

Two dimpled creatures, rose-lipped innocent.
But when we fain had kissed — O! the end came,
For snatched aloft, held in the nurse's arms,
She parting with her lover I was borne
Far from that little child.

And no one knew
She lived down there, but only I; and none
Sought for her, but I yearned for her and left
Part of myself behind, as the lambs leave
Their wool upon a thorn."

"And was she seen
Never again, nor known for what she was?"

"Never again, for we did leave anon
The pasture and the pool. I know not where
They lie, and sleep a heaven on earth, but know
From thenceforth yearnings for a lost delight;
On certain days I dream about her still."

IN THE NURSERY.

"WHERE do you go, Bob, when you're fast asleep?"
"Where? O well, once I went into a deep
Mine, father told of, and a cross man said
He'd make me help to dig, and eat black bread.
I saw the Queen once, in her room, quite near.
She said, 'You rude boy, Bob, how came you
here?'"

"Was it like mother's boudoir?"
"Grander far,
Gold chairs and things — all over diamonds — Ah!"

"You're sure it was the Queen?"

"Of course, a crown
Was on her, and a spangly purple gown."

"I went to heaven last night."

"O Lily, no,
How could you?"

"Yes I did, they told me so,
And my best doll, my favorite, with the blue
Frock, Jasmine, I took her to heaven too."

"What was it like?"

"A kind of — I can't tell —
A sort of orchard place in a long dell,
With trees all over flowers. And there were birds
Who could do talking, say soft pretty words;
They let me stroke them, and I showed it all
To Jasmine. And I heard a blue dove call,
'Child, this is heaven.' I was not frightened
when

It spoke, I said 'Where are the angels then?'"

"Well."

"So it said, 'Look up and you shall see.'
There were two angels sitting in the tree,
As tall as mother; they had long gold hair.
They let drop down the fruit they gather'd there
And little angels came for it — so sweet.
Here they were beggar children in the street,
And the dove said they had the prettiest things,
And wore their best frocks every day."

"And wings,
Had they no wings?"

"O yes, and lined with white
Like swallow wings, so soft — so very light
Fluttering about."

"Well."

"Well, I did not stay,
So that was all."

"They made you go away?"
"I did not go — but — I was gone."

"I know."
"But it's a pity, Bob, we never go
Together."

"Yes, and have no dreams to tell,
But the next day both know it all quite well."

"And, Bob, if I could dream you came with me
You would be there perhaps."

"Perhaps — we'll see."

THE BELL-BIRD.

"TOLL —
Toll." "The bell-bird sounding far away,
Hid in a myall grove." He raised his head,
The bush glowed scarlet in descending day,
A masterless wild country — and he said,
My father ("Toll"), "Full oft by her to stray,
As if a spirit called, have I been led;
Oft seems she as an echo in my soul
("Toll") from my native towers by Avon. ("Toll.")

("Toll.") "Oft as in a dream I see full fain
The bell-tower beautiful that I love well,
A seemly cluster with her churches twain.

I hear adown the river faint and swell
And lift upon the air that sound again,

It is, it is — how sweet no tongue can tell,
For all the world-wide breadth of shining foam,
The bells of Evesham chiming 'Home, sweet home.'

"The mind hath mastery thus — it can defy
The sense, and make all one as it DID HEAR —

Nay, I mean more; the wraiths of sound gone by
Rise; they are present 'neath this dome all clear.

ONE, sounds the bird — a pause — then doth supply
Some ghosts of chimes the void expectant ear;

Do they ring bells in heaven? The learnedest soul
Shall not resolve me such a question. ("Toll.")

("Toll.") "Say I am a boy, and fishing stand
By Avon ("Toll") on line and rod intent,

How glitters deep in dew the meadow land —
What, dost thou fit, thy ministry all spent,

Not many days we hail such visits bland,
Why steal so soon the rare enravishment?

Ay gone! the soft deceptive echoes roll
Away, and faint into remoteness." ("Toll.")

While thus he spoke the doom'd sun touched his bed
In scarlet, all the palpitating air

Still loyal waited on. He dipped his head,
Then all was over, and the dark was there;

And northward, lo! a star, one likewise red
But lurid, starts from out her day-long lair,

Her fellows trail behind; she bears her part,
The balefullest star that shines, the Scorpion's heart,

Or thus of old men feigned, and then did fear,
Then straight crowd forth the great ones of the sky
In flashing flame at strife to reach more near.

The little children of Infinity,
They next look down as to report them "Here,"
From deeps all thoughts despair and heights
past high

Speeding, not sped, no rest, no goal, no shore,
Still to rush on till time shall be no more.

"Loved vale of Evesham, 'tis a long farewell,

Not laden orchards nor their April snow
These eyes shall light upon again; the swell

And whisper of thy storied river know,
Nor climb the hill where great old Montfort fell

In a good cause hundreds of years ago;
So fall'n, elect to live till life's ally,
The river of recorded deeds, runs dry.

"This land is very well, this air," saith he,

"Is very well, but we want echoes here.
Man's past to feed the air and move the sea;

Ages of toil make English furrows dear,
Enriched by blood shed for his liberty,

Sacred by love's first sigh and life's last fear,
We come of a good nest, for it shall yearn
Poor birds of passage, but may not return,

"Spread younger wings, and beat the winds afar.

There sing more poets in that one small isle

Than all isles else can show — of such you are;

Remote things come to you unsought erewhile,
Near things a long way round as by a star.

Wild dreams!" He laughed, "A sage right
infantile;

With sacred fear behold life's waste deplored,
Undaunted by the leisure of the Lord.

"Ay go, the island dream with eyes make good,

Where Freedom rose, a lodestar to your race;
And Hope that leaning on her anchor stood

Did smile it to her feet: a right small place.
Call her a mother, high such motherhood,

Home in her name and duty in her face;
Call her a ship, her wide arms rake the clouds,
And every wind of God pipes in her shrouds.

"Ay, all the more go you. But some have cried

'The ship is breaking up'; they watch amazed
While urged toward the rocks by some that guide;

Bad steering, reckless steering, she all dazed
Tempteth her doom; yet this have none denied

Ships men have wrecked and palaces have razed,
But never was it known beneath the sun,
They of such wreckage built a goodlier one.

"God help old England an't be thus, nor less

God help the world." Therewith my mother
spake,

"Perhaps He will! By time, by faithlessness,
By the world's want long in the dark awake,

I think He must be all most due: the stress
Of the great tide of life, sharp misery's ache,

In a recluseness of the soul we rue
Far off, but yet — He must be almost due.

“God manifest again, the coming King.”

Then said my father, “I beheld erewhile,
Sitting up dog-like to the sunrising,

The giant doll in ruins by the Nile,
With hints of red that yet to it doth cling,

Fell, battered, and bewigged its cheeks were vile,
A body of evil with its angel fled,
Whom and his fellow fiends men worshippèd.

“The gods die not, long shrouded on their biers,

Somewhere they live, and live in memory yet;
Were not the Israelites for forty years

Did from them in the desert to forget —
Did they forget? no more than their lost feres

Sons of to-day with faces southward set,
Who dig for buried lore long ages fled,
And sift for it the sand and search the dead.

“Brown Egypt gave not one great poet birth,

But man was better than his gods, with lays
He soothed them restless, and they zoned the earth,
And crossed the sea; there drank immortal praise;

Then from his own best self with glory and worth
And beauty dowered he them for dateless days.
“Ever ‘their sound goes forth’ from shore to shore,
When was there known an hour that they lived more?

“Because they are beloved and not believed,

Admired not feared, they draw men to their feet;
All once, rejected, nothing now, received

Where once found wanting, now the most complete;

Man knows to-day though manhood stand achieved,
His cradle-rockers made a rustling sweet;
That king reigns longest which did lose his crown,
Stars that by poets shine are stars gone down.

“Still drawn obedient to an unseen hand,

From purer heights comes down the yearning
west,

Like to that eagle in the morning land,

That swooping on her predatory quest,
Did from the altar steal a smouldering brand,

The which she bearing home it burned her nest,
And her wide pinions of their plumes bereaven,
Spoiled for glad spiring up the steps of heaven.

“I say the gods live, and that reign abhor,

And will the nations it should dawn? Will they
Who ride upon the perilous edge of war?

Will such as delve for gold in this our day?
Neither the world will, nor the age will, nor

The soul — and what, it cometh now? Nay, nay,
The weighty sphere, unready for release,
Rolls far in front of that o’ermastering peace.

“Wait and desire it; life waits not, free there

To good, to evil, thy right perilous —
All shall be fair, and yet it is not fair.

I thank my God He takes the advantage thus;
He doth not greatly hide, but still declare

Which side He is on and which He loves, to us,
While life impartial aid to both doth lend,
And heed not which the choice nor what the end.

“Among the few upright, O to be found,
 And ever search the nobler path, my son,
 Nor say ‘’tis sweet to find me common ground
 Too high, too good, shall leave the hours alone’ —
 Nay, though but one stood on the height renowned,
 Deny not hope or will, to be that one.
 Is it the many fall’n shall lift the land,
 The race, the age! — Nay, ’tis the few that stand.”

While in the lamplight hearkening I sat mute,
 Methought “how soon this fire must needs burn
 out.”

Among the passion flowers and passion fruit
 That from the wide verandah hung, misdoubt
 Was mine. “And wherefore made I thus long suit
 To leave this old white head? His words devout,
 His blessings not to hear who loves me so —
 He that is old, right old — I will not go.”

But ere the dawn their counsels wrought with me,
 And I went forth; alas that I so went
 Under the great gum-forest canopy,
 The light on every silken filament
 Of every flower, a quivering ecstasy
 Of perfect paleness made it; sunbeams sent
 Up to the leaves with sword-like flash endued
 Each turn of that gray drooping multitude.

I sought to look as in the light of one
 Returned. “Will this be strange to me that day?
 Flocks of green parrots clamorous in the sun
 Tearing out milky maize — stiff cacti gray
 As old men’s beards — here stony ranges lone,

There dust of mighty flocks upon their way
 To water, cloudlike on the bush afar,
 Like smoke that hangs where old-world cities are.

“Is it not made man’s last endowment here
 To find a beauty in the wilderness;
 Feel the lorn moor above his pastures dear,
 Mountains that may not house and will not bless
 To draw him even to death? He must insphere
 His spirit in the open, so doth less
 Desire his feres, and more that unvex’d wold
 And fine afforested hills, his dower of old.

“But shall we lose again that new-found sense
 Which sees the earth less for our tillage fair?
 Oh, let her speak with her best eloquence
 To me, but not her first and her right rare
 Can equal what I may not take from hence.
 The gems are left: it is not elsewhere
 The wild Nepèan cleaves her matchless way,
 Nor Sydney harbor shall outdo the day.

“Adding to day this — that she lighteth it.”
 But I beheld again, and as must be
 With a world-record by a spirit writ,
 It was more beautiful than memory,
 Than hope was more complete.

Tall brigs did sit
 Each in her berth the pure flood placidly,
 Their topsails drooping ’neath the vast blue dome
 Listless, as waiting to be sheeted home.

And the great ships with pulse-like throbbing clear,
 Majestical of mien did take their way

Like living creatures from some grander sphere,
 That having boarded ours thought good to stay,
 Albeit enslaved. They most divided here
 From God's great art and all his works in clay,
 In that their beauty lacks, though fair it shows
 That divine waste of beauty only He bestows.

The day was young, scarce out the harbor lights
 That morn I sailed: low sun-rays tremulous
 On golden loops sped outward. Yachts in flig'its
 Flutter'd the water air-like clear, while thus
 It crept for shade among brown rocky bights
 With cassia crowned and palms diaphanous,
 And boughs ripe fruitage dropping fitfully,
 That on the shining ebb went out to sea.

"Home," saith the man self-banishèd, "my son
 Shall now go home." Therewith he sendeth him
 Abroad, and knows it not, but thence is won,
 Rescued, the son's true home. His mind doth
 limn

Beautiful pictures of it, there is none
 So dear, a new thought shines erewhile but dim.
 "That was my home, a land past all compare,
 Life, and the poetry of life, are there."

But no such thought drew near to me that day;
 All the new worlds flock forth to greet the old,
 All the young souls bow down to own its sway,
 Enamoured of strange richness manifold;
 Not to be stored, albeit they seek for aye,
 Besieging it for its own life to hold,
 E'en as Al Mamoun fain for treasures hid,
 Stormed with an host th' inviolate pyramid,

And went back foiled but wise to walled Bagdad.
 So I, so all. The treasure sought not found,
 But some divine tears found to superadd
 Themselves to a long story. The great round
 Of yesterdays, their pathos sweet as sad,
 Found to be only as to-day, close bound
 With us, we hope some good thing yet to know,
 But God is not in haste, while the lambs grow

The Shepherd leadeth softly. It is great
 The journey, and the flock forgets at last
 (Earth ever working to obliterate
 The landmarks) when it halted, where it passed;
 And words confuse, and time doth ruinate,
 And memory fail to hold a theme so vast;
 There is request for light, but the flock feeds,
 And slowly ever on the Shepherd leads.

"Home," quoth my father, and a glassy sea
 Made for the stars a mirror of its breast,
 While southing, pennon-like, in bravery
 Of long-drawn gold they trembled to their rest.
 Strange the first night and morn, when Destiny
 Spread out to float on, all the mind oppressed;
 Strange on their outer roof to speed forth thus,
 And know the uncouth sea-beasts stared up at us.
 But yet more strange the nights of falling rain,
 That splashed without — a sea-coal fire within;
 Life's old things gone astern, the mind's disdain,
 For murmurous London makes soft rhythmic din.
 All courtier thoughts that wait on words would fain
 Express that sound. The words are not to win

'Till poet made, but mighty, yet so mild
 Shall be as cooing of a cradle-child.

Sensation like a piercing arrow flies,
 Daily out-going thought. This Adamhood,
 This weltering river of mankind that hies
 Adown the street; it cannot be withstood.
 The richest mundane miles not otherwise
 Than by a symbol keep possession good,
 Mere symbol of division, and they hold
 The clear pane sacred, the unminted gold

And wild outpouring of all wealth not less.
 Why this? A million strong the multitude,
 And safe, far safer than our wilderness
 The walls; for them it daunts with right at feud,
 Itself declares for law; yet sore the stress
 On steeps of life: what power to ban and bless;
 Sainly denial, waste inglorious,
 Desperate want, and riches fabulous.

Of souls what beautiful embodiment
 For some; for some what homely housing writ;
 What keen-eyed men who beggared of content
 Eat bread well earned as they had stolen it;
 What flutterers after joy that forward went,
 And left them in the rear unqueened, unfit
 For joy, with light that faints in strugglings drear
 Of all things good the most awaiting here.

Some in the welter of this surging tide
 Move like the mystic lamps, the Spirits Seven,
 Their burning love runs kindling far and wide,
 That fire they needed not to steal from heaven,

'Twas a free gift flung down with them to bide,
 And be a comfort for the hearts bereaven,
 A warmth, a glow, to make the failing store
 And parsimony of emotion more.

What glorious dreams in that find harborage,
 The phantom of a crime stalks this beside,
 And those might well have writ on some past page,
 In such an hour, of such a year, we — died,
 Put out our souls, took the mean way, false wage,
 Course cowardly; and if we be denied
 The life once loved, we cannot alway rue
 The loss; let be: what vails so sore ado?

And faces pass of such as give consent
 To live because 'tis not worth while to die;
 This never knew the awful trembling
 When some great fear sprang forward suddenly,
 Its other name being hope — and there forthwent
 As both confronted him a rueful cry
 From the heart's core, one urging him to dare,
 "Now! now! Leap now." The other, "Stand,
 forbear."

A nation reared in brick, how shall this be?
 Nor by excess of life death overtake.
 To die in brick of brick her destiny,
 And as the hamadryad eats the snake
 His wife, and then the snake his son, so she
 Air not enough, "though every one doth take
 A little," water scant, a plague of gold,
 Light out of date — a multitude born old.

And then a three-day siege might be the end;
 E'en now the rays get muddied struggling down

Through heaven's vasty lofts, and still extend
 The miles of brick and none forbid, and none
 Forbode; a great world-wonder that doth send
 High fame abroad, and fear no setting sun,
 But helpless she through wealth that flouts the day
 And through her little children, even as they.

But forth of London, and all visions dear
 To eastern poets of a watered land
 Are made the commonplace of nature here,
 Sweet rivers always full, and always bland.
 Beautiful, beautiful! What runlets clear
 Twinkle among the grass. On every hand
 Fall in the common talk from lips around
 The old names of old towns and famous ground.

It is not likeness only charms the sense,
 Not difference only sets the mind aglow,
 It is the likeness in the difference,
 Familiar language spoken on the snow,
 To have the Perfect in the Present tense,
 To hear the ploughboy whistling, and to know,
 It smacks of the wild bush, that tune — 'Tis ours,
 And look! the bank is pale with primrose flowers,

What veils of tender mist make soft the lea,
 What bloom of air the height; no veils confer
 On warring thought or softness or degree
 Or rest. Still falling, conquering, strife and stir,
 For this religion pays indemnity.

She pays her enemies for conquering her,
 And then her friends; while ever, and in vain
 Lots for a seamless coat are cast again

Whose it shall be; unless it shall endow
 Thousands of thousands it can fall to none,
 But faith and hope are not so simple now,
 As in the year of our redemption — One.
 The pencil of pure light must disallow
 Its name and scattering, many hues put on,
 And faith and hope low in the valley fell,
 There it is well with them, 'tis very well.

The land is full of vision, voices call.
 Can spirits cast a shadow? Ay, I trow
 Past is not done, and over is not all,
 Opinion dies to live and wanes to grow,
 The gossamer of thought doth filmlike fall,
 On fallows after dawn make shimmering show,
 And with old arrow-heads, her earliest prize,
 Mix learning's latest guess and last surmise.

There heard I pipes of fame, saw wrens "about
 That time when kings go forth to battle" dart,
 Full valorous atoms pierced with song, and stout
 To dare, and downy clad; I shared the smart
 Of grievèd cushats, bloom of love, devout
 Beyond man's thought of it. Old song my heart
 Rejoiced, but O mine own fore-elders' ways
 To look on, and their fashions of past days.

The ponderous craft of arms I craved to see,
 Knights, burghers, filtering through those gates
 ajar,
 Their age of serfdom with my spirit free;
 We cannot all have wisdom; some there are
 Believe a star doth rule their destiny,
 And yet they think to overreach the star,

For thought can weld together things apart,
And contraries find meeting in the heart.

In the deep dust at Suez without sound

I saw the Arab children walk at eve,
Their dark untroubled eyes upon the ground,

A part of Time's grave quiet. I receive
Since then a sense, as nature might have found

Love kin to man's that with the past doth grieve;
And lets on waste and dust of ages fall
Her tender silences that mean it all.

We have it of her, with her; it were ill

For men, if thought were widowed of the world,
Or the world beggared of her sons, for still

A crownèd sphere with many gems impearled
She rolls because of them. We lend her will

And she yields love. The past shall not be hurled
In the abhorrèd limbo while the twain,
Mother and son, hold partnership and reign.

She hangs out omens, and doth burdens dree.

Is she in league with heaven? That knows but
One.

For man is not, and yet his work we see

Full of unconscious omen darkly done.

I saw the ring-stone wrought at Avebury

To frame the face of the midwinter sun,

Good luck that hour they thought from him forth
smiled,

At midwinter the Sun did rise — the Child.

Still would the world divine though man forbore,

And what is beauty but an omen? — what

But life's deep divination cast before,

Omen of coming love? Hard were man's lot,
With love and toil together at his door,

But all-convincing eyes hath beauty got;
His love is beautiful, and he shall sue.

Toil for her sake is sweet, the omen true.

Love, love, and come it must, then life is found

Beforehand that was whole and fronting care,
A torn and broken half in durance bound

That mourns and makes request for its right fair
Remainder, with forlorn eyes cast around

To search for what is lost, that unaware
With not an hour's forebodement makes the day

From henceforth less or more for ever and aye.

Her name — my love's — I knew it not; who says

Of vagrant doubt for such a cause that stirs
His fancy shall nor pay arrearages

To all sweet names that might perhaps be hers?
The doubts of love are powers. His heart obeys,

The world is in them, still to love defers,
Will play with him for love, but when't begins

The play is high, and the world always wins.

For 'tis the maiden's world, and his no more.

Now thus it was: with new-found kin flew by
The temperate summer; every wheatfield wore

Its gold, from house to house in ardency
Of heart for what they showed I westward bore —

My mother's land, her native hills drew nigh;
I was — how green, how good old earth can be —

Beholden to that land for teaching me.

And parted from my fellows, and went on
 To feel the spiritual sadness spread
 Adown long pastoral hollows. And anon
 Did words recur in far remoteness said:
 "See the deep vale ere dewes are dried and gone,
 Where my so happy life in peace I led,
 And the great shadow of the Beacon lies —
 See little Ledbury trending up the rise,

"With peakèd houses and high market hall —
 An oak each pillar — reared in the old days."
 And here was little Ledbury, quaint withal,
 The forest felled, her lair and sheltering place
 She long time left in age pathological.

"Great oaks," methought, as I drew near to gaze,
 "Were but of small account when these came down,
 Drawn rough-hewn in to serve the tree-girt town.

"And thus and thus of it will question be
 The other side the world." I paused awhile
 To mark. The old hall standeth utterly
 Without or floor or side, a comely pile,
 A house on pillars, and by destiny
 Drawn under its deep roof I saw a file
 Of children slowly through their way make good,
 And lifted up mine eyes — and there — SHE STOOD.

She was so stately that her youthful grace
 Drew out, it seemed, my soul unto the air,
 Astonished out of breathing by her face
 So fain to nest itself in nut-brown hair
 Lying loose about her throat. But that old place
 Proved sacred, she just fully grown too fair

For such a thought. The dimples that she had!
 She was so truly sweet that it was sad.

I was all hers. That moment gave her power —
 And whom, nay what she was, I scarce might
 know,
 But felt I had been born for that good hour.
 The perfect creature did not move, but so
 As if ordained to claim all grace for dower,
 She leaned against the pillar, and below
 Three almost babes, her care, she watched the while
 With downcast lashes and a musing smile.

I had been 'ware without a rustic treat,
 Wagons bedecked with greenery stood anigh,
 A swarm of children in the cheerful street
 With girls to marshal them; but all went by
 And none I noted save this only sweet:
 Too young her charge more venturous sport to try,
 With whirling baubles still they played content,
 And softly rose their lispings babblement.

"O what a pause! to be so near, to mark
 The locket rise and sink upon her breast;
 The shadow of the lashes lieth dark
 Upon her cheek. O fleeting time, O rest!
 A slant ray finds the gold, and with a spark
 And flash it answers, now shall be the best.
 Her eyes she raises, sets their light on mine,
 They do not flash nor sparkle — no — but shine."

As I for very hopelessness made bold
 Did off my hat ere time there was for thought,