

## GOOD-NIGHT IN THE PORCH.

A LITTLE longer in the light, love, let me be. The air is warm.  
I hear the cuckoo's last good-night float from the copse below the Farm.  
A little longer, Sister sweet, — your hand in mine, — on this old seat.

In yon red gable, which the rose creeps round and o'er, your casement shines  
Against the yellow west, o'er those forlorn and solitary pines.  
The long, long day is nearly done. How silent all the place is grown!

The stagnant levels, one and all, are burning in the distant marsh —  
Hark! 't was the bittern's parting call. The frogs are out: with murmurs harsh  
The low reeds vibrate. See! the sun catches the long pools one by one.

A moment, and those orange flats will turn dead gray or lurid white.  
Look up! o'erhead the winnowing bats are come and gone, eluding sight.  
The little worms are out. The snails begin to move down shining trails,

With slow pink cones, and soft wet horns. The garden-bowers are dim with dew.  
With sparkling drops the white-rose thorns are twinkling, where the sun slips  
through  
Those reefs of coral buds hung free below the purple Judas-tree.

From the warm upland comes a gust made fragrant with the brown hay there.  
The meek cows, with their white horns thrust above the hedge, stand still and  
stare.  
The steaming horses from the wains droop o'er the tank their plaited manes.

And o'er yon hillside brown and barren (where you and I as children played,  
Starting the rabbit to his warren), I hear the sandy, shrill cascade  
Leap down upon the vale, and spill his heart out round the muffled mill.

O can it be for nothing only that God has shown his world to me?  
Or but to leave the heart more lonely with loss of beauty . . . can it be?  
O closer, closer, Sister dear . . . nay, I have kist away that tear.

God bless you, Dear, for that kind thought which only upon tears could rise!  
God bless you for the love that sought to hide them in those drooping eyes,  
Whose lids I kiss! . . . poor lids, so red! but let my kiss fall there instead.

Yes, sad indeed it seems, each night, — and sadder, Dear, for your sweet sake!  
To watch the last low lingering light, and know not where the morn may break.  
To-night we sit together here. To-morrow night will come . . . ah, where?

O child! howe'er assured be faith, to say farewell is fraught with gloom,  
When, like one flower, the germs of death and genius ripen toward the tomb;  
And earth each day, as some fond face at parting, gains a graver grace.

There's not a flower, there's not a tree in this old garden where we sit,  
But what some fragrant memory is closed and folded up in it.  
To-night the dog-rose smells as wild, as fresh, as when I was a child.

'T is eight years since (do you forget?) we set those lilies near the wall:  
You were a blue-eyed child: even yet I seem to see the ringlets fall, —  
The golden ringlets, blown behind your shoulders in the merry wind.

Ah, me! old times, they cling, they cling! And oft by yonder green old gate  
The field shows through, in morns of spring, an eager boy, I paused elate  
With all sweet fancies loosed from school. And oft, you know, when eves were cool,

In summer-time, and through the trees young gnats began to be about,  
With some old book upon your knees 't was here you watched the stars come out.  
While oft, to please me, you sang through some foolish song I made for you.

And there's my epic — I began when life seemed long, though longer art —  
And all the glorious deeds of man made golden riot in my heart —  
Eight books . . . it will not number nine! I die before my heroine.

Sister! they say that drowning men in one wild moment can recall  
Their whole life long, and feel again the pain—the bliss—that thronged it all:—  
Last night those phantoms of the Past again came crowding round me fast.

Near morning, when the lamp was low, against the wall they seemed to flit;  
And, as the wavering light would glow or fall, they came and went with it.  
The ghost of boyhood seemed to gaze down the dark verge of vanished days.

Once more the garden where she walked on summer eves to tend her flowers,  
Once more the lawn where first we talked of future years in twilight hours  
Arose; once more she seemed to pass before me in the waving grass

To that old terrace; her bright hair about her warm neck all undone,  
And waving on the balmy air, with tinges of the dying sun.  
Just one star kindling in the west: just one bird singing near its nest.

So lovely, so beloved! O, fair as though that sun had never set  
Which stayed upon her golden hair, in dreams I seem to see her yet!  
To see her in that old green place, — the same husht, smiling, cruel face!

A little older, love, than you are now; and I was then a boy;  
And wild and wayward-hearted too; to her my passion was a toy,  
Soon broken! ah, a foolish thing, — a butterfly with crumpled wing!

Her hair, too, was like yours, — as bright, but with a warmer golden tinge:  
Her eyes, — a somewhat deeper light, and dreamed below a longer fringe:  
And still that strange grave smile she had stays in my heart and keeps it sad!

There's no one knows it, truest friend, but you, for I have never breathed  
To other ears the frozen end of those spring-garlands Hope once wreathed;  
And death will come before again I breathe that name untouched by pain.

From little things — a star, a flower — that touched us with the self-same thought,  
My passion deepened hour by hour, until to that fierce heat 't was wrought,  
Which, shrivelling over every nerve, crumbled the outworks of reserve.

I told her then, in that wild time, the love I knew she long had seen;  
The accusing pain that burned like crime, yet left me nobler than I had been;  
What matter with what words I wooed her? She said I had misunderstood her.

And something more — small matter what! of friendship something — sister's love —  
She said that I was young — knew not my own heart — as the years would prove —  
She wished me happy — she conceived an interest in me — and believed



I should grow up to something great — and soon forget her — soon forget  
This fancy — and congratulate my life she had released it, yet —  
With more such words — a lie! a lie! She broke my heart, and flung it by!

A life's libation lifted up, from her proud lip she dashed untasted:  
There trampled lay love's costly cup, and in the dust the wine was wasted.  
She knew I could not pour such wine again at any other shrine.

Then I remember a numb mood: mad murmurings of the words she said:  
A slow shame smouldering through my blood; that surged and sung within my  
head:  
And drunken sunlights reeling through the leaves: above, the burnisht blue

Hot on my eyes, — a blazing shield: a noise among the waterfalls:  
A free crow up the brown cornfield floating at will: faint shepherd-calls:  
And reapers reaping in the shocks of gold: and girls with purple frocks:

All which the more confused my brain: and nothing could I realize  
But the great fact of my own pain: I saw the fields: I heard the cries:  
The crow's shade dwindled up the hill: the world went on: my heart stood still.

I thought I held in my hot hand my life crusht up: I could have tost  
The crumpled riddle from me, and laughed loud to think what I had lost.  
A bitter strength was in my mind: like Samson, when she scorned him — blind,

And casting reckless arms about the props of life to hug them down, —  
A madman with his eyes put out. But all my anger was my own.  
I spared the worm upon my walk: I left the white rose on its stalk.

All's over long since. Was it strange that I was mad with grief and shame?  
And I would cross the seas, and change my ancient home, my father's name?  
In the wild hope, if that might be, to change my own identity!

I know that I was wrong: I know it was not well to be so wild.  
But the scorn stung so! . . . Pity now could wound not! . . . I have seen her child:  
It had the self-same eyes she had: their gazing almost made me mad.

Dark violet eyes whose glances, deep with April hints of sunny tears,  
'Neath long soft lashes laid asleep, seemed all too thoughtful for her years;  
As though from mine her gaze had caught the secret of some mournful thought.

But, when she spoke her father's air broke o'er her . . . that clear confident voice!  
Some happy souls there are, that wear their nature lightly; these rejoice  
The world by living; and receive from all men more than what they give.

One handful of their buoyant chaff exceeds our hoards of careful grain:  
Because their love breaks through their laugh, while ours is fraught with tender  
pain:  
The world, that knows itself too sad, is proud to keep some faces glad:

And, so it is! from such an one Misfortune softly steps aside  
To let him still walk in the sun. These things must be. I cannot chide.  
Had I been she I might have made the self-same choice. She shunned the shade,

To some men God hath given laughter: but tears to some men He hath given:  
He bade us sow in tears, hereafter to harvest holier smiles in Heaven:  
And tears and smiles, they are His gift: both good, to smite or to uplift:

He knows His sheep: the wind and showers beat not too sharply the shorn lamb:  
His wisdom is more wise than ours: He knew my nature — what I am:  
He tempers smiles with tears: both good, to bear in time the Christian mood.

O yet — in scorn of mean relief, let Sorrow bear her heavenly fruit!  
Better the wildest hour of grief than the low pastime of the brute!  
Better to weep, for He wept too, than laugh as every fool can do!

For sure, 't were best to bear the cross; nor lightly fling the thorns behind;  
Lest we grow happy by the loss of what was noblest in the mind.  
— Here — in the ruins of my years — Father, I bless Thee through these tears!

It was in the far foreign lands this sickness came upon me first.  
Below strange suns, 'mid alien hands, this fever of the south was nurst,  
Until it reached some vital part. I die not of a broken heart.

O think not that! If I could live . . . there's much to live for — worthy life.  
It is not for what fame could give — though that I scorn not — but the strife  
Were noble for its own sake too. I thought that I had much to do —

But God is wisest! Hark, again! . . . 't was yon black bittern, as he rose  
Against the wild light o'er the fen. How red your little casement glows!  
The night falls fast. How lonely, Dear, this bleak old house will look next year!

So sad a thought? . . . ah, yes! I know it is not good to brood on this:  
And yet — such thoughts will come and go, unbidden. 'T is that you should miss,  
My darling, one familiar tone of this weak voice when I am gone.

And, for what's past, — I will not say in what she did that all was right,  
But all's forgiven; and I pray for her heart's welfare, day and night.  
All things are changed! This cheek would glow even near hers but faintly now!

Thou — God! before whose sleepless eye not even in vain the sparrows fall,  
Receive, sustain me! Sanctify my soul. Thou know'st, Thou lovest all.  
Too weak to walk alone — I see Thy hand: I falter back to Thee.

Saved from the curse of time which throws its baseness on us day by day:  
Its wretched joys, and worthless woes; till all the heart is worn away.  
I feel Thee near. I hold my breath, by the half-open doors of Death.

And sometimes, glimpses from within of glory (wondrous sight and sound!)  
Float near me: — faces pure from sin; strange music; saints with splendor crowned:  
I seem to feel my native air blow down from some high region there,

And fan my spirit pure: I rise above the sense of loss and pain:  
Faint forms that lured my childhood's eyes, long lost, I seem to find again:  
I see the end of all: I feel hope, awe, no language can reveal.

Forgive me, Lord, if overmuch I loved that form Thou mad'st so fair;  
I know that Thou didst make her such; and fair but as the flowers were, —  
Thy work: her beauty was but Thine; the human less than the divine.

My life hath been one search for Thee 'mid thorns found red with Thy dear blood:  
In many a dark Gethsemane I seemed to stand where Thou hadst stood:  
And, scorned in this world's Judgment-Place, at times, through tears, to catch  
Thy face.



Thou suffered'st here, and didst not fail : Thy bleeding feet these paths have trod :  
But Thou wert strong, and I am frail : and I am man, and Thou wert God.  
Be near me : keep me in Thy sight : or lay my soul asleep in light.

O to be where the meanest mind is more than Shakespeare ! where one look  
Shows more than here the wise can find, though toiling slow from book to book !  
Where life is knowledge : love is sure : and hope's brief promise made secure.

O dying voice of human praise ! the crude ambitions of my youth !  
I long to pour immortal lays ! great pæans of perennial Truth !  
A larger work ! a loftier aim ! . . . and what are laurel-leaves, and fame ?

And what are words ? How little these the silence of the soul express !  
Mere froth, — the foam and flower of seas whose hungering waters heave and press  
Against the planets and the sides of night, — mute, yearning, mystic tides !

To ease the heart with song is sweet : sweet to be heard if heard by love.  
And you have heard me. When we meet shall we not sing the old songs above  
To grander music ? Sweet, one kiss. O blest it is to die like this !

To lapse from being without pain : your hand in mine, on mine your heart :  
The unshaken faith to meet again that sheathes the pang with which we part :  
My head upon your bosom, sweet : your hand in mine, on this old seat !

So ; closer wind that tender arm . . . How the hot tears fall ! Do not weep,  
Beloved, but let your smile stay warm about me. "In the Lord they sleep."  
You know the words the Scripture saith . . . O light, O Glory ! . . . is this death !

## THE EARL'S RETURN.

RAGGED and tall stood the castle wall  
And the squires, at their sport, in the  
great South Court,  
Lounged all day long from stable to hall  
Laughingly, lazily, one and all.  
The land about was barren and blue,  
And swept by the wing of the wet sea-  
mew.

Seven fishermen's huts on a shelly shore :  
Sand-heaps behind, and sand-banks be-  
fore :

And a black champaign streaked white  
all through

To a great salt pool which the ocean drew,  
Sucked into itself, and disgorged it again  
To stagnate and steam on the mineral  
plain ;

Not a tree or a bush in the circle of sight,  
But a bare black thorn which the sea-  
winds had withered

With the drifting scum of the surf and  
blight,

And some patches of gray grass-land to  
the right,  
Where the lean red-hided cattle were  
tethered :  
A reef of rock wedged the water in twain,  
And a stout stone tower stood square to  
the main.

And the flakes of the spray that were  
jerked away  
From the froth on the lip of the bleak  
blue sea  
Were sometimes flung by the wind, as it  
swung

Over turret and terrace and balcony,  
To the garden below where, in desolate  
corners

Under the mossy green parapet there,  
The lilies crouched, rocking their white  
heads like mourners,

And burned off the heads of the flowers  
that were

Pining and pale in their comfortless  
bowers,  
Dry-bushed with the sharp stubborn  
lavender,  
And paven with disks of the torn sun-  
flowers,  
Which, day by day, were strangled, and  
stripped  
Of their ravelling fringes and brazen  
bosses,  
And the hardy mary-buds nipped and  
ripped  
Into shreds for the beetles that lurked  
in the mosses.

Here she lived alone, and from year to  
year  
She saw the black belt of the ocean appear  
At her casement each morn as she rose ;  
and each morn  
Her eye fell first on the bare black thorn.  
This was all : nothing more : or some-  
times on the shore  
The fishermen sang when the fishing was  
o'er ;

Or the lowing of oxen fell dreamily,  
Close on the shut of the glimmering eves,  
Through some gusty pause in the moan-  
ing sea,

When the pools were splashed pink by  
the thirsty beeves.

Or sometimes, when the pearl-lighted  
morns drew the tinges

Of the cold sunrise up their amber fringes,  
A white sail peered over the rim of the  
main,

Looked all about o'er the empty sea,  
Staggered back from the fine line of  
white light again,

And dropped down to another world  
silently.

Then she breathed freer. With sicken-  
ing dread

She had watched five pale young moons  
unfold

From their notchy cavern in light, and  
spread

To the fuller light, and again grow old,  
And dwindle away to a luminous shred.

"He will not come back till the Spring's  
green and gold.

And I would that I with the leaves were  
dead,

Quiet somewhere with them in the moss  
and the mould,

When he and the summer come this  
way," she said.

And when the dull sky darkened down  
to the edges,  
And the keen frost kindled in star and  
spar,  
The sea might be known by a noise on  
the ledges  
Of the long crags, gathering power from  
afar  
Through his roaring bays, and crawling  
back  
Hissing, as o'er the wet pebbles he  
dragged  
His skirt of foam frayed, dripping, and  
jagged,  
And reluctantly fell down the smooth  
hollow shell  
Of the night, whose lustrous surface of  
black

In spots to an intense blue was worn.  
But later, when up on the sullen sea-bar  
The wide large-lighted moon had arisen,  
Where the dark and voluminous ocean  
grew luminous,  
Helping after her slowly one little shy  
star

That shook blue in the cold, and looked  
forlorn,  
The clouds were troubled, and the wind  
from his prison

Behind them leaped down with a light  
laugh of scorn ;

Then the last thing she saw was that  
bare black thorn ;

For the forked tree, as the bleak blast  
took it,

Howled through it, and beat it, and bit  
it, and shook it,  
Seemed to visibly waste and wither and  
wizen.

And the snow was lifted into the air  
Layer by layer,  
And turned into vast white clouds that  
flew

Silent and fleet up the sky, and were  
riven

And jerked into chasms which the sun  
leaped through,

Opening crystal gulfs of a breezy blue  
Fed with rainy lights of the April heaven.

From eaves and leaves the quivering dew  
Sparkled off ; and the rich earth, black  
and bare,

Was starred with snowdrops everywhere ;  
And the crocus upturned its flame, and  
burned

Here and there.



"The Summer," she said, "cometh  
blithe and bold;  
And the crocus is lit for her welcoming;  
And the days will have garments of  
purple and gold;  
But I would be left by the pale green  
Spring  
With the snowdrops somewhere under  
the mould;  
For I dare not think what the Summer  
may bring."

Pale she was as the bramble blooms  
That fill the long fields with their faint  
perfumes,  
When the May-wind flits finely through  
sun-threaded showers,  
Breathing low to himself in his dim  
meadow-bowers.  
And her cheek each year was paler and  
thinner,  
And white as the pearl that was hung at  
her ear,  
As her sad heart sickened and pined  
within her,  
And failed and fainted from year to year.  
So that the Seneschal, rough and gray,  
Said, as he looked in her face one day,  
"St. Catherine save all good souls, I pray,  
For our pale young lady is paling away.  
O the Saints," he said, smiling bitter  
and grim,  
"Know she's too fair and too good for  
him!"

Sometimes she walked on the upper leads,  
And leaned on the arm of the weather-  
worn Warden.  
Sometimes she sat 'twixt the mildewy beds  
Of the sea-singed flowers in the Pleas-  
ance Garden.  
Till the rotting blooms that lay thick on  
the walks  
Were combed by the white sea-gust like  
a rake,  
And the stimulant steam of the leaves  
and stalks  
Made the coiled memory, numb and cold,  
That slept in her heart like a dreaming  
snake,  
Drowsily lift itself fold by fold,  
And gnaw and gnaw hungrily, half  
awake.

Sometimes she looked from the window  
below  
To the great South Court, and the  
squires, at their sport,

Loungingly loitering to and fro.  
She heard the grooms there as they  
cursed one another.  
She heard the great bowls falling all day  
long  
In the bowling-alleys. She heard the  
song  
Of the shock-headed Pages that drank  
without stint in  
The echoing courts, and swore hard at  
each other.  
She saw the red face of the rough wooden  
Quintin,  
And the swinging sand-bag ready to  
smother  
The awkward Squire that missed the  
mark.  
And, all day long, between the dull  
noises  
Of the bowls, and the oaths, and the  
singing voices,  
The sea boomed hoarse till the skies  
were dark.

But when the swallow, that sweet new-  
comer,  
Floated over the sea in the front of the  
summer,  
The salt dry sands burned white, and  
sickened  
Men's sight in the glaring horn of the  
bay;  
And all things that fasten, or float at  
ease  
In the silvery light of the leprous seas  
With the pulse of a hideous life were  
quickened,  
Fell loose from the rocks, and crawled  
crosswise away,  
Slippery sidelong crabs, half strangled  
By the white sea grasses in which they  
were tangled,  
And those half-living creatures, orbéd,  
rayed, and sharp-angled,  
Fan-fish, and star-fish, and polypous  
lumps,  
Hueless and boneless, that languidly  
thickened,  
Or flat-faced, or spikéd, or ridgéd with  
humps,  
Melting off from their clotted clusters  
and clumps  
Sprawled over the shore in the heat of  
the day.

An hour before the sun was set  
A darker ripple rolled over the sea;

The white rocks quivered in wells of  
jet;  
And the great West, opening breathlessly  
Up all his inmost orange, gave  
Hints of something distant and sweet  
That made her heart swell; far up the  
wave  
The clouds that lay piled in the golden  
heat  
Were turned into types of the ancient  
mountains  
In an ancient land; the weeds, which  
forlorn  
Waves were swaying neglectfully,  
By their sound, as they dipped into  
sparkles that dripped  
In the emerald creeks that ran up from  
the shore,  
Brought back to her fancy the bubble  
of fountains  
Leaping and falling continually  
In valleys where she should wander no  
more.

And when, over all of these, the night  
Among her mazy and milk-white signs,  
And clustered orbs, and zigzag lines,  
Burst into blossom of stars and light,  
The sea was glassy; the glassy brine  
Was paven with lights, — blue, crystal-  
line,  
And emerald keen; the dark world hung  
Balanced under the moon, and swung  
In a net of silver sparkles. Then she  
Rippled her yellow hair to her knee,  
Bared her warm white bosom and throat,  
And from the lattice leaned athirst.  
There, on the silence did she gloat  
With a dizzy pleasure steeped in pain,  
Half catching the soul of the secret that  
blended  
God with his starlight, then feeling it  
vain,  
Like a pining poet ready to burst  
With the weight of the wonder that  
grows in his brain,  
Or a nightingale, mute at the sound of  
a lute  
That is swelling and breaking his heart  
with its strain,  
Waiting, breathless, to die when the  
music is ended.  
For the sleek and beautiful midnight  
stole,  
Like a faithless friend, her secret care,  
Crept through each pore to the source  
of the soul,

And mocked at the anguish which he  
found there,  
Shining away from her, scornful and  
fair  
In his pitiless beauty, refusing to share  
The discontent which he could not con-  
trol.

The water-rat, as he skulked in the moat,  
Set all the slumbrous lilies afloat,  
And sent a sharp quick pulse along  
The stagnant light, that heaved and  
swung  
The leaves together. Suddenly  
At times a shooting star would spin  
Shell-like out of heaven, and tumble in,  
And burst o'er a city of stars; but she,  
As he dashed on the back of the zodiac,  
And quivered and glowed down arc and  
node,  
And split sparkling into infinity,  
Thought that some angel, in his reveries  
Thinking of earth, as he pensively  
Leaned over the star-grated balcony  
In his palace among the Pleiades,  
And grieved for the sorrow he saw in  
the land,  
Had dropped a white lily from his loose  
hand.

And thus many a night, steeped pale in  
the light  
Of the stars, when the bells and clocks  
Had ceased in the towers, and the sound  
of the hours  
Was eddying about in the rocks,  
Deep-sunken in bristling broidery be-  
tween the black oak Fiends sat she,  
And under the moth-flitted canopy  
Of the mighty antique bed in her cham-  
ber,  
With wild eyes drinking up the sea,  
And her white hands heavy with jewelry,  
Flashing as she loosed languidly  
Her satins of snow and of amber.  
And as, fold by fold, these were rippled  
and rolled  
To her feet, and lay huddled in ruins of  
gold,  
She looked like some pale spirit above  
Earth's dazzling passions forever flung  
by,  
Freed from the stains of an earthly love,  
And those splendid shackles of pride  
that press  
On the heart till it aches with the gor-  
geous stress,



Quitting the base Past remorsefully.  
 And so she put by the coil and care  
 Of the day that lay furled like an idle  
 weft  
 Of heaped spots which a bright snake  
 hath left,  
 Or that dark house, the blind worm's lair,  
 When the star-winged moth from the  
 windows hath crept,  
 Steeped her soul in a tearful prayer,  
 Shrank into her naked self, and slept.

And as she slumbered, starred and eyed  
 All over with angry gems, at her side,  
 The Fiends in the oak kept ward and  
 watch ;  
 And the querulous clock, on its rusty  
 catch,  
 With a quick tick, husky and thick,  
 Clamored and clacked at her sharply.

There was  
 (Fronting a portrait of the Earl)  
 A shrine with a dim green lamp, and a  
 cross  
 Of glowing cedar wreathed with pearl,  
 Which the Arimathæan, so it was writ,  
 When he came from the holy Orient,  
 Had worn, with his prayers embalm-  
 ing it,  
 As with the San-Grael through the world  
 he went.

Underneath were relics and gems  
 From many an antique king-saint's crown,  
 And some ('t was avouched) from the  
 dusk diadems  
 And mighty rings of those Wise Kings  
 That evermore sleep 'mid the marble  
 stems,  
 "Twixt chancel and chalice in God his  
 palace,  
 The marvel of Cologne Town.  
 In a halo dim of the lamp all night  
 Smiled the sad Virgin, holy and white,  
 With a face as full of the soul's affliction  
 As one that had looked on the Crucifix-  
 ion.

At moonrise the land was suddenly  
 brighter ;  
 And through all its length and breadth  
 the casement  
 Grew large with a luminous strange  
 amazement,  
 And, as doubting in dreams what that  
 sudden blaze meant,  
 The Lady's white face turned a thought  
 whiter.

Sometimes in sleep light finger-tips  
 Touched her behind ; the pain, the bliss  
 Of a long slow despairing kiss  
 Doubled the heat on her feverish lips,  
 And down to her heart's-heart smoulder-  
 ing burned ;  
 From lips long mute she heard her name ;  
 Sad dreams and sweet to vex her came ;  
 Sighing, upon her pillow she turned,  
 Like a weary waif on a weary sea  
 That is heaving over continually,  
 And finds no course, until for its sake  
 The heart of the silence begins to ache.  
 Unsoothed from slumber she awoke  
 An hour ere dawn. The lamp burned  
 faint.

The Fiends glared at her out of the oak.  
 She rose, and fell at the shrine of the  
 Saint.

There with clasped hands to the Mother  
 Of many sorrows, in sorrow, she prayed ;  
 Till all things in the room melted into  
 each other,  
 And vanished in gyres of flickering shade,  
 Leaving her all alone, with the face  
 Of the Saint growing large in its one  
 bright place.

Then on a sudden, from far, a fear  
 Through all her heart its horror drew,  
 As of something hideous growing near.  
 Cold fingers seemed roaming through her  
 damp hair ;  
 Her lips were locked. The power of  
 prayer  
 Left her. She dared not turn. She knew,  
 From his panel atilt on the wall up there,  
 The grim Earl was gazing her through  
 and through.

But when the casement, a grisly square,  
 Flickered with day, she flung it wide,  
 And looked below. The shore was bare.  
 In the mist tumbled the dismal tide.  
 One ghastly pool seemed solid white ;  
 The forked shadow of the thorn  
 Fell through it, like a raven rent  
 In the steadfast blank down which it went.  
 The blind world slowly gathered sight.  
 The sea was moaning on to morn.

And the Summer into the Autumn  
 waned.  
 And under the watery Hyades  
 The gray sea swelled, and the thick sky  
 rained,  
 And the land was darkened by slow de-  
 grees.

But oft, in the low West, the day  
 Smouldering sent up a sullen flame  
 Along the dreary waste of gray,  
 As though in that red region lay,  
 Heaped up, like Autumn weeds and  
 flowers  
 For fire, its thorny fruitless hours,  
 And God said, "burn it all away !"

When all was dreariest in the skies,  
 And the gusty tract of twilight muttered,  
 A strange slow smile grew into her eyes,  
 As though from a great way off it came  
 And was weary ere down to her lips it  
 fluttered,  
 And turned into a sigh, or some soft name  
 Whose syllables sounded like sighs,  
 Half smothered in sorrow before they  
 were uttered.

Sometimes, at night, a music was rolled —  
 A ripple of silver harp-strings cold —  
 From the halls below where the Minstrel  
 sung,  
 With the silver hair, and the golden  
 tongue,  
 And the eyes of passionless, peaceful blue  
 (Like twilight which faint stars gaze  
 through),  
 Wise with the years which no man knew.  
 And first the music, as though the wings  
 Of some blind angel were caught in the  
 strings,  
 Fluttered with weak endeavor : anon  
 The uncaged heart of music grew bold  
 And cautiously loosened, length by  
 length,  
 The golden cone of its great undertone,  
 Like a strong man using mild language  
 to one  
 That is weaker, because he is sure of his  
 strength.

But once — and it was at the fall of the day,  
 When she, if she closed her eyes, did seem  
 To be wandering far, in a sort of dream,  
 With some lost shadow, away, away,  
 Down the heart of a golden land which  
 she  
 Remembered a great way over the sea,  
 There came a trample of horses and men ;  
 And a blowing of horns at the Castle-  
 Gate ;  
 Then a clattering noise ; then a pause ;  
 and then,  
 With the sudden jerk of a heavy weight,  
 And a wrangling and jangling and clink-  
 ing and clanking,

The sound of the falling of cable and  
 chain ;  
 And a grumbling over the dewy planking  
 That shrieked and sung with the weight  
 and strain ;  
 And the rough Seneschal bawled out in  
 the hall,  
 "The Earl and the Devil are come back  
 again !"

Her heart stood still for a moment or more.  
 Then suddenly tugged, and strained, and  
 tore  
 At the roots, which seemed to give way  
 beneath.  
 She rushed to the window, and held her  
 breath.

High up on the beach were the long  
 black ships  
 And the brown sails hung from the masts  
 in strips ;  
 And the surf was whirled over and over  
 them,  
 And swept them dripping from stern to  
 stern.

Within, in the great square court below,  
 Were a hundred rough-faced men, or so.  
 And one or two pale fair-haired slaves  
 Whom the Earl had brought over the  
 winter waves.

There was a wringing of horny hands ;  
 And a swearing of oaths ; and a great  
 deal of laughter ;  
 The grim Earl growling his hoarse com-  
 mands  
 To the Warden that followed him growl-  
 ing after ;  
 A lowing of cattle along the wet sands ;  
 And a plashing of hoofs on the slippery  
 rafter,  
 As the long-tailed black-maned horses  
 each  
 Went over the bridge from the gray sea-  
 beach.

Then quoth the grim Earl, "fetch me a  
 stoop !"  
 And they brought him a great bowl that  
 dripped from the brim,  
 Which he seized upon with a satisfied  
 whoop,  
 Drained, and flung at the head of him  
 That brought it ; then, with a laugh like  
 a howl,  
 Stroked his beard ; and strode in through  
 the door with a growl.