

MERLIN

I

THY trivial harp will never please  
Or fill my craving ear ;  
Its chords should ring as blows the breeze,  
Free, peremptory, clear.  
No jingling serenader's art,  
Nor tinkle of piano strings,  
Can make the wild blood start  
In its mystic springs.  
The kingly bard  
Must smite the chords rudely and hard,  
As with hammer or with mace ;  
That they may render back  
Artful thunder, which conveys  
Secrets of the solar track,  
Sparks of the supersolar blaze.  
Merlin's blows are strokes of fate,  
Chiming with the forest tone,  
When boughs buffet boughs in the wood ;  
Chiming with the gasp and moan  
Of the ice-imprisoned flood ;  
With the pulse of manly hearts ;  
With the voice of orators ;  
With the din of city arts ;

MERLIN

121

With the cannonade of wars ;  
With the marches of the brave ;  
And prayers of might from martyrs' cave.

Great is the art,  
Great be the manners, of the bard.  
He shall not his brain encumber  
With the coil of rhythm and number ;  
But, leaving rule and pale forethought,  
He shall aye climb  
For his rhyme.  
'Pass in, pass in,' the angels say,  
'In to the upper doors,  
Nor count compartments of the floors,  
But mount to paradise  
By the stairway of surprise.'

Blameless master of the games,  
King of sport that never shames,  
He shall daily joy dispense  
Hid in song's sweet influence.  
Forms more cheerly live and go,  
What time the subtle mind  
Sings aloud the tune whereto  
Their pulses beat,  
And march their feet,  
And their members are combined.

By Sybarites beguiled,  
He shall no task decline ;

## MERLIN

Merlin's mighty line  
 Extremes of nature reconciled, —  
 Bereaved a tyrant of his will,  
 And made the lion mild.  
 Songs can the tempest still,  
 Scattered on the stormy air,  
 Mould the year to fair increase,  
 And bring in poetic peace.

He shall not seek to weave,  
 In weak, unhappy times,  
 Efficacious rhymes;  
 Wait his returning strength.  
 Bird that from the nadir's floor  
 To the zenith's top can soar, —  
 The soaring orbit of the muse exceeds that  
     journey's length.  
 Nor profane affect to hit  
 Or compass that, by meddling wit,  
 Which only the propitious mind  
 Publishes when 't is inclined.  
 There are open hours  
 When the God's will sallies free,  
 And the dull idiot might see  
 The flowing fortunes of a thousand years; —  
 Sudden, at unawares,  
 Self-moved, fly-to the doors,  
 Nor sword of angels could reveal  
 What they conceal.

## MERLIN

## II

THE rhyme of the poet  
 Modulates the king's affairs;  
 Balance-loving Nature  
 Made all things in pairs.  
 To every foot its antipode;  
 Each color with its counter glowed;  
 To every tone beat answering tones,  
 Higher or graver;  
 Flavor gladly blends with flavor;  
 Leaf answers leaf upon the bough;  
 And match the paired cotyledons.  
 Hands to hands, and feet to feet,  
 In one body grooms and brides;  
 Eldest rite, two married sides  
 In every mortal meet.  
 Light's far furnace shines,  
 Smelting balls and bars,  
 Forging double stars,  
 Glittering twins and trines.  
 The animals are sick with love,  
 Lovesick with rhyme;  
 Each with all propitious Time  
 Into chorus wove.

Like the dancers' ordered band,  
 Thoughts come also hand in hand;

## MERLIN

In equal couples mated,  
 Or else alternated ;  
 Adding by their mutual gage,  
 One to other, health and age.  
 Solitary fancies go  
 Short-lived wandering to and fro,  
 Most like to bachelors,  
 Or an ungiven maid,  
 Not ancestors,  
 With no posterity to make the lie afraid,  
 Or keep truth undecayed.  
 Perfect-paired as eagle's wings,  
 Justice is the rhyme of things ;  
 Trade and counting use  
 The self-same tuneful muse ;  
 And Nemesis,  
 Who with even matches odd,  
 Who athwart space redresses  
 The partial wrong,  
 Fills the just period,  
 And finishes the song.

Subtle rhymes, with ruin rife,  
 Murmur in the house of life,  
 Sung by the Sisters as they spin ;  
 In perfect time and measure they  
 Build and unbuild our echoing clay.  
 As the two twilights of the day  
 Fold us music-drunken in.

## BACCHUS

BRING me wine, but wine which never grew  
 In the belly of the grape,  
 Or grew on vine whose tap-roots, reaching through,  
 Under the Andes to the Cape,  
 Suffer no savor of the earth to scape.

Let its grapes the morn salute  
 From a nocturnal root,  
 Which feels the acrid juice  
 Of Styx and Erebus ;  
 And turns the woe of Night,  
 By its own craft, to a more rich delight.

We buy ashes for bread ;  
 We buy diluted wine ;  
 Give me of the true, —  
 Whose ample leaves and tendrils curled  
 Among the silver hills of heaven  
 Draw everlasting dew ;  
 Wine of wine,  
 Blood of the world,  
 Form of forms, and mould of statures,  
 That I intoxicated,  
 And by the draught assimilated,  
 May float at pleasure through all natures ;

The bird-language rightly spell,  
And that which roses say so well.

Wine that is shed  
Like the torrents of the sun  
Up the horizon walls,  
Or like the Atlantic streams, which run  
When the South Sea calls.

Water and bread,  
Food which needs no transmuting,  
Rainbow-flowering, wisdom-fruited,  
Wine which is already man,  
Food which teach and reason can.

Wine which Music is, —  
Music and wine are one, —  
That I, drinking this,  
Shall hear far Chaos talk with me ;  
Kings unborn shall walk with me ;  
And the poor grass shall plot and plan  
What it will do when it is man.  
Quickened so, will I unlock  
Every crypt of every rock.

I thank the joyful juice  
For all I know ; —  
Winds of remembering  
Of the ancient being blow,

And seeming-solid walls of use  
Open and flow.

Pour, Bacchus! the remembering wine ;  
Retrieve the loss of me and mine!  
Vine for vine be antidote,  
And the grape requite the lote!  
Haste to cure the old despair, —  
Reason in Nature's lotus drenched,  
The memory of ages quenched ;  
Give them again to shine ;  
Let wine repair what this undid ;  
And where the infection slid,  
A dazzling memory revive ;  
Refresh the faded tints,  
Recut the aged prints,  
And write my old adventures with the pen  
Which on the first day drew,  
Upon the tablets blue,  
The dancing Pleiads and eternal men.

## MEROPS

WHAT care I, so they stand the same, —  
Things of the heavenly mind, —  
How long the power to give them name  
Tarrys yet behind ?

## THE HOUSE

Thus far to-day your favors reach,  
 O fair, appeasing presences!  
 Ye taught my lips a single speech,  
 And a thousand silences.

Space grants beyond his fated road  
 No inch to the god of day;  
 And copious language still bestowed  
 One word, no more, to say.

## THE HOUSE

THERE is no architect  
 Can build as the Muse can;  
 She is skilful to select  
 Materials for her plan;

Slow and warily to choose  
 Rafters of immortal pine,  
 Or cedar incorruptible,  
 Worthy her design,

She threads dark 'Alpine forests  
 Or valleys by the sea,  
 In many lands, with painful steps,  
 Ere she can find a tree.

## SAADI

She ransacks mines and ledges  
 And quarries every rock,  
 To hew the famous adamant  
 For each eternal block —

She lays her beams in music,  
 In music every one,  
 To the cadence of the whirling world  
 Which dances round the sun —

That so they shall not be displaced  
 By lapses or by wars,  
 But for the love of happy souls  
 Outlive the newest stars.

## SAADI

TREES in groves,  
 Kine in droves,  
 In ocean sport the scaly herds,  
 Wedge-like cleave the air the birds,  
 To northern lakes fly wind-borne ducks,  
 Browse the mountain sheep in flocks,  
 Men consort in camp and town,  
 But the poet dwells alone.

God, who gave to him the lyre,  
 Of all mortals the desire,

For all breathing men's behoof,  
 Straitly charged him, 'Sit aloof;'  
 Annexed a warning, poets say,  
 To the bright premium, —  
 Ever, when twain together play,  
 Shall the harp be dumb.

Many may come,  
 But one shall sing;  
 Two touch the string,  
 The harp is dumb.  
 Though there come a million,  
 Wise Saadi dwells alone.

Yet Saadi loved the race of men, —  
 No churl, immured in cave or den;  
 In bower and hall  
 He wants them all,  
 Nor can dispense  
 With Persia for his audience;  
 They must give ear,  
 Grow red with joy and white with fear;  
 But he has no companion;  
 Come ten, or come a million,  
 Good Saadi dwells alone.

Be thou ware where Saadi dwells;  
 Wisdom of the gods is he, —  
 Entertain it reverently.

Gladly round that golden lamp  
 Sylvan deities encamp,  
 And simple maids and noble youth  
 Are welcome to the man of truth.  
 Most welcome they who need him most,  
 They feed the spring which they exhaust;  
 For greater need  
 Draws better deed:  
 But, critic, spare thy vanity,  
 Nor show thy pompous parts,  
 To vex with odious subtlety  
 The cheerer of men's hearts.

Sad-eyed Fakirs swiftly say  
 Endless dirges to decay,  
 Never in the blaze of light  
 Lose the shudder of midnight;  
 Pale at overflowing noon  
 Hear wolves barking at the moon;  
 In the bower of dalliance sweet  
 Hear the far Avenger's feet:  
 And shake before those awful Powers,  
 Who in their pride forgive not ours.  
 Thus the sad-eyed Fakirs preach:  
 'Bard, when thee would Allah teach,  
 And lift thee to his holy mount,  
 He sends thee from his bitter fount  
 Wormwood, — saying, "Go thy ways;  
 Drink not the Malaga of praise,

But do the deed thy fellows hate,  
 And compromise thy peaceful state;  
 Smite the white breasts which thee fed,  
 Stuff sharp thorns beneath the head  
 Of them thou shouldst have comforted;  
 For out of woe and out of crime  
 Draws the heart a lore sublime."'  
 And yet it seemeth not to me  
 That the high gods love tragedy;  
 For Saadi sat in the sun,  
 And thanks was his contrition;  
 For haircloth and for bloody whips,  
 Had active hands and smiling lips;  
 And yet his runes he rightly read,  
 And to his folk his message sped.  
 Sunshine in his heart transferred  
 Lighted each transparent word,  
 And well could honoring Persia learn  
 What Saadi wished to say;  
 For Saadi's nightly stars did burn  
 Brighter than Jami's day.

Whispered the Muse in Saadi's cot:

'O gentle Saadi, listen not,  
 Tempted by thy praise of wit,  
 Or by thirst and appetite  
 For the talents not thine own,  
 To sons of contradiction.  
 Never, son of eastern morning,

Follow falsehood, follow scorning.  
 Denounce who will, who will deny,  
 And pile the hills to scale the sky;  
 Let theist, atheist, pantheist,  
 Define and wrangle how they list,  
 Fierce conserver, fierce destroyer,—  
 But thou, joy-giver and enjoyer,  
 Unknowing war, unknowing crime,  
 Gentle Saadi, mind thy rhyme;  
 Heed not what the brawlers say,  
 Heed thou only Saadi's lay.

'Let the great world bustle on  
 With war and trade, with camp and town;  
 A thousand men shall dig and eat;  
 At forge and furnace thousands sweat;  
 And thousands sail the purple sea,  
 And give or take the stroke of war,  
 Or crowd the market and bazaar;  
 Oft shall war end, and peace return,  
 And cities rise where cities burn,  
 Ere one man my hill shall climb,  
 Who can turn the golden rhyme.  
 Let them manage how they may,  
 Heed thou only Saadi's lay.  
 Seek the living among the dead,—  
 Man in man is imprisonèd;  
 Barefooted Dervish is not poor,  
 If fate unlock his bosom's door,

So that what his eye hath seen  
 His tongue can paint as bright, as keen;  
 And what his tender heart hath felt  
 With equal fire thy heart shalt melt.  
 For, whom the Muses smile upon,  
 And touch with soft persuasion,  
 His words like a storm-wind can bring  
 Terror and beauty on their wing;  
 In his every syllable  
 Lurketh Nature veritable;  
 And though he speak in midnight dark, —  
 In heaven no star, on earth no spark, —  
 Yet before the listener's eye  
 Swims the world in ecstasy,  
 The forest waves, the morning breaks,  
 The pastures sleep, ripple the lakes,  
 Leaves twinkle, flowers like persons be,  
 And life pulsates in rock or tree.  
 Saadi, so far thy words shall reach:  
 Suns rise and set in Saadi's speech!

And thus to Saadi said the Muse:  
 'Eat thou the bread which men refuse;  
 Flee from the goods which from thee flee;  
 Seek nothing, — Fortune seeketh thee.  
 Nor mount, nor dive; all good things keep  
 The midway of the eternal deep.  
 Wish not to fill the isles with eyes  
 To fetch thee birds of paradise:

On thine orchard's edge belong  
 All the brags of plume and song;  
 Wise Ali's sunbright sayings pass  
 For proverbs in the market-place:  
 Through mountains bored by regal art,  
 Toil whistles as he drives his cart,  
 Nor scour the seas, nor sift mankind,  
 A poet or a friend to find:  
 Behold, he watches at the door!  
 Behold his shadow on the floor!  
 Open innumerable doors  
 The heaven where unveiled Allah pours  
 The flood of truth, the flood of good,  
 The Seraph's and the Cherub's food.  
 Those doors are men: the Pariah hind  
 Admits thee to the perfect Mind.  
 Seek not beyond thy cottage wall  
 Redeemers that can yield thee all:  
 While thou sittest at thy door  
 On the desert's yellow floor,  
 Listening to the gray-haired crones,  
 Foolish gossips, ancient drones,  
 Saadi, see! they rise in stature  
 To the height of mighty Nature,  
 And the secret stands revealed  
 Fraudulent Time in vain concealed, —  
 That blessed gods in servile masks  
 Plied for thee thy household tasks.'



## HOLIDAYS

FROM fall to spring, the russet acorn,  
Fruit beloved of maid and boy,  
Lent itself beneath the forest,  
To be the children's toy.

Pluck it now! In vain, — thou canst not;  
Its root has pierced yon shady mound;  
Toy no longer — it has duties;  
It is anchored in the ground.

Year by year the rose-lipped maiden,  
Playfellow of young and old,  
Was frolic sunshine, dear to all men,  
More dear to one than mines of gold.

Whither went the lovely hoyden?  
Disappeared in blessed wife;  
Servant to a wooden cradle,  
Living in a baby's life.

Still thou playest; — short vacation  
Fate grants each to stand aside;  
Now must thou be man and artist, —  
'T is the turning of the tide.

## XENOPHANES

By fate, not option, frugal Nature gave  
One scent to hyson and to wall-flower,  
One sound to pine-groves and to waterfalls,  
One aspect to the desert and the lake.  
It was her stern necessity: all things  
Are of one pattern made; bird, beast and flower,  
Song, picture, form, space, thought and character  
Deceive us, seeming to be many things,  
And are but one. Beheld far off, they part  
As God and devil; bring them to the mind,  
They dull its edge with their monotony.  
To know one element, explore another,  
And in the second reappears the first.  
The specious panorama of a year  
But multiplies the image of a day, —  
A belt of mirrors round a taper's flame;  
And universal Nature, through her vast  
And crowded whole, an infinite paroquet,  
Repeats one note.