

APPENDIX

THE POET

I

RIGHT upward on the road of fame
With sounding steps the poet came;
Born and nourished in miracles,
His feet were shod with golden bells,
Or where he stepped the soil did peal
As if the dust were glass and steel.
The gallant child where'er he came
Threw to each fact a tuneful name.
The things whereon he cast his eyes
Could not the nations rebaptize,
Nor Time's snows hide the names he set,
Nor last posterity forget.
Yet every scroll whereon he wrote
In latent fire his secret thought,
Fell unregarded to the ground,
Unseen by such as stood around.
The pious wind took it away,
The reverent darkness hid the lay.
Methought like water-haunting birds
Divers or dippers were his words,
And idle clowns beside the mere
At the new vision gape and jeer.

But when the noisy scorn was past,
Emerge the wingèd words in haste.
New-bathed, new-trimmed, on healthy wing,
Right to the heaven they steer and sing.

A Brother of the world, his song
Sounded like a tempest strong
Which tore from oaks their branches broad,
And stars from the ecliptic road.
Times wore he as his clothing-weeds,
He sowed the sun and moon for seeds.
As melts the iceberg in the seas,
As clouds give rain to the eastern breeze,
As snow-banks thaw in April's beam,
The solid kingdoms like a dream
Resist in vain his motive strain,
They totter now and float amain.
For the Muse gave special charge
His learning should be deep and large,
And his training should not scant
The deepest lore of wealth or want:
His flesh should feel, his eyes should read
Every maxim of dreadful Need;
In its fulness he should taste
Life's honeycomb, but not too fast;
Full fed, but not intoxicated;
He should be loved; he should be hated;
A blooming child to children dear,
His heart should palpitate with fear.

And well he loved to quit his home
And, Calmuck, in his wagon roam
To read new landscapes and old skies; —
But oh, to see his solar eyes
Like meteors which chose their way
And rived the dark like a new day!
Not lazy grazing on all they saw,
Each chimney-pot and cottage door,
Farm-gear and village picket-fence,
But, feeding on magnificence,
They bounded to the horizon's edge
And searched with the sun's privilege.
Landward they reached the mountains old
Where pastoral tribes their flocks infold,
Saw rivers run seaward by cities high
And the seas wash the low-hung sky;
Saw the endless rack of the firmament
And the sailing moon where the cloud was rent,
And through man and woman and sea and star
Saw the dance of Nature forward and far,
Through worlds and races and terms and times
Saw musical order and pairing rhymes.

II

The gods talk in the breath of the woods,
They talk in the shaken pine,
And fill the long reach of the old seashore
With dialogue divine;

And the poet who overhears
 Some random word they say
 Is the fated man of men
 Whom the ages must obey :
 One who having nectar drank
 Into blissful orgies sank ;
 He takes no mark of night or day,
 He cannot go, he cannot stay,
 He would, yet would not, counsel keep,
 But, like a walker in his sleep
 With staring eye that seeth none,
 Ridiculously up and down
 Seeks how he may fitly tell
 The heart-o'erlading miracle.

Not yet, not yet,
 Impatient friend, —
 A little while attend ;
 Not yet I sing : but I must wait,
 My hand upon the silent string,
 Fully until the end.
 I see the coming light,
 I see the scattered gleams,
 Aloft, beneath, on left and right
 The stars' own ether beams ;
 These are but seeds of days,
 Not yet a steadfast morn,
 An intermittent blaze,
 An embryo god unborn.

How all things sparkle,
 The dust is alive,
 To the birth they arrive :
 I snuff the breath of my morning afar,
 I see the pale lustres condense to a star :
 The fading colors fix,
 The vanishing are seen,
 And the world that shall be
 Twins the world that has been.
 I know the appointed hour,
 I greet my office well,
 Never faster, never slower
 Revolves the fatal wheel !
 The Fairest enchants me,
 The Mighty commands me,
 Saying, ' Stand in thy place ;
 Up and eastward turn thy face ;
 As mountains for the morning wait,
 Coming early, coming late,
 So thou attend the enriching Fate
 Which none can stay, and none accelerate.'
 I am neither faint nor weary,
 Fill thy will, O faultless heart !
 Here from youth to age I tarry, —
 Count it flight of bird or dart.
 My heart at the heart of things
 Heeds no longer lapse of time,
 Rushing ages moult their wings,
 Bathing in thy day sublime.

The sun set, but set not his hope : —
 Stars rose, his faith was earlier up :
 Fixed on the enormous galaxy,
 Deeper and older seemed his eye,
 And matched his sufferance sublime
 The taciturnity of Time.

Beside his hut and shading oak,
 Thus to himself the poet spoke,
 'I have supped to-night with gods,
 I will not go under a wooden roof :
 As I walked among the hills
 In the love which Nature fills,
 The great stars did not shine aloof,
 They hurried down from their deep abodes
 And hemmed me in their glittering troop.

'Divine Inviters! I accept
 The courtesy ye have shown and kept
 From ancient ages for the bard,
 To modulate
 With finer fate
 A fortune harsh and hard.
 With aim like yours
 I watch your course,
 Who never break your lawful dance
 By error or intemperance.
 O birds of ether without wings!
 O heavenly ships without a sail!

O fire of fire! O best of things!
 O mariners who never fail!
 Sail swiftly through your amber vault,
 An animated law, a presence to exalt.'

Ah, happy if a sun or star
 Could chain the wheel of Fortune's car,
 And give to hold an even state,
 Neither dejected nor elate,
 That haply man upraised might keep
 The height of Fancy's far-eyed steep.
 In vain: the stars are glowing wheels,
 Giddy with motion Nature reels,
 Sun, moon, man, undulate and stream,
 The mountains flow, the solids seem,
 Change acts, reacts; back, forward hurled,
 And pause were palsy to the world. —
 The morn is come: the starry crowds
 Are hid behind the thrice-piled clouds;
 The new day lowers, and equal odds
 Have changed not less the guest of gods;
 Discrowned and timid, thoughtless, worn,
 The child of genius sits forlorn:
 Between two sleeps a short day's stealth,
 'Mid many ails a brittle health,
 A cripple of God, half true, half formed,
 And by great sparks Promethean warmed,
 Constrained by impotence to adjourn
 To infinite time his eager turn,

His lot of action at the urn,
 He by false usage pinned about
 No breath therein, no passage out,
 Cast wishful glances at the stars
 And wishful saw the Ocean stream:—
 'Merge me in the brute universe,
 Or lift to a diviner dream!'

Beside him sat enduring love,
 Upon him noble eyes did rest,
 Which, for the Genius that there strove,
 The follies bore that it invest.
 They spoke not, for their earnest sense
 Outran the craft of eloquence.

He whom God had thus preferred,—
 To whom sweet angels ministered,
 Saluted him each morn as brother,
 And bragged his virtues to each other,—
 Alas! how were they so beguiled,
 And they so pure? He, foolish child,
 A facile, reckless, wandering will,
 Eager for good, not hating ill,
 Thanked Nature for each stroke she dealt;
 On his tense chords all strokes were felt,
 The good, the bad with equal zeal,
 He asked, he only asked, to feel.
 Timid, self-pleasing, sensitive,
 With Gods, with fools, content to live;

Bended to fops who bent to him;
 Surface with surfaces did swim.

'Sorrow, sorrow!' the angels cried,
 'Is this dear Nature's manly pride?
 Call hither thy mortal enemy,
 Make him glad thy fall to see!
 Yon waterflag, yon sighing osier,
 A drop can shake, a breath can fan;
 Maidens laugh and weep; Composure
 Is the pudency of man.'

Again by night the poet went
 From the lighted halls
 Beneath the darkling firmament
 To the seashore, to the old seawalls,
 Out shone a star beneath the cloud,
 The constellation glittered soon,—
 'You have no lapse; so have ye glowed
 But once in your dominion.
 And yet, dear stars, I know ye shine
 Only by needs and loves of mine;
 Light-loving, light-asking life in me
 Feeds those eternal lamps I see.
 And I to whom your light has spoken,
 I, pining to be one of you,
 I fall, my faith is broken,
 Ye scorn me from your deeps of blue.

THE POET

Or if perchance, ye orbs of Fate,
 Your ne'er averted glance
 Beams with a will compassionate
 On sons of time and chance,
 Then clothe these hands with power
 In just proportion,
 Nor plant immense designs
 Where equal means are none.'

CHORUS OF SPIRITS

Means, dear brother, ask them not ;
 Soul's desire is means enow,
 Pure content is angel's lot,
 Thine own theatre art thou.

Gentler far than falls the snow
 In the woodwalks still and low
 Fell the lesson on his heart
 And woke the fear lest angels part.

POET

I see your forms with deep content,
 I know that ye are excellent,
 But will ye stay ?
 I hear the rustle of wings,
 Ye meditate what to say
 Ere ye go to quit me for ever and aye.

THE POET

SPIRITS

Brother, we are no phantom band ;
 Brother, accept this fatal hand.
 Aches thine unbelieving heart
 With the fear that we must part ?
 See, all we are rooted here
 By one thought to one same sphere ;
 From thyself thou canst not flee, —
 From thyself no more can we.

POET

Suns and stars their courses keep,
 But not angels of the deep :
 Day and night their turn observe,
 But the day of day may swerve.
 Is there warrant that the waves
 Of thought in their mysterious caves
 Will heap in me their highest tide,
 In me therewith beatified ?
 Unsure the ebb and flood of thought,
 The moon comes back, — the Spirit not.

SPIRITS

Brother, sweeter is the Law
 Than all the grace Love ever saw ;
 We are its suppliants. By it, we
 Draw the breath of Eternity ;