

It was a sudden thought; but he gave way,
 For it assailed him with unwonted force;
 And, with no more than one short week's delay,
 For English shores he shaped the vessel's course
 And ten years absent saw her landed now,
 With thirteen summers on her maiden brow.

And so he journeyed with her, far inland,
 Down quiet lanes, by hedges gemmed with dew,
 Where wonders met her eye on every hand,
 And all was beautiful and strange and new —
 All, from the forest trees in stately ranks,
 To yellow cowslips trembling on the banks.

All new — the long-drawn slope of evening shades,
 The sweet solemnities of waxing light,
 The white-haired boys, the blushing rustic maids,
 The ruddy gleam through cottage casements bright,
 The green of pastures, bloom of garden nooks,
 And endless bubbling of the water-brooks.

So far he took them on through this green land,
 The maiden and her nurse, till journeying
 They saw at last a peaceful city stand
 On a steep mount, and heard its clear bells ring.
 High were the towers and rich with ancient state,
 In its old wall enclosed and massive gate.

There dwelt a worthy matron whom he knew,
 To whom in time of war he gave good aid,
 Shielding her household from the plundering crew
 When neither law could bind nor worth persuade;
 And to her house he brought his care and pride,
 Awearied with the way and sleepy-eyed.

And he, the man whom she was fain to serve,
 Delayed not shortly his request to make,
 Which was, if aught of her he did deserve,

To take the maid, and rear her for his sake,
 To guard her youth, and let her breeding be
 In womanly reserve and modesty.

And that same night into the house he brought
 The costly fruits of all his voyages —
 Rich Indian gems of wandering craftsmen wrought
 Long ropes of pearls from Persian palaces,
 With ingots pure and coins of Venice mould,
 And silver bars and bags of Spanish gold;

And costly merchandise of far-off lands,
 And golden stuffs and shawls of Eastern dye,
 He gave them over to the matron's hands,
 With jewelled gauds, and toys of ivory,
 To be her dower on whom his love was set,
 His dearest child, fair Madam Margaret.

Then he entreated, that if he should die,
 She would not cease her guardian mission mild.
 Awhile, as undecided, lingered nigh,
 Beside the pillow of the sleeping child,
 Severed one wandering lock of wavy hair,
 Took horse that night, and left her unaware.

And it was long before he came again —
 So long that Margaret was woman grown;
 And oft she wished for his return in vain,
 Calling him softly in an undertone;
 Repeating words that he had said the while,
 And striving to recall his look and smile.

If she had known — oh, if she could have known —
 The toils, the hardships of those absent years —
 How bitter thralldom forced the unwilling groan —
 How slavery wrung out subduing tears,
 Not calmly had she passed her hours away,
 Chiding half pettishly the long delay.

But she was spared. She knew no sense of harm,
 While the red flames ascended from the deck ;
 Saw not the pirate band the crew disarm,
 Mourned not the floating spars, the smoking wreck.
 She did not dream, and there was none to tell
 That fetters bound the hands she loved so well.

Sweet Margaret — withdrawn from human view,
 She spent long hours beneath the cedar shade,
 The stately trees that in the garden grew,
 And, overtwin'd, a towering shelter made ;
 She mused among the flowers, and birds, and bees,
 In winding walks, and bowering canopies ;

Or wandered slowly through the ancient rooms,
 Where oriel windows shed their rainbow gleams ;
 And tapestried hangings, wrought in Flemish looms
 Displayed the story of King Pharaoh's dreams ;
 And, come at noon because the well was deep,
 Beautiful Rachel leading down her sheep.

At last she reached the bloom of womanhood,
 After five summers spent in growing fair ;
 Her face betokened all things dear and good,
 The light of somewhat yet to come was there
 Asleep, and waiting for the opening day,
 When childish thoughts, like flowers, would drift
 away.

O! we are far too happy while they last ;
 We have our good things first, and they cost
 naught ;
 Then the new splendor comes unfathomed, vast,
 A costly trouble, ay, a sumptuous thought,
 And will not wait, and cannot be possessed,
 Though infinite yearnings fold it to the breast.

And time, that seemed so long, is fleeting by,
 And life is more than life ; love more than love ;

We have not found the whole — and we must die —
 And still the unclasped glory floats above.
 The inmost and the utmost faint from sight,
 Forever secret in their veil of light.

Be not too hasty in your flow, you rhymes,
 For Margaret is in her garden bower ;
 Delay to ring, you soft cathedral chimes,
 And tell not out too soon the noontide hour ;
 For one draws nearer to your ancient town,
 On the green mount down settled like a crown.

He journeyed on, and, as he neared the gate,
 He met with one to whom he named the maid,
 Inquiring of her welfare, and her state,
 And of the matron in whose house she stayed.
 "The maiden dwelt there yet," the townsman said ;
 "But, for the ancient lady, — she was dead."

He further said, she was but little known,
 Although reputed to be very fair,
 And little seen (so much she dwelt alone)
 But with her nurse at stated morning prayer ;
 So seldom passed her sheltering garden wall,
 Or left the gate at quiet evening fall.

Flow softly, rhymes — his hand is on the door ;
 Ring out, ye noontide bells, his welcoming —
 "He went out rich, but he returneth poor ;"
 And strong — now something bowed with suffering ;
 And on his brow are traced long furrowed lines,
 Earned in the fight with pirate Algerines.

Her aged nurse comes hobbling at his call ;
 Lifts up her withered hand in dull surprise,
 And, tottering, leads him through the pillared hall ;
 "What! come at last to bless my lady's eyes!

Dear heart, sweet heart, she's grown a likesome
maid —

Go, seek her where she sitteth in the shade."

The noonday chime had ceased — she did not know
Who watched her, while her ringloves fluttered
near :

While, under the green boughs, in accents low
She sang unto herself. She did not hear
His footsteps till she turned, then rose to meet
Her guest with guileless blush and wonder sweet.

But soon she knew him, came with quickened pace,
And put her gentle hands about his neck ;
And leaned her fair cheek to his sunburned face,

As long ago upon the vessel's deck :
As long ago she did in twilight deep,
When heaving waters lulled her infant sleep.

So then he kissed her, as men kiss their own,
And, proudly parting her unbraided hair,
He said : " I did not think to see thee grown
So fair a woman," — but a touch of care
The deep-toned voice through its caressing kept,
And, hearing it, she turned away and wept.

Wept, — for an impress on the face she viewed —
The stamp of feelings she remembered not ;
His voice was calmer now, but more subdued,
Not like the voice long loved and unforgot !
She felt strange sorrow and delightful pain —
Grief for the change, joy that he came again.

O pleasant days, that followed his return,
That made his captive years pass out of mind ;
If life had yet new pains for him to learn,
Not in the maid's clear eyes he saw it shrined ;
And three full weeks he stayed with her, content
To find her beautiful and innocent.

It was all one in his contented sight
As though she were a child, till suddenly,
Waked of the chimes in the dead time of the night
He fell to thinking how the urgency
Of Fate had dealt with him, and could but sigh
For those best things wherein she passed him by.

Down the long river of life how, cast adrift,
She urged him on, still on, to sink or swim ;
And all at once, as if a veil did lift,
In the dead time of the night, and bare to him
The want in his deep soul, he looked, was dumb,
And knew himself, and knew his time was come.

In the dead time of the night his soul did sound
The dark sea of a trouble unforeseen,
For that one sweet that to his life was bound
Had turned into a want — a misery keen :
Was born, was grown, and wounded sorely cried
All 'twixt the midnight and the morning tide.

He was a brave man, and he took this thing
And cast it from him with a man's strong hand ;
And that next morn, with no sweet altering
Of mien, beside the maid he took his stand,
And copied his past self till ebbing day
Paled its deep western blush, and died away.

And then he told her that he must depart
Upon the morrow, with the earliest light ;
And it displeased and pained her at the heart,
And she went out to hide her from his sight
Aneath the cedar trees, where dusk was deep,
And be apart from him awhile to weep

And to lament, till, suddenly aware
Of steps, she started up as fain to flee,
And met him in the moonlight pacing there,

Who questioned with her why her tears might be,
Till she did answer him, all red for shame,
"Kind sir, I weep — the wanting of a name."

"A name!" quoth he, and sighed. "I never knew
Thy father's name; but many a stalwart youth
Would give thee his, dear child, and his love too,
And count himself a happy man forsooth.
Is there none here who thy kind thought hath won?"
But she did falter, and made answer, "None."

Then, as in father-like and kindly mood,
He said, "Dear daughter, it would please me well
To see thee wed; for know it is not good

That a fair woman thus alone should dwell."
She said, "I am content it should be so,
If when you journey I may with you go."

This when he heard, he thought, right sick at heart
Must I withstand myself, and also thee?
Thou, also thou! must nobly do thy part;
That honor leads thee on which holds back me.
No, thou sweet woman; by love's great increase,
I will reject thee for thy truer peace.

Then said he, "Lady! — look upon my face;
Consider well this scar upon my brow;
I have had all misfortune but disgrace;
I do not look for marriage blessings now.
Be not thy gratitude deceived. I know
Thou think'st it is thy duty — I will go!

"I read thy meaning, and I go from hence,
Skilled in the reason; though my heart be rude,
I will not wrong thy gentle innocence,
Nor take advantage of thy gratitude,
But think, while yet the light these eyes shall bless,
The more for thee — of woman's nobleness."

Faultless and fair, all in the moony light,
As one ashamed, she looked upon the ground,
And her white raiment glistened in his sight.

And hark! the vesper chimes began to sound,
Then lower yet she drooped her young, pure cheek,
And still was she ashamed, and could not speak.

A swarm of bells from that old tower o'erhead,
They sent their message sifting through the bough
Of cedars; when they ceased his lady said,
"Pray you forgive me," and her lovely brows
She lifted, standing in her moonlit place,
And one short moment looked him in the face.

Then straight he cried, "O sweetheart, think all one
As no word yet were said between us twain,
And know thou that in this I yield to none —
I love thee, sweetheart, love thee!" so full fain,
While she did leave to silence all her part,
He took the gleaming whiteness to his heart —

The white-robed maiden with the warm white throat,
The sweet white brow, and locks of umber flow,
Whose murmuring voice was soft as rock-dove's note,
Entreating him, and saying, "Do not go!"
"I will not, sweetheart; nay, not now," quoth he,
"By faith and troth, I think thou art for me!"

And so she won a name that eventide,
Which he gave gladly, but would ne'er bespeak,
And she became the rough sea-captain's bride,
Matching her dimples to his sunburnt cheek;
And chasing from his voice the touch of care,
That made her weep when first she heard it there.

One year there was, fulfilled of happiness,
But O! it went so fast, too fast away.
Then came that trouble which full oft doth bless —

It was the evening of a sultry day,
 There was no wind the thread-hung flowers to stir,
 Or float abroad the filmy gossamer.
 Toward the trees his steps the mariner bent,
 Pacing the grassy walks with restless feet:
 And he recalled, and pondered as he went,
 All her most duteous love and converse sweet,
 Till summer darkness settled deep and dim,
 And dew from bending leaves dropt down on him.
 The flowers sent forth their nightly odors faint —
 Thick leaves shut out the starlight overhead;
 While he told over, as by strong constraint
 Drawn on, her childish life on shipboard led,
 And beauteous youth, since first low kneeling there,
 With folded hands she lisped her evening prayer.
 Then he remembered how, beneath the shade,
 She wooed him to her with her lovely words,
 While flowers were closing, leaves in moonlight
 played,
 And in dark nooks withdrew the silent birds.
 So pondered he that night in twilight dim,
 While dew from bending leaves dropt down on him.
 The flowers sent forth their nightly odors faint —
 When, in the darkness waiting, he saw one
 To whom he said — “How fareth my sweet saint?”
 Who answered — “She hath borne to you a son;”
 Then, turning, left him, — and the father said,
 “God rain down blessings on his welcome head!”
 But, Margaret! — *she* never saw the child,
 Nor heard about her bed love’s mournful wails;
 But to the last, with ocean dreams beguiled,
 Murmured of troubled seas and swelling sails —
 Of weary voyages, and rocks unseen,
 And distant hills in sight, all calm and green. . . .

Woe and alas! — the times of sorrow come,
 And make us doubt if we were ever glad!
 So utterly that inner voice is dumb,
 Whose music through our happy days we had!
 So, at the touch of grief, without our will,
 The sweet voice drops from us, and all is still.
 Woe and alas! for the sea-captain’s wife —
 That Margaret who in the Xebec played —
 She spent upon his knee her baby life;
 Her slumbering head upon his breast she laid.
 How shall he learn alone his years to pass?
 How in the empty house? — woe and alas!
 She died, and in the aisle, the minster aisle,
 They made her grave; and there, with fond intent,
 Her husband raised, his sorrow to beguile,
 A very fair and stately monument:
 Her tomb (the careless vergers show it yet),
 The mariner’s wife, his love, his Margaret.
 A woman’s figure, with the eyelids closed,
 The quiet head declined in slumber sweet;
 Upon an anchor one fair hand reposed,
 And a long ensign folded at her feet,
 And carved upon the bordering of her vest
 The motto of her house — “*Be glibly Rest.*”
 There is an ancient window richly fraught
 And fretted with all hues most rich, most bright,
 And in its upper tracery enwrought
 An olive-branch and dove wide-winged and white,
 An emblem meet for her, the tender dove,
 Her heavenly peace, her duteous earthly love.
 Amid heraldic shields and banners set,
 In twisted knots and wildly-tangled bands,
 Crimson and green, and gold and violet,
 Fall softly on the snowy sculptured hands;
 And, when the sunshine comes, full sweetly rest
 The dove and olive-branch upon her breast.