

CONCLUDING SONG OF DAWN.

(Old English Manner.)

A MORN OF MAY.

ALL the clouds about the sun lay up in golden
creases

(Merry rings the maiden's voice that sings at dawn
of day);

Lambkins woke and skipped around to dry their
dew fleeces,

So sweetly as she carolled, all on a morn of May.

Quoth the Sergeant, "Here I'll halt; here's wine of
joy for drinking;

To my heart she sets her hand, and in the strings
doth play;

All among the daffodils, and fairer to my thinking,
And fresh as milk and roses, she sits this morn of
May."

Quoth the Sergeant, "Work is work, but any ye
might make me,

If I worked for you, dear lass, I'd count my holiday.
I'm your slave for good and all, an' if ye will but
take me,

So sweetly as ye carol upon this morn of May."

"Medals count for worth," quoth she, "and scars
are won for honor;

But a slave an' if ye be, kind wooer, go your way."

All the nodding daffodils woke up and laughed upon
her,

O! sweetly did she carol, all on that morn of May.

Gladsome leaves upon the bough, they fluttered fast
and faster.

Fretting brook, till he would speak, did chide the
dull delay:

"Beauty! when I said a slave, I think I meant a
master;

So sweetly as ye carol all on this morn of May.

"Lass, I love you! Love is strong, and some men's
hearts are tender."

Far she sought o'er wood and wold, but found not
ought to say;

Mounting lark nor mantling cloud would any coun-
sel render,

Though sweetly she had carolled upon that morn of
May.

Shy, she sought the wooer's face, and deemed the
wooing mended;

Proper man he was, good sooth, and one would have
his way:

So the lass was made a wife, and so the song was
ended.

O! sweetly she did carol all on that morn of May.

A STORY OF DOOM.

BOOK I.

NILOIYA said to Noah, "What aileth thee,
My master, unto whom is my desire,

The father of my sons?" He answered her,

"Mother of many children, I have heard

The Voice again." "Ah, me!" she saith, "ah, me!

What spake it?" and with that Niloiya sighed.

This when the Master-builder heard, his heart
 Was sad in him, the while he sat at home
 And rested after toil. The steady rap
 O' the shipwright's hammer sounding up the vale
 Did seem to mock him; but her distaff down
 Nileiya laid, and to the doorplace went,
 Parted the purple covering seemly hung
 Before it, and let in the crimson light
 Of the descending sun. Then looked he forth,—
 Looked, and beheld the hollow where the ark
 Was a-preparing; where the dew distilled
 All night from leaves of old lign aloe-trees,
 Upon the gliding river; where the palm,
 The almug, and the gophir shot their heads
 Into the crimson brede that dyed the world:
 And lo! he marked—unwieldy, dark, and huge—
 The ship, his glory and his grief,—too vast
 For that still river's floating,—building far
 From mightier streams, amid the pastoral dells
 Of shepherd kings.

Nileiya spake again:
 "What said the Voice, thou well-belovèd man?"
 He, laboring with his thought that troubled him,
 Spoke on behalf of God: "Behold," said he,
 "A little handful of unlovely dust
 He fashioned to a lordly grace, and when
 He laughed upon its beauty, it waxed warm,
 And with His breath awoke a living soul.

"Shall not the Fashioner command His work?
 And who am I, that, if He whisper, 'Rise,
 Go forth upon Mine errand,' should reply,
 'Lord, God, I love the woman and her sons,—
 I love not scorning; I beseech Thee, God,
 Have me excused.'"

She answered him, "Tell on."
 And he continuing, reasoned with his soul:
 "What though I,—like some goodly lama sunk
 In meadow grass, eating her way at ease,
 Unseen of them that pass, and asking not
 A wider prospect than of yellow flowers
 That nod above her head—should lay me down,
 And willingly forget this high behest,
 There should be yet no tarrying. Furthermore,
 Though I went forth to cry against the doom,
 Earth crieth louder, and she draws it down:
 It hangeth balanced over us; she crieth,
 And it shall fall. O! as for me, my life
 Is bitter, looking onward, for I know
 That in the fulness of the time shall dawn
 That day: my preaching shall not bring forth fruit,
 Though for its sake I leave thee. I shall float
 Upon the abhorrèd sea, that mankind hate,
 With thee and thine."

She answered: "God forbid!
 For, sir, though men be evil, yet the deep
 They dread, and at the last will surely turn
 To Him, and He, long-suffering, will forgive,
 And chide the waters back to their abyss,
 To cover the pits where doleful creatures feed.
 Sir, I am much afraid; I would not hear
 Of riding on the waters: look you, sir,
 Better it were to die with you by hand
 Of them that hate us, than to live, ah me!
 Rolling among the furrows of the unquiet,
 Unconsecrate, unfriendly, dreadful sea."
 He saith again: "I pray thee, woman, peace,
 For thou wilt enter, when that day appears,
 The fateful ship."

"My lord," quoth she, "I will. But O, good sir, be sure of this, be sure The Master calleth; for the time is long That thou hast warned the world: thou art but here Three days; the song of welcoming but now Is ended. I behold thee, I am glad: And wilt thou go again? Husband, I say, Be sure who 'tis that calleth; O, be sure, Be sure. My mother's ghost came up last night, Whilst I thy beard, held in my hands, did kiss, Leaning anear thee, wakeful through my love, And watchful of thee till the moon went down.

"She never loved me since I went with thee To sacrifice among the hills: she smelt The holy smoke, and could no more divine Till the new moon. I saw her ghost come up; It had a snake with a red comb of fire Twisted about its waist, — the doggish head Lolloped on its shoulder, and so leered at me. 'This woman might be wiser,' quoth the ghost; 'Shall there be husbands for her found below, When she comes down to us? O, fool! O, fool! She must not let her man go forth, to leave Her desolate, and reap the whole world's scorn, A harvest for himself.' With that they passed."

He said: "My crystal drop of perfectness, I pity thee; it was an evil ghost: Thou wilt not heed the counsel?" "I will not," quoth she; "I am loyal to the Highest. Him I hold by even as thou, and deem Him best. Sir, am I fairer than when last we met?" "God add," said he, "unto thy much yet more, As I do think thou art." "And think you, sir," Niloiya saith, "that I have reached the prime?" He answering, "Nay, not yet." "I would 'twere so,"

She plaineth, "for the daughters mock at me: Her locks forbear to grow, they say, so sore She pineth for the Master. Look you, sir, They reach but to the knee. But thou art come, And all goes merrier. Eat, my lord, of all My supper that I set, and afterward Tell me, I pray thee, somewhat of thy way; Else shall I be despised as Adam was, Who compassed not the learning of his sons, But, grave and silent, oft would lower his head And ponder, following of great Isha's feet, When she would walk with her fair brow upraised, Scorning the children that she bare to him."

"Ay," quoth the Master; "but they did amiss When they despised their father: knowest thou that?"

"Sure he was foolisher," Niloiya saith, "Than any that came after. Furthermore, He had not heart nor courage for to rule: He let the mastery fall from his slack hand. Had not our glorious mother still borne up His weakness, chid with him, and sat apart, And listened, when the fit came over him To talk on his lost garden, he had sunk Into the slave of slaves."

"Nay, thou must think How he had dwelt long, God's loved husbandman, And looked in hope among the tribes for one To be his fellow, ere great Isha, once Waking, he found at his left side, and knew The deep delight of speech." So Noah, and thus Added, "And therefore was his loss the more; For though the creatures he had singled out His favorites, dared for him the fiery sword And followed after him, — shall bleat of lamb

Console one for the foregone talk of God?
Or in the afternoon, his faithful dog,
Fawning upon him, make his heart forget
At such a time, and such a time, to have heard
What he shall hear no more?

“O, as for him,

It was for this that he full oft would stop,
And, lost in thought, stand and revolve that deed,
Sad muttering, ‘Woman! we reproach thee not;
Though thou didst eat mine immortality;
Earth, be not sorry; I was free to choose.’
Wonder not, therefore, if he walked forlorn.
Was not the helpmeet given to raise him up
From his contentment with the lower things?
Was she not somewhat that he could not rule
Beyond the action, that he could not have
By the mere holding, and that still aspired
And drew him after her? So, when deceived
She fell by great desire to rise, he fell
By loss of upward drawing, when she took
An evil tongue to be her counsellor:
‘Death is not as the death of lower things,
Rather a glorious change, begrudged of Heaven,
A change to being as gods,’ — he from her hand,
Upon reflection, took of death that hour,
And ate it (not the death that she had dared);
He ate it knowing. Then divisions came.
She, like a spirit strayed who lost the way,
Too venturesome, among the farther stars,
And hardly cares, because it hardly hopes
To find the path to heaven; in bitter wise
Did bear to him degenerate seed, and he,
Once having felt her upward drawing, longed,
And yet aspired, and yearned to be restored,
Albeit she drew no more.”

“Sir, ye speak well,”
Niloiya saith, “but yet the mother sits
Higher than Adam. He did understand
Discourse of birds and all four-footed things,
But she had knowledge of the many tribes
Of angels and their tongues; their playful ways
And greetings when they met. Was she not wise?
They say she knew much that she never told,
And had a voice that called to her as thou.”

“Nay,” quoth the Master-shipwright, “who am I
That I should answer? As for me, poor man,
Here is my trouble: ‘if there be a Voice,’
At first I cried, ‘let me behold the mouth
That uttereth it.’ Thereon it held its peace.
But afterward, I, journeying up the hills,
Did hear it hollower than an echo fallen
Across some clear abyss; and I did stop,
And ask of all my company, ‘What cheer?
If there be spirits abroad that call to us,
Sirs, hold your peace and hear.’ So they gave heed,
And one man said, ‘It is the small ground-doves
That peck upon the stony hillocks;’ one,
‘It is the mammoth in yon cedar swamp
That cheweth in his dream;’ and one, ‘My lord,
It is the ghost of him that yesternight
We slew, because he grudged to yield his wife
To thy great father, when he peaceably
Did send to take her.’ Then I answered, ‘Pass,’
And they went on; and I did lay mine ear
Close to the earth; but there came up therefrom
No sound, nor any speech; I waited long,
And in the saying, ‘I will mount my beast
And on,’ I was as one that in a trance
Beholdeth what is coming, and I saw
Great waters and a ship; and somewhat spake,
‘Lo, this shall be; let him that heareth it,

And seeth it, go forth to warn his kind,
For I will drown the world.'"

Niloiya saith,

"Sir, was that all that ye went forth upon?"
The Master, he replieth, "Ay, at first,
That same was all; but many days went by,
While I did reason with my heart and hope
For more, and struggle to remain, and think,
'Let me be certain;' and so think again,
'The counsel is but dark; would I had more!
When I have more to guide me, I will go.'
And afterward, when reasoned on too much,
It seemed remoter, then I only said,
'O, would I had the same again;' and still
I had it not.

"Then at the last I cried,
'If the unseen be silent, I will speak
And certify my meaning to myself.
Say that He spoke, then He will make that good
Which He hath spoken. Therefore it were best
To go, and do His bidding. All the earth
Shall hear the judgment so, and none may cry
When the doom falls, "Thou God art hard on us;
We knew not Thou wert angry. O! we are lost,
Only for lack of being warned."

"But say

That He spoke not, and merely it befell
That I being weary had a dream. Why, so
He could not suffer damage; when the time
Was past, and that I threatened had not come,
Men would cry out on me, haply me kill,
For troubling their content. They would not swear,
"God, that did send this man, is proved untrue,"
But rather, "Let him die; he lied to us;
God never sent him." Only Thou, great King,

Knowest if Thou didst speak or no. I leave
The matter here. If Thou wilt speak again,
I go in gladness; if Thou wilt not speak,
Nay, if Thou never didst, I not the less
Shall go, because I have believed, what time
I seemed to hear Thee, and the going stands
With memory of believing.' Then I washed,
And did array me in the sacred gown,
And take a lamb."

"Ay, sir," Niloiya sighed,

"I following, and I knew not anything
Till, the young lamb asleep in thy two arms,
We, moving up among the silent hills,
Paused in a grove to rest; and many slaves
Came near to make obeisance, and to bring
Wood for the sacrifice, and turf and fire.
Then in their hearing thou didst say to me,
'Behold, I know thy good fidelity,
And theirs that are about us; they would guard
The mountain passes, if it were my will
Awhile to leave thee;' and the pygmies laughed
For joy, that thou wouldst trust inferior things;
And put their heads down, as their manner is,
To touch our feet. They laughed, but sore I wept
Sir, I could weep now; ye did ill to go
If that was all your bidding; I had thought
God drave thee, and thou couldst not choose but go."

Then said the son of Lamech, "Afterward,
When I had left thee, He whom I had served
Met with me in the visions of the night,
To comfort me for that I had withdrawn
From thy dear company. He sware to me
That no man should molest thee, no, nor touch
The bordering of mine outmost field. I say,
When I obeyed, He made His matters plain.

With whom could I have left thee, but with them,
Born in thy mother's house, and bound thy slaves?"

She said, "I love not pygmies; they are naught."
And he, "Who made them pygmies?" Then she
pushed

Her veiling hair back from her round, soft eyes,
And answered, wondering, "Sir, my mothers did;
Ye know it." And he drew her near to sit
Beside him on the settle, answering, "Ay."
And they went on to talk as writ below,
If any one shall read:

"Thy mother did,
And they that went before her. Thinkest thou
That they did well?"

"They had been overcome;
And when the angered conquerors drave them out,
Behoved them find some other way to rule,
They did but use their wits. Hath not man aye
Been cunning in dominion, among beasts
To breed for size or swiftness, or for sake
Of the white wool he loveth, at his choice?
What harm if coveting a race of men
That could but serve, they sought among their thralls,
Such as were low of stature, men and maids;
Ay, and of feeble will and quiet mind?
Did they not spend much gear to gather out
Such as I tell of, and for matching them
One with another for a thousand years?
What harm, then, if there came of it a race,
Inferior in their wits, and in their size,
And well content to serve?"

"What harm?" thou sayest.
My wife doth ask, 'What harm?'"

"Your pardon, sir.
I do remember that there came one day,
Two of the grave old angels that God made,
When first He invented life (right old they were
And plain, and venerable): and they said,
Rebuking of my mother as with hers
She sat, 'Ye do not well, you wives of men,
To match your wit against the Maker's will,
And for your benefit to lower the stamp
Of His fair image, which He set at first
Upon man's goodly frame; ye do not well
To treat His likeness even as ye treat
The bird and beast that perish.'"

"Said they aught
To appease the ancients, or to speak them fair?"

"How know I? 'Twas a slave that told it me.
My mother was full old when I was born,
And that was in her youth. What think you, sir?
Did not the giants likewise ill?"

"To that
I have no answer ready. If a man,
When each one is against his fellow, rule,
Or unmolested dwell, or unreproved,
Because, for size and strength, he standeth first,
He will thereof be glad; and if he say,

'I will to wife choose me a stately maid,
And leave a goodly offspring;' 'sooth, I think,
He sinneth not; for good to him and his
He would be strong and great. Thy people's fault
Was, that for ill to others, they did plot
To make them weak and small."

"But yet they steal
Or take in war the strongest maids, and such
As are of highest stature; ay, and oft

They fight among themselves for that same cause.
And they are proud against the King of heaven:
They hope in course of ages they shall come
To be as strong as He."

The Master said,
"I will not hear thee talk thereof; my heart
Is sick for all this wicked world. Fair wife,
I am right weary. Call thy slaves to thee,
And bid that they prepare the sleeping place.
O would that I might rest! I fain would rest,
And, no more wandering, tell a thankless world
My never-heeded tale!"

With that she called.
The moon was up, and some few stars were out,
While heavy at the heart he walked abroad
To meditate before his sleep. And yet
Niloiya pondered, "Shall my master go?
And will my master go? What 'vaileth it,
That he doth spend himself, over the waste
A-wandering, till he reach outlandish folk,
That mock his warning? O, what 'vaileth it,
That he doth lavish wealth to build yon ark,
Whereat the daughters, when they eat with me,
Laugh? O my heart! I would the Voice were stilled
Is not he happy? Who, of all the earth,
Obeyeth like to me? Have not I learned
From his dear mouth to utter seemly words,
And lay the powers my mother gave me by?
Have I made offerings to the dragon? Nay,
And I am faithful, when he leaveth me
Lonely betwixt the peakèd mountain tops
In this long valley, where no stranger foot
Can come without my will. He shall not go.
Not yet, not yet! But three days — only three —
Beside me, and a muttering on the third,

'I have heard the Voice again.' Be dull, O dull,
Mind and remembrance! Mother, ye did il;
'Tis hard unlawful knowledge not to use.
Why, O dark mother! opened ye the way?"
Yet when he entered, and did lay aside
His costly robe of sacrifice, — the robe
Wherein he had been offering, ere the sun
Went down, — forgetful of her mother's craft,
She lovely and submiss did mourn to him:
"Thou wilt not go, — I pray thee, do not go,
Till thou hast seen thy children." And he said,
"I will not. I have cried, and have prevailed:
To-morrow it is given me by the Voice
Upon a four days' journey to proceed,
And follow down the river, till its waves
Are swallowed in the sand, where no flesh dwells.

"'There,' quoth the Unrevealed, 'we shall meet,
And I will counsel thee; and thou shalt turn
And rest thee with the mother, and with them
She bare.' Now, therefore, when the morn appears,
Thou fairest among women, call thy slaves,
And bid them yoke the steers, and spread thy car
With robes, the choicest work of cunning hands;
Array thee in thy rich apparel, deck
Thy locks with gold; and while the hollow vale
I thread beside yon river, go thou forth
Atween the mountains to my father's house,
And let thy slaves make all obeisance due,
And take and lay an offering at his feet.
Then light, and cry to him, 'Great king, the son
Of old Methuselah, thy son hath sent
To fetch the growing maids, his children, home.'"

"Sir," quoth the woman, "I will do this thing,
So thou keep faith with me, and yet return.

But will the Voice, think you, forbear to chide,
Nor that Unseen, who calleth, buffet thee,
And drive thee on?"

He saith, "It will keep faith.
Fear not. I have prevailed, for I besought,
And lovingly it answered. I shall rest,
And dwell with thee till after my three sons
Come from the chase." She said, "I let them forth
In fear, for they are young. Their slaves are few.
The giant elephants be cunning folk;
They lie in ambush, and will draw men on
To follow, — then will turn and tread them down."

"Thy father's house unwisely planned," said he,
"To drive them down upon the growing corn
Of them that were their foes; for now, behold,
They suffer while the unwieldy beasts delay
Retirement to their lands, and meanwhile, pound
The damp, deep meadows, to a pulpy mash;
Or wallowing in the waters foul them; nay,
Tread down the banks, and let them forth to flood
Their cities; or, assailed and falling, shake
The walls, and taint the wind, ere thirty men,
Over the hairy terror piling stones
Or earth, prevail to cover it."

She said,
"Husband, I have been sorry, thinking oft
I would my sons were home; but now so well
Methinks it is with me, that I am fain
To wish they might delay, for thou wilt dwell
With me till after they return, and thou
Hast set thine eyes upon them. Then, ah me!
I must sit joyless in my place; bereft,
As trees that suddenly have dropped their leaves,
And dark as nights that have no moon."

She spake:
The hope o' the world did hearken, but reply
Made none. He left his hand on her fair locks
As she lay sobbing; and the quietness
Of night began to comfort her, the fall
Of far-off waters, and the wingèd wind
That went among the trees. The patient hand,
Moreover, that was steady, wrought with her,
Until she said, "What wilt thou? Nay, I know.
I therefore answer what thou utterest not.
*Thou lovest me well, and not for thine own will
Consentest to depart. . . What more? Ay, this:
I do avow that He which calleth thee,
Hath right to call; and I do swear the Voice
Shall have no let of me to do Its will.*"

BOOK II.

Now ere the sunrise, while the morning star
Hung yet behind the pine-bough, woke and prayed
The world's great shipwright, and his soul was glad
Because the Voice was favorable. Now
Began the tap o' the hammer, now ran forth
The slaves preparing food. They therefore ate
In peace together; then Niloiya forth
Behind the milk-white steers went on her way;
And the great Master-builder, down the course
Of the long river, on his errand sped,
And as he went, he thought:

[They do not well
Who, walking up a trodden path, all smooth
With footsteps of their fellows, and made straight
From town to town, will scorn at them that wonn
Under the covert of God's eldest trees
(Such as He planted with His hand, and fed
With dew before rain fell, till they stood close

And awful: drank the light up as it dropt,
 And kept the dusk of ages at their roots),—
 They do not well who mock at such and cry,
 “We peaceably, without or fault or fear,
 Proceed, and miss not of our end; but these
 Are slow and fearful: with uncertain pace,
 And ever reasoning of the way, they oft,
 After all reasoning, choose the worsè course,
 And plunged in swamp, or in the matted growth
 Nigh smothered struggle, all to reach a goal
 Not worth their pains.” Nor do they well whose
 work
 Is still to feed and shelter them and theirs,
 Get gain, and gathered store it, to think scorn
 Or those who work for a world (no wages paid
 By a Master hid in light), and sent alone
 To face a laughing multitude, whose eyes
 Are full of damaging pity, that forbears
 To tell the harmless laborer, “Thou art mad.”]

And as he went, he thought: “They counsel me,
 Ay, with a kind of reason in their talk,
 ‘Consider; call thy soberer thought to aid;
 Why to but one man should a message come?
 And why, if but to one, to thee? Art thou
 Above us, greater, wiser? Had He sent, [knoweth
 He had willed that we should heed. Then since He
 That such as thou, a wise man cannot heed,
 He did not send.’ My answer, ‘Great and wise,
 If He had sent with thunder, and a voice
 Leaping from heaven, ye must have heard; but so
 Ye had been robbed of choice, and, like the beasts
 Yoked to obedience. God makes no men slaves.’
 They tell me, ‘God is great above thy thought:
 He meddles not; and this small world is ours,
 These many hundred years we govern it;

Old Adam, after Eden, saw Him not.’
 Then I, ‘It may be He is gone to knead
 More clay. But look, my masters; one of you,
 Going to warfare, layeth up his gown,
 His sickle, or his gold, and thinks no more
 Upon it, till young trees have waxen great;
 At last, when he returneth, he will seek
 His own. And God, shall He not do the like?
 And, having set new worlds a-rolling, come
 And say, “I will betake Me to the earth
 That I did make;” and, having found it vile,
 Be sorry. Why should man be free, you wise,
 And not the Master?’ Then they answer, ‘Fool!
 A man shall cast a stone into the air
 For pastime, or for lack of heed,—but He!
 Will He come fingering of his ended work,
 Fright it with His approaching face, or snatch
 One day the rolling wonder from its ring,
 And hold it quivering, as a wanton child
 Might take a nestling from its downy bed,
 And having satisfied a careless wish,
 Go thrust it back into its place again?’
 To such I answer, and, that doubt once mine,
 I am assured that I do speak aright:
 ‘Sirs, the significance of this your doubt
 Lies in the reason of it; ye do grudge
 That these your lands should have another Lord;
 Ye are not loyal, therefore ye would fain
 Your King would bide afar. But if ye looked
 For countenance and favor when He came,
 Knowing yourselves right worthy, would ye care,
 With cautious reasoning, deep and hard, to prove
 That He would never come, and would your wrath
 Be hot against a prophet? Nay, I wot
 That as a flatterer you would look on him,—
 “Full of sweet words thy mouth is: if He come,—

We think not that He will, — but if He come,
Would it might be to-morrow, or to-night,
Because we look for praise.”’”

Now, as he went,
The noontide heats came on, and he grew faint;
But while he sat below an almug-tree,
A slave approached with greeting. “Master, hail!”
He answered, “Hail! what wilt thou?” Then she
said,

“The palace of thy fathers standeth nigh.”
“I know it,” quoth he; and she said again,
“The Elder, learning thou wouldst pass, hath sent
To fetch thee.” Then he rose and followed her.

So first they walked beneath a lofty roof
Of living bough and tendril, woven on high
To let no drop of sunshine through, and hung
With gold and purple fruitage, and the white
Thick cups of scented blossom. Underneath,
Soft grew the sward and delicate, and flocks
Of egrets, ay, and many cranes, stood up,
Fanning their wings, to agitate and cool
The noonday air, as men with heed and pains
Had taught them, marshalling and taming them
To bear the wind in, on their moving wings.

So long time as a nimble slave would spend
In milking of her cow, they walked at ease;
Then reached the palace, all of forest trunks,
Brought whole and set together, made. Therein
Had dwelt old Adam, when his mighty sons
Had finished it, and up to Eden gate
Had journeyed for to fetch him. “Here,” they said,
“Mother and father, ye may dwell, and here
Forget the garden wholly.”

So he came
Under the doorplace, and the women sat,
Each with her finger on her lips; but he,

Having been called, went on, until he reached
The jewelled settle, wrought with cunning work
Of gold and ivory, whereon they wont
To set the Elder. All with sleekest skins,
That striped and spotted creatures of the wood
Had worn, the seat was covered, but thereon
The Elder was not: by the steps thereof,
Upon the floor, whereto his silver beard
Did reach, he sat, and he was in his trance.
Upon the settle many doves were perched,
That set the air a-going with their wings:
These opposite, the world's great shipwright stood
To wait the burden; and the Elder spake:
“Will He forget me? Would He might forget!
Old, old! The hope of old Methuselah
Is all in His forgetfulness.” With that,
A slave-girl took a cup of wine, and crept
Anear him, saying, “Taste;” and when his lips
Had touched it, lo, he trembled, and he cried,
“Behold, I prophesy.”

Then straight they fled
That were about him, and did stand apart
And stop their ears. For he, from time to time,
Was plagued with that same fate to prophesy,
And spake against himself, against his day
And time, in words that all men did abhor.
Therefore he, warning them what time the fit
Came on him, saved them, that they heard it not
So while they fled, he cried: “I saw the God
Reach out of heaven His wonderful right hand.
Lo, lo! He dipped it in the unquiet sea,
And in its curvèd palm behold the ark,
As in a vast calm lake, came floating on.
Ay, then, His other hand — the cursing hand —
He took and spread between us and the sun,
And all was black; the day was blotted out,
And horrible staggering took the frightened earth.