

CLYTEMNESTRA.

We have not failed.

CHORUS.

Come, venerable, and ancient Night!  
From sources of the western stars,  
In darkest shade that fits this woe.  
Consoler of a thousand griefs,  
And likest death unalterably calm.  
We toil, aspire, and sorrow,  
And in a little while shall cease.  
For we know not whence we came,  
And who can insure the morrow?  
Thou, eternally the same,  
From of old, in endless peace  
Eternally survivest;  
Enduring on through good and ill,  
Coeval with the Gods; and still  
In thine own silence livest.  
Our days thou leadest home [Again!  
To the great Whither which has no  
Impartiality to pleasure and to pain  
Thou sett'st the bourn. To thee  
shall all things come.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

But, if he cease to love me, what is  
gained?

CASSANDRA.

With wings darkly spreading,  
Like ravens to the carcass  
Scenting far off the savor of blood,  
From shores of the unutterable  
River.

They gather and swoop,  
They waver, they darken.  
From the fangs that raven,  
From the eyes that glare  
Intolerably fierce,  
Save me, Apollo!  
Ai! Ai! Ai!  
Alinon! Alinon!  
Blood, blood! and of kindred nature,  
Which the young wolf returning  
Shall dip his fangs in,  
Thereby accursedly  
Imbibing madness!

CHORUS.

The wild woman is uttering strange  
things  
Fearful to listen to.

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Within the house

Straightway confine her,  
There to learn wisdom.

ÆGISTHUS.

Orestes—O, this child's life now out-  
weighs  
That mighty ruin, Agamemnon  
dead!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Ægisthus, dost thou love me?

ÆGISTHUS.

As my life!

CLYTEMNESTRA.

Thou lovest me! O love, we have  
not failed.  
Give me thy hand! So . . . lead me  
to the house.  
Let me lean on thee. I am very  
weak.

CHORUS.

Only Heaven is high.  
Only the Gods are great.  
Above the searchless sky,  
In unremoved state,  
They from their golden mansions  
Look over the lands, and the seas;  
The ocean's wide expansions,  
And the earth's varieties:  
Secure of their supremacy,  
And sure of affluent ease.  
Who shall say, "I stand!" nor  
fall?

Destiny is over all!  
Rust will crumble old renown.  
Bust and column tumble down;  
Keep and castle; tower and town;  
Throne and sceptre; crest and  
crown.

Destiny is over all!  
One by one the pale guests fall  
At lighted feast, in palace hall;  
And feast is turned to funeral.  
Who shall say, "I stand!" nor  
fall?  
Destiny is over all!

## GOOD-NIGHT IN THE PORCH.

A LITTLE longer in the light, love, let me be. The air is warm.  
I hear the cuckoo's last good-night float from the copse below the Farm.  
A little longer, Sister sweet,—your hand in mine,—on this old seat.

In yon red gable, which the rose creeps round and o'er, your casement  
shines  
Against the yellow west, o'er those forlorn and solitary pines.  
The long, long day is nearly done. How silent all the place is grown!

The stagnant levels, one and all, are burning in the distant marsh—  
Hark! 'twas the bittern's parting call. The frogs are out: with murmurs  
harsh  
The low reeds vibrate. See! the sun catches the long pools one by one.

A moment, and those orange flats will turn dead gray or lurid white.  
Look up! o'erhead the winnowing bats are come and gone, eluding sight.  
The little worms are out. The snails begin to move down shining trails,

With slow pink cones, and soft wet horns. The garden-bowers are dim  
with dew.  
With sparkling drops the white-rose thorns are twinkling, where the sun  
slips through  
Those reefs of coral buds hung free below the purple Judas-tree.

From the warm upland comes a gust made fragrant with the brown hay  
there,  
The meek cows, with their white horns thrust above the hedge, stand still  
and stare.  
The steaming horses from the wains droop o'er the tank their plaited  
manes.

And o'er yon hillside brown and barren (where you and I as children  
played,  
Starting the rabbit to his warren), I hear the sandy, shrill cascade  
Leap down upon the vale, and spill his heart out round the muffled mill.

O can it be for nothing only that God has shown his world to me?  
Or but to leave the heart more lonely with loss of beauty . . . can it be?  
O closer, closer, Sister dear . . . nay, I have kist away that tear.

God bless you, Dear, for that kind thought which only upon tears could  
rise!  
God bless you for the love that sought to hide them in those drooping eyes,  
Whose lids I kiss! . . . poor lids, so red! but let my kiss fall there  
instead.

Yes, sad indeed it seems, each night,—and sadder, Dear, for your sweet sake!  
 To watch the last low lingering light, and know not where the morn may break,  
 To-night we sit together here. To-morrow night will come . . . ah, where?

O child! howe'er assured be faith, to say farewell is fraught with gloom,  
 When, like one flower, the germs of death and genius ripen toward the tomb;  
 And earth each day, as some fond face at parting, gains a graver grace.

There's not a flower, there's not a tree in this old garden where we sit,  
 But what some fragrant memory is closed and folded up in it.  
 To-night the dog-rose smells as wild, as fresh, as when I was a child.

'Tis eight years since (do you forget?) we set those lilies near the wall:  
 You were a blue-eyed child: even yet I seem to see the ringlets fall,—  
 The golden ringlets, blown behind your shoulders in the merry wind.

Ah, me! old times, they cling, they cling! And oft by yonder green old gate  
 The field shows through, in morns of spring, an eager boy, I paused elate  
 With all sweet fancies loosed from school. And oft, you know, when eyes were cool,

In summer-time, and through the trees young gnats began to be about,  
 With some old book upon your knees 'twas here you watched the stars come out.  
 While oft, to please me, you sang through some foolish song I made for you.

And there's my epic—I began when life seemed long, though longer art—  
 And all the glorious deeds of man made golden riot in my heart—  
 Eight books . . . it will not number nine! I die before my heroine.

Sister! they say that drowning men in one wild moment can recall  
 Their whole life long, and feel again the pain—the bliss—that thronged  
 it all:—  
 Last night those phantoms of the Past again came crowding round me fast.

Near morning, when the lamp was low, against the wall they seemed to flit;  
 And, as the wavering light would glow or fall, they came and went with it.  
 The ghost of boyhood seemed to gaze down the dark verge of vanished days.

Once more the garden where she walked on summer eves to tend her flowers,  
 Once more the lawn where first we talked of future years in twilight hours  
 Arose; once more she seemed to pass before me in the waving grass

To that old terrace; her bright hair about her warm neck all undone,  
 And waving on the balmy air, with tinges of the dying sun.  
 Just one star kindling in the west: just one bird singing near its nest.

So lovely, so beloved! O, fair as though that sun had never set  
 Which stayed upon her golden hair, in dreams I seem to see her yet!  
 To see her in that old green place,—the same husht, smiling, cruel face!

A little older, love, than you are now; and I was then a boy;  
 And wild and wayward-hearted too; to her my passion was a toy,  
 Soon broken! ah, a foolish thing,—a butterfly with crumpled wing!

Her hair, too, was like yours,—as bright, but with a warmer golden tinge:  
 Her eyes,—a somewhat deeper light, and dreamed below a longer fringe:  
 And still that strange grave smile she had stays in my heart and keeps it sad!

There's no one knows it, truest friend, but you, for I have never breathed  
 To other ears the frozen end of those spring-garlands Hope once wreathed;  
 And death will come before again I breathe that name untouched by pain!

From little things—a star, a flower—that touched us with the self-same thought,  
 My passion deepened hour by hour, until to that fierce heat 'twas wrought,  
 Which, shrivelling over every nerve, crumbled the outworks of reserve.

I told her then, in that wild time, the love I knew she long had seen;  
 The accusing pain that burned like crime, yet left me nobler than I had been;  
 What matter with what words I wooed her? She said I had misunderstood her.

And something more—small matter what! of friendship something—  
 sister's love—  
 She said that I was young—knew not my own heart—as the years would prove—  
 She wished me happy—she conceived an interest in me—and believed

I should grow up to something great—and soon forget her—soon forget  
 This fancy—and congratulate my life she had released it, yet—  
 With more such words—a lie! a lie! She broke my heart, and flung it by!

A life's libation lifted up, from her proud lip she dashed untasted:  
 There trampled lay love's costly cup, and in the dust the wine was wasted.  
 She knew I could not pour such wine again at any other shrine.

Then I remember a numb mood: mad murmurings of the words she said:  
 A slow shame smouldering through my blood; that surged and sung within my head:  
 And drunken sunlights reeling through the leaves: above, the burnisht blue

Hot on my eyes,—a blazing shield : a noise among the waterfalls :  
A free crow up the brown cornfield floating at will : faint shepherd-calls :  
And reapers reaping in the shocks of gold : and girls with purple frocks :

All which the more confused my brain : and nothing could I realize  
But the great fact of my own pain : I saw the fields : I heard the cries :  
The crow's shade dwindled up the hill : the world went on : my heart  
stood still.

I thought I held in my hot hand my life crusht up : I could have tost  
The crumpled riddle from me, and laughed loud to think what I had lost.  
A bitter strength was in my mind : like Samson, when she scorned him—  
blind,

And casting reckless arms about the props of life to hug them down,—  
A madman with his eyes put out. But all my anger was my own.  
I spared the worm upon my walk : I left the white rose on its stalk.

All's over long since. Was it strange that I was mad with grief and  
shame ?  
And I would cross the seas, and change my ancient home, my father's  
name ?  
In the wild hope, if that might be, to change my own identity !

I know that I was wrong : I know it was not well to be so wild.  
But the scorn stung so ! . . . Pity now could wound not ! . . . I have seen  
her child :  
It had the self-same eyes she had : their gazing almost made me mad.

Dark violet eyes whose glances, deep with April hints of sunny tears,  
'Neath long soft lashes laid asleep, seemed all too thoughtful for her  
years ;  
As though from mine her gaze had caught the secret of some mournful  
thought.

But, when she spoke her father's air broke o'er her . . . that clear con-  
fident voice !  
Some happy souls there are, that wear their nature lightly ; these rejoice  
The world by living ; and receive from all men more than what they give.

One handful of their buoyant chaff exceeds our hoards of careful grain :  
Because their love breaks through their laugh, while ours is fraught with  
tender pain :  
The world, that knows itself too sad, is proud to keep some faces glad :

And, so it is ! from such an one Misfortune softly steps aside  
To let him still walk in the sun. These things must be. I cannot chide.  
Had I been she I might have made the self-same choice. She shunned the  
shade.

To some men God hath given laughter ; but tears to some men he hath  
given :  
He bade us sow in tears, hereafter to harvest holier smiles in Heaven :  
And tears and smiles, they are His gift : both good, to smite or to uplift :

He knows His sheep : the wind and showers beat not too sharply the  
shorn lamb :  
His wisdom is more wise than ours : He knew my nature—what I am :  
He tempers smiles with tears : both good, to bear in time the Christian  
mood.

O yet—in scorn of mean relief, let Sorrow bear her heavenly fruit !  
Better the wildest hour of grief than the low pastime of the brute !  
Better to weep, for He wept too, than laugh as every fool can do !

For sure, 'twere best to bear the cross ; nor lightly fling the thorns  
behind ;  
Lest we grow happy by the loss of what was noblest in the mind.  
—Here—in the ruins of my years—Father, I bless Thee through these  
tears !

It was in the far foreign lands this sickness came upon me first.  
Below strange suns, 'mid alien hands, this fever of the south was nurst,  
Until it reached some vital part. I die not of a broken heart.

O think not that ! If I could live . . . there's much to live for—  
worthy life.  
It is not for what fame could give—though that I scorn not—but the strife  
Were noble for its own sake too. I thought that I had much to do—

But God is wisest ! Hark, again ! . . . 'twas yon black bittern, as he  
rose  
Against the wild light o'er the fen. How red your little casement glows !  
The night falls fast. How lonely, Dear, this bleak old house will look  
next year !

So sad a thought ? . . . ah, yes ! I know it is not good to brood on this :  
And yet—such thoughts will come and go, unbidden. 'Tis that you  
should miss,  
My darling, one familiar tone of this weak voice when I am gone.

And, for what's past,—I will not say in what she did that all was right,  
But all's forgiven ; and I pray for her heart's welfare, day and night.  
All things are changed ! This cheek would glow even near hers but  
faintly now !

Thou—God ! before whose sleepless eye not even in vain the sparrows  
fall,  
Receive, sustain me ! Sanctify my soul. Thou know'st, Thou lovest all.  
Too weak to walk alone—I see Thy hand : I falter back to Thee.

Saved from the curse of time which throws its baseness on us day by day :  
Its wretched joys, and worthless woes ; till all the heart is worn away.  
I feel Thee near. I hold my breath, by the half-open doors of Death.

And sometimes, glimpses from within of glory (wondrous sight and  
sound !)

Float near me :—faces pure from sin ; strange music ; saints with splendor crowned :

I seem to feel my native air blow down from some high region there,

And fan my spirit pure : I rise above the sense of loss and pain :  
Faint forms that lured my childhood's eyes, long lost, I seem to find again :

I see the end of all : I feel hope, awe, no language can reveal.

Forgive me, Lord, if overmuch I loved that form Thou mad'st so fair ;  
I know that Thou didst make her such ; and fair but as the flowers were,—

Thy work : her beauty was but Thine ; the human less than the divine.

My life hath been one search for Thee 'mid thorns found red with Thy dear blood ;

In many a dark Gethsemane I seemed to stand where Thou hadst stood :  
And, scorned in this world's Judgment-Place, at times, through tears, to catch Thy face.

Thou suffered'st here, and didst not fail : Thy bleeding feet these paths have trod :

But Thou wert strong, and I am frail : and I am man, and Thou wert God.

Be near me : keep me in Thy sight : or lay my soul asleep in light.

O to be where the meanest mind is more than Shakespeare ! where one look

Shows more than here the wise can find, though toiling slow from book to book !

Where life is knowledge : love is sure : and hope's brief promise made secure.

O dying voice of human praise ! the crude ambitions of my youth !  
I long to pour immortal lays ! great pæans of perennial Truth !  
A larger work ! a loftier aim ! . . . and what are laurel-leaves and fame ?

And what are words ? How little these the silence of the soul express !  
Mere froth,—the foam and flower of seas whose hungering waters heave and press

Against the planets and the sides of night,—mute, yearning, mystic tides !

To ease the heart with song is sweet : sweet to be heard if heard by love.  
And you have heard me. When we meet shall we not sing the old songs above

To grander music ? Sweet, one kiss. O blest it is to die like this !

To lapse from being without pain : your hand in mine, on mine your heart :

The unshaken faith to meet again that sheathes the pang with which we part :

My head upon your bosom, sweet : your hand in mine, on this old seat !

So ; closer wind that tender arm . . . How the hot tears fall ! Do not weep,

Beloved, but let your smile stay warm about me. "In the Lord they sleep."

You know the words the Scripture saith . . . O light, O Glory ! . . . is this death ?

## THE EARL'S RETURN.

RAGGED and tall stood the castle wall	And the flakes of the spray that were jerked away
And the squires at their sport, in the great South Court,	From the froth on the lip of the bleak blue sea
Lounged all day long from stable to hall	Were sometimes flung by the wind, as it swung
Laughingly, lazily, one and all.	Over turret and terrace and balcony,
The land about was barren and blue,	To the garden below where, in desolate corners
And swept by the wing of the wet sea-mew.	Under the mossy green parapet there,
Seven fishermen's huts on a shelly shore ;	The lilies crouched, rocking their white heads like mourners,
Sand-heaps behind, and sand-banks before ;	And burned off the heads of the flowers that were
And a black champaign streaked white all through	Pining and pale in their comfortless bowers,
To a great salt pool which the ocean drew,	Dry-bushed with the sharp stubborn lavender,
Sucked into itself, and disgorged it again	And paven with disks of the torn sunflowers,
To stagnate and steam on the mineral plain ;	Which, day by day, were strangled, and stripped
Not a tree or a bush in the circle of sight,	Of their ravelling fringes and brazen bosses,
But a bare black thorn which the sea-winds had withered	And the hardy mary-buds nipped and ripped
With the drifting scum of the surf and blight,	Into shreds for the beetles that lurked in the mosses.
And some patches of gray grass-land to the right,	Here she lived alone, and from year to year
Where the lean red-hided cattle were tethered :	[appear
A reef of rock wedged the water in twain,	She saw the black belt of the ocean
And a stout stone tower stood square to the main.	At her casement each morn as she rose ; and each morn
	Her eye fell first on the bare black thorn.