOVE thee, I love thee, Giulio !
 Some call me cold, and some
 demure,
 And if you have ever guessed that
 so
 I loved thee . . . well ; the proof
 was poor,
 And no one could be sure.

II.

Before thy song (with shifted
 rhymes
 To suit my name) did I undo
 The persian? If it moved some-
 times,
 Thou hast not seen a hand push
 through
 A flower or two.

III.

My mother listening to my sleep
 Heard nothing but a sigh at
 night,—

The short sigh rippling on the
 deep,—
 When hearts run out of breath
 and sight,
 Of men, to God's clear light.

IV.

When others named thee, . . .
 thought thy brows
 Where straight, thy smile was
 tender, . . . 'Here
 He comes between the vineyard-
 rows !'—
 I said not 'Ay,' nor waited,
 Dear,
 To feel thee step too near.

V.

I left such things to bolder girls,
 Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,
 When that Clotilda thought her
 curls [day,
 Held both thine eyes in hers one
 I marvelled, let me say.

VI.

I could not try the woman's trick :
 Between us straightway fell the
 blush,
 Which kept me separate, blind, and
 sick.
 A wind came with thee in a flush,
 As blown through Horeb's bush.

VII.

But now that Italy invokes
 Her young men to go forth and
 chase
 The foe or perish,—nothing chokes
 My voice, or drives me from the
 place ;
 I look thee in the face.

VIII.

I love thee ! it is understood,
 Confest : I do not shrink or
 start :
 No blushes : all my body's blood
 Has gone to greaten this poor
 heart,
 That, loving, we may part.

IX.

Our Italy invokes the youth
 To die if need be. Still there's
 room,
 Though earth is strained with dead,
 in truth,
 Since twice the lilies were in
 bloom
 They have not grudged a tomb.

X.

And many a plighted maid and
 wife
 And mother, who can say since
 then
 'My country,' cannot say through
 life
 'My son,' 'my spouse,' 'my
 flower of men,'
 And not weep dumb again.

XI.

Heroic males the country bears,
 But daughters give up more than
 sons.
 Flags wave, drums beat, and un-
 awares
 You flash your souls out with the
 guns
 And take your Heaven at once!

XII.

But *we*,—we empty heart and home
 Of life's life, love! we bear to
 think
 You're gone, . . . to feel you may not
 come, [click,
 To hear the door-latch stir and
 Yet no more you, . . . nor sink.

XIII.

Dear God! when Italy is one
 And perfected from bound to
 bound,
 Suppose (for my share) earth's un-
 done
 My one grave in't! as one small
 wound
 May kill a man, 'tis found.

XIV.

What then? If love's delight must
 end, [flaws.
 At least we'll clear its truth from
 I love thee, love thee, sweetest
 friend! [a pause
 Now take my sweetest without!
 To help the nation's cause.

XV.

And thus of noble Italy
 We'll both be worthy. Let her
 show
 The future how we made her free,
 Not sparing life, nor Giulio,
 Nor this. . . this heart-break.

MOTHER AND POET.

(Turin—After news from Gaeta. 1865.)

DEAD! one of them shot by the
 sea in the east,
 And one of them shot in the west
 by the sea.
 Dead! both my boys! When you
 sit at the feast
 And are wanting a great song
 for Italy free,
 Let none look at *me!*

II.

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
 And good at my art, for a wom-
 an, men said. [nised here,
 But *this* woman, *this*, who is ago-
 The east sea and west sea rhyme
 on in her head
 Forever instead.

III.

What art can a woman be good at :
 Oh, vain!
 What art *is* she good at, but hurt-
 ing her breast
 With the milk-teeth of babes, and
 a smile at the pain?
 Ah, boys, how you hurt! you
 were strong as you pressed,
 And I proud, by that test.

IV.

What art's for a woman? To hold
 on her knees
 Both darlings! to feel all their
 arms round her throat
 Cling, strangle a little! To sew
 by degrees,
 And 'broider the long clothes
 and neat little coat!
 To dream and to dote.

V.

To teach them... It stings there.
I made them indeed
 Speak plain the word 'country.'
I taught them, no doubt,
 That a country's a thing men should
 die for at need. [about
I prated of liberty, rights, and
 The tyrant turned out.

VI.

And when their eyes flashed... 'O
 my beautiful eyes!
 I exulted! nay, let them go forth
 at the wheels
 Of the guns, and denied not. But
 then the surprise,
 When one sits quite alone!
 Then one weeps, then one
 kneels!
 —God! how the house feels!

VII.

At first happy news came, in gay
 letters moiled
 With my kisses, of camp-life and
 glory, and how
 They both loved me, and soon,
 coming home to be spoiled,
 In return would fan off every fly
 from my brow
 With their green-laurel bough.

VIII.

Then was triumph at Turin. 'An-
 cona was free!
 And some one came out of the
 cheers in the street,

With a face pale as stone, to say
 something to me.

—My Guido was dead!—I fell
 down at his feet,
 While they cheered in the
 street.

IX.

I bore it—friends soothed me: my
 grief looked sublime
 As the ransom of Italy. One
 boy remained
 To be leant on and walked with,
 recalling the time
 When the first grew immortal,
 while both of us strained
 To the height he had gained.

X.

And letters still came,—shorter,
 sadder, more strong,
 Writ now but in one hand. 'I
 was not to faint.
 One loved me for two... would be
 with me ere long:
 And 'Viva Italia' *he* died for, our
 saint,
 Who forbids our complaint.

XI.

My Nanni would add 'he was safe,
 and aware
 Of a presence that turned off the
 balls... was imprest
 It was Guido himself, who knew
 what I could bear.
 And how 'twas impossible, quite
 dispossessed,
 To live on for the rest.'

XII.

On which without pause up the
 telegraph line
 Swept smoothly the next news
 from Gaeta:—*Shot.*
Tell his mother. Ah, ah,—'his,'
 'their' mother: not 'mine.'
 No voice says '*my* mother' again
 to me. What!
 You think Guido forgot?

XIII.

Are souls straight so happy that,
 dizzy with Heaven,
 They drop earth's affection, conceive
 not of woe?
 I think not. Themselves were too
 lately forgiven
 Through that Love and Sorrow
 which reconciled so
 The Above and Below.

XIV.

O Christ of the seven wounds, who
 look'dst through the dark
 To the face of Thy mother! consider,
 I pray,
 How we common mothers stand
 desolate, mark,
 Whose sons, not being Christs,
 die with eyes turned away.
 And no last word to say!

XV.

Both boys dead! but that's out of
 nature. We all
 Have been patriots, yet each
 house must always keep one,
 'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads
 to a wall.
 And, when Italy's made, for what
 end is it done
 If we have not a son?

XVI.

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken,
 what then?
 When the fair wicked queen sits
 no more at her sport
 Of the fire-balls of death crashing
 souls out of men?
 When your guns of Cavalli with
 final retort
 Have cut the game short,—

XVII.

When Venice and Rome keep their
 new jubilee,
 When your flag takes all heaven
 for its white, green, and red,

When *you* have your country from
 mountain to sea,
 When King Victor has Italy's
 crown on his head,
 (And I have my dead,)

XVIII.

What then? Do not mock me!
 Ah, ring your bells low,
 And burn your lights faintly.
My country is there,
 Above the star pricked by the last
 peak of snow.
My Italy's there—with my brave
 civic Pair,
 To disfranchise despair.

XIX.

Forgive me. Some women bear
 children in strength,
 And bite back the cry of their
 pain in self-scorn.
 But the birth-pangs of nations will
 wring us at length
 Into wail such as this!—and we
 sit on forlorn
 When the man-child is born.

XX.

Dead!—one of them shot by the
 sea in the west!
 And one of them shot in the east
 by the sea!
 Both! both my boys!—If in keep-
 ing the feast
 You want a great song for your
 Italy free,
 Let none look at *me*!

NATURE'S REMORSES.

ROME, 1861.

I.

HER soul was bred by a throne,
 and fed
 From the sucking-bottle used in
 her race
 On starch and water (for
 mother's milk

Which gives a larger growth in-
stead) [grace,
And, out of the natural liberal
Was swaddled away in violet
silk.

II.

And young and kind, and royally
blind,
Forth she stepped from her
palace-door
On three-piled carpet of com-
pliments, [wind
Curtains of incense drawn by the
In between her for evermore
And daylight issues of events.

III.

On she drew, as a queen might do,
To meet a Dream of Italy,—
Of magical town and musical
wave,
Where even a god, his amulet blue
Of shining sea, in an ecstasy
Dropt and forgot in a nereid's
cave.

IV.

Down she goes, as the soft wind
blows,
To live more smoothly than mor-
tals can [and wife,
To love and to reign as queen
To wear a crown that smells of a
rose,
And still, with a sceptre as light
as a fan
Beat sweet time to the song of
life.

V.

What is this? As quick as a kiss
Falls the smile from her girlish
mouth!
The lion-people has left its lair,
Roaring along her garden of bliss,
And the fiery underworld of the
South
Scorched a way to the upper
air.

VI.

And a fire-stone ran in the form of
a man,
Burningly, boundingly, fatal, and
fell,
Bowling the kingdom down!
Where was the king?
She had heard somewhat, since life
began,
Of terrors on earth and horrors
in hell,
But never, never, of such a
thing!

VII.

You think she dropped when her
dream was stopped,
When the blotch of Bourbon
blood inlay, [cheek?
Lividly rank, her new lord's
Not so. Her high heart overtopped
The royal part she had come to
play.
Only the men in that hour were
weak.

VIII.

And twice a wife by her ravaged
life,
And twice a queen by her king-
dom lost,
She braved the shock and the
counter-shock
Of hero and traitor, bullet and
knife.
While Italy pushed, like a venge-
ful ghost,
That son of the cursed from
Gaeta's rock.

IX.

What will ye give her, who could
not deliver,
German Princesses? A laurel-
wreath
All over-scored with your sig-
natures,
Graces, Serenities, Highnesses
ever?

Mock her not, fresh from the
truth of Death,
Conscious of dignities higher
than yours.

X.

What will ye put in your casket
shut, [name?
Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's
Guizot's daughter, what have
you brought her?
Withered immortelles, long ago cut
For guilty dynasties perished in
shame,
Putrid to memory, Guizot's
daughter?

XI.

Ah poor queen! so young and so
serene!
What shall we do for her, now
hope's done,
Standing at Rome in these
ruins old, [queen?
She too a ruin and no more a
Leave her that diadem made by
the sun,
Turning her hair to an inno-
cent gold.

XII.

Ay! bring close to her, as 'twere a
rose, to her, [city
Yon free child from an Apennine
Singing for Italy,—dumb in
the place!
Something like solace, let us sup-
pose, to her
Given, in that homage of wonder
and pity,
By his pure eyes to see her
beautiful face.

XIII.

Nature, excluded, savagely brooded,
Ruined all queendom and dog-
ma of state,—
Then in reaction remorseful
and mild,

Rescues the womanhood, nearly
eluded,
Shows her what's sweetest in
womanly fate—
Sunshine from Heaven, and
the eyes of a child.

THE KING'S GIFT.

I.

TERESA, ah Teresita!
Now what has the messenger
brought her,
Our Garibaldi's youngest daughter,
To make her stop short in her
singing?
Will she not once more repeat a
Verse from that hymn of our hero's,
Setting the souls of us ringing?
Break off the song where the tear
rose?
Ah, Teresita!

II.

A young thing, mark, is Te-
resa;
Her eyes have caught fire, to be
sure, in
That necklace of jewels from Turin,
Till blind their regard to us men
is.
But still she remembers to raise a
Shy look at her father, and note,
... 'Could she sing on as well
about Venice;
Yet wear such a frame at her
throat?
Decide for Teresa.'

III.

Teresa, ah, Teresita!
His right hand has passed on her
head.
'Accept it, my daughter,' he said;
'Ay, wear it, true child of thy
mother,

Then sing till all start to their feet a
 New verse even bolder and freer !
 King Victor's no king like
 another,
 But verily noble as *we* are,
 Child, Teresita !

THE NORTH AND THE
 SOUTH.

[THE LAST POEM.]

ROME, MAY, 1861.

I.

' Now give us lands where olives
 grow,'
 Cried the North to the South,
 ' Where the sun with a golden
 mouth can blow
 Blue bubbles of grapes down a
 vineyard row !'
 Cried the North to the South.

' Now give us men from the sun-
 less plain,'
 Cried the South to the North,
 ' By need of work in the snow and
 the rain
 Made strong, and brave by familiar
 pain !'
 Cried the South to the North.

II.

' Give lucider hills and intenser
 seas,'
 Said the North to the South,
 Since ever by symbols and bright
 degrees

Art, childlike, climbs to the dear
 Lord's knees,'
 Said the North to the South.

' Give strenuous souls for belief and
 prayer,'
 Said the South to the North,
 ' That stand in the dark on the
 lowest stair,
 While affirming of God, " He is
 certainly *there*,"'
 Said the South to the North.

III.

' Yet, oh, for the skies that are
 softer and higher !'
 Sighed the North to the South,
 ' For the flowers that blaze, and the
 trees that aspire,
 And the insects made of a song or
 a fire !'
 Sighed the North to the South.

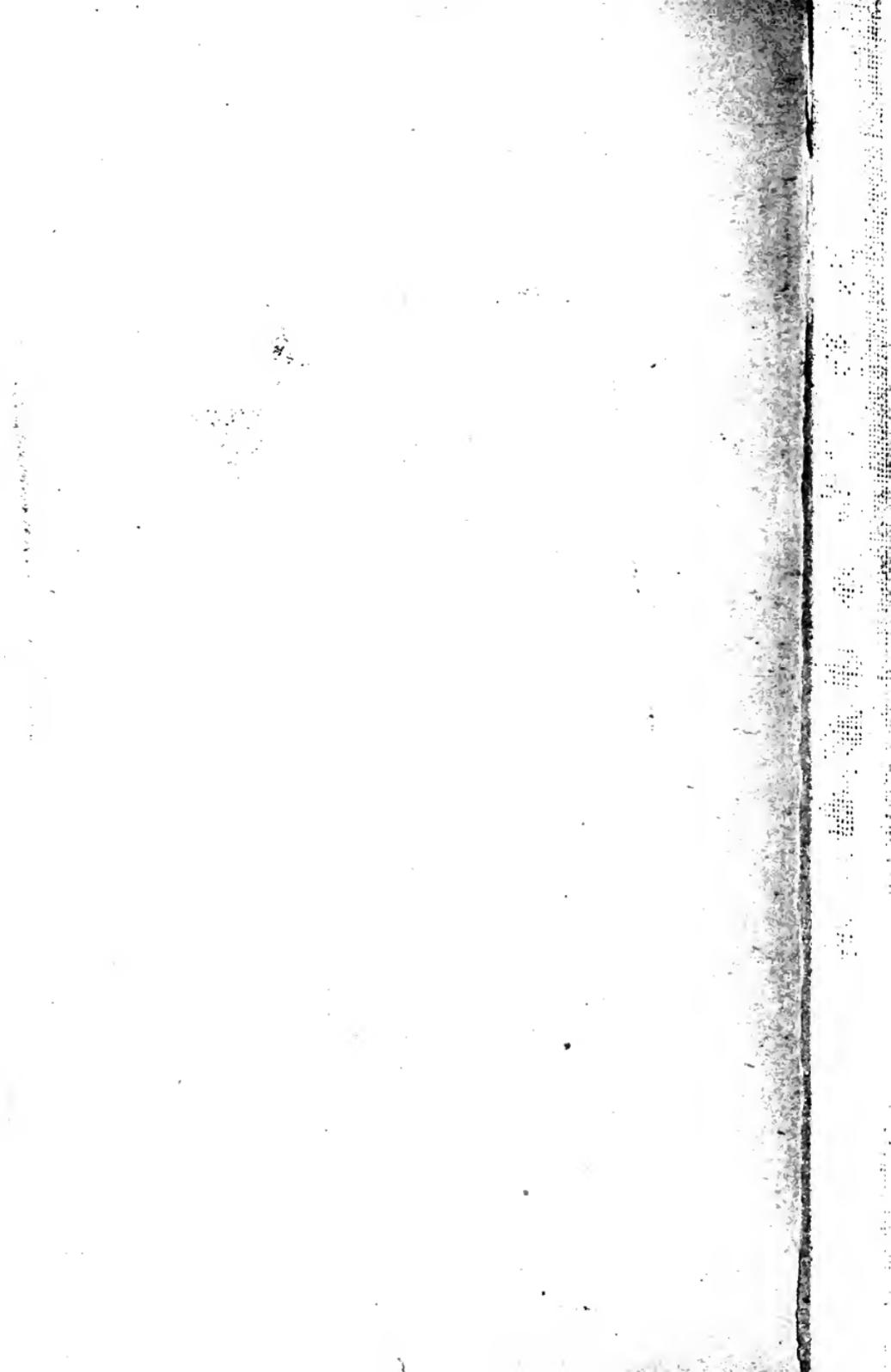
' And oh, for a seer, to discern the
 same !'
 Sighed the South to the North,
 ' —For a poet's tongue of bap-
 tismal flame,
 To call the tree and the flower by
 its name !'
 Sighed the South to the North.

IV.

The North sent therefore a man of
 men
 As a grace to the South,—
 And thus to Rome, came Andersen.
 ' —*Alas, but must you take him
 again ?*'
 Said the South to the North.







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Browning, Elizabeth

Robarts Library

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