

"Pure with all faithful passion, fair
 With tender smiles that come and go;
 And comforting as April air
 After the snow.

"Fool that I was! my spirit frets
 And marvels at the humbling truth,
 That I have deigned to spend regrets
 On my bruised youth.

"Its idol mocked thee, seated nigh,
 And shamed me for the mad mistake;
 I thank my God he could deny,
 And she forsake.

"Ah, who am I, that God hath saved
 Me from the doom I did desire,
 And crossed the lot myself had craved,
 To set me higher?

"What have I done that He should bow
 From heaven to choose a wife for me?
 And what deserved, He should endow
 My home with THEE?

"My wife!" With that she turned her face
 To kiss the hand about her neck;
 And I went down and sought the place
 Where leaped the beck—

The busy beck, that still would run
 And fall, and falter its refrain;
 And pause and shimmer in the sun,
 And fall again.

It led me to the sandy shore,
 We sang together, it and I—
 "The daylight comes, the dark is o'er,
 The shadows fly."

I lost it on the sandy shore,
 "O wife!" its latest murmurs fell,
 "O wife, be glad and fear no more
 The letter L."

THE HIGH TIDE ON THE COAST OF LINCOLN-
 SHIRE.

(1571.)

THE old mayor climbed the belfry tower,
 The ringers ran by two, by three;
 "Pull, if ye never pulled before;
 Good ringers, pull your best," quoth he.
 "Play uppe, play uppe, O Boston bells!
 Ply all your changes, all your swells,
 Play uppe 'The Brides of Enderby.'"

Men say it was a stolen tyde—
 The Lord that sent it, He knows all;
 But in myne ears doth still abide
 The message that the bells let fall:
 And there was naught of strange, beside
 The flight of mews and peewits pied
 By millions crouched on the old sea wall.

I sat and spun within the doore,
 My thread break off, I raised myne eyes;
 The level sun, like ruddy ore,
 Lay sinking in the barren skies;
 And dark against day's golden death
 She moved where Lindis wandereth,
 My sonne's faire wife, Elizabeth.

"Cusha! Cusha! Cusha!" calling,
 Ere the early dews were falling,

Farre away I heard her song,
 "Cusha! Cusha!" all along;
 Where the reedy Lindis floweth,
 Floweth, floweth,
 From the meads where melick groweth
 Faintly came her milking song —

"Cusha! Cusha! Cusha!" calling,
 "For the dews will soone be falling;
 Leave your meadow grasses mellow,
 Mellow, mellow;
 Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow;
 Come uppe, Whitefoot, come uppe, Lightfoot;
 Quit the stalks of parsley hollow,
 Hollow, hollow;
 Come uppe, Jetty, rise and follow,
 From the clovers lift your head;
 Come uppe, Whitefoot, come uppe, Lightfoot,
 Come uppe, Jetty, rise and follow,
 Jetty to the milking shed."

If it be long, ay, long ago,
 When I beginne to think howe long,
 Againe I hear the Lindis flow,
 Swift as an arrowe, sharpe and strong;
 And all the aire, it seemeth mee,
 Bin full of floating bells (sayth shee),
 That ring the tune of Enderby.

Alle fresh the level pasture lay,
 And not a shadowe mote be seene,
 Save where full fyve good miles away
 The steeple towered from out the greene;
 And lo! the great bell farre and wide
 Was heard in all the country side
 That Saturday at eventide.

The swanherds where their sedges are
 Moved on in sunset's golden breath,
 The shepherde lads I heard afarre,
 And my sonne's wife, Elizabeth;
 Till floating o'er the grassy sea
 Came downe that kyndly message free,
 The "Brides of Mavis Enderby."
 Then some looked uppe into the sky,
 And all along where Lindis flows
 To where the goodly vessels lie,
 And where the lordly steeple shows.
 They sayde, "And why should this thing be?
 What danger lowers by land or sea?
 They ring the tune of Enderby!"
 "For evil news from Mablethorpe,
 Of pyrate galleys warping down;
 For shippes ashore beyond the scorpe,
 They have not spared to wake the towne;
 But while the west bin red to see,
 And storms be none, and pyrates flee,
 Why ring 'The Brides of Enderby'?"
 I looked without, and lo! my sonne
 Came riding downe with might and main:
 He raised a shout as he drew on,
 Till all the welkin rang again,
 "Elizabeth! Elizabeth!"
 (A sweeter woman ne'er drew breath
 Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.)
 "The olde sea wall (he cried) is downe,
 The rising tide comes on apace,
 And boats adrift in yonder towne
 Go sailing uppe the market-place."
 He shook as one that looks on death:
 "God save you, mother!" straight he saith;
 "Where is my wife, Elizabeth?"

"Good sonne, where Lindis winds her way,
 With her two bairns I marked her long;
 And ere young bells beganne to play
 Afar I heard her milking song."
 He looked across the grassy lea,
 To right, to left, "Ho, Enderby!"
 They rang "The Brides of Enderby!"
 With that he cried and beat his breast;
 For lo! along the river's bed
 A mighty eygre reared his crest,
 And uppe the Lindis raging sped.
 It swept with thunderous noises loud;
 Shaped like a curling snow-white cloud,
 Or like a demon in a shroud.
 And rearing Lindis backward pressed
 Shook all her trembling bankes amaine;
 Then madly at the eygre's breast
 Flung uppe her weltering walls again.
 Then bankes came downe with ruin and rout—
 Then beaten foam flew round about—
 Then all the mighty floods were out.
 So farre, so fast the eygre drave,
 The heart had hardly time to beat
 Before a shallow seething wave
 Sobbed in the grasses at oure feet:
 The feet had hardly time to flee
 Before it brake against the knee,
 And all the world was in the sea.
 Upon the roofe we sate that night,
 The noise of bells went sweeping by;
 I marked the lofty beacon light
 Stream from the church tower, red and high—
 A lurid mark and dread to see;
 And awsome bells they were to mee,
 That in the dark rang "Enderby."

They rang the sailor lads to guide
 From roofe to roofe who fearless rowed;
 And I—my sonne was at my side,
 And yet the ruddy beacon glowed;
 And yet he moaned beneath his breath,
 "O come in life, or come in death!
 O lost! my love, Elizabeth."
 And didst thou visit him no more?
 Thou didst, thou didst, my daughter deare,
 The waters laid thee at his doore,
 Ere yet the early dawn was clear.
 The pretty bairns in fast embrace,
 The lifted sun shone on thy face,
 Downe drifted to thy dwelling-place.
 That flow strewed wrecks about the grass,
 That ebbe swept out the flocks to sea;
 A fatal ebbe and flow, alas!
 To manye more than myne and mee:
 But each will mourn his own (she saith);
 And sweeter woman ne'er drew breath
 Than my sonne's wife, Elizabeth.
 I shall never hear her more
 By the reedy Lindis shore,
 "Cusha! Cusha! Cusha!" calling,
 Ere the early dewes be falling;
 I shall never hear her song,
 "Cusha! Cusha!" all along
 Where the sunny Lindis floweth,
 Goeth, floweth;
 From the meads where melick groweth,
 When the water winding down,
 Onward floweth to the town.
 I shall never see her more
 Where the reeds and rushes quiver,

Shiver, quiver ;
 Stand beside the sobbing river,
 Sobbing, throbbing, in its falling
 To the sandy lonesome shore ;
 I shall never hear her calling,
 "Leave your meadow grasses mellow,
 Mellow, mellow ;
 Quit your cowslips, cowslips yellow ;
 Come uppe, Whitefoot, come uppe, Lightfoot ;
 Quit your pipes of parsley hollow,
 Hollow, hollow ;
 Come uppe, Lightfoot, rise and follow ;
 Lightfoot, Whitefoot,
 From your clovers lift the head :
 Come uppe, Jetty, follow, follow,
 Jetty, to the milking shed."

AFTERNOON AT A PARSONAGE.

(THE PARSON'S BROTHER, SISTER, AND TWO CHILDREN.)

Preface.

WHAT wonder man should fail to stay
 A nursling wafted from above,
 The growth celestial come astray,
 That tender growth whose name is Love?
 It is as if high winds in heaven
 Had shaken the celestial trees,
 And to this earth below had given
 Some feathered seeds from one of these.
 O perfect love that 'dureth long !
 Dear growth, that shaded by the palms,
 And breathed on by the angel's song,
 Blooms on in heaven's eternal calms !

How great the task to guard thee here,
 Where wind is rough, and frost is keen,
 And all the ground with doubt and fear
 Is checkered birth and death between !

Space is against thee -- it can part ;
 Time is against thee -- it can chill ;
 Words -- but they render half the heart ;
 Deeds -- they are poor to our rich will.

Merton. Though she had loved me, I had never
 bound

Her beauty to my darkness ; that had been
 Too hard for her. Sadder to look so near
 Into a face all shadow, than to stand
 Aloof, and then withdraw, and afterwards
 Suffer forgetfulness to comfort her.

I think so, and I loved her ; therefore I
 Have no complaint ; albeit she is not mine :
 And yet -- and yet, withdrawing I would fain
 She would have pleaded duty -- would have said
 "My father wills it ;" would have turned away,
 As lingering, or unwillingly ; for then
 She would have done no damage to the past :
 Now she has roughly used it -- flung it down
 And brushed its bloom away. If she had said,
 "Sir, I have promised ; therefore, lo ! my hand" --
 Would I have taken it? Ah, no ! by all
 Most sacred, no !

I would for my sole share
 Have taken first her recollected blush
 The day I won her ; next her shining tears --
 The tears of our long parting : and for all
 The rest -- her cry, her bitter heartsick cry,
 That day or night (I know not which it was,

The days being always night), that darkest night,
When being led to her I heard her cry,
"O blind! blind! blind!"

Go with thy chosen mate
The fashion of thy going nearly cured
The sorrow of it. I am yet so weak
That half my thoughts go after thee; but not
So weak that I desire to have it so.

JESSIE, seated at the piano, sings.

When the dimpled water slippeth,
Full of laughter, on its way,
And her wing the wagtail dippeth,
Running by the brink at play;
When the poplar leaves atremble
Turn their edges to the light,
And the far-up clouds resemble
Veils of gauze most clear and white;
And the sunbeams fall and flatter
Woodland moss and branches brown,
And the glossy finches chatter
Up and down, up and down:
Though the heart be not attending,
Having music of her own,
On the grass, through meadows wending,
It is sweet to walk alone.

When the falling waters utter
Something mournful on their way,
And departing swallows flutter
Taking leave of bank and brae;
When the chaffinch idly sitteth
With her mate upon the sheaves,
And the wistful robin flitteth
Over beads of yellow leaves;
When the clouds, like ghosts that ponder
Evil fate, float by and frown,

And the listless wind doth wander
Up and down, up and down:
Though the heart be not attending,
Having sorrows of her own,
Through the fields and fallows wending,
It is sad to walk alone.

Merton. Blind! blind! blind!

Oh! sitting in the dark for evermore,
And doing nothing — putting out a hand
To feel what lies about me, and to say
Not "This is blue or red," but "This is cold,
And this the sun is shining on, and this
I know not till they tell its name to me."

O that I might behold once more, my God!
The shining rulers of the night and day;
Or a star twinkling; or an almond-tree,
Pink with her blossom and alive with bees,
Standing against the azure! O my sight!
Lost, and yet living in the sunlit cells
Of memory — that only lightsome place
Where lingers yet the dayspring of my youth:
The years of mourning for thy death are long.

Be kind, sweet memory! O desert me not!
For oft thou show'st me lucent opal seas,
Fringed with their cocoa-palms, and dwarf red crags,
Whereon the placid moon doth "rest her chin;"
For oft by favor of thy visitings
I feel the dimness of an Indian night,
And lo! the sun is coming. Red as rust
Between the latticed blind his presence burns,
A ruby ladder running up the wall;
And all the dust, printed with pigeons' feet,
Is reddened, and the crows that stalk anear

Begin to trail for heat their glossy wings,
 And the red flowers give back at once the dew,
 For night is gone, and day is born so fast,
 And is so strong, that, huddled as in flight
 The fleeting darkness paleth to a shade,
 And while she calls to sleep and dreams "Come on,"
 Suddenly waked, the sleepers rub their eyes,
 Which having opened, lo! she is no more.

O misery and mourning! I have felt —
 Yes, I have felt like some deserted world
 That God had done with, and had cast aside
 To rock and stagger through the gulfs of space,
 He never looking on it any more —
 Untilled, no use, no pleasure, not desired,
 Nor lighted on by angels in their flight
 From heaven to happier planets, and the race
 That once had dwelt on it withdrawn or dead.
 Could such a world have hope that some blest day
 God would remember her, and fashion her
 Anew?

Jessie. What, dearest? Did you speak to me?

Child. I think he spoke to us.

M. No, little elves
 You were so quiet that I half forgot
 Your neighborhood. What are you doing there?

F. They sit together on the window-mat
 Nursing their dolls.

C. Yes, Uncle, our new dolls —
 Our best dolls, that you gave us.

M. Did you say
 The afternoon was bright?

F. Yes, bright indeed!
 The sun is on the plane-tree, and it flames
 All red and orange.

C. I can see my father —
 Look! look! the leaves are falling on his gown.

M. Where?

C. In the churchyard, Uncle — he is gone;
 He passed behind the tower.

M. I heard a bell:
 There is a funeral, then, behind the church.

2d Child. Are the trees sorry when their leaves
 drop off?

1st Child. You talk such silly words; — no, not
 at all.

There goes another leaf.

2d Child. I did not see. [hills,

1st Child. Look! on the grass, between the little
 Just where they planted Amy.

F. Amy died —
 Dear little Amy! when you talk of her,
 Say, she is gone to heaven.

2d Child. They planted her —
 Will she come up next year?

1st Child. No, not so soon;
 But some day God will call her to come up,
 And then she will. Papa knows every thing —
 He said she would before he planted her.

2d Child. It was at night she went to heaven
 Last night

We saw a star before we went to bed.

1st Child. Yes, Uncle, did you know?

A large bright star,
 And at her side she had some little ones —
 Some young ones.

M. Young ones! no, my little maid,
 Those stars are very old.

1st Child. What! all of them?

M. Yes.

1st Child. Older than our father?

M. Older, far.

2d Child. They must be tired of shining there so long.

Perhaps they wish they might come down.

F. Perhaps!

Dear children, talk of what you understand.

Come, I must lift the trailing creepers up

That last night's wind has loosened.

1st Child. May we help?

Aunt, may we help to nail them!

F. We shall see.

Go, find and bring the hammer, and some shreds.

[*Steps outside the window, lifts a branch and sings.*]

Should I change my allegiance for rancor

If fortune changes her side?

Or should I, like a vessel at anchor,

Turn with the turn of the tide?

Lift! O lift, thou lowering sky;

An thou wilt, thy gloom forego!

An thou wilt not, he and I

Need not part for drifts of snow.

M. [*within*]. Lift! no, thou lowering sky, thou wilt not lift—

Thy motto readeth, "Never."

Children. Here they are!

Here are the nails! and may we help?

F. You shall,

If I should want help.

1st Child. Will you want it then?

Please want it—we like nailing.

2d Child. Yes, we do.

F. It seems I ought to want it; hold the bough,
And each may nail in turn,

[*Sings.*]

Like a daisy I was, near him growing:

Must I move because favors flag,

And be like a brown wall-flower blowing

Far out of reach in a crag?

Lift! O lift, thou lowering sky;

An thou canst, thy blue regain!

And thou canst not, he and I

Need not part for drops of rain.

1st Child. Now, have we nailed enough?

J. [*trains the creepers*]. Yes, you may go;
But do not play too near the churchyard path.

M. [*within*]. Even misfortune does not strike so near

As my dependence. O, in youth and strength

To sit a timid coward in the dark,

And feel before I set a cautious step!

It is so very dark, so far more dark

Than any night that day comes after—night

In which there would be stars, or else at least

The silvered portion of a sombre cloud

Through which the moon is plunging.

J. [*entering*]. Merton!

M. Yes.

J. Dear Merton, did you know that I could hear?

M. No: e'en my solitude is not mine now,
And if I be alone is oftentimes doubt.

Alas! far more than eyesight have I lost;

For manly courage drifteth after it—

E'en as a splintered spar would drift away

From some dismayed wreck. Hear, I complain—

Like a weak ailing woman I complain.

J. For the first time.

M. I cannot bear the dark.

J. My brother! you do bear it—bear it well—
Have borne it twelve long months, and not complained.

Comfort your heart with music : all the air
Is warm with sunbeams where the organ stands.
You like to feel them on you. Come and play.

M. My fate, my fate, is lonely!

J. So it is —

I know it is.

M. And pity breaks my heart.

J. Does it, dear Merton?

M. Yes, I say it does.

What! do you think I am so dull of ear
That I can mark no changes in the tones
That reach me? Once I liked not girlish pride
And that coy quiet, chary of reply,
That held me distant: now the sweetest lips
Open to entertain me — fairest hands
Are proffered me to guide.

J. That is not well?

M. No: give me coldness, pride, or still disdain,
Gentle withdrawal. Give me anything
But this—a fearless, sweet, confiding ease,
Whereof I may expect, I may exact,
Considerate care, and have it — gentle speech,
And have it. Give me anything but this!
For they who give it, give it in the faith
That I will not misdeem them, and forget
My doom so far as to perceive thereby
Hope of a wife. They make this thought too plain;
They wound me — O they cut me to the heart!
When have I said to any one of them,
“I am a blind and desolate man; — come here,
I pray you — be as eyes to me?” When said,
Even to her whose pitying voice is sweet
To my dark ruined heart, as must be hands
That clasp a lifelong captive’s through the grate,
And who will ever lend her delicate aid
To guide me, dark incumbrance that I am! —

When have I said to her, “Comforting voice,
Belonging to a face unknown, I pray
Be my wife’s voice?”

J. Never, my brother — no,
You never have!

M. What could she think of me
If I forgot myself so far? or what
Could she reply?

J. You ask not as men ask
Who care for an opinion, else, perhaps,
Although I am not sure — although, perhaps,
I have no right to give one — I should say
She would reply, “I will!”

—
Afterthought.

Man dwells apart, though not alone,
He walks among his peers unread;
The best of thoughts which he hath known
For lack of listeners are not said.

Yet dreaming on earth’s clustered isles,
He saith, “They dwell not lone like men.”
Forgetful that their sunflecked smiles
Flash far beyond each other’s ken.

He looks on God’s eternal suns
That sprinkle the celestial blue,
And saith, “Ah! happy shining ones,
I would that men were grouped like you!”

Yet this is sure: the loveliest star
That clustered with its peers we see,
Only because from us so far
Doth near its fellows seem to be.