

Wake, I have found within my breast
 Counsel." Ah, the weird was strong,
 But the time is told. Release
 Openeth on him when his eyes
 Lift them in dull desolate wise,
 And behold he is at peace.
 Ay, but silent. Of all done
 And all suffer'd in the night,
 Of all ills that do him spite
 She shall never know that one.
 Then he heareth accents bland,
 Seeth the queen's ring on his hand,
 And he riseth calmed withal.

XVII.

Rain and wind on the palace wall
 Beat and bluster, sob and moan,
 When at noon he musing lone,
 Comes the queen anigh his seat,
 And she kneeleth at his feet.

XVIII.

Quoth the queen, "My love, my lord,
 Take thy wife and take thy sword,
 We must forth in the stormy weather,
 Thou and I to the witch together.
 Thus I rede thee counsel deep,
 Thou didst ill to sell thy sleep,
 Turning so man's wholesome life
 From its meaning. Thine intent
 None shall hold for innocent.
 Thou dost take thy good things first,
 Then thou art cast into the worst;

First the glory, then the strife.
 Nay, but first thy trouble dree,
 So thy peace shall sweeter be.
 First to work and then to rest,
 Is the way for our humanity,
 Ay, she sayeth that loves thee best,
 We must forth and from this strife
 Buy the best part of man's life;
 Best and worst thou holdest still
 Subject to a witch's will.
 Thus I rede thee counsel deep,
 Thou didst ill to sell thy sleep;
 Take the crown from off thy head,
 Give it the white-witch instead,
 If in that she say thee nay,
 Get the night, — and give the day."

XIX.

Then the king (amazed, mild,
 As one reasoning with a child
 All his speech): "My wife! my fair!"
 And his hand on her brown hair
 Trembles; "Lady, dost indeed
 Weigh the meaning of thy rede?
 Would'st thou dare the dropping away
 Of allegiance, should our sway
 And sweet splendor and renown
 All be risked? (methinks a crown
 Doth become thee marvellous well).
 We ourself are, truth to tell,
 Kingly both of wont and kind,
 Suits not such the craven mind."
 "Yet this weird thou can'st not dree,"

Quoth the queen, "And live;" then he,
 "I must die and leave the fair
 Unborn, long-desired heir
 To his rightful heritage."

XX.

But this queen arisen doth high
 Her two hands uplifting, sigh
 "God forbid." And he to assuage
 Her keen sorrow, for his part
 Searcheth, nor can find in his heart
 Words. And weeping she will rest
 Her sweet cheek upon his breast,
 Whispering, "Dost thou verily
 Know thou art to blame? Ah me,
 Come," and yet beseecheth she,
 "Ah me, come."

For good for ill,
 Whom man loveth hath her will.
 Court and castle left behind,
 Stolen forth in the rain and wind,
 Soon they are deep in the forest, fain
 The white-witch to raise again;
 Down and deep where flat o'erhead
 Layer on layer do cedars spread,
 Down where lordly maples strain,
 Wrestling with the storm amain.

XXI.

Wide-wing'd eagles struck on high
 Headlong fall'n break through, and lie
 With their prey in piteous wise,
 And no film on their dead eyes.

Matted branches grind and crash,
 Into darkness dives the flash,
 Stabs, a dread gold dirk of fire,
 Loads the lift with splinters dire.
 Then a pause i' the deadly feud —
 And a sick cowed quietude.

XXII.

Soh! A pillar misty and gray,
 'Tis the white-witch in the way.
 Shall man deal with her and gain?
 I trow not. Albeit the twain
 Costly gear and gems and gold
 Freely offer, she will hold
 Sleep and token for the pay
 She did get for greatening day.

XXIII.

"Or the night shall rest my fee
 Or the day shall naught of me,"
 Quoth the witch. "An't thee beseem,
 Sell thy kingdom for a dream."

XXIV.

"Now what will be let it be!"
 Quoth the queen; "but choose the right."
 And the white-witch scorns at her,
 Stately standing in their sight.
 Then without or sound or stir
 She is not. For offering meet
 Lieth the token at their feet,
 Which they, weary and sore bestead
 In the storm, lift up, full fain

Ere the waning light hath fled
Those high towers they left to gain.

XXV.

Deep among tree roots astray
Here a torrent tears its way,
There a cedar split aloft
Lies head downward. Now the oft
Muttering thunder, now the wind
Wakens. How the path to find?
How the turning? Deep ay deep,
Far ay far. She needs must weep,
This fair woman, lost, astray
In the forest; naught to say.
Yet the sick thoughts come and go,
"I, 'twas I would have it so."

XXVI.

Shelter at the last, a roof
Wrought of ling (in their behoof,
Foresters, that drive the deer).
What, and must they couch them here?
Ay, and ere the twilight fall
Gather forest berries small
And nuts down beaten for a meal.

XXVII.

Now the shy wood-wonners steal
Nearer, bright-eyed furry things,
Winking owls on silent wings
Glance, and float away. The light
In the wake o' the storm takes flight,
Day departeth: night — 'tis night.

The crown'd king musing of morn by a clear sweet
river.

Palms on the slope o' the valley, and no winds
blow;

Birds blameless, dove-eyed, mystical talk deliver,
Oracles haply. The language he doth not know.

Bare, blue, are yon peaked hills for a rampart lying,
As dusty gold is the light in the palms o'erhead,
"What is the name o' the land? and this calm sweet
sighing,

If it be echo, where first was it caught and spread?

I might — I might be at rest in some field Elysian,
If this be asphodel set in the herbage fair,
I know not how I should wonder, so sweet the vision,
So clear and silent the water, the field, the air.

Love, are you by me? Malva, what think you this
meaneth?

Love, do you see the fine folk as they move over
there?

Are they immortals? Look you a wingèd one lean-
eth

Down from yon pine to the river of us unaware.

All unaware; and the country is full of voices,
Mild strangers passing: they reckon not of me nor
of thee.

List! about and around us wondrous sweet noises,
Laughter of little children and maids that dream-
ing be.

Love, I can see their dreams." A dim smile flitteth
Over her lips, and they move as in peace supreme,

And a small thing, silky haired, beside her sitteth,
 "O this is thy dream atween us — this is thy
 dream."

Was it then truly his dream with her dream that
 blended?

"Speak, dear child dear," quoth the queen, "and
 mine own little son."

"Father," the small thing murmurs; then all is
 ended,

He starts from that passion of peace — ay, the
 dream is done.

XXVIII.

"I have been in a good land,"

Quoth the king: "O sweet sleep bland,

Blessed! I am grown to more,

Now the doing of right hath moved

Me to love of right, and proved

If one doth it, he shall be

Twice the man he was before.

Verily and verily,

Thou fair woman, thou didst well;

I look back and scarce may tell

Those false days of tinsel sheen,

Flattery, feasting, that have been.

Shows of life that were but shows,

How they held me; being I ween

Like sand-pictures thin, that rose

Quivering, when our thirsty bands

Marched i' the hot Egyptian lands;

Shade of palms on a thick green plot,

Pools of water that was not,

Mocking us and melting away.

XXIX.

I have been a witch's prey,
 Art mine enemy now by day,
 Thou fell Fear? There comes an end
 To the day; thou canst not wend
 After me where I shall fare,
 My foredoomèd peace to share.
 And awake with a better heart,
 I shall meet thee and take my part
 O' the dull world's dull spite; with thine
 Hard will I strive for me and mine."

XXX.

A page and a palfrey pacing nigh,
 Malva the queen awakes. A sigh —
 One amazed moment — "Ay,
 We remember yesterday,
 Let us to the palace straight:
 What! do all my ladies wait —
 Is no zeal to find me? What!
 No knights forth to meet the king;
 Due observance, is it forgot?"

XXXI.

"Lady," quoth the page, "I bring
 Evil news. Sir king, I say,
 My good lord of yesterday,
 Evil news." This king saith low,
 "Yesterday, and yesterday,
 The queen's yesterday we know,
 Tell us thine." "Sir king," saith he,
 "Hear. Thy castle in the night
 Was surprised, and men thy flight

Learned but then; thine enemy
 Of old days, our new king, reigns;
 And sith thou wert not at pains
 To forbid it, hear alsò,
 Marvelling whereto this should grow
 How thy knights at break of morn
 Have a new allegiance sworn,
 And the men-at-arms rejoice,
 And the people give their voice
 For the conqueror. I, sir king,
 Rest thine only friend. I bring
 Means of flight; now therefore fly,
 A great price is on thy head.
 Cast her jewell'd mantle by,
 Mount thy queen i' the selle and hie
 (Sith disguise ye need, and bread)
 Down yon pleachèd track, down, down,
 Till a tower shall on thee frown;
 Him that holds it show this ring:
 So farewell, my lord the king."

XXXII.

Had one marked that palfrey led
 To the tower, he sooth had said,
 These are royal folk and rare —
 Jewels in her plaited hair
 Shine not clearer than her eyes,
 And her lord in goodly wise
 With his plumèd cap in's hand
 Moves in the measure of command.

XXXIII.

Had one marked where stole forth two
 From the friendly tower anew,

"Common folk," he sooth had said,
 Making for the mountain track.
 Common, common, man and maid.
 Clad in russet, and of kind
 Meet for russet. On his back
 A wallet bears the stalwart hind;
 She, all shy, in rustic grace
 Steps beside her man apace,
 And wild roses match her face.

XXXIV.

Whither speed they? Where are toss'd
 Like sea foam the dwarfèd pines
 At the jagged sharp inclines;
 To the country of the frost
 Up the mountains to be lost,
 Lost. No better now may be,
 Lost where mighty hollows thrust
 'Twixt the fierce teeth of the world,
 Fill themselves with crimson dust
 When the tumbling sun down hurl'd
 Stares among them drearily,
 As a' wondering at the lone
 Gulfs that weird gaunt company
 Fenceth in. Lost there unknown,
 Lineage, nation, name, and throne.

XXXV.

Lo, in a crevice choked with ling
 And fir, this man, not now the king,
 This Sigismund, hath made a fire,
 And by his wife in the dark night
 He leans at watch, her guard and squire

His wide eyes stare out for the light
 Weary. He needs must chide on fate,
 And she is asleep. "Poor brooding mate,
 What! wilt thou on the mountain crest
 Slippery and cold scoop thy first nest?
 Or must I clear some uncouth cave
 That laired the mother wolf, and save —
 Spearing her cubs — the gray pelt fine
 To be a bed for thee and thine?
 It is my doing. Ay," quoth he,
 "Mine; but who dares to pity thee
 Shall pity, not for loss of all,
 But that thou wert my wife perdie,
 E'en wife unto a witch's thrall, —
 A man beholden to the cold
 Cloud for a covering, he being sold
 And hunted for reward of gold."

XXXVI.

But who shall chronicle the ways
 Of common folk — the nights and days
 Spent with rough goatherds on their snows,
 Of travellers come whence no man knows,
 Then gone aloft on some sharp height
 In the dumb peace and the great light
 Amid brown eagles and wild roes?

XXXVII.

'Tis the whole world whereon they lie,
 The rocky pastures hung on high
 Shelve off upon an empty sky.
 But they creep near the edge, look down —

Great heaven! another world afloat,
 Moored as in seas of air; remote
 As their own childhood; swooning away
 Into a tenderer sweeter day,
 Innocent, sunny. "O for wings!
 There lie the lands of other kings —
 I, Sigismund, my sometime crown
 Forfeit; forgotten of renown
 My wars, my rule; I fain would go
 Down to yon peace obscure."

Even so;

Down to the country of the thyme,
 Where young kids dance, and a soft chime
 Of sheepbells tinkles; then at last
 Down to a country of hollows, cast
 Up at the mountains full of trees,
 Down to fruit orchards and wide leas,

XXXVIII.

With name unsaid and fame unsunned
 He walks that was King Sigismund.
 With palmers holy and pilgrims brown,
 New from the East, with friar and clown,
 He mingles in a walled town,
 And in the mart where men him scan
 He passes for a merchant man.
 For from his vest, where by good hap
 He thrust it, he his plumèd cap
 Hath drawn and plucked the gems away,
 And up and down he makes essay
 To sell them; they are all his wares
 And wealth. He is a man of cares,
 A man of toil; no roof hath he

To shelter her full soon to be
The mother of his dispossessed
Desirèd heir.

XXXIX.

Few words are best.

He, once King Sigismund, saith few,
But makes good diligence and true.
Soon with the gold he gather'd so,
A little homestead lone and low
He buyeth: a field, a copse, with these
A melon patch and mulberry trees
And is the man content? Nay, morn
Is toilsome, oft is noon forlorn,
Though right be done and life be won,
Yet hot is weeding in the sun,
Yea scythe to wield and axe to swing,
Are hard on sinews of a king.

XL.

And Malva, must she toil? E'en so.
Full patiently she takes her part,
All, all so new. But her deep heart
Forebodes more change than shall be shown
Betwixt a settle and a throne.
And lost in musing she will go
About the winding of her silk,
About the skimming of her goat's milk,
About the kneading of her bread,
And water drawn from her well-head.

XLI.

Then come the long nights dark and still,
Then come the leaves and cover the sill,

Then come the swift flocks of the stare,
Then comes the snow — then comes the heir.

XLII.

If he be glad, if he be sad,
How should one question when the hand
Is full, the heart. That life he had,
While leisure was aside may stand,
Till he shall overtake the task
Of every day, then let him ask
(If he remember — if he will),
“When I could sit me down and muse,
And match my good against mine ill,
And weigh advantage dulled by use
At nothing, was it better with me?”
But Sigismund! It cannot be
But that he toil, nor pause, nor sigh,
A dreamer on a day gone by
The king is come.

XLIII.

His vassals two
Serve with all homage deep and due.
He is contented, he doth find
Belike the kingdom much to his mind.
And when the long months of his long
Reign are two years, and like a song
From some far sweeter world, a call
From the king's mouth for fealty,
Buds soon to blossom in language fall,
They listen and find not any plea
Left, for fine chiding at destiny.

XLIV.

Sigismund hath ricked the hay,
 He sitteth at close o' a sultry day
 Under his mulberry boughs at ease.
 "Hey for the world, and the world is wide,
 The world is mine, and the world is — these."
 Beautiful Malva leans at his side,
 And the small babbler talks at his knees.

XLV.

Riseth a waft as of summer air,
 Floating upon it what moveth there?
 Faint as the light of stars and wan
 As snow at night when the moon is gone,
 It is the white-witch risen once more.

XLVI.

The white-witch that tempted of yore
 So utterly doth substance lack,
 You may breathe her nearer and breathe her
 back.

Soft her eyes, her speech full clear:
 "Hail, thou Sigismund my fere,
 Bargain with me yea or nay.
 NAY, I go to my true place,
 And no more thou seest my face.
 YEA, the good be all thine own,
 For now will I advance thy day,
 And yet will leave the night alone."

XLVII.

Sigismund makes answer, "NAY.
 Though the Highest heaped on me
 Trouble, yet the same should be

Welcomer than weal from thee.
 Nay; — for ever and ever Nay."
 O, the white-witch floats away.
 Look you, look! A still pure smile
 Blossoms on her mouth the while,
 White wings peaked high behind,
 Bear her; — no, the wafting wind,
 For they move not, — floats her back,
 Floats her up. They scarce may track
 Her swift rising, shot on high
 Like a ray from the western sky,
 Or a lark from some gray wold
 Utterly whelm'd in sunset gold.

XLVIII.

Then these two long silence hold,
 And the lisp'ing babe doth say,
 "White, white bird, it flew away."
 And they marvel at these things,
 For her ghostly visitings
 Turn to them another face.
 Haply she was sent, a friend
 Trying them, and to good end
 For their better weal and grace;
 One more wonder let to be
 In the might and mystery
 Of the world, where verily
 And good sooth a man may wend
 All his life, and no more view
 Than the one right next to do.

XLIX.

So, the welcome dusk is here,
 Sweet is even, rest is dear;

Mountain heads have lost the light,
 Soon they couch them.
 Night — 'tis night.

Sigismund dreaming delightfully after his haying.

“Sleep of the laboring man,” quoth King
 David, “is sweet.”

“Sigismund, Sigismund” — “Who is this calling
 and saying

‘Sigismund, Sigismund’? O blessed night do
 not fleet.

Is it not dark — ay, methinks it is dark, I would
 slumber,

O I would rest till the swallow shall chirp 'neath
 mine eaves.”

“Sigismund, Sigismund,” multitudes now without
 number

Calling, the noise is as dropping of rain upon
 leaves.

“Ay,” quoth he dreaming, “say on, for I, Sigis-
 mund, hear ye.”

“Sigismund, Sigismund, all the knights weary
 full sore.

Come back, King Sigismund, come, they shall love
 thee and fear thee,

The people cry out, O come back to us, reign ever-
 more.

The new king is dead, and we will not his son, no
 nor brother,

Come with thy queen, is she busy yet, kneading
 of cakes?

Sigismund, show us the boy, is he safe, and his
 mother,
 Sigismund?” — dreaming he falls into laughter
 and wakes.

L.

And men say this dream came true,

For he walking in the dew

Turned aside while yet was red

On the highest mountain head,

Looking how the wheat he set

Flourished. And the knights him met

And him prayèd “Come again,

Sigismund our king, and reign.”

But at first — at first they tell

How it liked not Malva well;

She must leave her belted bees

And the kids that she did rear.

When she thought on it full dear

Seemed her home. It did not please

Sigismund that he must go

From the wheat that he did sow;

When he thought on it his mind

Was not that should any bind

Into sheaves that wheat but he,

Only he; and yet they went,

And it may be were content.

And they won a nation's heart;

Very well they played their part.

They ruled with sceptre and diadem,

And their children after them.