

A POET IN HIS YOUTH, AND THE CUCKOO-  
BIRD.

ONCE upon a time, I lay  
Fast asleep at dawn of day;  
Windows open to the south,  
Fancy pouting her sweet mouth  
To my ear.

She turned a globe  
In her slender hand, her robe  
Was all spangled; and she said,  
As she sat at my bed's head,  
"Poet, poet, what! asleep?  
Look! the ray runs up the steep  
To your roof." Then in the golden  
Essence of romances olden,  
Bathed she my entranced heart.  
And she gave a hand to me,  
Drew me onward; "Come!" said she;  
And she moved with me apart,  
Down the lovely vale of Leisure.

Such its name was, I heard say,  
For some fairies trooped that way;  
Common people of the place,  
Taking their accustomed pleasure  
(All the clocks being stopped), to race  
Down the slope on palfreys fleet.  
Bridle bells made tinkling sweet;  
And they said, "What signified  
Faring home till eventide;  
There were pies on every shelf,  
And the bread would bake itself."  
But for that I cared not, fed,  
As it were, with angels' bread,

Sweet as honey; yet next day  
All foredoomed to melt away;  
Gone before the sun waxed hot,  
Melted manna that *was not*.

Rock-doves' poetry of plaint,  
Or the starling's courtship quaint,  
Heart made much of; 'twas a boon  
Won from silence, and too soon  
Wasted in the ample air:  
Building rooks far distant were.  
Scarce at all would speak the rills,  
And I saw the idle hills,  
In their amber hazes deep,  
Fold themselves and go to sleep,  
Though it was not yet high noon.

Silence? Rather music brought  
From the spheres! As if a thought,  
Having taken wings, did fly  
Through the reaches of the sky.  
Silence? No, a sumptuous sigh  
That had found embodiment,  
That had come across the deep  
After months of wintry sleep,  
And with tender heavings went  
Floating up the firmament.

"O," I mourned, half slumbering yet,  
"'Tis the voice of *my* regret, —  
*Mine!*" and I awoke. Full sweet  
Saffron sunbeams did me greet;  
And the voice it spake again,  
Dropped from yon blue cup of light  
Or some cloudlet swan's-down white  
On my soul, that drank full fain  
The sharp joy — the sweet pain —

Of its clear, right innocent,  
 Unreprovèd discontent.  
 How it came — where it went —  
 Who can tell! The open blue  
 Quivered with it, and I, too,  
 Trembled. I remembered me  
 Of the springs that used to be,  
 When a dimpled white-haired child,  
 Shy and tender and half wild,  
 In the meadows I had heard  
 Some way off the talking bird,  
 And had felt it marvellous sweet,  
 For it laughed: it did me greet,  
 Calling me: yet, hid away  
 In the woods, it would not play.  
 No.

And all the world about,  
 While a man will work or sing,  
 Or a child pluck flowers of spring,  
 Thou wilt scatter music out,  
 Rouse him with thy wandering note,  
 Changeful fancies set afloat,  
 Almost tell with thy clear throat,  
 But not quite, the wonder-rife,  
 Most sweet riddle, dark and dim,  
 That he searcheth all his life,  
 Searcheth yet, and ne'er expoundeth;  
 And so, winnowing of thy wings,  
 Touch and trouble thy heart's strings,  
 That a certain music soundeth  
 In that wondrous instrument,  
 With a trembling upward sent,  
 That is reckoned sweet above  
 By the Greatness surnamed Love.  
 "O, I hear thee in the blue;  
 Would that I might wing it too!

O to have what hope hath seen!  
 O to be what might have been!  
 O to set my life, sweet bird,  
 To a tune that oft I heard  
 When I used to stand alone  
 Listening to the lovely moan  
 Of the swaying pines o'erhead,  
 While, a-gathering of bee-bread  
 For their living, murmured round,  
 As the pollen dropped to ground,  
 All the nations from the hives;  
 And the little brooding wives  
 On each nest, brown dusky things,  
 Sat with gold-dust on their wings.  
 Then beyond (more sweet than all)  
 Talked the tumbling waterfall;  
 And there were, and there were not  
 (As might fall, and form anew  
 Bell-hung drops of honey-dew)  
 Echoes of — I know not what;  
 As if some right-joyous elf,  
 While about his own affairs,  
 Whistled softly otherwheres.  
 Nay, as if our mother dear,  
 Wrapt in sun-warm atmosphere,  
 Laughed a little to herself,  
 Laughed a little as she rolled,  
 Thinking on the days of old.  
 "Ah! there be some hearts, I wis,  
 To which nothing comes amiss.  
 Mine was one. Much secret wealth  
 I was heir to: and by stealth,  
 When the moon was fully grown,  
 And she thought herself alone,  
 I have heard her, ay, right well,  
 Shoot a silver message down

To the unseen sentinel  
Of a still, snow-thatched town.

“Once, awhile ago, I peered  
In the nest where Spring was reared.  
There she, quivering her fair wings,  
Flattered March with chirrupings;  
And they fed her; nights and days,  
Fed her mouth with much sweet food,  
And her heart with love and praise,  
Till the wild thing rose and flew  
Over woods and water-springs,  
Shaking off the morning dew  
In a rainbow from her wings.

“Once (I will to you confide  
More), — O, once in forest wide,  
I, benighted, overheard  
Marvellous mild echoes stirred,  
And a calling half defined,  
And an answering from afar;  
Somewhat talkèd with a star,  
And the talk was of mankind.

“‘Cuckoo, cuckoo!’  
Float anear in upper blue:  
Art thou yet a prophet true?  
Wilt thou say, ‘And having seen  
Things that be, and have not been,  
Thou art free o’ the world, for naught  
Can despoil thee of thy thought’?  
Nay, but make me music yet,  
Bird, as deep as my regret;  
For a certain hope hath set,  
Like a star, and left me heir  
To a crying for its light,  
An aspiring infinite,  
And a beautiful despair!

“Ah! no more, no more, no more  
I shall lie at thy shut door,  
Mine ideal, my desired,  
Dreaming thou wilt open it,  
And step out, thou most admired,  
By my side to fare, or sit,  
Quenching hunger and all drouth  
With the wit of thy fair mouth,  
Showing me the wishèd prize  
In the calm of thy dove’s eyes,  
Teaching me the wonder-rife  
Majesties of human life,  
All its fairest possible sum,  
And the grace of its to come.

“What a difference! Why of late  
All sweet music used to say,  
‘She will come, and with thee stay  
To-morrow, man, if not to-day.’  
Now it rumors, ‘Wait, wait, wait!’”

A RAVEN IN A WHITE CHINE.

I saw, when I looked up, on either hand,  
A pale high chalk-cliff, reared aloft in white;  
A narrowing rent soon closed toward the land, —  
Toward the sea, an open yawning bight.  
The polished tide, with scarce a hint of blue,  
Washed in the bight; above with angry moan  
A raven, that was robbed, sat up in view,  
Croaking and crying on a ledge alone.  
“Stand on thy nest, spread out thy fateful wings,  
With sullen hungry love bemoan thy brood,  
For boys have wrung their necks, those imp-like  
things,  
Whose beaks dripped crimson daily at their food.

"Cry, thou black prophetess! cry, and despair;  
None love thee, none! Their father was thy foe,  
Whose father in his youth did know thy lair,  
And steal thy little demons long ago.

"Thou madest many childless for their sake,  
And picked out many eyes that loved the light.  
Cry, thou black prophetess! sit up, awake,  
Forebode; and ban them through the desolate  
night."

Lo! while I spake it, with a crimson hue  
The dipping sun endowed that silver flood,  
And all the cliffs flushed red, and up she flew,  
The bird, as mad to bathe in airy blood.

"Nay, thou mayst cry, the omen is not thine,  
Thou aged priestess of fell doom, and fate.  
It is not blood: thy gods are making wine,  
They spilt the must outside their city gate,

"And stained their azure pavement with the lees:  
They will not listen though thou cry aloud.  
Old Chance, thy dame, sits mumbling at her ease,  
Nor hears; the fair hag, Luck, is in her shroud.

"They heed not, they withdraw the sky-hung sign:  
Thou hast no charm against the favorite race;  
Thy gods pour out for it, not blood, but wine:  
There is no justice in their dwelling-place!

"Safe in their father's house the boys shall rest,  
Though thy fell brood doth stark and silent lie;  
Their unborn sons may yet despoil thy nest:  
Cry, thou black prophetess! lift up! cry, cry!"

## THE WARBLING OF BLACKBIRDS.

WHEN I hear the waters fretting,  
When I see the chestnut letting  
All her lovely blossom falter down, I think, "Alas  
the day!"  
Once, with magical sweet singing,  
Blackbirds set the woodland ringing,  
That awakes no more while April hours wear them-  
selves away.

In our hearts fair hope lay smiling,  
Sweet as air, and all beguiling;  
And there hung a mist of bluebells on the slope and  
down the dell;  
And we talked of joy and splendor  
That the years unborn would render,  
And the blackbirds helped us with the story, for  
they knew it well.

Piping, fluting, "Bees are humming,  
April's here, and summer's coming;  
Don't forget us when you walk, a man with men, in  
pride and joy;  
Think on us in alleys shady,  
When you step a graceful lady; [boy.  
For no fairer day have we to hope for, little girl and

"Laugh and play, O lispings waters,  
Lull our downy sons and daughters;  
Come, O wind, and rock their leafy cradle in thy  
wanderings coy;  
When they wake, we'll end the measure  
With a wild sweet cry of pleasure,  
And a 'Hey down derry, let's be merry! little girl  
and boy!'"

## SEA-MEWS IN WINTER TIME.

I WALKED beside a dark gray sea,  
And said, "O world, how cold thou art!  
Thou poor white world, I pity thee,  
For joy and warmth from thee depart.

"Yon rising wave licks off the snow,  
Winds on the crag each other chase,  
In little powdery whirls they blow  
The misty fragments down its face.

"The sea is cold, and dark its rim,  
Winter sits cowering on the wold,  
And I, beside this watery brim,  
Am also lonely, also cold."

I spoke, and drew toward a rock,  
Where many mews made twittering sweet;  
Their wings upreared, the clustering flock  
Did pat the sea-grass with their feet.

A rock but half submerged, the sea  
Ran up and washed it while they fed;  
Their fond and foolish ecstasy  
A wondering in my fancy bred.

Joy companied with every cry,  
Joy in their food, in that keen wind,  
That heaving sea, that shaded sky,  
And in themselves, and in their kind.

The phantoms of the deep at play!  
What idless graced the twittering things;  
Luxurious paddlings in the spray,  
And delicate lifting up of wings.

Then all at once a flight, and fast  
The lovely crowd flew out to sea;  
If mine own life had been recast,  
Earth had not looked more changed to me.

"Where is the cold? Yon clouded skies  
Have only dropped their curtains low  
To shade the old mother where she lies,  
Sleeping a little, 'neath the snow.

"The cold is not in crag, nor scar,  
Not in the snows that lap the lea,  
Not in your wings that beat afar,  
Delighting, on the crested sea;

"No, nor in yon exultant wind  
That shakes the oak and bends the pine.  
Look near, look in, and thou shalt find  
No sense of cold, fond fool, but thine!"

With that I felt the gloom depart,  
And thoughts within me did unfold,  
Whose sunshine warmed me to the heart:  
I walked in joy, and was not cold.

## LAURANCE.

## I.

HE knew she did not love him; but so long  
As rivals were unknown to him, he dwelt  
At ease, and did not find his love a pain.  
He had much deference in his nature, need  
To honor, — it became him: he was frank,  
Fresh, hardy, of a joyous mind, and strong, —  
Looked all things straight in the face. So when she  
came  
Before him first, he looked at her, and looked