

From some invisible form, which, being laid
A little moment on the curate's eyes,
It dazzled him with light that brake from it,
So that he saw no more.

“What shall I do?”

The curate murmured, when he came again
To himself and looked about him. “This is strange!
My thoughts are all astray; and yet, methinks,
A weight is taken from my heart. Lo! lo!
There lieth at my feet, frail, white, and dead,
The sometime beggar. He is happy now.
There was a child; but he is gone, and he
Is also happy. I am glad to think
I am not bound to make the wrong go right;
But only to discover, and to do,
With cheerful heart, the work that God appoints.”

With that, he did compose, with reverent care,
The dead; continuing, “I will trust in Him,
THAT HE CAN HOLD HIS OWN; and I will take
His will, above the work He sendeth me,
To be my chiefest good.”

Then went he forth,
“I shall die early,” thinking: “I am warned,
By this fair vision, that I have not long
To live.” Yet he lived on to good old age;—
Ay, he lives yet, and he is working still.

It may be there are many in like case;
They give themselves, and are in misery
Because the gift is small, and doth not make
The world by so much better as they fain
Would have it. 'Tis a fault; but, as for us,
Let us not blame them. Maybe, 'tis a fault
More kindly looked on by The Majesty

Than our best virtues are. Why, what are we?
What have we given, and what have we desired
To give, the world?

There must be something wrong.
Look to it: let us mend our ways. Farewell.

A BIRTHDAY WALK.

(WRITTEN FOR A FRIEND'S BIRTHDAY.)

“The days of our life are threescore years and ten.”

A BIRTHDAY:— and now a day that rose
With much of hope, with meaning rife—
A thoughtful day from dawn to close:
The middle day of human life.

In sloping fields on narrow plains,
The sheep were feeding on their knees,
As we went through the winding lanes,
Strewed with red buds of alder-trees.

So warm the day— its influence lent
To flagging thoughts a stronger wing;
So utterly was winter spent,
So sudden was the birth of spring.

Wild crocus flowers in copse and hedge—
In sunlight, clustering thick below,
Sighed for the firwood's shaded ledge,
Where sparkled yet a line of snow.

And crowded snowdrops faintly hung
 Their fair heads lower for the heat,
 While in still air all branches flung
 Their shadowy doubles at our feet.

And through the hedge the sunbeams crept,
 Dropped through the maple and the birch;
 And lost in airy distance slept
 On the broad tower of Tamworth Church.

Then, lingering on the downward way,
 A little space we resting stood,
 To watch the golden haze that lay
 Adown that river by the wood.

A distance vague, the bloom of sleep
 The constant sun had lent the scene,
 A veiling charm on dingles deep
 Lay soft those pastoral hills between.

There are some days that die not out,
 Nor alter by reflection's power,
 Whose converse calm, whose words devout,
 Forever rest, the spirit's dower.

And they are days when drops a veil —
 A mist upon the distance past;
 And while we say to peace — "All hail!"
 We hope that always it shall last.

Times when the troubles of the heart
 Are hushed — as winds were hushed that day —
 And budding hopes begin to start,
 Like those green hedgerows on our way:

When all within and all around
 Like hues on that sweet landscape blend,
 And Nature's hand has made to sound
 The heartstrings that her touch attend:

When there are rays within, like those
 That streamed through maple and through
 birch,
 And rested in such calm repose
 On the broad tower of Tamworth Church.

—♦—
 NOT IN VAIN I WAITED.

SHE was but a child, a child,
 And I a man grown;
 Sweet she was, and fresh, and wild,
 And, I thought, my own.

What could I do? The long grass groweth,
 The long wave floweth with a murmur on:
 The why and the wherefore of it all who know-
 eth?
 Ere I thought to lose her she was grown —
 and gone.

This day or that day in warm spring weather,
 The lamb that was tame will yearn to break its
 tether.
 "But if the world wound thee," I said, "come back
 to me,
 Down in the dell wishing, — wishing, wishing for
 thee."

The dews hang on the white may,
 Like a ghost it stands,
 All in the dusk before day
 That folds the dim lands:
 Dark fell the skies when once belated,
 Sad, and sorrow-fated, I missed the sun;
 But wake, heart, and sing, for not in vain I waited.
 O clear, O solemn dawning, lo, the maid is won!

Sweet dews, dry early on the grass and clover,
Lest the bride wet her feet while she walks over;
Shine to-day, sunbeams, and make all fair to see:
Down the dell she's coming — coming, coming with
me.

—♦—
A GLEANING SONG.

“WHITHER away, thou little careless rover?
(Kind Roger's true)

Whither away, across yon bents and clover,
Wet, wet with dew?”

“Roger here, Roger there —
Roger — O, he sighed,

Yet let me glean among the wheat,
Nor sit kind Roger's bride.”

‘What wilt thou do when all the gleaning's ended,
What wilt thou do?

The cold will come, and fog and frost-work blended
(Kind Roger's true).”

“Sleet and rain, cloud and storm,
When they cease to frown,

I'll bind me primrose bunches sweet,
And cry them up the town.”

“What if at last thy careless heart awaking
This day thou rue?”

“I'll cry my flowers, and think for all its breaking.
Kind Roger's true;

Roger here, Roger there.

O, my true love sighed,

Sigh once, once more, I'll stay my feet
And rest kind Roger's bride.”

WITH A DIAMOND.

WHILE Time a grim old lion gnawing lay,
And mumbled with its teeth yon regal tomb,
Like some immortal tear undimmed for aye,
This gem was dropped among the dust of doom.

Dropped, haply, by a sad forgotten queen,
A tear to outlast name, and fame, and tongue:
Her other tears, and ours, all tears terrene,
For great new griefs to be hereafter sung.

Take it, — a goddess might have wept such tears,
Or Dame Electra changed into a star,
That waxed so dim because her children's years
In leaguered Troy were bitter through long war.

Not till the end to end to grow dull or waste, —
Ah, what a little while the light we share!
Hand after hand shall yet with this be graced,
Signing the Will that leaves it to an heir.

—♦—
FANCY.

O FANCY, if thou flyest, come back anon,
Thy fluttering wings are soft as love's first word,
And fragrant as the feathers of that bird,
Which feeds upon the budded cinnamon.
I ask thee not to work, or sigh — play on,
From naught that was not, was, or is, deterred;
The flax that Old Fate spun thy flights have
stirred,
And waved memorial grass of Marathon;
Play, but be gentle, not as on that day
I saw thee running down the rims of doom.

With stars thou hadst been stealing — while they lay
 Smothered in light and blue — clasped to thy breast;
 Bring rather to me in the firelit room
 A netted halcyon bird to sing of rest.

 COMPENSATION.

ONE launched a ship, but she was wrecked at sea;
 He built a bridge, but floods have borne it down,
 He meant much good, none came: strange destiny,
 His corn lies sunk, his bridge bears none to town,
 Yet good he had not meant became his crown;
 For once at work, when even as nature free,
 From thought of good he was, or of renown,
 God took the work for good and let good be.
 So wakened with a trembling after sleep,
 Dread Mona Roa yields her fateful store;
 All gleaming hot the scarlet rivers creep,
 And fanned of great-leaved palms slip to the shore,
 Then stolen to unplumbed wastes of that far deep,
 Lay the foundations for one island more.

 LOOKING DOWN.

MOUNTAINS of sorrow, I have heard your moans,
 And the moving of your pines; but we sit high
 On your green shoulders, nearer stoops the sky,
 And pure airs visit us from all the zones.
 Sweet world beneath, too happy far to sigh,
 Dost thou look thus beheld from heavenly thrones?
 No; not for all the love that counts thy stones,
 While sleepy with great light the valleys lie.
 Strange, rapturous peace! its sunshine doth enfold
 My heart; I have escaped to the days divine,

It seemeth as bygone ages back had rolled,
 And all the eldest past was now, was mine;
 Nay, even as if Melchizedec of old
 Might here come forth to us with bread and wine

 MARRIED LOVERS.

COME away, the clouds are high,
 Put the flashing needles by.
 Many days are not to spare,
 Or to waste, my fairest fair!
 All is ready. Come to-day,
 For the nightingale her lay,
 When she findeth that the whole
 Of her love, and all her soul,
 Cannot forth of her sweet throat,
 Sobs the while she draws her breath,
 And the bravery of her note
 In a few days altereth.
 Come, ere she despond, and see
 In a silent ecstasy
 Chestnuts heave for hours and hours
 All the glory of their flowers
 To the melting blue above,
 That broods over them like love.
 Leave the garden walls, where blow
 Apple-blossoms pink, and low
 Ordered beds of tulips fine.
 Seek the blossoms made divine
 With a scent that is their soul.
 These are soulless. Bring the white
 Of thy gown to bathe in light
 Walls for narrow hearts. The whole
 Earth is found, and air and sea,
 Not too wide for thee and me.

Not too wide, and yet thy face
 Gives the meaning of all space;
 And thine eyes with starbeams fraught,
 Hold the measure of all thought;
 For of them my soul besought,
 And was shown a glimpse of thine —
 A veiled vestal, with divine
 Solace, in sweet love's despair,
 For that life is brief as fair.
 Who hath most, he yearneth most,
 Sure, as seldom heretofore,
 Somewhere of the gracious more.
 Deepest joy the least shall boast,
 Asking with new-opened eyes
 The remainder; that which lies
 O, so fair! but not all conned —
 O, so near! and yet beyond.

Come, and in the woodland sit,
 Seem a wonted part of it.
 Then, while moves the delicate air,
 And the glories of thy hair
 Little flickering sun-rays strike,
 Let me see what thou art like;
 For great love enthralles me so,
 That, in sooth, I scarcely know.
 Show me, in a house all green,
 Save for long gold wedges' sheen,
 Where the flies, white sparks of fire,
 Dart and hover and aspire,
 And the leaves, air-stirred on high,
 Feel such joy they needs must sigh,
 And the untracked grass makes sweet
 All fair flowers to touch thy feet,
 And the bees about them hum.
 All the world is waiting. Come!

A WINTER SONG.

CAME the dread Archer up yonder lawn —
 Night is the time for the old to die —
 But woe for an arrow that smote the fawn,
 When the hind that was sick unscathed went by.

Father lay moaning, "Her fault was sore
 (Night is the time when the old must die),
 Yet, ah to bless her, my child, once more,
 For heart is failing: the end is nigh."

"Daughter, my daughter, my girl," I cried
 (Night is the time for the old to die),
 "Woe for the wish if till morn ye bide" —
 Dark was the welkin and wild the sky.

Heavily plunged from the roof the snow —
 (Night is the time when the old will die),
 She answered, "My mother, 'tis well, I go."
 Sparkled the north star, the wrack flew high.

First at his head, and last at his feet
 (Night is the time when the old should die),
 Kneeling I watched till his soul did fleet,
 None else that loved him, none else were nigh.

I wept in the night as the desolate weep
 (Night is the time for the old to die),
 Cometh my daughter? the drifts are deep,
 Across the cold hollows how white they lie.

I sought her afar through the spectral trees
 (Night is the time when the old must die),
 The fells were all muffled, the floods did freeze,
 And a wrathful moon hung red in the sky.

By night I found her where pent waves steal
 (Night is the time when the old should die),
 But she lay stiff by the locked mill-wheel,
 And the old stars lived in their homes on high.

 BINDING SHEAVES.

HARK! a lover binding sheaves,
 To his maiden sings,
 Flutter, flutter go the leaves,
 Larks drop their wings.
 Little brooks for all their mirth
 Are not blithe as he.
 "Give me what the love is worth
 That I give thee.

"Speech that cannot be forborne
 Tells the story through:
 I sowed my love in with the corn,
 And they both grew.
 Count the world full wide of girth,
 And hived honey sweet,
 But count the love of more worth
 Laid at thy feet.

"Money's worth is house and land,
 Velvet coat and vest.
 Work's worth is bread in hand,
 Aÿ, and sweet rest.
 Wilt thou learn what love is worth?
 Ah! she sits above,
 Sighing, 'Weigh me not with earth,
 Love's worth is love.'"

WORK.

LIKE coral insects multitudinous
 The minutes are whereof our life is made.
 They build it up, as in the deep's blue shade
 It grows, it comes to light, and then, and thus
 For both there is an end. The populous
 Sea-blossoms close, our minutes that have paid
 Life's debt of work are spent; the work is laid
 Before our feet that shall come after us.
 We may not stay to watch if it will speed,
 The bard if on some lute's string his song
 Live sweetly yet; the hero if his star
 Doth shine. Work is its own best earthly need,
 Else have we none more than the sea-born throng
 Who wrought those marvellous isles that bloom afar.

 WISHING.

WHEN I reflect how little I have done,
 And add to that how little I have seen,
 Then furthermore how little I have won
 Of joy, or good, how little known, or been:
 I long for other life more full, more keen,
 And yearn to change with such as well have run—
 Yet reason mocks me—nay, the soul, I ween,
 Granted her choice would dare to change with none,
 No, not to feel, as Blondel when his lay
 Pierced the strong tower, and Richard answered
 it—
 No, not to do, as Eustace on the day
 He left fair Calais to her weeping fit—
 No, not to be,—Columbus, waked from sleep
 When his new world rose from the charmed deep.

TO —.

STRANGE was the doom of Heracles, whose shade
 Had dwelling in dim Hades the unblest,
 While yet his form and presence sat a guest
 With the old immortals when the feast was made.
 Thine like, thus differs; form and presence laid
 In this dim chamber of enforced rest,
 It is the unseen "shade" which, risen, hath pressed
 Above all heights where feet Olympian strayed.
 My soul admires to hear thee speak; thy thought
 Falls from a high place like an August star,
 Or some great eagle from his air-hung rings—
 When swooping past a snow-cold mountain scar—
 Down the steep slope of a long sunbeam brought,
 He stirs the wheat with the steerage of his wings.

—◆—

 ON THE BORDERS OF CANNOCK CHASE.

A COTTAGER leaned whispering by her hives,
 Telling the bees some news, as they lit down,
 And entered one by one their waxen town.
 Larks passioning hung o'er their brooding wives,
 And all the sunny hills where heather thrives
 Lay satisfied with peace. A stately crown
 Of trees enringed the upper headland brown,
 And reedy pools, wherein the moor-hen dives,
 Glittered and gleamed.

A resting-place for light,
 They that were bred here love it; but they say,
 "We shall not have it long; in three years' time
 A hundred pits will cast out fires by night,
 Down yon still glen their smoke shall trail its way,
 And the white ash lie thick in lieu of rime."

THE MARINER'S CAVE.

ONCE on a time there walked a mariner,
 That had been shipwrecked, on a lonely shore,
 And the green water made a restless stir,
 And a great flock of mews sped on before.
 He had nor food nor shelter, for the tide
 Rose on the one, and cliffs on the other side.
 Brown cliffs they were; they seemed to pierce the
 sky,
 That was an awful deep of empty blue,
 Save that the wind was in it, and on high
 A wavering skein of wild-fowl tracked it through.
 He marked them not, but went with movement slow,
 Because his thoughts were sad, his courage low.
 His heart was numb, he neither wept nor sighed,
 But wearifully lingered by the wave;
 Until at length it chanced that he espied
 Far up, an opening in the cliff, a cave,
 A shelter where to sleep in his distress,
 And lose his sorrow in forgetfulness.
 With that he clambered up the rugged face
 Of that steep cliff that all in shadow lay,
 And, lo, there was a dry and homelike place,
 Comforting refuge for the castaway;
 And he laid down his weary, weary head,
 And took his fill of sleep till dawn waxed red.
 When he awoke, warm stirring from the south
 Of delicate summer air did sough and flow;
 He rose, and, wending to the cavern's mouth,
 He cast his eyes a little way below,
 Where on the narrow ledges, sharp and rude,
 Preening their wings, the blue rock-pigeons cooed

Then he looked lower and saw the lavender
 And sea-thrift blooming in long crevices,
 And the brown wallflower—April's messenger,
 The wallflower marshalled in her companies.
 Then lower yet he looked adown the steep,
 And sheer beneath him lapped the lovely deep.
 The laughing deep;—and it was pacified
 As if had not raged that other day.
 And it went murmuring in the morningtide
 Innumerable flatteries on its way,
 Kissing the cliffs and whispering at their feet
 With exquisite advancement, and retreat.
 This when the mariner beheld he sighed,
 And thought on his companions lying low.
 But while he gazed with eyes unsatisfied
 On the fair reaches of their overthrow,
 Thinking it strange he only lived of all,
 But not returning thanks, he heard a call!
 A soft sweet call, a voice of tender ruth,
 He thought it came from out the cave. And, lo,
 It whispered, "Man, look up!" But he, forsooth,
 Answered, "I cannot, for the long waves flow
 Across my gallant ship where sunk she lies
 With all my riches and my merchandise.
 "Moreover, I am heavy for the fate
 Of these my mariners drowned in the deep;
 I must lament me for their sad estate
 Now they are gathered in their last long sleep.
 O! the unpitying heavens upon me frown,
 Then how should I look up?—I must look down."
 And he stood yet watching the fair green sea
 Till hunger reached him; then he made a fire,
 A driftwood fire, and wandered listlessly

And gathered many eggs at his desire,
 and dressed them for his meal, and then he lay
 And slept, and woke upon the second day.
 When as he said, "The cave shall be my home;
 None will molest me, for the brown cliffs rise
 Like castles of defence behind,—the foam
 Of the remorseless sea beneath me lies;
 'Tis easy from the cliff my food to win,—
 The nations of the rock-dove breed therein.
 "For fuel, at the ebb yon fair expanse
 Is strewn with driftwood by the breaking wave,
 And in the sea is fish for sustenance.
 I will build up the entrance of the cave,
 And leave therein a window and a door,
 And here will dwell and leave it nevermore."
 Then even so he did; and when his task,
 Many long days being over, was complete;
 When he had eaten, as he sat to bask
 In the red firelight glowing at his feet,
 He was right glad of shelter, and he said,
 "Now for my comrades am I comforted."
 Then did the voice awake and speak again;
 It murmured, "Man, look up!" But he replied
 "I cannot. O, mine eyes, mine eyes are fain
 Down on the red wood-ashes to abide
 Because they warm me." Then the voice was still,
 And left the lonely mariner to his will.
 And soon it came to pass that he got gain.
 He had great flocks of pigeons which he fed,
 And drew great store of fish from out the main,
 And down from eider ducks; and then he said,
 "It is not good that I should lead my life
 In silence, I will take to me a wife."

He took a wife, and brought her home to him ;
 And he was good to her and cherished her
 So that she loved him ; then when light waxed dim
 Gloom came no more ; and she would minister
 To all his wants ; while he, being well content,
 Counted her company right excellent.

But once as on the lintel of the door
 She leaned to watch him while he put to sea,
 This happy wife, down-gazing at the shore,
 Said sweetly, " It is better now with me
 Than it was lately when I used to spin
 In my old father's house beside the lin."

And then the soft voice of the cave awoke —
 The soft voice which had haunted it erewhile —
 And gently to the wife it also spoke,
 " Woman, look up ! " But she, with tender guile,
 Gave it denial, answering, " Nay, not so,
 For all that I should look on lieth below.

" The great sky overhead is not so good
 For my two eyes as yonder stainless sea,
 The source and yielder of our livelihood,
 Where rocks his little boat that loveth me."
 This when the wife had said she moved away,
 And looked no higher than the wave all day.

Now when the year ran out a child she bore,
 And there was such rejoicing in the cave
 As surely never had there been before
 Since God first made it. Then full, sweet, and
 grave,
 The voice, " God's utmost blessing brims thy cup,
 O, father of this child, look up, look up ! "

" Speak to my wife," the mariner replied.
 " I have much work — right welcome work 'tis
 true —

Another mouth to feed." And then it sighed,
 " Woman, look up ! " She said, " Make no ado,
 For I must needs look down, on anywise,
 My heaven is in the blue of these dear eyes."
 The seasons of the year did swiftly whirl,
 They measured time by one small life alone ;
 On such a day the pretty pushing pearl
 That mouth they loved to kiss had sweetly shown,
 That smiling mouth, and it had made essay
 To give them names on such another day.

And afterward his infant history,
 Whether he played with baubles on the floor,
 Or crept to pat the rock-doves pecking nigh,
 And feeding on the threshold of the door,
 They loved to mark, and all his marvellings dim,
 The mysteries that beguiled and baffled him.

He was so sweet, that oft his mother said,
 " O child, how was it that I dwelt content
 Before thou camest ! Blessings on thy head,
 Thy pretty talk it is so innocent,
 That oft for all my joy, though it be deep,
 When thou art prattling, I am like to weep."

Summer and winter spent themselves again,
 The rock-doves in their season bred, the cliff
 Grew sweet, for every cleft would entertain
 Its tuft of blossom, and the mariner's skiff,
 Early and late, would linger in the bay,
 Because the sea was calm and winds away.

The little child about that rocky height,
 Led by her loving hand who gave him birth,
 Might wander in the clear unclouded light,
 And take his pastime in the beauteous earth ;
 Smell the fair flowers in stony cradles swung,
 And see God's happy creatures feed their young.

And once it came to pass, at eventide,
 His mother set him in the cavern door,
 And filled his lap with grain, and stood aside
 To watch the circling rock-doves soar, and soar,
 Then dip, alight, and run in circling bands,
 To take the barley from his open hands.
 And even while she stood and gazed at him,
 And his grave father's eyes upon him dwelt,
 They heard the tender voice, and it was dim,
 And seemed full softly in the air to melt;
 "Father," it murmured, "Mother," dying away,
 "Look up, while yet the hours are called to-day."
 "I will," the father answered, "but not now;"
 The mother said, "Sweet voice, O speak to me
 At a convenient season." And the brow
 Of the cliff began to quake right fearfully,
 There was a rending crash, and there did leap
 A riven rock and plunge into the deep.
 They said, "A storm is coming;" but they slept
 That night in peace, and thought the storm had
 passed,
 For there was not a cloud to intercept
 The sacred moonlight on the cradle cast;
 And to his rocking boat at dawn of day,
 With joy of heart the mariner took his way.
 But when he mounted up the path at night,
 Foreboding not of trouble or mischance,
 His wife came out into the fading light,
 And met him with a serious countenance;
 And she broke out in tears and sobbings thick,
 "The little child is sick, my little child is sick."
 They knelt beside him in the sultry dark,
 And when the moon looked in his face was pale.
 And when the red sun, like a burning bark,

Rose in a fog at sea, his tender wail
 Sank deep into their hearts, and piteously
 They fell to chiding of their destiny.
 The doves unheeded cooed that livelong day,
 Their pretty playmate cared for them no more;
 The sea-thrift nodded, wet with glistening spray,
 None gathered it; the long wave washed the shore;
 He did not know, nor lift his eyes to trace,
 The new fallen shadow in his dwelling-place.
 The sultry sun beat on the cliffs all day,
 And hot calm airs slept on the polished sea,
 The mournful mother wore her time away,
 Bemoaning of her helpless misery,
 Pleading and plaining, till the day was done,
 "O look on me, my love, my little one."
 "What aileth thee, that thou dost lie and moan?
 Ah! would that I might bear it in thy stead."
 The father made not his forebodings known,
 But gazed, and in his secret soul he said,
 "I may have sinned, on sin waits punishment,
 But as for him, sweet blameless innocent,
 "What has he done that he is stricken down?
 O it is hard to see him sink and fade,
 When I, that counted him my dear life's crown,
 So willingly have worked while he has played;
 That he might sleep, have risen, come storm, come
 heat,
 And thankfully would fast that he might eat."
 My God, how short our happy days appear!
 How long the sorrowful! They thought it long,
 The sultry morn that brought such evil cheer,
 And sat, and wished, and sighed for evensong;
 It came, and cooling wafts about him stirred,
 Yet when they spoke he answered not a word.