

Sharp rims of shining horror round the doomed,
 Undaunted minstrel. Then a piteous cry;
 And from the purple baldachin down sprang
 The Princess, gleaming like a ghost, and shd
 Among the swords, and standing in the midst
 Swept a wild arm of prohibition forth.
 Cowering, recoiled the angry, baffled surge,
 Leaving on either side a horrid hedge
 Of rifted glare, as when the Red Sea waves
 Hung heaped and Sundered, ere they roaring fell
 On Egypt's chariots. So there came a hush;
 And in the hush her voice, heavy with scorn:

"Or shall I call you men? or beasts? who seem
 No nobler than the bloodhound and the wolf
 Which scorn to prey upon their proper kind!
 Christians I will not call you! who defraud
 That much-misapprehended holy name
 Of reverence due by such a deed as, done,
 Will clash against the charities of Christ,
 And make a marred thing and a mockery
 Of the fair face of Mercy. You dull hearts,
 And hard! have ye no pity for yourselves?
 For man no pity? man whose common cause
 Is shamed and saddened by the stain that falls
 Upon a noble nature! You blind hands,
 Thrust out so fast to smite a fallen friend!
 Did ye not all conspire, whilst yet he stood
 The stateliest soul among you, to set forth
 And fix him in the foremost ranks of men?
 Content that he, your best, should bear the brunt,
 And head the van against the scornful fiend
 That will not waste his weapons on the herd,

But saves them for the noblest. And shall Hell
 Triumph through you, that triumph in the shame
 Of this eclipse that blots your brightest out,
 And leaves you dark in his extinguished light?
 O, who that lives but hath within his heart
 Some cause to dread the suddenness of death?
 And God is merciful; and suffers us,
 Even for our sins' sake; and doth spare us time,
 Time to grow ready, time to take farewell!
 And sends us monitors and ministers —
 Old age, that steals the fulness from the veins;
 And griefs, that take the glory from the eyes;
 And pains, that bring us timely news of death;
 And tears, that teach us to be glad of him.
 For who can take farewell of all his sins
 On such a sudden summons to the grave?
 Against high Heaven hath this man sinned, or you?
 O, if it be against high Heaven, to Heaven
 Remit the compt! lest, from the armory
 Of the Eternal Justice ye pluck down,
 Heedless, that bolt the Highest yet withholds
 From this low-fallen head, — how fallen!
 Yet not so fallen, not so low fallen, but what
 Divine Redemption, reaching everywhere,
 May reach at last even to this wretchedness,
 And, out of late repentance, raise it up
 With pardon into peace."

She paused: she touched,
 As with an angel's finger, him whose pride
 Obdurate now had yielded, and he lay,
 Vanquished by Pity, broken at her feet.
 She, lingering, waited answer, but none came
 Across the silence. And again she spake:
 "O, not for him alone, and not for that
 Which to remember now makes life for me

A wilderness of homeless griefs, I plead
 Before you; but, O Princes, for yourselves;
 For all that in your nobler nature stirs
 To vindicate Forgiveness and enlarge
 The lovely laws of Pity! Which of you,
 Here in the witness of all-judging God,
 Stands spotless? Which of you will boast himself
 More miserably injured by this man
 Than I, whose heart of all that lived in it
 He hath untenanted? O, horrible!
 Unheard of! from the blessed lap of life
 To send the soul, asleep in all her sins,
 Down to perdition! Be not yours the hands
 To do this desperate wrong in sight of all
 The ruthless faces of the Saints in Heaven."

She passionately pleading thus, her voice
 Over their hearts moved like that earnest wind
 That, laboring long against some great
 high cloud,
 Sets free, at last, a solitary star,
 Then sinks; but leaves the night not all
 forlorn
 Ere the soft rain o'ercomes it.

This long while
 Wolfram, whose harp and voice were
 overborne
 By burly brawlers in the turbulence
 That shook that stormy senate, stood
 apart
 With vainly-vigilant eye, and writhen
 hands,
 All in mute trouble: too gentle to
 prove,
 Too gentle to prevent, what passed: and
 still
 Divided in himself 'twixt sharpest grief
 To see his friend so fallen, and a drear
 Strange horror of the crime whereby he
 fell.
 So, like a headland light that down dark
 waves
 Shines o'er some sinking ship it fails to
 save,
 Looked the pale singer down the lurid
 hall.
 But when the pure voice of Elizabeth
 Ceased, and clear-lighted all with noble
 thoughts
 Her face glowed as an angel's, the sweet
 Bard,

Whose generous heart had scaled with
 that loved voice
 Up to the lofty levels where it ceased,
 Stood forth, and from the dubious silence
 caught
 And carried up the purpose of her prayer;
 And drew it out, and drove it to the
 heart,
 And clenched it with conviction in the
 mind,
 And fixed it firm in judgment.

From deep muse
 The Landgrave started, toward Tann-
 häuser strode,
 And, standing o'er him with an eye
 wherein
 Salt sorrow and a moody pity gleamed,
 Spake hoarse of utterance:
 "Arise! go forth!
 Go from us, mantled in the shames which
 make
 Thee, stranger whom mine eye hence-
 forth abhors,
 The mockery of the man I loved, and
 mourn.
 Go from these halls yet holy with the
 voice
 Of her whose intercession for thy sake, —
 If any sacred sorrow yet survive
 All ruined virtues, — in remorse shall
 steep
 The memory of her wrongs. For thee
 remains
 One hope, unhappiest! reject it not.
 There goeth a holy pilgrimage to Rome,
 Which not yet from the borders of our
 land
 Is parted; pious souls and meek, whom
 thou
 Haply may'st join, and of those holy
 hands,
 Which sole have power to bind or loose,
 receive
 Remission of thy sin. For save alone
 The hand of Christ's high Vicar upon
 earth
 A hurt so heinous what may heal?
 What save
 A soul so fallen? Go forth upon thy
 ways,
 Which are not ours: for we no more
 may mix
 Congenial minds in converse sweet, no
 more
 Together pace these halls, nor ever hear
 Thy harp as once when all was pure and
 glad,

Among the days which have been. All
thy paths
Henceforth be paths of penitence and
prayer,
Whilst over ours thy memory moving
makes
A shadow, and a silence in our talk.
Get thee from hence, O all that now re-
mains
Of one we honored! Till the hand that
holds
The keys of heaven hath oped for thee
the doors
Of life in that far distance, let mine eye
See thee no more. Go from us!"

Even then,
Even whilst he spake, like some sweet
miracle,
From darkening lands that glimmered
through the doors
Came, faintly heard along the filmy air
That bore it floating near, a choral chant
Of pilgrims pacing by the castle wall;
And "*salvum me fac Domine*" they
sung
Sonorous, in the ghostly going out
Of the red-litten eve along the land.

Then, like a hand across the heart of
him
That heard it moved that music from
afar,
And beckoned forth the better hope
which leads
A man's life up along the rugged road
Of high resolve. Tannhäuser moved, as
moves
The folded serpent smitten by the spring
And stirred with sudden sunlight, when
he casts
His spotted skin, and, renovated, gleams
With novel hues. One lingering long
look,
Wild with remorse and vague with vast
regrets,
He lifted to Elizabeth. His thoughts
Were then as those dumb creatures in
their pain
That make a language of a look. He
tossed
Aloft his arms, and down to the great
doors
With drooped brows striding, groaned
"To Rome, to Rome!"
Whilst the deep hall behind him caught
the cry

And drove it clamorous after him, from
all
Its hollow roofs reverberating "Rome!"
A fleeting darkness through the lurid
arch;
A flying form along the glare beyond;
And he was gone. The scowling Eve
reached out
Across the hills a fiery arm, and took
Tannhäuser to her, like a sudden death.
So ended that great Battle of the Bards,
Whereof some rumor to the end of time
Will echo in this land.

And, voided now
Of all his multitudes, the mighty Hall,
Dumb, dismally dispageanted, laid bare
His ghostly galleries to the mournful
moon;
And Night came down, and Silence, and
the twain
Mingled beneath the starlight. Wheeled
at will
The flitter-wingéd bat round lonely
towers
Where, one by one, from darkening
casements died
The taper's shine; the howlet from the
hills
Whooped; and Elizabeth, alone with
Night
And Silence, and the Ghost of her slain
youth,
Lay lost among the ruins of that day.

As when the buffeting gusts, that adverse
blow
Over the Caribbean Sea, conspire
Conflicting breaths, and, savagely begot,
The fierce tornado rotatory wheels,
Or sweeps centripetal, or, all forces
joined,
Whirls circling o'er the maddened waves,
and they
Lift up their foaming backs beneath the
keel
Of some frail vessel, and, careering high
Over a sunken rock, with a sudden
plunge
Confound her, — stunned and strained,
upon the peak
Poising one moment, ere she forward fall
To float, dishelmed, a wreck upon the
waves:
So rose, engendered by what furious
blasts

Of passion, that fell hurricane that swept
Elizabeth to her doom, and left her now
A helmless hull upon the savage seas
Of life, without an aim, to float forlorn.

Longwhile, still shuddering from the
shock that jarred
The bases of her being, piteous wreck
Of ruined hopes, upon her couch she lay,
Of life and time oblivious; all her mind,
Locked in a rigid agony of grief,
Clasping, convulsed, its unwept woe;
her heart

Writhing and riven; and her burthened
brain

Blind with the weight of tears that
would not flow.

But when, at last, the healing hand of
Time

Had wrought repair upon her shattered
frame;

And those unskilled physicians of the
mind —

Importunate, fond friends, a host of
kin —

Drew her perforce from solitude, she
passed

Back to the world, and walked its weary
ways

With dull mechanic motions, such as
make

A mockery of life. Yet gave she never,
By weeping or by wailing, outward sign
Of that great inward agony that she bore;
For she was not of those whose sternest
sorrow

Outpours in plaints, or weeps itself in
dew;

Not passionate she, nor of the happy
souls

Whose grief comes tempered with the
gift of tears.

So, through long weeks and many a
weary moon,

Silent and self-involved, without a sigh,
She suffered. There, whence consolati-
on comes,

She sought it — at the foot of Jesu's
cross,

And on the bosom of the Virgin-spouse,
And in communion with the blessed
Saints.

But chief for him she prayed whose
grievous sin

Had wrought her desolation; God be-
sought

To touch the leprous soul and make it
clean;

And sued the Heavenly Pastor to recall
The lost sheep, wandered from the pleas-
ant ways,

Back to the pasture of the paths of
peace.

So thrice a day, what time the blushing
morn

Crimsoned the orient sky, and when the
sun

Glared from mid-heaven or weltered in
the west,

Fervent she prayed; nor in the night
forewent

Her vigils; till at last from prayer she
drew

A calm into her soul, and in that calm
Heard a low whisper — like the breeze
that breaks

The deep peace of the forest ere the
chirp

Of earliest bird salutes the advent Day —
Thrill through her, herald of the dawn
of Hope.

Then most she loved from forth her
leafy tower

Listless to watch the irrevocable clouds
Roll on, and daylight waste itself away
Along those dreaming woods, whence
evermore

She mused, "He will return"; and
fondly wove

Her webs of wistful fantasy till the moon
Was high in heaven, and in its light
she kneeled,

A faded watcher through the weary
night,

A meek, sweet statue at the silver
shrines,

In deep, perpetual prayer for him she
loved.

And from the pitying Sisterhood of
Saints

Haply that prayer shall win an angel
down

To be his unseen minister, and draw
A drowning conscience from the deeps
of Hell.

Time put his sickle in among the days.
Blithe Summer came, and into dimples
danced

The fair and fructifying Earth, anon
Showering the gathered guerdon of her
play

Into the lap of Autumn ; Autumn stored
The gift, piled ready to the palsied hand
Of blind and begging Winter ; and when
he
Closed his well-provendered days, Spring
lightly came
And scattered sweets upon his sullen
grave.
And twice the seasons passed, the sisters
three
Doing glad service for their hoary brother,
And twice twelve moons had waxed and
waned, and twice
The weary world had pilgrimed round
the sun,
When from the outskirts of the land
there came
Rumor of footsore penitents from Rome
Returning, jubilant of remitted sin.

So chanced it, on a silent April eve
The westerling sun along the Wartburg
vale
Shot level beams, and into glory touched
The image of Madonna, — where it stands
Hard by the common way that climbs the
steep, —
The image of Madonna, and the face
Of meek Elizabeth turned towards the
Queen
Of Sorrows, sorrowful in patient prayer ;
When, through the silence and the
sleepy leaves,
A breeze blew up the vale, and on the
breeze
Floated a plaintive music. She that heard,
Trembled ; the prayer upon her parted lips
Suspended hung, and one swift hand she
pressed
Against the palpitating heart whose
throbs
Confused the cunning of her ears. Ah
God !
Was this the voice of her returning joy ?
The psalm of shriven pilgrims to their
homes
Returning ? Ay ! it swells upon the
breeze
The "*Nunc Dimittis*" of glad souls that
sue
After salvation seen to part in peace.
Then up she sprang, and to a neighbor-
ing copse
Swift as a startled hind, when the ghostly
moon
Draws sudden o'er the silvered heather-
bells

The monstrous shadow of a cloud, she
sped ;
Pausing, low-crouched, within a maze
of shrubs,
Whose emerald slivers fringed the rugged
way
So broad, the pilgrim's garments as they
passed
Would brush the leaves that hid her.
And anon
They came in double rank, and two by
two,
With cumbered steps, with haggard gait
that told
Of bodily toil and trouble, with besoiled
And tattered garments ; nathless with
glad eyes,
Whence looked the soul disburthened of
her sin,
Climbing the rude path, two by two
they came.
And she, that watched with what in-
tensest gaze
Them coming, saw old faces that she
knew,
And every face turned skywards, while
the lips
Poured out the heavenly psalm, and
every soul
Sitting seraphic in the upturned eyes
With holy fervor rapt upon the song.
And still they came and passed, and still
she gazed ;
And still she thought, "Now comes he !"
and the chant
Went heavenwards, and the filed pil-
grims fared
Beside her, till their tale wellnigh was
told.
Then o'er her soul a shuddering horror
crept,
And, in that agony of mind that makes
Doubt more intolerable than despair,
With sudden hand she brushed aside
the sprays,
And from the thicket leaned and looked.
The last
Of all the pilgrims stood within the ken
Of her keen gaze, — save him all scanned,
and he
No sooner scanned than cancelled from
her eyes
By vivid lids swept down to lash away
Him hateful, being other than she
sought.
So for a space, blind with dismay, she
paused,

But, he approaching, from the thicket
leapt,
Clutched with wrung hands his robe, and
gasped, "The Knight
That with you went, returns not ?" In
his psalm
The fervid pilgrim made no pause, yet
gazed
At his wild questioner, intelligent
Of her demand, and shook his head and
passed.
Then she, with that mute answer stabbed
to the heart,
Sprung forward, clutched him yet once
more, and cried,
"In Mary's name, and in the name of
God,
Received the knight his shrift ?" And,
once again,
The pilgrim, sorrowful, shook his head
and sighed,
Sighed in the singing of his psalm, and
passed.

Then prone she fell upon her face, and
prone
Within her mind Hope's shattered fabric
fell, —
The dear and delicate fabric of frail Hope
Wrought by the simple cunning of her
thoughts,
That, laboring long, through many a
dreamy day
And many a vigil of the wakeful night,
Piecemeal had reared it, patiently, with
pain,
From out the ruins of her ancient peace.
O ancient Peace ! that never shalt re-
turn ;
O ruined Hope ! O Fancy ! over-fond,
Futile artificer that build'st on air,
Marred is thy handiwork, and thou shalt
please
With plastic fantasies her soul no more.

So lay she cold against the callous ground,
Her pale face pillowed on a stone, her
eyes
Wide open, fixed into a ghastly stare
That knew no speculation ; for her mind
Was dark, and all her faculty of thought
Compassionately cancelled. But she lay
Not in the embrace of loyal Death, who
keeps
His bride forever, but in treacherous
arms
Of Sleep that, sated, will restore to Grief

Her, snatched a sweet space from his
cruel clutch,
So lay she cold against the callous ground,
And none was near to heed her, as the
sun,
About him drawing the vast-skirted
clouds,
Went down behind the western hill to die.

Now Wolfram, when the rumor reached
his ears
That, from their quest of saving grace
returned,
The pilgrims all within the castle-court
Were gathered, flocked about by happy
friends,
Passed from his portal swiftly, and ran
out
And joined the clustering crowd. Full
many a face,
Wasted and wan, he recognized, and
clasped
Full many a lean hand clutching at his
own,
Of those who, stretched upon the grass,
or propped
Against the bowlder-stones, were pressed
about
By weeping women, clamorous to unbind
Their sandal-thongs and bathe the
bruised feet.
Then up and down, and swiftly through
and through,
And round about, skirting the crowd,
he hurried,
With greetings fair to all ; till, filled
with fear,
Half-hopeless of his quest, yet harboring
hope,
He paused perplexed beside the castle
gates.
There, at his side, the youngest of the
train,
A blue-eyed pilgrim tarried, and to him
Turned Wolfram questioning of Tann-
häuser's fate,
And learnt in few words how, his sin
pronounced
Deadly and irremediable, the knight
Had faded from before the awful face
Of Christ's incensed Vicar ; and none
knew
Whither he wandered, to what desolate
lands,
Hiding his anguish from the eyes of men.
Then Wolfram groaned, and clasped his
hands, and cried,

"Merciful God!" and fell upon his knees
 In purpose as of prayer, — but, suddenly,
 About the gate the crowd moved, and a cry
 Went up for space, when, rising, he beheld
 Four maids who on a pallet bore the form
 Of wan Elizabeth. The whisper grew
 That she had met the pilgrims, and had learned
 Tannhäuser's fate, and fallen beside the way.
 And Wolfram, in the ghastly torchlight, saw
 The white face of the Princess turned to his,
 And for a space their eyes met; then she raised
 One hand towards Heaven, and smiled as who should say,
 "O friend, I journey unto God; farewell!"
 But he could answer nothing; for his eyes
 Were blinded by his tears, and through his tears
 Dimly, as in a dream, he saw her borne
 Up the broad granite steps that wind within
 The palace; and his inner eye, entranced,
 Saw in a vision four great Angels stand,
 Expectant of her spirit, at the foot
 Of flights of blinding brilliancy of stairs
 Innumerable, that through the riven skies
 Scaled to the City of the Saints of God.
 Then, when thick night fell on his soul, and all
 The vision fled, he solitary stood
 A crazed man within the castle-court;
 Whence issuing, with wild eyes and wandering gait
 He through the darkness, groaning, passed away.
 All that lone night, along the haunted hills,
 By dizzy brinks of mountain precipices,
 He fled, aimless as an unused wind
 That wastes itself about a wilderness.
 Sometimes from low-browed caves, and hollow crofts,
 Under the hanging woods, there came and went

A voice of wail upon the midnight air,
 As of a lost soul mourning; and the voice
 Was still the voice of his remembered friend.
 Sometimes (so fancy mocked the fears she bred!)
 He heard along the lone and eery land
 Low demon laughers; and a sullen strain
 Of horror swelled upon the breeze; and sounds
 Of wizard dance, with shawm and timbrel, flew
 Ever betwixt waste air and wandering cloud
 O'er pathless peaks. Then, in the distance tolled,
 Or seemed to toll, a knell: the breezes dropped:
 And, in the sudden pause, that passing bell
 With ghostly summons bade him back return
 To where, till dawn, a shade among the shades
 Of Wartburg, watching one lone tower, he saw
 A light that waned with all his earthly hopes.
 The calm Dawn came and from the eastern cliff,
 Athwart the glistening slopes and cold green copse,
 Called to him, careless of a grief not hers;
 But he, from all her babbling birds, and all
 Her vexing sunlight, with a weary heart
 Drew close the darkness of the glens and glades
 About him, flying through the forest deeps.
 And day and night, dim eve and dewy dawn,
 Three times returning, went uncared for by;
 And thrice the double twilights rose and fell
 About a land where nothing seemed the same,
 At eve or dawn, as in the time gone by.
 But, when the fourth day like a stranger slipped
 To his unhonored grave, God's Angel passed

Across the threshold of the Landgrave's hall,
 And in his bosom bore to endless peace
 The weary spirit of Elizabeth.
 Then, in that hour when Death with gentle hand
 Had drooped the quiet eyelids o'er the eyes
 That Wolfram loved, to Wolfram's heart there came
 A calmness like the calmness of a grave
 Walled safe from all the noisy walks of men
 In some green place of peace where daisies grow.
 His tears fell in the twilight with the dews,
 Soft as the dews that with the twilight fell,
 When, over scarred and weather-wounded walls,
 Sharp-jagged mountain cones, and tangled quicks,
 Eve's spirit, settling, laid the land to sleep
 In skyey trance. Nor yet less soft to fuse
 Memory with hope, and earth with heaven, to him,
 Athwart the harsher anguish of that day,
 There stole with tears the tender human sense
 Of heavenly mercy. Through that milder mood,
 Like waifs that float to shore when storms are spent,
 Flowed to his heart old memories of his friend,
 O'erwoven with the weed of other griefs,
 Of other griefs for her that grieved no more—
 And of that time when, like a blazing star
 That moves and mounts between the Lyre and Crown,
 Tannhäuser shone; ere sin came, and with sin
 Sorrow. And now if yet Tannhäuser lived
 None knew: and if he lived, what hope in life?
 And if he lived no more, what rest in death?
 But every way the dreadful doom of sin.

Thus, musing much on all the mystery
 Of life, and death, and love that will not die,
 He wandered forth, incurious of the way;
 Which took the wont of other days, and wound
 Along the valley. Now the nodding star
 Of even, and the deep, the dewy hour
 Held all the sleeping circle of the hills;
 Nor any cloud the stainless heavens obscured,
 Save where, o'er Hörsel folded in the frown
 Of all his wicked woods, a fleecy fringe
 Of vapor veiled the slowly sinking moon.
 There, in the shade, the stillness, o'er his harp
 Leaning, of love, and life, and death he sang
 A song to which from all her æry caves
 The mountain echo murmured in her sleep.
 But, as the last strain of his solemn song
 Died off among the solitary stars,
 There came in answer from the folded hills
 A note of human woe. He turned, he looked
 That way the sound came o'er the lonely air;
 And, seeing, yet believed not that he saw,
 But, nearer moving, saw indeed hard by,
 Dark in the darkness of a neighboring hill,
 Lying among the splintered stones and stubs
 Flat in the fern, with limbs diffused as one
 That, having fallen, cares to rise no more,
 A pilgrim; all his weeds of pilgrimage
 Hanging and torn, his sandals stained with blood
 Of bruised feet, and, broken in his hand,
 His wreathed staff.
 And Wolfram wistfully
 Looked in his face, and knew it not.
 "Alas!"
 Not him," he murmured, "not my friend!" And then,

"What art thou, pilgrim? whence thy way? how fall'n
In this wild glen? at this lone hour abroad
When only Grief is stirring?" Unto whom
That other, where he lay in the long grass,
Not rising, but with petulant gesture, "Hence!
Whate'er I am, it skills not. Thee I know
Full well, Sir Wolfram of the Willow-brook,
The well-belovéd Singer!"

Like a dart
From a friend's hand that voice through Wolfram went:
For Memory over all the ravaged form
Wherefrom it issued, wandering, failed to find
The man she mourned; but Wolfram, to the voice
No stranger, started smit with pain, as all

The past on those sharp tones came back to break
His heart with hopeless knowledge.

And he cried,
"Alas, my brother!" Such a change, so drear,

In all so unlike all that once he was
Showed the lost knight Tannhäuser, where he lay

Fallen across the split and morselled crags
Like a dismantled ruin. And Wolfram said,

"O lost! how comest thou, unabsolved, once more

Among these valleys visited by death,
And shadowed with the shadow of thy sin?"

Whereto in scorn Tannhäuser, "Be at rest,

O fearful in thy righteousness! not thee,
Nor grace of thine, I seek."

Speaking, he rose
The spectre of a beauty waned away;

And, like a hollow echo of himself
Mocking his own last words, he murmured, "Seek!

Alas! what seek I here, or anywhere?
Whose way of life is like the crumbled stair

That winds and winds about a ruined tower,
And leads nowhither!"

But Wolfram cried, "Yet turn!
For, as I live, I will not leave thee thus.

My life shall be about thee, and my voice

Lure scared Hope back to find a resting-place

Even in the jaws of Death. I do adjure thee,

By all that friendship yet may claim, declare

That, even though unabsolved, not uncontrite,

Thy soul no more hath lapsed into the snare

Of that disastrous sorcery. Bid me hail,
Seen through the darkness of thy desolation,

Some light of purer purpose; since I deem

Not void of purpose hast thou sought these paths

That range among the places of the past;

And I will make defeat of Grief with such
True fellowship of tears as shall disarm

Her right hand of its scorpions; nor in vain

My prayers with thine shall batter at the gates

Of Mercy, through all antagonisms of fate

Forcing sharp inlet to her throne in Heaven."

Whereto Tannhäuser, turning tearless eyes

On Wolfram, murmured mournfully, "If tears

Fiery as those from fallen seraphs distilled,

Or centuries of prayers for pardon sighed
Sad, as of souls in purgatorial glooms,

Might soften condemnation, or restore
To her, whom most on earth I have offended,

The holy freight of all her innocent hopes
Wrecked in this ruined venture, I would weep

Salt oceans from these eyes. But I no more

May drain the deluge from my heart, no more

On any breath of sigh or prayer rebuild
The rainbow of dis-covenanted Hope.

Thou, therefore, Wolfram — for her face,
when mine

Is dark forever, thine eyes may still behold —

Tell her, if thou unblamed may'st speak of one

Signed cross by the curse of God and cancelled out,

How, at the last, though in remorse of all
That makes allegiance void and valueless,

To me has come, with knowledge of my loss,

Faithful to that pure passion, once betrayed,

Wherewith I loved, and love her."

There his voice,
Even as a wave that, touching on the shore

To which it travelled, is shivered and diffused,

Sank, scattered into spray of wasteful sighs,

And back dissolved into the deeper grief.

To whom, Wolfram, "O answer by the faith

In which mankind are kindred, art thou not

From Rome, unhappiest?" "From Rome? ah me!"

He muttered, "Rome is far off, very far,
And weary is the way!" But undeterred

Wolfram renewed, "And hast thou not beheld

The face of Christ's High Vicar?" And again,

"Pass on," he muttered, "what is that to thee?"

Whereto, with sorrowful voice, Wolfram, "O all,

And all in all to me that love my friend!"
"My friend!" Tannhäuser laughed a bitter laugh

Then sadder said, "What thou wouldst know, once known,

Will cause thee to recall that wasted word
And cancel all the kindness in thy thoughts;

Yet shalt thou learn my misery, and learn
The man so changed, whom once thou calledst 'friend,'

That unto him the memory of himself
Is as a stranger." Then, with eyes that swam

True sorrow, Wolfram stretched his arms
and sought

To clasp Tannhäuser to him: but the other

Waved him away, and with a shout that sprang

Fierce with self-scorn from misery's deepest depth,

"Avaunt!" he cried, "the ground whereon I tread

Is ground accurst!

"Yet stand not so far off
But what thine ears, if yet they will, may take

The tale thy lips from mine have sought to learn;

Then, sign thyself, and peaceful go thy ways."

And Wolfram, for the grief that choked his voice,

Could only murmur "Speak!" But for a while

Tannhäuser to sad silence gave his heart;
Then fetched back some far thought, sighing, and said: —

"O Wolfram, by the love of lovelier days
Believe I am not so far fallen away

From all I was while we might yet be friends,

But what these words, haply my last, are true:

True as my heart's deep woe what time I felt

Cold on my brow tears wept, and wept in vain,

For me, among the scorn of altered friends,

Parting that day for Rome. Remember this:

That when, in the after years to which I pass

A by-word, and a mockery, and no more,
Thou, honored still by honorable men,

Shalt hear my name dishonored, thou may'st say,

'Greatly he grieved for that great sin he sinned.'

"Ever, as up the windy Alpine way,
We halting oft by cloudy convent doors,

My fellow-pilgrims warmed themselves within,

And ate and drank, and slept their sleep, all night,

I, fasting, slept not; but in ice and snow
Wept, aye remembering her that wept for me,

And loathed the sin within me. When at length

Our way lay under garden terraces

Strewn with their dropping blossoms,
thick with scents,
Among the towers and towns of Italy,
Whose sumptuous airs along them, like
the ghosts
Of their old gods, went sighing, I nor
looked
Nor lingered, but with bandaged eyeballs
prest,
Impatient, to the city of the shrine
Of my desired salvation. There by night
We entered. There, all night, forlorn I
lay
Bruised, broken, bleeding, all my gar-
ments torn,
And all my spirit stricken with remorse,
Prostrate beneath the great cathedral
stairs.
So the dawn found me. From a hun-
dred spires
A hundred silvery chimes rang joy: but I
Lay folded in the shadow of my shame,
Darkening the daylight from me in the
dust.
Then came a sound of solemn music
flowing
To where I crouched; voices and tram-
pling feet;
And, girt by all his crimson cardinals,
In all his pomp the sovran Pontiff stood
Before me in the centre of my hopes;
Which trembled round him into glorious
shapes,
Golden, as clouds that ring the risen sun.
And all the people, all the pilgrims, fell
Low at his sacred feet, confessed their
sins,
And, pardoned, rose with psalms of jubi-
lee
And confident glad faces.
"Then I sprang
To where he paused above me; with
wild hands
Clutched at the skirts I could not reach;
and sank
Shiveringly back; crying, 'O holy, and
high,
And terrible, that hast the keys of
heaven!
Thou that dost bind and dost unloose,
from me,
For Mary's sake, and the sweet saints',
unbind
The grievous burthen of the curse I
bear.'
And when he questioned, and I told him
all

The sin that smouldered in my blood,
how bred,
And all the strangeness of it, then his face
Was as the Judgment Angel's; and I hid
My own; and, hidden from his eyes, I
heard:
"Hast thou within the nets of Satan
lain?
Hast thou thy soul to her perdition
pledged?
Hast thou thy lip to Hell's Enchantress
lent,
To drain damnation from her reeking cup?
Then know that sooner from the withered
staff
That in my hand I hold green leaves
shall spring,
Than from the brand in hell-fire scorched
rebloom
The blossoms of salvation.'
"The voice ceased,
And, with it all things from my sense.
I waked
I know not when, but all the place was
dark:
Above me, and about me, and within
Darkness: and from that hour by moon
or sun
Darkness unutterable as of death
Where'er I walk. But death himself is
near!
O, might I once more see her, unseen;
unheard,
Hear her once more; or know that she
forgives
Whom Heaven forgives not, nor his own
lost peace;
I think that even among the nether fires
And those dark fields of Doom to which
I pass,
Some blessing yet would haunt me."
Sorrowfully
He rose among the tumbled rocks and
leaned
Against the dark. As one that many a
year,
Sundered by savage seas unsociable
From kin and country, in a desert isle
Dwelling till half dishumanized, beholds
Haply, one eve, a far-off sail go by,
That brings old thoughts of home across
his heart;
And still the man who thinks—"They
are all gone,
Or changed, that loved me once, and I
myself

No more the same"—watches the dwin-
dling speck
With weary eyes, nor shouts, nor waves
a hand;
But after, when the night is left alone,
A sadness falls upon him, and he feels
More solitary in his solitudes,
And tears come starting fast; so, tear-
ful, stood
Tannhäuser, whilst his melancholy
thoughts,
From following up far off a waning hope,
Back to himself came, one by one, more
sad
Because of sadness troubled.
Yet not long
He rested thus; but murmured, "Now,
farewell:
I go to hide me darkly in the groves
That she was wont to haunt; where
some sweet chance
Haply may yield me sight of her, and I
May stoop, she passed away, to kiss the
ground
Made sacred by her passage ere I die."
But him departing Wolfram held,
"Vain! vain!
Thy footstep sways with fever, and thy
mind
Wavers within thy restless eyes. Lie
here,
O unrejected, in my arms, and rest!"
Now o'er the cumbrous hills began to
creep
A thin and watery light: a whisper went
Vague through the vast and dusky-vol-
umed woods,
And, unaccompanied, from a drowsy copse
Hard by a solitary chirp came cold,
While, spent with inmost trouble, Tann-
häuser leaned
His wan cheek pillowed upon Wol-
fram's breast,
Calm, as in death, with placid lids down
locked.
And Wolfram prayed within his heart,
"Ah, God!
Let him not die, not yet, not thus, with
all
The sin upon his spirit!" But while
he prayed
Tannhäuser raised delirious looks, and
sighed,
"Hearest thou not the happy songs
they sing me?
Seest thou not the lovely floating forms?

O fair, and fairer far than fancy fashioned!
O sweet the sweetness of the songs they
sing!
For thee, . . . they sing . . . the goddess
waits: for thee
With braided blooms the balmy couch &
strewn,
And loosed for thee . . . they sing . . .
the golden zone.
Fragrant for thee the lighted spices fume
With streaming incense sweet, and sweet
for thee
The scattered rose, the myrtle crown, the
cup,
The nectar-cup for thee! . . . they sing.
Return,
Though late, too long desired, . . . I hear
them sing,
Delay no more delights too long delayed:
Turn to thy rest; . . . they sing . . .
the married doves
Murmur; the fays soft-sparkling tapers
tend;
The odors burn the purple bowers among;
And Love for thee, and Beauty, waits!
 . . . they sing."
"Ah me! ah madman!" Wolfram cried,
"yet cram
Thy cheated ears, nor chase with credu-
lous heart
The fair dissembling of that dream.
For thee
Not roses now, but thorns; nor myrtle
wreath,
But cypress rather and the graveyard
flower
Befitting saddest brows; nor nectar
poured,
But prayers and tears! For thee in
yonder skies
An Angel strives with Sin and Death;
for thee
Yet pleads a spirit purer than thine own:
For she is gone! gone to the breast of
God!
Thy Guardian Angel, while she walked
the earth,
Thine intercessionary Saint while now
For thee she sues about the Throne
Thrones,
Beyond the stars, our star, Elizabeth!
Then Wolfram felt the shattered frame
that leaned
Across his breast with sudden spasms
convulsed.

"Dead! is she dead?" Tannhäuser murmured, "dead!
 Gone to the grave, so young! murdered — by me!
 Dead — and by my great sin! O Wolfram, turn
 Thy face from mine. I am a dying man!"
 And Wolfram answered, "Dying? ah, not thus!
 Yet make one sign thou dost repent the past,
 One word, but one! to say thou hast abhorred
 That false she-devil that, with her damned charms,
 Hath wrought this ruin; and I, though all the world
 Roar out against thee, ay! though fiends of hell
 Howl from the deeps, yet I, thy friend, even yet
 Will cry them 'Peace!' and trust the hope I hold
 Against all desperate odds, and deem thee saved."
 Whereto Tannhäuser, speaking faintly, "Friend,
 The fiend that haunts in ruins through my heart
 Will wander sometimes. In the nets I trip,
 When most I fret the meshes. These spent shafts
 Are of a sickly brain that shoots awry, Aiming at something better. Bear with me.
 I die: I pass I know not whither: yet know
 That I die penitent. O Wolfram, pray, Pray for my soul! I cannot pray myself. I dare not hope: and yet I would not die
 Without a hope, if any hope, though faint
 And far beyond this darkness, yet may dwell
 In the dear death of Him that died for all."
 He whispering thus; far in the Aurean East
 The ruddy sun, uprising, sharply smote
 A golden finger on the airy harps
 By Morning hung within her leafy bowers;
 And all about the budded dells, and woods
 With sparkling-tasselled tops, from birds and brooks
 A hundred hallelujahs hailed the light.

The whitethorn glistened from the wakening glen:
 O'er golden gravel danced the dawning rills:
 All the delighted leaves by copse and glade
 Gambolled; and breezy bleatings came from flocks
 Far off in pleasant pastures fed with dew.
 But whilst, unconscious of the silent change
 Thus stolen around him, o'er the dying bard
 Hung Wolfram, on the breeze there came a sound
 Of mourning moving down the narrow glen;
 And, looking up, he suddenly was 'ware
 Of four white maidens, moving in the van
 Of four black monks who bore upon her bier
 The flower-strewn corpse of young Elizabeth.
 And after these, from all the castled hills,
 A multitude of lieges and of lords;
 A multitude of men-at-arms, with all
 Their morions hung with mourning; and in midst
 His worn cheek channelled with unwonted tears,
 The Landgrave, weeping for Elizabeth.
 These, as the sad procession nearer wound,
 And nearer, trampling bare the feathery weed
 To where Sir Wolfram rested o'er his friend,
 Tannhäuser caught upon his dying gaze;
 And caught, perchance, upon the inward eye,
 Far, far beyond the corpse, the bier, and far
 Beyond the widening circle of the sun,
 Some sequel of that vision Wolfram saw:
 The crowned Spirit by the Jasper Gates;
 The four white Angels o'er the walls of Heaven,
 The shores where, tideless, sleep the seas of Time
 Soft by the City of the Saints of God.
 Forth, with the strength that lastly comes to break
 All bonds, from Wolfram's folding arm he leapt,

Clambered the pebbly path, and, groaning, fell
 Flat on the bier of love — his bourn at last!
 Then, even then, while question question chased
 About the ruffled circle of that grief,
 And all was hubbub by the bier, a noise
 Of shouts and hymns brake in across the hills,
 That now o'erflowed with hurrying feet; and came,
 Dashed to the hip with travel, and dewed with haste,
 A flying post, and in his hand he bore
 A withered staff o'erflourished with green leaves;
 Who, — followed by a crowd of youth and eld,
 That sang to stun with sound the lark in heaven,
 "A miracle! a miracle from Rome!
 Glory to God that makes the bare bough green!" —
 Sprang in the midst, and, hot for answer, asked
 News of the Knight Tannhäuser.
 Then a monk
 Of those that, stoled in sable, bore the bier
 Pointing, with sorrowful hand, "Behold the man!"
 But straight the other, "Glory be to God!
 This from the Vicar of the fold of Christ:
 The withered staff hath flourished into leaves,
 The brand shall bloom, though burned with fire, and thou
 — Thy soul from sin be saved!" To whom, with tears
 That flashed from lowering lids, Wolfram replied:
 "To him a swifter message, from a source
 Mightier than whence thou comest, hath been vouchsafed.
 See these stark hands, blind eyes, and bloodless lips,
 This shattered remnant of a once fair form,
 Late home of desolation, now the husk
 And ruined chrysalis of a regal spirit
 That up to heaven hath parted on the wing!
 But thou, to Rome returning with hot speed,
 Tell the high Vicar of the Fold of Christ
 How that lost sheep his rescuing hand would reach,

Although by thee unfound, is found indeed,
 And in the Shepherd's bosom lies at peace."
 And they that heard him lifted up the voice
 And wept. But they that stood about the hills
 Far off, not knowing, ceased not to cry out,
 "Glory to God that makes the bare bough green!"
 Till Echo, from the inmost heart of all
 That mellowing morn blown open like a rose
 To round and ripen to the perfect noon,
 Resounded, "Glory! glory!" and the rocks
 From glen to glen rang, "Glory unto God!"
 And so those twain, severed by Life and Sin,
 By Love and Death united, in one grave Slept. But Sir Wolfram passed into the wilds:
 There, with long labor of his hands, he hewed
 A hermitage from out the hollow rock,
 Wherein he dwelt, a solitary man.
 There, many a year, at nightfall or at dawn,
 The pilgrim paused, nor ever paused in vain,
 For words of cheer along his weary way.
 But once, upon a windy night, men heard
 A noise of rustling wings, and at the dawn
 They found the hermit parted to his peace.
 The place is yet. The youngest pilgrim knows,
 And loves it. Three gray rocks; and, over these,
 A mountain ash that, mourning, beaded by bead,
 Drops her red rosary on a ruined cell.
 So sang the Saxon Bard. And when he ceased,
 The women's cheeks were wet with tears; but all
 The broad-blown Barons roared applause, and flowed
 The jostling tankards prodigal of wine.