

THE CHANGELING°

I HAD a little daughter,
 And she was given to me
 To lead me gently backward
 To the Heavenly Father's knee,
 That I, by the force of nature,
 Might in some dim wise divine
 The depth of his infinite patience
 To this wayward soul of mine.

I know not how others saw her,
 But to me she was wholly fair,
 And the light of the heaven she came from
 Still lingered and gleamed in her hair;
 For it was as wavy and golden,
 And as many changes took,
 As the shadows of sun-gilt ripples
 On the yellow bed of a brook.

To what can I liken her smiling
 Upon me, her kneeling lover,

10

How it leaped from her lips to her eyelids,
 And dimpled her wholly over, 20
 Till her outstretched hands smiled also,
 And I almost seemed to see
 The very heart of her mother
 Sending sun through her veins to me!

She had been with us scarce a twelvemonth,
 And it hardly seemed a day,
 When a troop of wandering angels
 Stole my little daughter away;
 Or perhaps those heavenly Zingari°
 But loosed the hampering strings, 30
 And when they had opened the cage-door,
 My little bird used her wings.

But they left in her stead a changeling,
 A little angel child,
 That seems like her bud in full blossom,
 And smiles as she never smiled:
 When I wake in the morning I see it
 Where she always used to lie,
 And I feel as weak as a violet°
 Alone 'neath the awful sky. 40

As weak, yet as trustful also;
 For the whole year long I see
 All the wonders of faithful Nature
 Still worked for the love of me;
 Winds wander and dews drip earthward,
 Rains fall, suns rise and set,
 Earth whirls, and all but to prosper
 A poor little violet.

This child is not mine as the first was,
 I cannot sing it to rest,
 I cannot lift it up fatherly
 And bliss^o it upon my breast;
 Yet it lies in my little one's cradle,
 And it sits in my little one's chair,
 And the light of the heaven she's gone to
 Transfigures its golden hair.

50

NOTES

THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL

The Metre. Except for the first eight lines, the poem is in mixed tetrameter, that is, in lines of four accents, separated by either one or two light syllables. Take, for example, the lines:—

“Not only around our infancy
 Doth heaven with all its splendors lie.”

In each of these we find four stressed or accented syllables:

Not only around our infancy
 Doth heaven with all its splendors lie.

If we divide these lines into groups, — just as we divide music into bars, — and call these groups *feet*, we shall find that, as one reads the lines aloud, he will naturally hurry the time in groups where there are three syllables, so as to make them take only as long as the feet that have two. That is, no matter how many syllables there are in the foot, the time between accents is the same, the loud syllables coming with the regular beat of a drum. Beat time as you read the verses and you will see this.

In some verse there is a set number of syllables to each foot. Sometimes the feet are regularly of two syllables each, and, if