

The Spouse with pomegranate, lily, and bell,
Is glorious in her abode ;
For with gold of Ophir, and scent of myrrh,
And purple of Tyre, the King clothed her.

By the soul of each slumbrous instrument
Drawn soft through the musical misty air,
The stream of the folk that came and went,
For worship, and praise, and prayer,
Flowed to and fro, and up and down,
And round the King in his golden crown.

And it came to pass, as the King stood there,
And looked on the house he had built,
with pride,
That the Hand of the Lord came un-ware,
And touched him ; so that he died,
In his purple robe, with his signet-ring
And the crown wherewith they had crowned him king.

And the stream of the folk that came and went
To worship the Lord with prayer and praise,
Went softly ever, in wonderment,
For the King stood there always ;
And it was solemn and strange to behold
That dead king crowned with a crown of gold.

For he leaned on his ebony staff upright ;
And over his shoulders the purple robe ;
And his hair and his beard were both snow-white
And the fear of him filled the globe ;
So that none dared touch him, though he was dead,
He looked so royal about the head.

And the moons were changed : and the years rolled on :
And the new king reigned in the old king's stead :
And men were married and buried anon ;
But the King stood, stark and dead ;
Leaning upright on his ebony staff ;
Preserved by the sign of the Pentegraph.

And the stream of life, as it went and came,
Ever for worship and praise and prayer,
Was awed by the face, and the fear, and the fame
Of the dead king standing there ;
For his hair was so white, and his eyes so cold,
That they left him alone with his crown of gold.

So King Solomon stood up, dead, in the House
Of the Lord, held there by the Pentegraph,
Until out from a pillar there ran a red mouse,
And gnawed through his ebony staff :
Then, flat on his face, the King fell down :
And they picked from the dust a golden crown.*

CORDELIA.

THOUGH thou never hast sought to divine it,
Though to know it thou hast not a care,
Yet my heart can no longer confine it,
Though my lip may be blanched to declare
That I love thee, revere thee, adore thee,
O my dream, my desire, my despair !

Though in life it may never be given
To my heart to repose upon thine ;
Though neither on earth, nor in heaven,
May the bliss I have dreamed of be mine ;
Yet thou canst not forbid me, in distance,
And silence, and long lonely years,
To love thee, despite thy resistance,
And bless thee, despite of my tears.

Ah me, *couldst* thou love me ! . . . Believe me,
How I hang on the tones of thy voice ;
How the least sigh thou sighest can grieve me,
The least smile thou smilest rejoice :

* My knowledge of the Rabbinical legend which suggested this Poem is one among the many debts I owe to my friend Robert Browning. I hope these lines may remind him of hours which his society rendered precious and delightful to me, and which are among the most pleasant memories of my life.

In thy face, how I watch every shade there ;
In thine eyes, how I learn every look ;
How the least sign thy spirit hath made there
My heart reads, and writes in its book !

And each day of my life my love shapes me
From the mien that thou wearest, Beloved.
Thou hast not a grace that escapes me,
Nor a movement that leaves me unmoved.
I live but to see thee, to hear thee ;
I count but the hours where thou art ;
I ask — only ask — to be near thee,
Albeit so far from thy heart.

In my life's lonely galleries never
Will be silenced thy lightest footfall :
For it lingers, and echoes, forever
Unto Memory mourning o'er all.
All thy fair little footsteps are bright
O'er the dark troubled spirit in me,
As the tracks of some sweet water-sprite
O'er the heaving and desolate sea.
And, though cold and unkind be thine eyes,
Yet, unchilled their unkindness below,
In my heart all its love for thee lies,
Like a violet covered by snow.

Little child ! . . . were it mine to watch o'er thee,
To guide, and to guard, and to soothe ;
To shape the long pathway before thee,
And all that was rugged to smooth ;
To kneel at one bedside by night,
And mingle our souls in one prayer ;
And, awaked by the same morning-light,
The same daily duties to share ;

Until Age with his silver dimmed slowly
Those dear golden tresses of thine ;
And Memory rendered thrice holy
The love in this poor heart of mine ;

Ah, never . . . (recalling together,
By one hearth, in our life's winter time,
Our youth, with its lost summer weather,
And our love, in its first golden prime,)
Should those loved lips have cause to record

One word of unkindness from me,
Or my heart cease to bless the least word
Of kindness once spoken by thee !

But, whatever my path, and whatever
The future may fashion for thine,
Thy life, O believe me, can never,
My beloved, be indifferent to mine.
When far from the sight of thy beauty,
Pursuing, unaided, alone,
The path of man's difficult duty
In the land where my lot may be thrown ;
When my steps move no more in the place
Where thou art : and the brief days of yore
Are forgotten : and even my face
In thy life is remembered no more ;
Yet in *my* life will live thy least feature ;
I shall mourn the lost light of thine eyes ;
And on earth there will yet be one nature
That must yearn after thine till it dies.

"YE SEEK JESUS OF NAZARETH
WHICH WAS CRUCIFIED : HE
IS RISEN : HE IS NOT HERE."
MARK XVI. 6.

If Jesus came to earth again,
And walked, and talked, in field and street,
Who would not lay his human pain
Low at those heavenly feet ?

And leave the loom, and leave the lute,
And leave the volume on the shelf,
To follow Him, unquestioning, mute,
If 't were the Lord himself ?

How many a brow with care o'erworn,
How many a heart with grief o'erladen,
How many a youth with love forlorn,
How many a mourning maiden,

Would leave the baffling earthly prize
Which fails the earthly, weak endeavor,
To gaze into those holy eyes,
And drink content forever !

The mortal hope, I ask with tears
Of Heaven, to soothe this mortal pain, —
The dream of all my darkened years, —
I should not cling to then.

The pride that prompts the bitter jest —
(Sharp styptic of a bleeding heart !)
Would fail, and humbly leave confest
The sin that brought the smart,

If I might crouch within the fold
Of that white robe (a wounded bird) ;
The face that Mary saw behold,
And hear the words she heard.

I would not ask one word of all
That now my nature yearns to know ;—
The legend of the ancient Fall ;
The source of human woe :

What hopes in other worlds may hide ;
What griefs yet unexplored in this ;
How fares the spirit within the wide
Waste tract of that abyss

Which scares the heart (since all we know
Of life is only conscious sorrow)
Lest novel life be novel woe
In death's undawned to-morrow ;

I would not ask one word of this,
If I might only hide my head
On that beloved breast, and kiss
The wounds where Jesus bled.

And I, where'er He went, would go,
Nor question where the path might
lead,
Enough to know that, here below,
I walked with God indeed !

His sheep along the cool, the shade,
By the still watercourse He leads,
His lambs upon His breast are laid,
His hungry ones He feeds.

Safe in His bosom I should lie,
Hearing, where'er His steps might be,
Calm waters, murmuring, murmuring by,
To meet the mighty sea.

If this be thus, O Lord of mine,
In absence is Thy love forgot ?
And must I, where I walk, repine
Because I see thee not ?

If this be thus, if this be thus,
And our poor prayers yet reach Thee,
Lord,
Since we are weak, once more to us
Reveal the Living Word !

Yet is my heart, indeed, so weak
My course alone I dare not trace ?
Alas ! I know my heart must break
Before I see Thy face.

I loved, with all my human soul,
A human creature, here below,
And, though thou bad'st thy sea to roll
Forever 'twixt us two,

And though her form I may not see
Through all my long and lonely life,
And though she never now may be
My helpmate and my wife,

Yet in my dreams her dear eyes shine,
Yet in my heart her face I bear,
And yet each holiest thought of mine
I seem with her to share.

But, Lord, Thy face I never saw,
Nor ever heard Thy human voice ;
My life, beneath an iron law,
Moves on without my choice.

No memory of a happier time,
When in Thine arms, perchance, I
slept,
In some lost ante-natal clime,
My mortal frame hath kept :

And all is dark — before — behind.
I cannot reach Thee, where Thou art,
I cannot bring Thee to my mind,
Nor clasp Thee to my heart.

And this is why, by night and day,
Still with so many an unseen tear
These lonely lips have learned to pray
That God would spare me here,

While yet my doubtful course I go
Along the vale of mortal years,
By Life's dull stream, that will not flow
As fast as flow my tears,

One human hand, my hand to take :
One human heart, my own to raise :
One loving human voice, to break
The silence of my days.

Saviour, if this wild prayer be wrong,
And what I seek I may not find,
O, make more hard, and stern, and
strong,
The framework of my mind !

Or, nearer to me, in the dark
Of life's low hours, one moment stand,
And give me keener eyes to mark
The moving of Thy hand.

TO CORDELIA.

I do not blame thee, that my life
Is lonelier now than even before ;
For hadst thou been, indeed, my wife,
(Vain dream that cheats no more !)

The fate, which from my earliest years
Hath made so dark the path I tread,
Had taught thee too, perchance, such tears
As I have learned to shed.

And that fixed gloom, which souls like
mine
Are schooled to wear with stubborn
pride,
Had cast too dark a shade o'er thine, —
Hadst thou been by my side.

I blame thee not, that thou shouldst flee
From paths where only weeds have
sprung,
Though loss of thee is loss to me
Of all that made youth young.

For 'tis not mine, and 't was not thine,
To shape our course as first we strove :
And powers which I could not combine
Divide me from thy love.

Alas ! we cannot choose our lives, —
We can but bear the burthen given.
In vain the feverish spirit strives
With unrelenting heaven.

For who can bid those tyrant stars
The injustice of their laws repeal ?
Why ask who makes our prison bars,
Since they are made of steel ?

The star that rules my darkened hour
Is fixt in reachless spheres on high :
The curse which foils my baffled power
Is scrawled across the sky.

My heart knows all it felt, and feels :
But more than this I shall not know,
Till He that made the heart reveals
Why mine must suffer so.

I only know that, never yet,
My life hath found what others find, —
That peace of heart which will not fret
The fibres of the mind.

I only know that not for me
The human love, the clasp, the kiss ;

My love in other worlds must be, —
Why was I born in this ?

The bee is framed to find her food
In every wayside flower and bell,
And build within the hollow wood
Her own ambrosial cell :

The spider hath not learned her art,
A home in ruined towers to spin ;
But what it seeks, my heart, my heart
Is all unskilled to win.

The world was filled, ere I was born,
With man and maid, with bower and
brake,
And nothing but the barren thorn
Remained for me to take :

I took the thorn, I wove it round,
I made a piercing crown to wear :
My own sad hands myself have crowned,
Lord of my own despair.

That which we are, we are. 'T were
vain
To plant with toil what will not grow.
The cloud will break, and bring the
rain,
Whether we reap or sow.

I cannot turn the thunder-blast,
Nor pluck the levin's lurid root ;
I cannot change the changeless past,
Nor make the ocean mute.

And if the bolt of death must fall
Where, bare of head, I walk my way,
Why let it fall ! I will not call
To bid the Thunderer stay.

'T is much to know, whate'er betide
The pilgrim path I pace alone,
Thou wilt not miss me from thy side
When its brief course is done.

Hadst thou been mine, — when skies
were drear
And waves were rough, for thy sweet
sake
I should have found in all some fear
My inmost breast to shake :

But now, his fill the blast may blow,
The sea may rage, the thunder roll,
For every path by which I go
Will reach the self-same goal.

Too proud to fly, too weak to cope,
I yet will wait, nor bow my head.
Those who have nothing left to hope,
Have nothing left to dread.

A LETTER TO CORDELIA.

PERCHANCE, on earth, I shall not see
thee ever
Ever again : and my unwritten years
Are signed out by that desolating
"Never,"
And blurred with tears.

'T is hard, so young — so young as I am
still,
To feel forevermore from life depart
All that can flatter the poor human
will,
Or fill the heart.

Yet there was nothing in that sweet,
and brief,
And perisht intercourse, now closed
for me,
To add one thought unto my bitterest
grief
Upbraiding thee.

'T is somewhat to have known, albeit in
vain,
One woman in this sorrowful bad earth,
Whose very loss can yet bequeathe to
pain
New faith in worth.

If I have overrated, in the wild
Blind heat of hope, the sense of aught
which hath
From the lost vision of thy beauty smiled
On my lone path,

My retribution is, that to the last
I have o'errated, too, my power to
cope
With this fierce thought . . . that life
must all be past
Without life's hope ;

And I would bless the chance which let
me see
Once more the comfort of thy face,
although
It were with beauty never born for me
That face should glow.

To see thee — all thou wilt be — loved
and loving —
Even though another's — in the years
to come —
To watch, once more, thy gracious sweet-
ness moving
Through its pure home, —

Even this would seem less desolate, less
drear,
Than never, never to behold thee
more —
Never on those beloved lips to hear
The voice of yore !

These weak words, O my friend, fell not
more fast
Than the weak scalding tears that with
them fell.
Nor tears, nor words came, when I saw
thee last . . .
Enough ! . . . Farewell.

Farewell. If that dread Power which
fashioned man
To till this planet, free to search and
find
The secret of his source as best he can,
In his own mind,

Hath any care, apart from that which
moves
Earth's myriads through Time's ages
as they roll,
For any single human life, or loves
One separate soul,

May He, whose wisdom portions out for
me
The moonless, changeless midnight of
the heart,
Still all his softest sunshine save for thee,
Where'er thou art :

And if, indeed, not any human eyes
From human tears be free, — may Sor-
row bring
Only to thee her April-rain, whose sighs
Soothe flowers in Spring.

FAILURE.

I HAVE seen those that wore Heaven's
armor worsted :
I have heard Truth lie :

Seen Life, beside the founts for which
it thirsted,
Curse God and die :

I have felt the hand, whose touch was
rapture, braiding
Among my hair
Love's choicest flowerets, and have found
how fading
Those garlands were :

I have watched my first and holiest hopes
depart,
One after one :
I have held the hand of Death upon my
heart,
And made no moan :

I have seen her whom life's whole sacrifice
Was made to keep,
Pass coldly by me with a stranger's eyes,
Yet did not weep :

Now even my body fails me ; and my brow
Aches night and day :
I am weak with over-work : how can I
now
Go forth and play ?

What ! now that Youth's forgotten as-
pirations
Are all no more,
Rest there, indeed, all Youth's glad re-
creations,
— An untried store ?

Alas, what skills this heart of sad expe-
rience,
This frame o'erwrought,
This memory with life's motion all at
variance,
This aching thought ?

How shall I come, with these, to follow
pleasure
Where others find it ?
Will not their sad steps mar the merriest
measure,
Or lag behind it ?

Still must the man move sadlier for the
dreams
That mocked the boy ;
And, having failed to achieve, must still,
it seems,
Fail to enjoy.

It is no common failure, to have failed
Where man hath given
A whole life's effort to the task assailed —
Spent earth on heaven.

If error and if failure enter here,
What helps repentance ?
Remember this, O Lord, in thy severe
Last sentence !

MISANTHROPOS.

Παντα κονις και παντα γελως και παντα
το μηδεν.

DAY's last light is dying out.
All the place grows dim and drear :
See ! the grisly bat's about.
There is nothing left to fear.
Little left to doubt.

Not a note of music flits
O'er the slackened harpstrings yonder
From the skeleton that sits
By the broken harp, to ponder
(While the spider knits

Webs in each black socket-hole)
Where is all the music fled.
Music, hath it, then, a goal ? . . .
Broken harp, and brainless head !
Silent song and soul !

Not a light in yonder sky,
Save that single wicked star,
Leering with its wanton eye
Through the shattered window-bar ;
Come to see me die !

All, save this, the monstrous night
Hath erased and blotted bare
As the fool's brain . . . God's last light
Winking at the Fiend's work there, —
Wrong made worse by right !

Gone the voice, the face, of yore !
Gone the dream of golden hair !
Gone the garb that Falsehood wore !
Gone the shame of being bare !
We may close the door.

All the guests are slunk away.
Not a footstep on the stairs !
Not a friend here, left to say
"Amen" to a sinner's prayers,
If he cared to pray !

Gone is Friendship's friendliness,
After Love's fidelity :
Gone is Honor in the mess,
Spat upon by Charity :
Faith has fled Distress.

Those grim tipstaves at the gate
Freely may their work begin.
Let them in ! they shall not wait.
There is little now within
Left for Scorn and Hate.

O, no doubt the air is foul !
"T is the last lamp spits and stinks,
Shuddering downward in the bowl
Of the socket, from the brinks.
What's a burned-out soul ?

Let them all go, unreprieved !
For the source of tears is dried.
What ! . . . One rests ? . . . hath nothing
moved

That pale woman from my side,
Whom I never loved ?

You, with those dim eyes of yours,
Sadder than all eyes save mine !
That dim forehead which immures
Such faint helpless griefs, that pine
For such hopeless cures !

Must you love me, spite of loathing ?
Can't you leave me where I'm lying ?
O, . . . you wait for our betrothing ?
I escape you, though, — by dying !
Lay out my death-clothing.

Well I would that your white face
Were abolisht out of sight,
With the glory and the grace
Swallowed long ago in night, —
Gone, — without a trace !

Reach me down my golden harp.
Set it here, beside my knee.
Never fear that I shall warp
All the chords of ecstasy,
Striking them too sharp !

Crown me with my crown of flowers.
Faded roses every one !
Plucked in those long-perisht bowers,
By the nightshade overrun, —
Fit for brows like ours !

Fill me, now, my golden cup.
Pour the black wine to the brim !

Till within me, while I sup,
All the fires, long quenched and dim,
Flare, one moment, up.

I will sing you a last song.
I will pledge you a last health . . .
Here's to Weakness seeming strong !
Here's to Want that follows Wealth !
Here's to Right gone wrong !

Curse me now the Oppressor's rod,
And the meanness of the weak ;
And the fool that apes the nod ;
And the world at hide and seek
With the wrath of God.

Dreams of man's unvalued good,
By mankind's unholy means !
Curse the people in their mud !
And the wicked Kings and Queens,
Lying by the Rood.

Fill ! to every plague . . . and first,
Love, that breeds its own decay ;
Rotten, ere the blossom burst.
Next, the friend that slinks away,
When you need him worst.

O the world's inhuman ways !
And the heartless social lie !
And the coward, cheapening praise !
And the patience of the sky,
Lighting such bad days !

Curséd be the heritage
Of the sins we have not sinned !
Curséd be this boasting age,
And the blind that lead the blind
O'er its creaking stage !

O the vice within the blood,
And the sin within the sense !
And the fallen angelhood,
With its yearnings, too immense
To be understood !

Curse the hound with beaten hide,
When he turns and licks the hand.
Curse this woman at my side !
And the memory of the land
Where my first love died.

Curséd be the next and most
(With whatever curse most kills),
Me . . . the man whose soul is lost ;
Fouled by each of all these ills, —
Filled with death and dust !

Take away the harp of gold,
And the empty wine-cup too.
Lay me out : for I grow cold.
There is something dim in view,
Which must pass untold : —

Something dim, and something vast, —
Out of reach of all I say.
Language ceases . . . hush, aghast.
What am I, to curse or pray ?
God succeeds at last !

BOOK VI.—PALINGENESIS.

A PRAYER.

My Saviour, dare I come to Thee,
Who let the little children come ?
But I ? . . . my soul is faint in me !
I come from wandering to and fro
This weary world. There still his round
The Accuser goes : but Thee I found
Not anywhere. Both joy and woe
Have passed me by. I am too weak
To grieve or smile. And yet I know
That tears lie deep in all I do.
The homeless that are sick for home
Are not so wretched. Ere it break,
Receive my heart ; and for the sake,
Not of my sorrows, but of Thine,
Bend down Thy holy eyes on mine,
Which are too full of misery
To see Thee clearly, though they seek.
Yet, if I heard Thy voice say . . .
"Come,"

So might I, dying, die near Thee.
It shames me not, to have passed by
The temple-doors in every street
Where men profaned Thee : but that I
Have left neglected, choked with weeds,
Defrauded of its incense sweet
From holy thoughts and loyal deeds,
The fane Thou gavest me to enshrine
Thee in, this wretched heart of mine.
The Satyr there hath entered in ;
The Owl that loves the darkened hour ;
And obscene shapes of night and sin
Still haunt, where God designed a bower
For angels.

Yet I will not say
How oft I have aspired in vain,
How toiled along the rugged way,
And held my faith above my pain,
For this Thou knowest. Thou knowest
when
I faltered, and when I was strong ;
And how from that of other men
My fate was different : all the wrong

Which devastated hope in me :
The ravaged years ; the excited heart,
That found in pain its only part
Of love : the master misery
That shattered all my early years,
From which, in vain, I sought to flee :
Thou knowest the long repentant tears,
Thou heard'st me cry against the spheres,
So sharp my anguish seemed to be !
All this Thou knowest. Though I should
keep
Silence, Thou knowest my hands were
free
From sin, when all things cried to me
To sin. Thou knowest that, had I rolled
My soul in hell-flame fifty-fold,
My sorrow could not be more deep.
Lord ! there is nothing hid from Thee.

EUTHANASIA.

(WRITTEN AFTER A SEVERE ILLNESS.)

SPRING to the world, and strength to
me, returns ;
And flowers return, — but not the
flowers I knew.
I live : the fire of life within me burns ;
But all my life is dead. The land I
view
I know not ; nor the life which I regain.
Within the hollow of the hand of death
I have lain so long, that now I draw
the breath
Of life as unfamiliar, and with pain.
Of life : but not the life which is no
more ; —
That tender, tearful, warm, and pas-
sionate thing ;
That wayward, restless, wistful life of
yore ;
Which now lies, cold, beneath the
clasp of Spring.