

Will slowly to the door and open it ;'
 But must He also wait where still, behold !
 He stands and knocks, while we do say, ' Good Lord,
 The gentlefolk are come to worship here,
 And I will up and open to Thee soon ;
 But first I pray a little longer wait,
 For I am taken up with them ; my eyes
 Must needs regard the fashion of their clothes,
 And count the gains I think to make by them ;
 Forsooth, they are of much account, good Lord !
 Therefore have patience with me — wait, dear Lord !
 Or come again ' ?

“ What ! must He wait for this —
 For this ? Ay, He doth wait for this, and still,
 Waiting for this, He, patient, railleth not ;
 Waiting for this, e'en this He saith, ' Behold !
 I stand at the door and knock.'

— “ O patient hand
 Knocking and waiting — knocking in the night
 When work is done ! I charge you by the sea
 Whereby you fill your children's mouths, and by
 The might of Him that made it — fishermen !
 I charge you, mothers ! by the mother's milk
 He drew, and by His Father, God over all,
 Blessèd forever, that ye answer Him !
 Open the door with shame, if ye have sinned ;
 If ye be sorry, open it with sighs.
 Albeit the place be bare for poverty,
 And comfortless for lack of plénishing,
 Be not abashed for that, but open it,
 And take Him in that comes to sup with thee ;
 ' Behold !' He saith, ' I stand at the door and knock.'

“ Now, hear me : there be troubles in this world
 That no man can escape, and there is one

That lieth hard and heavy on my soul,
 Concerning that which is to come : —

I say
 As a man that knows what earthly trouble means,
 I will not bear this ONE — I cannot bear
 This ONE — I cannot bear the weight of you —
 You — every one of you, body and soul ;
 You, with the care you suffer, and the loss
 That you sustain ; you, with the growing up
 To peril, maybe with the growing old
 To want, unless before I stand with you
 At the great white throne, I may be free of all,
 And utter to the full what shall discharge
 Mine obligation : nay, I will not wait
 A day, for every time the black clouds rise,
 And the gale freshens, still I search my soul
 To find if there be aught that can persuade
 To good, or aught forsooth that can beguile
 From evil, that I (miserable man !
 If that be so) have left unsaid, undone.

“ So that when any risen from sunken wrecks,
 Or rolled in by the billows to the edge
 Of the everlasting strand, what time the sea
 Gives up her dead, shall meet me, they may say
 Never, ' Old man, you told us not of this ;
 You left us fisher lads that had to toil
 Ever in danger of the secret stab
 Of rocks, far deadlier than the dagger ; winds
 Of breath more murderous than the cannon's ; waves
 Mighty to rock us to our death ; and gulfs,
 Ready beneath to suck and swallow us in :
 This crime be on your head ; and as for us —
 What shall we do ?' but rather — nay, not so,
 I will not think it ; I will leave the dead,
 Appealing but to life : I am afraid
 Of you, but not so much if you have sinned

As for the doubt if sin shall be forgiven.
 The day was, I have been afraid of pride—
 Hard man's hard pride; but now I am afraid
 Of man's humility. I counsel you,
 By the great God's great humbleness, and by
 His pity, be not humble over-much.
 See! I will show at whose unopened doors
 He stands and knocks, that you may never say,
 'I am too mean, too ignorant, too lost;
 He knocks at other doors, but not at mine.'

"See here! it is the night! it is the night!
 And snow lies thickly, white untrodden snow,
 And the wan moon upon a casement shines—
 A casement crusted o'er with frosty leaves,
 That makes her ray less bright along the floor.
 A woman sits, with hands upon her knees,
 Poor tired soul! and she has naught to do,
 For there is neither fire nor candle light:
 The driftwood ash lies cold upon her hearth;
 The rushlight flickered down an hour ago;
 Her children wail a little in their sleep
 For cold and hunger, and, as if that sound
 Was not enough, another comes to her,
 Over God's undefiled snow—a song—
 Nay, never hang your heads—I say, a song.

"And doth she curse the alehouse, and the sots
 That drink the night out and their earning there,
 And drink their manly strength and courage down,
 And drink away the little children's bread,
 And starve her, starving by the self-same act
 Her tender suckling, that with piteous eyes
 Looks in her face, till scarcely she has heart
 To work, and earn the scanty bit and drop
 That feed the others?"

"Does she curse the song?
 I think not, fishermen; I have not heard

Such women curse. God's curse is enough.
 To-morrow she will say a bitter thing,
 Pulling her sleeve down lest the bruises show—
 A bitter thing, but meant for an excuse—
 'My master is not worse than many men:'
 But now, ay, now she sitteth dumb and still;
 No food, no comfort, cold and poverty
 Bearing her down.

"My heart is sore for her;
 How long, how long? When troubles come of God
 When men are frozen out of work, when wives
 Are sick, when working fathers fail and die,
 When boats go down at sea—then naught behooves
 Like patience; but for troubles wrought of men
 Patience is hard—I tell you it is hard.

"O thou poor soul! it is the night—the night;
 Against thy door drifts up the silent snow,
 Blocking thy threshold: 'Fall,' thou sayest, 'fall, fall
 Cold snow, and lie and be trod underfoot.
 Am not I fallen? wake up and pipe, O wind,
 Dull wind, and beat and bluster at my door:
 Merciful wind, sing me a hoarse rough song,
 For there is other music made to-night
 That I would fain not hear. Wake, thou still sea,
 Heavily plunge. Shoot on, white waterfall.
 O, I could long like thy cold icicles
 Freeze, freeze, and hang upon the frosty clift
 And not complain, so I might melt at last
 In the warm summer sun, as thou wilt do!

"But woe is me! I think there is no sun;
 My sun is sunken, and the night grows dark:
 None care for me. The children cry for bread,
 And I have none, and naught can comfort me;
 Even if the heavens were free to such as I,
 It were not much, for death is long to wait,
 And heaven is far to go!"

“And speak'st thou thus,
 Despairing of the sun that sets to thee,
 And of the earthly love that wanes to thee,
 And of the heaven that lieth far from thee?
 Peace, peace, fond fool! One draweth near thy door
 Whose footsteps leave no print across the snow;
 Thy sun has risen with comfort in his face,
 The smile of heaven, to warm thy frozen heart,
 And bless with saintly hand. What! is it long
 To wait, and far to go? Thou shalt not go;
 Behold, across the snow to thee He comes,
 Thy heaven descends; and is it long to wait?
 Thou shalt not wait: ‘This night, this night,’ He saith,
 ‘I stand at the door and knock.’

“It is enough — can such an one be here —
 Yea, here? O God forgive you, fishermen!
 One! is there only one? But do thou know,
 O woman pale for want, if thou art here,
 That on thy lot much thought is spent in heaven;
 And, coveting the heart a hard man broke,
 One standeth patient, watching in the night,
 And waiting in the daytime.

“What shall be
 If thou wilt answer? He will smile on thee;
 One smile of His shall be enough to heal
 The wound of man's neglect; and He will sigh,
 Pitying the trouble which that sigh shall cure;
 And He will speak — speak in the desolate night,
 In the dark night: ‘For me a thorny crown
 Men wove, and nails were driven in my hands
 And feet: there was an earthquake, and I died;
 I died, and am alive for evermore.

“‘I died for thee; for thee I am alive,
 And my humanity doth mourn for thee,
 For thou art mine; and all thy little ones,

They, too, are mine, are mine. Behold, the house
 Is dark, but there is brightness where the sons
 Of God are singing; and, behold, the heart
 Is troubled: yet the nations walk in white:
 They have forgotten how to weep; and thou
 Shalt also come, and I will foster thee
 And satisfy thy soul; and thou shalt warm
 Thy trembling life beneath the smile of God.
 A little while — it is a little while —
 A little while, and I will comfort thee;
 I go away, but I will come again.’

“But hear me yet. There was a poor old man
 Who sat and listened to the raging sea,
 And heard it thunder, lunging at the cliffs
 As like to tear them down. He lay at night;
 And ‘Lord have mercy on the lads,’ said he,
 ‘That sailed at noon, though they be none of mine!’
 For when the gale gets up, and when the wind
 Flings at the window, when it beats the roof,
 And lulls, and stops, and rouses up again,
 And cuts the crest clean off the plunging wave,
 And scatters it like feathers up the field,
 Why, then I think of my two lads: my lads
 That would have worked and never let me want,
 And never let me take the parish pay.
 No, none of mine; my lads were drowned at sea —
 My two — before the most of these were born.
 I know how sharp that cuts, since my poor wife
 Walked up and down, and still walked up and down,
 And I walked after, and one could not hear
 A word the other said, for wind and sea
 That raged and beat and thundered in the night —
 The awfulest, the longest, lightest night
 That ever parents had to spend — a moon
 That shone like daylight on the breaking wave.
 Ah me! and other men have lost their lads,

And other women wiped their poor dead mouths,
 And got them home and dried them in the house,
 And seen the driftwood lie along the coast,
 That was a tidy boat but one day back,
 And seen next tide the neighbors gather it
 To lay it on their fires.

Ay, I was strong
 And able-bodied — loved my work; — but now
 I am a useless hull: 'tis time I sank;
 I am in all men's way; I troubled them;
 I am a trouble to myself: but yet
 I feel for mariners of stormy nights,
 And feel for wives that watch ashore. Ay, ay!
 If I had learning I would pray the Lord,
 To bring them in: but I'm no scholar, no;
 Book-learning is a world too hard for me:
 But I make bold to say, O Lord, good Lord,
 I am a broken-down poor man, a fool
 To speak to Thee: but in the Book 'tis writ,
 As I hear say from others that can read,
 How, when Thou camest, Thou didst love the sea,
 And live with fisherfolk, whereby 'tis sure
 Thou knowest all the peril they go through,
 And all their trouble.

As for me, good Lord,
 I have no boat; I am too old, too old —
 My lads are drowned; I buried my poor wife;
 My little lasses died so long ago
 That mostly I forget what they were like.
 Thou knowest, Lord; they were such little ones
 I know they went to thee, but I forget
 Their faces, though I missed them sore.

O Lord,

I was a strong man; I have drawn good food
 And made good money out of Thy great sea:
 But yet I cried for them at nights; and now,
 Although I be so old, I miss my lads,

And there be many folk this stormy night
 Heavy with fear for theirs. Merciful Lord,
 Comfort them; save their honest boys, their pride,
 And let them hear next ebb the blessedest,
 Best sound — the boat keels grating on the sand.

“‘I cannot pray with finer words: I know
 Nothing; I have no learning, cannot learn —
 Too old, too old. They say I want for naught,
 I have the parish pay; but I am dull
 Of hearing, and the fire scarce warms me through.
 God save me — I have been a sinful man —
 And save the lives of them that still can work,
 For they are good to me; ay, good to me.
 But, Lord, I am a trouble! and I sit,
 And I am lonesome, and the nights are few
 That any think to come and draw a chair,
 And sit in my poor place and talk awhile.
 Why should they come, forsooth? Only the wind
 Knocks at my door, O long and loud it knocks,
 The only thing God made that has a mind
 To enter in.’

“‘Yea, thus the old man spake;

These were the last words of his aged mouth —
 BUT ONE DID KNOCK. One came to sup with him,
 That humble, weak old man; knocked at his door
 In the rough pauses of the laboring wind.
 I tell you that One knocked while it was dark,
 Save where their foaming passion had made white
 Those livid seething billows. What He said
 In that poor place where He did talk awhile
 I cannot tell; but this I am assured,
 That when the neighbors came the morrow morn,
 What time the wind had bated, and the sun
 Shone on the old man's floor, they saw the smile
 He passed away in, and they said, ‘He looks
 As he had woke and seen the face of Christ,

And with that rapturous smile held out his arms
To come to Him!

“Can such an one be here,
So old, so weak, so ignorant, so frail?
The Lord be good to thee, thou poor old man;
It would be hard with thee if heaven were shut
To such as have not learning! Nay, nay, nay,
He condescends to them of low estate:
To such as are despised He cometh down,
Stands at the door and knocks.

“Yet bear with me.
I have a message; I have more to say.
Shall sorrow win His pity, and not sin —
That burden ten times heavier to be borne?
What think you? Shall the virtuous have His care
Alone? O virtuous women, think not scorn,
For you may lift your faces everywhere;
And now that it grows dusk, and I can see
None though they front me straight, I fain would tell
A certain thing to you. I say to you;
And if it doth concern you, as methinks
It doth, then surely it concerneth all.
I say that there was once — I say not here —
I say that there was once a castaway,
And she was weeping, weeping bitterly;
Kneeling, and crying with a heart-sick cry
That choked itself in sobs — ‘O my good name!
O my good name!’ And none did hear her cry!
Nay; and it lightened, and the storm-bolts fell,
And the rain splashed upon the roof, and still
She, storm-tost as the storming elements —
She cried with an exceeding bitter cry,
‘O my good name!’ And then the thunder-cloud
Stooped low and burst in darkness overhead,
And rolled, and rocked her on her knees, and shook
The frail foundations of her dwelling-place.

But she — if any neighbors had come in
(None did): if any neighbors had come in,
They might have seen her crying on her knees,
And sobbing, ‘Lost, lost, lost!’ beating her breast —
Her breast forever pricked with cruel thorns,
The wounds whereof could neither balm assuage
Nor any patience heal — beating her brow,
Which ached, it had been bent so long to hide
From level eyes, whose meaning was contempt.

“O ye good women, it is hard to leave
The paths of virtue, and return again.
What if this sinner wept, and none of you
Comforted her? And what if she did strive
To mend, and none of you believed her strife,
Nor looked upon her? Mark, I do not say,
Though it was hard, you therefore were to blame;
That she had aught against you, though your feet
Never drew near her door. But I beseech
Your patience. Once in old Jerusalem
A woman kneeled at consecrated feet,
Kissed them, and washed them with her tears.

What then?
I think that yet our Lord is pitiful:
I think I see the castaway e’en now!
And she is not alone; the heavy rain
Splashes without, and sullen thunder rolls,
But she is lying at the sacred feet
Of One transfigured.

“And her tears flow down,
Down to her lips, — her lips that kiss the print
Of nails; and love is like to break her heart!
Love and repentance — for it still doth work
Sore in her soul to think, to think that she,
Even she, did pierce the sacred, sacred feet,
And bruise the thorn-crowned head.

“O Lord, our Lord,
How great is Thy compassion! Come, good Lord,
For we will open. Come this night, good Lord;
Stand at the door and knock.

“And is this all? —
Trouble, old age and simpleness, and sin —
This all? It might be all some other night;
But this night, if a voice said, ‘Give account
Whom hast thou with thee?’ then must I reply,
‘Young manhood have I, beautiful youth and strength
Rich with all treasure drawn up from the crypt
Where lies the learning of the ancient world —
Brave with all thoughts that poets fling upon
The strand of life, as driftweed after storms:
Doubtless familiar with Thy mountain heads,
And the dread purity of Alpine snows,
Doubtless familiar with Thy works concealed
For ages from mankind — outlying worlds,
And many moonèd spheres — and Thy great store
Of stars, more thick than mealy dust which here
Powers the pale leaves of auriculas.

“‘This do I know, but, Lord, I know not more.

“‘Not more concerning them — concerning Thee,
I know Thy bounty; where Thou givest much
Standing without, if any call Thee in
Thou givest more.’ Speak, then, O rich and strong;
Open, O happy young, ere yet the hand
Of Him that knocks, wearied at last, forbear;
The patient foot its thankless quest refrain,
The wounded heart for evermore withdraw.”

I have heard many speak, but this one man —
So anxious not to go to heaven alone —
This one man I remember, and his look,
Till twilight overshadowed him. He ceased,

And out in darkness with the fisher folk
We passed and stumbled over mounds of moss,
And heard, but did not see, the passing beck.
Ah, graceless heart, would that it could regain
From the dim storehouse of sensations past
The impress full of tender awe, that night,
Which fell on me! It was as if the Christ
Had been drawn down from heaven to track us home
And any of the footsteps following us
Might have been His.

—◆—
A WEDDING SONG.

COME up the broad river, the Thames, my Dane,
My Dane with the beautiful eyes!
Thousands and thousands await thee full fain,
And talk of the wind and the skies.
Fear not from folk and from country to part,
O, I swear it is wisely done;
For (I said) I will bear me by thee, sweetheart,
As becometh my father’s son.

Great London was shouting as I went down,
“She is worthy,” I said, “of this;
What shall I give who have promised a crown?
O, first I will give her a kiss.”
So I kissed her and brought her, my Dane, my Dane,
Through the waving wonderful crowd:
Thousands and thousands, they shouted amain,
Like mighty thunders and loud.

And they said, “He is young, the lad we love,
The heir of the Isles is young:
How we deem of his mother, and one gone above,
Can neither be said nor sung.