

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.

“Take heart,” they cried, but their sad hearts sank
low

When he would moan and turn his restless head,
And wearily the lagging morns would go,

And nights, while they sat watching by his bed,
Until a storm came up with wind and rain,
And lightning ran along the troubled main.

Over their heads the mighty thunders brake,
Leaping and tumbling down from rock to rock,
Then burst anew and made the cliffs to quake

As they were living things and felt the shock ;
The waiting sea to sob as if in pain,
And all the midnight vault to ring again.

A lamp was burning in the mariner's cave,
But the blue lightning flashes made it dim ;
And when the mother heard those thunders rave,

She took her little child to cherish him ;
She took him in her arms, and on her breast
Full wearily she courted him to rest,

And soothed him long until the storm was spent,

And the last thunder peal had died away,
And stars were out in all the firmament.

Then did he cease to moan, and slumbering lay,
While in the welcome silence, pure and deep,
The care-worn parents sweetly fell asleep.

And in a dream, enwrought with fancies thick,
The mother thought she heard the rock-doves coo
(She had forgotten that her child was sick),

And she went forth their morning meal to strew :
Then over all the cliff with earnest care
She sought her child, and lo, he was not there !

But she was not afraid, though long she sought
And climbed the cliff, and set her feet in grass,
Then reached a river, broad and full, she thought,

And at its brink he sat. Alas ! alas !
For one stood near him, fair and undefiled,
An innocent, a marvellous man-child.

In garments white as wool, and O, most fair,
A rainbow covered him with mystic light ;
Upon the warmèd grass his feet were bare,
And as he breathed, the rainbow in her sight
In passions of clear crimson trembling lay,
With gold and violet mist made fair the day.

Her little life ! she thought, his little hands
Were full of flowers that he did play withal ;
But when he saw the boy o' the golden lands,
And looked him in the face, he let them fall,
Held through a rapturous pause in wistful wise
To the sweet strangeness of those keen child-eyes.

“Ah, dear and awful God, who chastenest me,
How shall my soul to this be reconciled !
It is the Saviour of the world,” quoth she,
“And to my child He cometh as a child.”
Then on her knees she fell by that vast stream —
Oh, it was sorrowful, this woman's dream !

For lo, that Elder Child drew nearer now,
Fair as the light, and purer than the sun.
The calms of heaven were brooding on his brow,
And in his arms He took her little one,
Her child, that knew her, but with sweet demur
Drew back, nor held his hands to come to her.

With that in mother misery sore she wept —
“O Lamb of God, I love my child so much !
He stole away to Thee while we two slept,
But give him back, for thou hast many such ;
And as for me I have but one. O deign,
Dear Pity of God, to give him me again.”

His feet were on the river. Oh, his feet
 Had touched the river now, and it was great;
 And yet He hearkened when she did entreat,
 And turned in quietness as He would wait —
 Wait till she looked upon Him, and behold,
 There lay a long way off a city of gold.

Like to a jasper and a sardine stone,
 Whelmed in the rainbow stood that fair man-child,
 Mighty and innocent, that held her own,
 And as might be his manner at home he smiled,
 Then while she looked and looked, the vision brake,
 And all amazed she started up awake.

And lo, her little child was gone indeed!
 The sleep that knows no waking he had slept,
 Folded to heaven's own heart; in rainbow brede
 Clothed and made glad, while they two mourned
 and wept,

But in the drinking of their bitter cup
 The sweet voice spoke once more, and sighed,
 "Look up!"

They heard, and straightway answered, "Even so:
 For what abides that we should look on here?
 The heavens are better than this earth below,
 They are of more account and far more dear.
 We will look up, for all most sweet and fair,
 Most pure, most excellent, is garnered there."

—♦—
 A REVERIE.

WHEN I do sit apart
 And commune with my heart,
 She brings me forth the treasures once my own;
 Shows me a happy place
 Where leaf-buds swelled apace,
 And wasting rims of snow in sunlight shone.

Rock, in a mossy glade,
 The larch-trees lend thee shade,
 That just begin to feather with their leaves;
 From out thy crevice deep
 White tufts of snowdrops peep,
 And melted rime drips softly from thine eaves.

Ah, rock, I know, I know
 That yet thy snowdrops grow,
 And yet doth sunshine fleck them through the tree,
 Whose sheltering branches hide
 The cottage at its side,
 That nevermore will shade or shelter me.

I know the stockdoves' note
 Athwart the glen doth float;
 With sweet foreknowledge of her twins oppressed,
 And longing onward sent,
 She broods before the event,
 While leisurely she mends her shallow nest.

Once to that cottage door,
 In happy days of yore,
 My little love made footprints in the snow.
 She was so glad of spring,
 She helped the birds to sing,
 I know she dwells there yet — the rest I do not know.

They sang, and would not stop,
 While drop, and drop, and drop,
 I heard the melted rime in sunshine fall;
 And narrow wandering rills,
 Where leaned the daffodils,
 Murmured and murmured on, and that was all.

I think, but cannot tell,
 I think she loved me well,
 And some dear fancy with my future twined.

But I shall never know,
 Hope faints, and lets it go,
 That passionate want forbid to speak its mind.

DEFTON WOOD.

I HELD my way through Defton Wood,
 And on to Wandor Hall;
 The dancing leaf let down the light,
 In hovering spots to fall.
 "O young, young leaves, you match me well,
 My heart was merry, and sung —
 "Now wish me joy of my sweet youth;
 My love — she, too, is young!

O so many, many, many
 Little homes above my head!
 O so many, many, many
 Dancing blossoms round me spread!
 O so many, many, many
 Maidens sighing yet for none!
 Speed, ye wooers, speed with any —
 Speed with all but one."

I took my leave of Wandor Hall,
 And trod the woodland ways.
 "What shall I do so long to bear
 The burden of my days?"
 I sighed my heart into the boughs
 Whereby the culvers cooed;
 For only I between them went
 Unwooing and unwooded.

"O so many, many, many
 Lilies bending stately heads!
 O so many, many, many
 Strawberries ripened on their beds!

O so many, many, many
 Maids, and yet my heart undone!
 What to me are all, are any —
 I have lost my — one."

THE SNOWDROP MONUMENT

(In Lichfield Cathedral.)

MARVELS of sleep, grown cold!
 Who hath not longed to fold
 With pitying ruth, forgetful of their bliss,
 Those cherub forms that lie,
 With none to watch them nigh,
 Or touch the silent lips with one warm human kiss?

What! they are left alone
 All night with graven stone,
 Pillars and arches that above them meet;
 While through those windows high
 The journeying stars can spy,
 And dim blue moonbeams drop on their uncovered
 feet?

O cold! yet look again,
 There is a wandering vein
 Traced in the hand where those white snowdrops lie.
 Let her rapt dreamy smile
 The wondering heart beguile,
 That almost thinks to hear a calm contented sigh.

What silence dwells between
 Those severed lips serene!
 The rapture of sweet waiting breathes and grows.
 What trance-like peace is shed
 On her reclining head,
 And e'en on listless feet what languor of repose!

Angels of joy and love
 Lean softly from above
 And whisper to her sweet and marvellous things ;
 Tell of the golden gate —
 That opened wide doth wait,
 And shadow her dim sleep with their celestial wings.

Hearing of that blest shore
 She thinks on earth no more,
 Contented to forego this wintry land.
 She has nor thought nor care
 But to rest calmly there,
 And hold the snowdrops pale that blossom in her
 hand.

But on the other face
 Broodeth a mournful grace,
 This had foreboding thoughts beyond her years,
 While sinking thus to sleep
 She saw her mother weep,
 And could not lift her hand to dry those heart-sick
 tears.

Could not — but failing lay,
 Sighed her young life away,
 And let her arm drop down in listless rest,
 Too weary on that bed
 To turn her dying head,
 Or fold the little sister nearer to her breast.

Yet this is faintly told
 On features fair and cold,
 A look of calm surprise, of mild regret,
 As if with life oppressed
 She turned her to her rest,
 But felt her mother's love and looked not to forget.

How wistfully they close,
 Sweet eyes, to their repose !
 How quietly declines the placid brow !
 The young lips seem to say,
 " I have wept much to-day,
 And felt some bitter pains, but they are over now."

Sleep ! there are left below
 Many who pine to go,
 Many who lay it to their chastened souls,
 That gloomy days draw nigh,
 And they are blest who die,
 For this green world grows worse the longer that
 she rolls.

And as for me I know
 A little of her woe,
 Her yearning want doth in my soul abide,
 And sighs of them that weep,
 " O put us soon to sleep,
 For when we wake — with Thee — we shall be satisfied."

 AN ANCIENT CHESS KING.

HAPLY some Rajah first in the ages gone
 Amid his languid ladies fingered thee,
 While a black nightingale, sun-swart as he,
 Sang his one wife, love's passionate oraison ;
 Haply thou may'st have pleased Old Prester John
 Among his pastures, when full royally
 He sat in tent, grave shepherds at his knee,
 While lamps of balsam winked and glimmered on.
 What doest thou here ? Thy masters are all dead ;
 My heart is full of ruth and yearning pain

At sight of thee ; O king that hast a crown
 Outlasting theirs, and tell'st of greatness fled
 Through cloud-hung nights of unabated rain
 And murmurs of the dark majestic town.

COMFORT IN THE NIGHT.

SHE thought by heaven's high wall that she did stray
 Till she beheld the everlasting gate :
 And she climbed up to it to long, and wait,
 Feel with her hands (for it was night), and lay
 Her lips to it with kisses ; thus to pray
 That it might open to her desolate,
 And lo ! it trembled, lo ! her passionate
 Crying prevailed. A little, little way
 It opened : there fell out a thread of light,
 And she saw wingèd wonders move within ;
 Also she heard sweet talking as they meant
 To comfort her. They said, " Who comes to-night
 Shall one day certainly an entrance win ;"
 Then the gate closed and she awoke content.

THOUGH ALL GREAT DEEDS.

THOUGH all great deeds were proved but fables fine,
 Though earth's old story could be told anew,
 Though the sweet fashions loved of them that sue
 Were empty as the ruined Delphian shrine—
 Though God did never man, in words benign,
 With sense of His great Fatherhood endue,
 Though life immortal were a dream untrue,
 And He that promised it were not divine—
 Though soul, though spirit were not and all hope
 Reaching beyond the bourn, melted away ;

Though virtue had no goal and good no scope,
 But both were doomed to end with this our clay—
 Though all these were not, — to the ungraced heir
 Would this remain, — to live, as though they were.

THE LONG WHITE SEAM.

As I came round the harbor buoy,
 The lights began to gleam,
 No wave the land-locked water stirred,
 The crags were white as cream ;
 And I marked my love by candle-light
 Sewing her long white seam.
 It's aye sewing ashore, my dear,
 Watch and steer at sea,
 It's reef and furl, and haul the line,
 Set sail and think of thee.

I climbed to her cottage door ;
 O sweetly my love sings !
 Like a shaft of light her voice breaks forth,
 My soul to meet it springs
 As the shining water leaped of old,
 When stirred by angel wings.
 Aye longing to list anew,
 Awake and in my dream,
 But never a song she sang like this,
 Sewing her long white seam.

Fair fall the lights, the harbor lights,
 That brought me in to thee,
 And peace drop down on that low roof
 For the sight that I did see,
 And the voice, my dear, that rang so clear
 All for the love of me.

For O, for O, with brows bent low
 By the candle's flickering gleam,
 Her wedding gown it was she wrought,
 Sewing the long white seam.

AN OLD WIFE'S SONG.

AND what will ye hear, my daughters dear?—

Oh, what will ye hear this night?
 Shall I sing you a song of the yuletide cheer,
 Or of lovers and ladies bright?

“Thou shalt sing,” they say (for we dwell far away
 From the land where fain would we be),

“Thou shalt sing us again some old-world strain
 That is sung in our own countrie.

“Thou shalt mind us so of the times long ago,
 When we walked on the upland lea,
 While the old harbor light waxed faint in the white,
 Long rays shooting out from the sea;

“While lambs were yet asleep, and the dew lay deep
 On the grass, and their fleeces clean and fair.
 Never grass was seen so thick nor so green
 As the grass that grew up there!

“In the town was no smoke, for none there awoke—
 At our feet it lay still as still could be;
 And we saw far below the long river flow,
 And the schooners a-warping out to sea.

“Sing us now a strain shall make us feel again
 As we felt in that sacred peace of morn,
 When we had the first view of the wet sparkling dew,
 In the shyness of a day just born.”

So I sang an old song — it was plain and not long —
 I had sung it very oft when they were small;
 And long ere it was done they wept every one:
 Yet this was all the song — this was all: —

The snow lies white, and the moon gives light,
 I'll out to the freezing mere,
 And ease my heart with one little song,
 For none will be nigh to hear.

And it's O my love, my love!
 And it's O my dear, my dear!
 It's of her that I'll sing till the wild woods ring,
 When nobody's nigh to hear.

My love is young, she is young, is young;
 When she laughs the dimple dips.

We walked in the wind, and her long locks blew
 Till sweetly they touched my lips.

And I'll out to the freezing mere,
 Where the stiff reeds whistle so low,
 And I'll tell my mind to the friendly wind,
 Because I have loved her so.

Ay, and she's true, my lady is true!
 And that's the best of it all;
 And when she blushes my heart so yearns
 That tears are ready to fall.

And it's O my love, my love!
 And it's O my dear, my dear!
 It's of her that I'll sing till the wild woods ring,
 When nobody's nigh to hear.

COLD AND QUIET.

COLD, my dear, — cold and quiet.
 In their cups on yonder lea,
 Cowslips fold the brown bee's diet;
 So the moss enfoldeth thee.

“Plant me, plant me, O love, a lily flower —
 Plant at my head, I pray you, a green tree;
 And when our children sleep,” she sighed, “at the
 dusk hour,
 And when the lily blossoms, O come out to me!”
 Lost, my dear? Lost! nay, deepest
 Love is that which loseth least;
 Through the night-time while thou sleepest,
 Still I watch the shrouded east.
 Near thee, near thee, my wife that aye liveth,
 “Lost” is no word for such a love as mine;
 Love from her past to me a present giveth,
 And love itself doth comfort, making pain divine.
 Rest, my dear, rest. Fair showeth
 That which was, and not in vain
 Sacred have I kept, God knoweth,
 Love’s last words atween us twain.
 “Hold by our past, my only love, my lover;
 Fall not, but rise, O love, by loss of me!”
 Boughs from our garden, white with bloom hang
 over.
 Love, now the children slumber, I come out to
 thee.

A SNOW MOUNTAIN.

CAN I make white enough my thought for thee,
 Or wash my words in light? Thou hast no mate
 To sit aloft in silence silently
 And twin those matchless heights undesecrate.
 Reverend as Lear, when, lorn of shelter, he
 Stood, with his old white head, surprised at fate;
 Alone as Galileo, when, set free,
 Before the stars he mused disconsolate.
 Ay, and remote, as the dead lords of song,

Great masters who have made us what we are,
 For thou and they have taught us how to long
 And feel a sacred want of the fair and far:
 Reign, and keep life in this our deep desire—
 Our only greatness is that we aspire.

SLEEP.

(A WOMAN SPEAKS.)

O SLEEP, we are beholden to thee, sleep,
 Thou bearest angels to us in the night,
 Saints out of heaven with palms. Seen by thy
 light
 Sorrow is some old tale that goeth not deep;
 Love is a pouting child. Once I did sweep
 Through space with thee, and, lo, a dazzling sight—
 Stars! They came on, I felt their drawing and
 might;
 And some had dark companions. Once (I weep
 When I remember that) we sailed the tide,
 And found fair isles, where no isles used to bide,
 And met there my lost love, who said to me,
That 'twas a long mistake: he had not died.
 Sleep, in the world to come how strange 'twill be
 Never to want, never to wish for thee!

PROMISING.

(A MAN SPEAKS.)

ONCE, a new world, the sun-swart marinere,
 Columbus, promised, and was sore withstood,
 Ungraced, unhelped, unheard for many a year;
 But let at last to make his promise good.

Promised and promising I go, most dear,
 To better my dull heart with love's sweet feud,
 My life with its most reverent hope and fear,
 And my religion, with fair gratitude.
 O we must part; the stars for me contend,
 And all the winds that blow on all the seas.
 Through wonderful waste places I must wend,
 And with a promise my sad soul appease.
 Promise then, promise much of far-off bliss;
 But— ah, for present joy, give me one kiss.

 LOVE.

Who veileth love should first have vanquished fate.
 She folded up the dream in her deep heart,
 Her fair full lips were silent on that smart,
 Thick fringed eyes did on the grasses wait.
 What good? one eloquent blush, but one, and straight
 The meaning of a life was known; for art
 Is often foiled in playing nature's part,
 And time holds nothing long inviolate.
 Earth's buried seed springs up— slowly, or fast:
 The ring came home, that one in ages past
 Flung to the keeping of unfathomed seas:
 And golden apples on the mystic trees
 Were sought and found, and borne away at last,
 Though watched of the divine Hesperides.

POEMS

*Written on the Deaths of Three Lovely Children who were
 taken from their Parents within a Month of one another.*

HENRY,

AGED EIGHT YEARS.

YELLOW leaves, how fast they flutter— woodland
 hollows thickly strewing,

Where the wan October sunbeams scanty in the
 mid-day win,
 While the dim gray clouds are drifting, and in sad-
 dened hues imbuing

All without and all within!

All within! but winds of autumn, little Henry, round
 their dwelling

Did not load your father's spirit with those deep
 and burdened sighs;—

Only echoed thoughts of sadness, in your mother's
 bosom swelling,

Fast as tears that dim her eyes.

Life is fraught with many changes, checked with
 sorrow and mutation,

But no grief it ever lightened such a truth before
 to know:—

I behold them— father, mother— as they seem to
 contemplation,

Only three short weeks ago!