

Master yourself, and say it." But he, weak
 With passion and great anguish, flung himself
 Upon the seat and cried, "O lost, my love!
 O Muriel, Muriel!" And the woman spoke,
 "Sir, 'twas an evil day you wed with me;
 And you were young; I know it, sir, right well.
 Sir, I have worked; I have not troubled you,
 Not for myself, not for your child. I know
 We are not equal." "Hold!" he cried; "have done;
 Your still, tame words are worse than hate or scorn.
 Get from me! Ay, my wife, my wife, indeed!
 All's done. You hear it, Muriel; if you can,
 O sweet, forgive me."

Then the woman moved
 Slowly away; her little singing child
 Went in her wake; and Muriel dropped her hands,
 And sat before these two that loved her so,
 Mute and unheeding. There were angry words,
 She knew, but yet she could not hear the words;
 And afterwards the man she loved stooped down
 And kissed her forehead once, and then withdrew
 To look at her, and with a gesture pray
 Her pardon. And she tried to speak, but failed,
 And presently, and soon, O, — he was gone.
 She heard him go, and Laurance, still as stone,
 Remained beside her; and she put her hand
 Before her face again, and afterward
 She heard a voice, as if a long way off,
 Some one entreated, but she could not heed.
 Thereon he drew her hand away, and raised
 Her passive from her seat. So then she knew
 That he would have her go with him, go home, —
 It was not far to go, — a dreary home.
 A crippled aunt, of birth and lineage high,
 Had, in her love, and for a place and home,
 Married the stern old rector; and the girl

Dwelt with them: she was orphaned, — had no kin
 Nearer than they. And Laurance brought her in,
 And spared to her the telling of this woe.
 He sought her kindred where they sat apart,
 And laid before them all the cruel thing,
 As he had seen it. After, he retired;
 And restless, and not master of himself,
 'He day and night haunted the rectory lanes;
 And all things, even to the spreading out
 Of leaves, their flickering shadows on the ground,
 Or sailing of the slow, white cloud, or peace
 And glory and great light on mountain heads, —
 All things were leagued against him, ministered
 By likeness or by contrast to his love.

But what was that to Muriel, though her peace
 He would have purchased for her with all prayers,
 And costly, passionate, despairing tears?
 O, what to her that he should find it worse
 To bear her life's undoing than his own?
 She let him see her, and she made no moan,
 But talked full calmly of indifferent things,
 Which, when he heard, and marked the faded eyes
 And lovely wasted cheek, he started up
 With "This I cannot bear!" and shamed to feel
 His manhood giving way, and utterly
 Subdued by her sweet patience and his pain,
 Made haste and from the window sprang, and paced
 Battling and chiding with himself, the maze.
 She suffered, and he could not make her well
 For all his loving; — he was naught to her.
 And now his passionate nature, set astir,
 Fought with the pain that could not be endured;
 And like a wild thing, suddenly aware
 That it is caged, which flings and bruises all
 Its body at the bars, he rose, and raged

Against the misery : then he made all worse
 With tears. But when he came to her again,
 Willing to talk as they had talked before,
 She sighed, and said, with that strange quietness,
 "I know you have been crying : " and she bent
 Her own fair head and wept.

She felt the cold —

The freezing cold that deadened all her life —
 Give way a little ; for this passionate
 Sorrow, and all for her, relieved her heart,
 And brought some natural warmth, some natural
 tears.

III.

And after that, though oft he sought her door,
 He might not see her. First they said to him,
 " She is not well ; " and afterwards, " Her wish
 Is ever to be quiet. " Then in haste
 They took her from the place, because so fast
 She faded. As for him, — though youth and strength
 Can bear the weight as of a world, at last
 The burden of it tells, — he heard it said,
 When autumn came, " The poor sweet thing will die :
 That shock was mortal. " And he cared no more
 To hide, if yet he could have hidden, the blight
 That was laying waste his heart. He journeyed south
 To Devon, where she dwelt with other kin,
 Good, kindly women ; and he wrote to them,
 Praying that he might see her ere she died.

So in her patience she permitted him
 To be about her, for it eased his heart ;
 And as for her that was to die so soon,
 What did it signify ? She let him weep
 Some passionate tears beside her couch, she spoke
 Pitying words, and then they made him go.

It was enough, they said ; her time was short,
 And he had seen her. He HAD seen, and felt
 The bitterness of death ; but he went home,
 Being satisfied in that great longing now,
 And able to endure what might befall.

And Muriel lay, and faded with the year ;
 She lay at the door of death, that opened not
 To take her in ; for when the days once more
 Began a little to increase, she felt, —
 And it was sweet to her, she was so young, —
 She felt a longing for the time of flowers,
 And dreamed that she was walking in that wood
 With her two feet among the primroses.

Then when the violet opened, she rose up
 And walked. The tender leaf and tender light
 Did solace her ; but she was white and wan,
 The shadow of that Muriel in the wood
 Who listened to those deadly words.

And now

Empurpled seas began to blush and bloom,
 Doves made sweet moaning, and the guelder-rose
 In a great stillness dropped, and ever dropped,
 Her wealth about her feet, and there it lay,
 And drifted not at all. The lilac spread
 Odorous essence round her ; and full oft,
 When Muriel felt the warmth her pulses cheer,
 She, faded, sat among the May-tide bloom,
 And with a reverent quiet in her soul,
 Took back — it was His will — her time, and sat
 Learning again to live.

Thus as she sat

Upon a day, she was aware of one
 Who at a distance marked her. This again
 Another day, and she was vexed, for yet

She longed for quiet; but she heard a foot
 Pass once again, and beckoned through the trees.
 "Laurance!" And all impatient of unrest
 And strife, ay, even of the sight of them,
 When he drew near, with tired, tired lips,
 As if her soul upbraided him, she said,
 "Why have you done this thing?" He answered
 her,
 "I am not always master in the fight:
 I could not help it."

"What!" she sighed, "not yet!
 O, I am sorry;" and she talked to him
 As one who looked to live, imploring him,—
 "Try to forget me. Let your fancy dwell
 Elsewhere, nor me enrich with it so long;
 It wearies me to think of this your love.
 Forget me!"

He made answer, "I will try:
 The task will take me all my life to learn,
 O, were it learned, I know not how to live;
 This pain is part of life and being now,—
 It is myself; but yet—but I will try."
 Then she spoke friendly to him,—of his home,
 His father, and the old, brave, loving folk;
 She bade him think of them. And not her words,
 But having seen her, satisfied his heart.
 He left her, and went home to live his life,
 And all the summer heard it said of her,
 "Yet, she grows stronger;" but when autumn came
 Again she drooped.

A bitter thing it is
 To lose at once the lover and the love;
 For who receiveth not may yet keep life
 In the spirit with bestowal. But for her,
 This Muriel, all was gone. The man she loved,

Not only from her present had withdrawn,
 But from her past, and there was no such man,
 There never had been.

He was not as one
 Who takes love in, like some sweet bird, and holds
 The wingèd fluttering stranger to his breast,
 Till, after transient stay, all unaware
 It leaves him: it has flown. No; this may live
 In memory,—loved till death. He was not vile;
 For who by choice would part with that pure bird,
 And lose the exaltation of its song?
 He had not strength of will to keep it fast,
 Nor warmth of heart to keep it warm, nor life
 Of thought to make the echo sound for him
 After the song was done. Pity that man:
 His music is all flown, and he forgets
 The sweetness of it, till at last he thinks
 'Twas no great matter. But he was not vile,
 Only a thing to pity most in man,
 Weak,—only poor, and, if he knew it, undone.
 But Herbert! When she mused on it, her soul
 Would fain have hidden him for evermore,
 Even from herself,—so pure of speech, so frank,
 So full of household kindness. Ah, so good
 And true! A little, she had sometimes thought,
 Despondent for himself, but strong of faith
 In God, and faith in her, this man had seemed.

Ay, he was gone! and she whom he had wed,
 As Muriel learned, was sick, was poor, was sad.
 And Muriel wrote to comfort her, and send,
 From her small store, money to help her need,
 With, "Pray you keep it secret." Then the whole
 Of the cruel tale was told.

What more? She died.
 Her kin, profuse of thanks, not bitterly,
 Wrote of the end. "Our sister fain had seen
 Her husband; prayed him sore to come. But no.
 And then she prayed him that he would forgive,
 Madam, her breaking of the truth to you.
 Dear Madam, he was angry, yet we think
 He might have let her see, before she died,
 The words she wanted, but he did not write
 Till she was gone,— 'I neither can forgive,
 Nor would I if I could.'"

"Patience, my heart!
 And this, then, is the man I loved!"

But yet
 He sought a lower level, for he wrote,
 Telling the story with a different hue,—
 Telling of freedom. He desired to come,
 "For now," said he, "O love, may all be well."
 And she rose up against it in her soul,
 For she despised him. And with passionate tears
 Of shame, she wrote, and only wrote these words,—
 "Herbert, I will not see you."

Then she drooped
 Again; it is so bitter to despise;
 And all her strength, when autumn leaves down
 dropped,
 Fell from her. "Ah!" she thought, "I rose up
 once,
 I cannot rise up now; here is the end."
 And all her kinsfolk thought, "It is the end."
 But when that other heard, "It is the end,"
 His heart was sick, and he, as by a power
 Far stronger than himself, was driven to her.
 Reason rebelled against it, but his will

Required it of him with a craving strong
 As life, and passionate though hopeless pain
 She, when she saw his face, considered him
 Full quietly, let all excuses pass
 Not answered, and considered yet again.

"He had heard that she was sick; what could he do
 But come, and ask her pardon that he came?"
 What could he do, indeed?— a weak white girl
 Held all his heartstrings in her small white hand;
 His youth, and power, and majesty were hers,
 And not his own.

She looked, and pitied him,
 Then spoke: "He loves me with a love that lasts,
 Ah me! that I might get away from it,
 Or, better, hear it said that love is not,
 And then I could have rest. My time is short,
 I think,— so short." And roused against himself
 In stormy wrath, that it should be his doom
 Her to disquiet whom he loved,— ay, her
 For whom he would have given all his rest,
 If there were any left to give,— he took
 Her words up bravely, promising once more
 Absence, and praying pardon; but some tears
 Dropped quietly upon her cheek.

"Remain,"
 She said, "for there is something to be told,
 Some words that you must hear."

"And first, hear this:
 God has been good to me; you must not think
 That I despair. There is a quiet time
 Like evening in my soul. I have no heart,
 For cruel Herbert killed it long ago,
 And death strides on. Sit, then, and give your mind
 To listen, and your eyes to look at me."

Look at my face, Laurance, how white it is;
 Look at my hand, — my beauty is all gone."
 And Laurance lifted up his eyes; he looked,
 But answered, from their deeps that held no doubt,
 Far otherwise than she had willed: they said,
 "Lovelier than ever."

Yet her words went on,
 Cold, and so quiet, "I have suffered much,
 And I would fain that none who care for me
 Should suffer a like pang that I can spare.
 Therefore," said she, and not at all could blush,
 "I have brought my mind of late to think of this:
 That since your life is spoilt (not willingly,
 My God, not willingly by me), 'twere well
 To give you choice of griefs.

"Were it not best
 To weep for a dead love, and afterwards
 Be comforted the sooner, that she died
 Remote, and left not in your house and life
 Aught to remind you? That indeed were best.
 But were it best to weep for a dead wife,
 And let the sorrow spend and satisfy
 Itself with all expression, and so end?
 I think not so; but if for you 'tis best,
 Then, — do not answer with too sudden words:
 It matters much to you; not much, not much
 To me, — then truly I will die your wife;
 I will marry you."

What was he like to say,
 But, overcome with love and tears, to choose
 The keener sorrow, — take it to his heart,
 Cherish it, make it part of him, and watch
 Those eyes, that were his light, till they should close?
 He answered her with eager, faltering words,
 "I choose, — my heart is yours, — die in my arms."

But was it well? Truly, at first, for him
 It was not well: he saw her fade, and cried,
 "When may this be?" She answered, "When you
 will,"

And cared not much, for very faint she grew,
 Tired and cold. Oft in her soul she thought,
 "If I could slip away before the ring
 Is on my hand, it were a blessed lot
 For both, — a blessed thing for him, and me."

But it was not so; for the day had come, —
 Was over: days and months had come, and Death, —
 Within whose shadow she had lain, which made
 Earth and its loves, and even its bitterness,
 Indifferent, — Death withdrew himself, and life
 Woke up, and found that it was folded fast,
 Drawn to another life forevermore.

O, what a waking! After it there came
 Great silence. She got up once more, in spring,
 And walked, but not alone, among the flowers.
 She thought within herself, "What have I done?
 How shall I do the rest?" And he, who felt
 Her inmost thought, was silent even as she. [him,
 "What have we done?" she thought. But as for
 When she began to look him in the face,
 Considering, "Thus and thus his features are,"
 For she had never thought on them before,
 She read their grave repose aright. She knew
 That in the stronghold of his heart, held back,
 Hidden reserves of measureless content
 Kept house with happy thought, for her sake mute

Most patient Muriel! when he brought her home,
 She took the place they gave her, — strove to please
 His kin, and did not fail; but yet thought on.
 "What have I done? how shall I do the rest?"
 Ah! so contented, Laurance, with this wife

That loves you not, for all the stateliness
 And grandeur of your manhood, and the deeps
 In your blue eyes." And after that awhile
 She rested from such thinking, put it by
 And waited. She had thought on death before:
 But no, this Muriel was not yet to die;
 And when she saw her little tender babe,
 She felt how much the happy days of life
 Outweigh the sorrowful. A tiny thing,
 Whom when it slept the lovely mother nursed
 With reverent love, whom when it woke, she fed
 And wondered at, and lost herself in long
 Rapture of watching, and contentment deep.

Once while she sat, this babe upon her knee,
 Her husband and his father standing nigh,
 About to ride, the grandmother, all pride
 And consequence, so deep in learned talk
 Of infants, and their little ways and wiles,
 Broke off to say, "I never saw a babe
 So like its father." And the thought was new
 To Muriel; she looked up, and when she looked,
 Her husband smiled. And she, the lovely bloom
 Flushing her face, would fain he had not known,
 Nor noticed her surprise. But he did know;
 Yet there was pleasure in his smile, and love
 Tender and strong. He kissed her, kissed his babe,
 With "Goody, you are left in charge, take care."—
 "As if I needed telling," quoth the dame;
 And they were gone.

Then Muriel, lost in thought,
 Gazed; and the grandmother, with open pride,
 Tended the lovely pair; till Muriel said,
 "Is she so like? Dear granny, get me now
 The picture that his father has;" and soon
 The old woman put it in her hand.

The wife,
 Considering it with deep and strange delight,
 Forgot for once her babe, and looked and learned.

A mouth for mastery and manful work,
 A certain brooding sweetness in the eyes,
 A brow, the harbor of grave thought, and hair
 Saxon of hue. She conned; then blushed again,
 Remembering now, when she had looked on him,
 The sudden radiance of her husband's smile.

But Muriel did not send the picture back;
 She kept it; while her beauty and her babe
 Flourished together, and in health and peace
 She lived.

Her husband never said to her,
 "Love, are you happy?" never said to her,
 "Sweet, do you love me?" and at first, when'er
 They rode together in the lanes, and paused,
 Stopping their horses, when the day was hot,
 In the shadow of a tree, to watch the clouds,
 Ruffled in drifting on the jagged rocks
 That topped the mountains,—when she sat by him,
 Withdrawn at even while the summer stars
 Came starting out of nothing, as new made,
 She felt a little trouble, and a wish
 That he would yet keep silence, and he did.
 That one reserve he would not touch, but still
 Respected.

Muriel grew more brave in time,
 And talked at ease, and felt disquietude
 Fade. And another child was given to her.

"Now we shall do," the old great grandsire cried,
 "For this is the right sort, a boy." "Fie, fie,"
 Quoth the good dame; "but never heed you, love,
 He thinks them both as right as right can be."

But Laurance went from home, ere yet the boy
Was three weeks old. It fretted him to go,
But yet he said, "I must:" and she was left
Much with the kindly dame, whose gentle care
Was like a mother's; and the two could talk
Sweetly, for all the difference in their years.

But unaware, the wife betrayed a wish
That she had known why Laurance left her thus.
"Ay, love," the dame made answer; "for he said,
'Goody,' before he left, 'if Muriel ask
No question, tell her naught; but if she let
Any disquietude appear to you,
Say what you know.'" "What?" Muriel said, and
laughed.
"I ask, then."

"Child, it is that your old love,
Some two months past, was here. Nay, never start:
He's gone. He came, our Laurance met him near;
He said that he was going over seas,
'And might I see your wife this only once,
And get her pardon?'"

"Mercy!" Muriel cried,
"But Laurance does not wish it?"

"Nay, now, nay,"
Quoth the good dame.

"I cannot," Muriel cried;
"He does not, surely, think I should."

"Not he,"
The kind old woman said, right soothingly.
"Does not he ever know, love, ever do
What you like best?"

And Muriel, trembling yet,
Agreed. "I heard him say," the dame went on,

"For I was with him when they met that day,
'It would not be agreeable to my wife.'"
Then Muriel, pondering, — "And he said no more?
You think he did not add, 'Nor to myself?'"
And with her soft, calm, inward voice, the dame
Unruffled answered, "No, sweetheart, not he:
What need he care?" "And why not?" Muriel cried,
Longing to hear the answer. "O, he knows,
He knows, love, very well:" — with that she smiled.
"Bless your fair face, you have not really thought
He did not know you loved him?"

Muriel said,
"He never told me, goody, that he knew."
"Well," quoth the dame, "but it may chance, my
dear,
That he thinks best to let old troubles sleep:
Why need to rouse them? You are happy, sure?
But if one asks, 'Art happy?' why it sets
The thoughts a-working. No, say I, let love,
Let peace and happy folk alone.

"He said,
'It would not be agreeable to my wife.'
And he went on to add, in course of time
That he would ask you, when it suited you,
To write a few kind words."

"Yes," Muriel said,
"I can do that."

"So Laurance went, you see,"
The soft voice added, "to take down that child.
Laurance had written oft about the child,
And now, at last, the father made it known
He could not take him. He has lost, they say,
His money, with much gambling; now he wants

To lead a good, true, working life. He wrote,
And let this so be seen, that Laurance went
And took the child, and took the money down
To pay."

And Muriel found her talking sweet,
And asked once more, the rather that she longed
To speak again of Laurance, "And you think
He knows I love him?"

"Ay, good sooth, he knows
No fear; but he is like his father, love.
His father never asked my pretty child
One prying question; took her as she was;
Trusted her; she has told me so: he knew
A woman's nature. Laurance is the same.
He knows you love him; but he will not speak;
No, never. Some men are such gentlemen!"

SONGS OF THE NIGHT WATCHES.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY SONG OF EVENING, AND A
CONCLUDING SONG OF THE EARLY DAY.

INTRODUCTORY.

(Old English Manner.)

APPRENTICED.

"COME out and hear the waters shoot, the owlet hoot,
the owlet hoot;
Yon crescent moon, a golden boat, hangs dim be-
hind the tree, O!
The dropping thorn makes white the grass, O sweetest
lass, and sweetest lass;
Come out and smell the ricks of hay adown the
croft with me, O!"

"My granny nods before her wheel, and drops her
reel, and drops her reel;
My father with his crony talks as gay as gay can
be, O!
But all the milk is yet to skim, ere light wax dim,
ere light wax dim;
How can I step adown the croft, my 'prentice lad,
with thee, O!"

"And must ye bide, yet waiting's long, and love is
strong, and love is strong;
And O! had I but served the time, that takes so
long to flee, O!
And thou, my lass, by morning's light wast all in
white, wast all in white,
And parson stood within the rails, a-marrying me
and thee, O!"

THE FIRST WATCH.

TIRED.

I.

O, I would tell you more, but I am tired;
For I have longed, and I have had my will;
I pleaded in my spirit, I desired:
"Ah! let me only see him, and be still
All my days after."

Rock, and rock, and rock,
Over the falling, rising watery world,
Sail, beautiful ship, along the leaping main;
The chirping land-birds follow flock on flock
To light on a warmer plain.
White as weaned lambs the little wavelets curled,