

And his gold harp, chanting a lonely lay;  
Chanting and changing it o'er and o'er,  
Like the mournful mad melodious breath  
Of some wild swan singing himself to death,  
As he floats down a strange land leagues away.  
One day the song ceased. They heard it no more.

Did you ever an Alpine eagle see  
Come down from flying near the sun  
To find his eyrie all undone  
On lonely cliffs where chance hath led  
Some spying thief the brood to plunder?  
How hangs he desolate overhead,  
And circling now aloft, now under,  
His ruined home screams round and round,  
Then drops flat fluttering to the ground.  
So moaning round the roofs they saw him,  
With his gleaming harp and his vesture white:  
Going, and coming, and ever returning  
To those chambers, emptied of beauty and state  
And choked with blackness and ruin  
and burning;

Then, as some instinct seemed to draw him,  
Like hidden hands, down to his fate,  
He paused, plunged, dropped forever from sight;  
And a cone of smoke and sparkles rolled up,  
As out of some troubled crater-cup.  
As for the rest, some died; some fled  
Over the sea, nor ever returned.  
But until to the living return the dead,  
And they each shall stand and take their station  
Again at the last great conflagration,  
Never more will be seen the Earl or the stranger.  
No doubt there is much here that's fit to be burned.  
Christ save us all in that day from the danger!  
And this is why these fishermen say,  
Sitting alone in their boats on the bay,  
When the moon is low in the wild windy nights,  
They hear strange sounds, and see strange sights.  
Spectres gathering all forlorn  
Under the boughs of this bare black thorn.

## A SOUL'S LOSS.

"If Beauty have a soul this is not she." — TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.

'TWIXT the Future and the Past  
There's a moment. It is o'er.  
Kiss sad hands! we part at last.  
I am on the other shore.  
Fly, stern Hour! and hasten fast.  
Nobler things are gone before.

From the dark of dying years  
Grows a face with violet eyes,  
Tremulous through tender tears, —  
Warm lips heavy with rich sighs, —  
Ah, they fade! it disappears,  
And with it my whole heart dies!

Dies . . . and this choked world is sick-  
ening;  
Truth has nowhere room for breath.

Crusts of falsehood, slowly thickening  
From the rottenness beneath  
These rank social forms, are quickening  
To a loathsome life-in-death.

O those devil's market-places!  
Knowing, nightly, she was there,  
Can I marvel that the traces  
On her spirit are not fair?  
I forgot that air debases  
When I knew she breathed such air.

This a fair immortal spirit  
For which God prepared his spheres?  
What! shall this the stars inherit?  
And the worth of honest tears?  
A fool's fancy all its merit!  
A fool's judgment all its fears!

No, she loves no other! No,  
That is lost which she gave me.  
Is this comfort, — that I know  
All her spirit's poverty?  
When that dry soul is drained low,  
His who wills the dregs may be!

Peace! I trust a heart forlorn  
Weakly upon boisterous speech.  
Pity were more fit than scorn.  
Fingered moth, and bloomless peach!  
Gathered rose without a thorn,  
Set to flee in all men's reach!

I am clothed with her disgrace.  
O her shame is made my own!  
O I reel from my high place!  
All belief is overthrown.  
What! This whirligig of lace,  
This the Queen that I have known?

Starry Queen that did confer  
Beauty on the barren earth!  
Woodlands, wandered oft with her  
In her sadness and her mirth,  
Feeling her ripe influence stir  
Brought the violets to birth.

The great golden clouds of even,  
They, too, knew her, and the host  
Of the eternal stars in heaven;  
And I deemed I knew her most.  
I, to whom the Word was given  
How archangels have been lost!

Given in vain! . . . But all is over!  
Every spell that bound me broken!  
In her eyes I can discover  
Of that perished soul no token.  
I can neither hate nor love her.  
All my loss must be unspoken.

Mourn I may, that from her features  
All the angel light is gone.  
But I chide not. Human creatures  
Are not angels. She was none.  
Women have so many natures!  
I think she loved me well with one.

All is not with love departed.  
Liferemains, though toucht with scorn.  
Lonely, but not broken-hearted.  
Nature changes not. The morn  
Breathes not sadder. Buds have started  
To white clusters on the thorn.

And to-morrow I shall see  
How the leaves their green silk sheath  
Have burst upon the chestnut-tree.  
And the white rose-bush beneath  
My lattice which, once tending, she  
Made thrice sweeter with her breath,

Its black buds through moss and glue  
Will swell greener. And at eve  
Winking bats will waver through  
The gray warmth from eave to eave,  
While the daisy gathers dew.  
These things grieve not, though I grieve.

What of that? Deep Nature's gladness  
Does not help this grief to less.  
And the stars will show no sadness,  
And the flowers no heaviness,  
Though each thought should turn to madness  
'Neath the strain of its distress!

No, if life seem lone to me,  
'Tis scarce lonelier than at first.  
Lonely natures there must be.  
Eagles are so. I was nurst  
Far from love in infancy:  
I have sought to slake my thirst

At high founts; to fly alone,  
Haunt the heaven, and soar, and sing.  
Earth's warm joys I have not known.  
This one heart held everything.  
Now my eyrie is o'erthrown!  
As of old, I spread the wing,

And rise up to meet my fate  
With a yet unbroken will.  
When Heaven shut up Eden-gate,  
Man was given the earth to till.  
There's a world to cultivate,  
And a solitude to fill.

Welcome man's old helpmate, Toil!  
How may this heart's hurt be healed?  
Crush the olive into oil;  
Turn the ploughshare; sow the field.  
All are tillers of the soil.  
Each some harvest hopes to yield.

Shall I perish with the whole  
Of the coming years in view  
Unattempted? To the soul  
Every hour brings something new.  
Still suns rise: still ages roll.  
Still some deed is left to do.



Some . . . but what? Small matter now!  
 For one lily for her hair,  
 For one rose to wreath her brow,  
 For one gem to sparkle there,  
 I had . . . words, old words, I know!  
 What was I, that she should care

How I differed from the common  
 Crowd that thrills not to her touch?  
 How I deemed her more than human,  
 And had died to crown her such?  
 They? To them she is mere woman.  
 O, her loss and mine is much!

Fool, she haunts me still! No wonder!  
 Not a bud on yon black bed,  
 Not a swathed lily yonder,  
 But recalls some fragrance fled!  
 Here, what marvel I should ponder  
 On the last word which she said?

I must seek some other place  
 Where free Nature knows her not:  
 Where I shall not meet her face  
 In each old familiar spot.  
 There is comfort left in space.  
 Even this grief may be forgot.

Great men reach dead hands unto me  
 From the graves to comfort me.  
 Shakespeare's heart is throbbing through  
 me.

All man has been man may be.  
 Plato speaks like one that knew me.  
 Life is made Philosophy.

Ah, no, no! while yet the leaf  
 Turns, the truth upon its pall.  
 By the stature of this grief,  
 Even Shakespeare shows so small!  
 Plato palter with relief.  
 Grief is greater than them all!

They were pedants who could speak.  
 Grandeur souls have past unheard:  
 Such as found all language weak;  
 Choosing rather to record  
 Secrets before Heaven: nor break  
 Faith with angels by a word.

And Heaven heeds this wretchedness  
 Which I suffer. Let it be.  
 Would that I could love thee less!  
 I, too, am dragged down by thee.  
 Thine — in weakness — thine — ah yes!  
 Yet farewell eternally.

Child, I have no lips to chide thee.  
 Take the blessing of a heart  
 (Never more to beat beside thee!)  
 Which in blessing breaks. Depart.  
 Farewell. I that defied thee  
 Dare not question what thou art.

## THE ARTIST.

O ARTIST, range not over-wide:  
 Lest what thou seek be haply hid  
 In bramble-blossoms at thy side,  
 Or shut within the daisy-lid.

God's glory lies not out of reach.  
 The moss we crush beneath our feet,  
 The pebbles on the wet sea-beach,  
 Have solemn meanings strange and  
 sweet.

The peasant at his cottage door  
 May teach thee more than Plato knew:  
 See that thou scorn him not: adore  
 God in him, and thy nature too.

Know well thy friends. The woodbine's  
 breath,  
 The woolly tendril on the vine,  
 Are more to thee than Cato's death,  
 Or Cicero's words to Catiline.

The wild rose is thy next in blood:  
 Share Nature with her, and thy heart.  
 The kingcups are thy sisterhood:  
 Consult them duly on thine art.

Nor cross the sea for gems. Nor seek:  
 Be sought. Fear not to dwell alone.  
 Possess thyself. Be proudly meek.  
 See thou be worthy to be known.

The Genius on thy daily ways  
 Shall meet, and take thee by the hand:  
 But serve him not as who obeys:  
 He is thy slave if thou command:

And blossoms on the blackberry-stalks  
 He shall enchant as thou dost pass,  
 Till they drop gold upon thy walks,  
 And diamonds in the dewy grass.

Such largess of the liberal bowers  
 From left to right is grandly flung,  
 What time their subject blooms and  
 flowers  
 King-Poets walk in state among.

Be quiet. Take things as they come;  
 Each hour will draw out some surprise.  
 With blessing let the days go home:  
 Thou shalt have thanks from evening  
 skies.

Lean not on one mind constantly:  
 Lest, where one stood before, two fall.  
 Something God hath to say to thee  
 Worth hearing from the lips of all.

All things are thine estate: yet must  
 Thou first display the title-deeds,  
 And sue the world. Be strong: and trust  
 High instincts more than all the creeds.

The world of Thought is packed so tight,  
 If thou stand up another tumbles:  
 Heed it not, though thou have to fight  
 With giants; whoso follows stumbles.

Assert thyself: and by and by  
 The world will come and lean on thee.  
 But seek not praise of men: thereby  
 Shall false shows cheat thee. Boldly  
 be.

Each man was worthy at the first:  
 God spake to us ere we were born:  
 But we forget. The land is curst:  
 We plant the brier, reap the thorn.

Remember, every man He made  
 Is different: has some deed to do,  
 Some work to work. Be undismayed,  
 Though thine be humble: do it too.

Not all the wisdom of the schools  
 Is wise for thee. Hast thou to speak?  
 No man hath spoken for thee. Rules  
 Are well: but never fear to break

The scaffolding of other souls:  
 It was not meant for thee to mount;  
 Though it may serve thee. Separate  
 wholes  
 Make up the sum of God's account.

Earth's number-scale is near us set;  
 The total God alone can see;  
 But each some fraction: shall I fret  
 If you see Four where I saw Three?

A unit's loss the sum would mar;  
 Therefore if I have One or Two,  
 I am as rich as others are,  
 And help the whole as well as you.

This wild white rosebud in my hand  
 Hath meanings meant for me alone,  
 Which no one else can understand:  
 To you it breathes with altered tone:

How shall I class its properties  
 For you? or its wise whisperings  
 Interpret? Other ears and eyes  
 It teaches many other things.

We number daisies, fringe and star:  
 We count the cinquoils and the  
 poppies:  
 We know not what they mean. We are  
 Degenerate copyists of copies.

We go to Nature, not as lords,  
 But servants: and she treats us thus:  
 Speaks to us with indifferent words,  
 And from a distance looks at us.

Let us go boldly, as we ought,  
 And say to her, "We are a part  
 Of that supreme original Thought  
 Which did conceive thee what thou art:

"We will not have this lofty look:  
 Thou shalt fall down, and recognize  
 Thy kings: we will write in thy book,  
 Command thee with our eyes."

She hath usurpt us. She should be  
 Our model; but we have become  
 Her miniature-painters. So when we  
 Entreat her softly she is dumb.

Nor serve the subject overmuch:  
 Nor rhythm and rhyme, nor color and  
 form.

Know Truth hath all great graces, such  
 As shall with these thy work inform.



We ransack History's tattered page :  
We prate of epoch and costume :  
Call this, and that, the Classic Age :  
Choose tunic now, now helm and plume :

But while we halt in weak debate  
"Twixt that and this appropriate theme,  
The offended wild-flowers stare and wait,  
The bird hoots at us from the stream.

Next, as to laws. What 's beautiful  
We recognize in form and face :  
And judge it thus, and thus, by rule,  
As perfect law brings perfect grace :

If through the effect we drag the cause,  
Dissect, divide, anatomize,  
Results are lost in loathsome laws,  
And all the ancient beauty dies :

Till we, instead of bloom and light,  
See only sinews, nerves, and veins :  
Nor will the effect and cause unite,  
For one is lost if one remains :

But from some higher point behold  
This dense, perplexing complication ;  
And laws involved in laws unfold.  
And orb into thy contemplation.

God, when he made the seed, conceived  
The flower ; and all the work of sun  
And rain, before the stem was leaved,  
In that prenatal thought was done ;

The girl who twines in her soft hair  
The orange-flower, with love's devotion,  
By the mere act of being fair  
Sets countless laws of life in motion ;

So thou, by one thought thoroughly great,  
Shalt, without heed thereto, fulfil  
All laws of art. Create ! create !  
Dissection leaves the dead dead still.

All Sciences are branches, each,  
Of that first science, — Wisdom. Seize  
The true point whence, if thou shouldst  
reach  
Thine arm out, thou may'st grasp all  
these,

And close all knowledge in thy palm.  
As History proves Philosophy :  
Philosophy, with warnings calm,  
Prophet-like, guiding History.

Burn catalogues. Write thine own books.  
What need to pore o'er Greece and Rome ?

When whoso through his own life looks  
Shall find that he is fully come,

Through Greece and Rome, and Middle-  
Age :  
Hath been by turns, ere yet full-grown,  
Soldier, and Senator, and Sage,  
And worn the tunic and the gown.

Cut the world thoroughly to the heart.  
The sweet and bitter kernel crack.  
Have no half-dealings with thine art.  
All heaven is waiting : turn not back.

If all the world for thee and me  
One solitary shape possessed,  
What shall I say ? a single tree —  
Whereby to type and hint the rest,

And I could imitate the bark  
And foliage, both in form and hue,  
Or silvery-gray, or brown and dark,  
Or rough with moss, or wet with dew,

But thou, with one form in thine eye,  
Couldst penetrate all forms : possess  
The soul of form : and multiply  
A million like it, more or less, —

Which were the Artist of us twain ?  
The moral 's clear to understand.  
Where'er we walk, by hill or plain,  
Is there no mystery on the land ?

The osiered, oozy water, ruffled  
By fluttering swifts that dip and wink :  
Deep cattle in the cowslips muffled,  
Or lazy-eyed upon the brink :

Or, when — a scroll of stars — the night  
(By God withdrawn) is rolled away,  
The silent sun, on some cold height,  
Breaking the great seal of the day :

Are these not words more rich than ours ?  
O seize their import if you can !  
Our souls are parched like withering  
flowers,  
Our knowledge ends where it began.

While yet about us fall God's dews,  
And whisper secrets o'er the earth  
Worth all the weary years we lose  
In learning legends of our birth,

Arise, O Artist ! and restore  
Their music to the moaning winds,  
Love's broken pearls to life's bare shore,  
And freshness to our fainting minds.

## THE WIFE'S TRAGEDY.

### I.

#### THE EVENING BEFORE THE FLIGHT.

TAKE the diamonds from my hair !  
Take the flowers from the urn !  
Fling the lattice wide ! more air !  
Air — more air, or else I burn !

Put the bracelets by. And thrust  
Out of sight these hated pearls.  
I could trample them to dust,  
Though they were his gift, the Earl's !

Flusht I am ? The dance it was.  
Only that. Now leave me, Sweet.  
Take the flowers, Love, because  
They will wither in this heat.

Good night, dearest ! Leave the door  
Half-way open as you go.  
— O, thank God ? . . . Alone once more.  
Am I dreaming ? . . . Dreaming ? . . .  
no !

Still that music underneath  
Works to madness in my brain.  
Even the roses seem to breathe  
Poisoned perfumes, full of pain.

Let me think . . . my head is aching.  
I have little strength to think.  
And I know my heart is breaking.  
Yet, O love, I will not shrink !

In his look was such sweet sadness.  
And he fixed that look on me.  
I was helpless . . . call it madness,  
Call it guilt . . . but it must be.

I can bear it, if, in losing  
All things else, I lose him not.  
All the grief is my own choosing.  
Can I murmur at my lot ?

Ah, the night is bright and still  
Over all the fields I know.  
And the chestnuts on the hill :  
And the quiet lake below.

By that lake I yet remember  
How, last year, we stood together

One wild eve in warm September  
Bright with thunder : not a feather

Stirred the slumbrous swans that floated  
Past the reed-beds, husht and white :  
Towers of sultry cloud hung moated  
In the lake's unshaken light :

Far behind us all the extensive  
Woodland blackened against heaven :  
And we spoke not : — pausing pensive :  
Till the thunder-cloud was riven,

And the black wood whitened under,  
And the storm began to roll,  
And the love laid up like thunder  
Burst at once upon my soul.

There ! . . . the moon is just in crescent  
In the silent happy sky.  
And to-night the meanest peasant  
In her light 's more blest than I.

Other moons I soon shall see  
Over Asian headlands green :  
Ocean-spaces sparkling free  
Isles of breathless balm between.

And the rosy-rising star  
At the setting of the day  
From the distant sandy bar  
Shining over Africa :

Steering through the glowing weather  
Past the tracks of crimson light,  
Down the sunset lost together  
Far athwart the summer night.

"Canst thou make such life thy choice,  
My heart's own, my chosen one ?"  
So he whispered and his voice  
Had such magic in its tone !

But one hour ago we parted.  
And we meet again to-morrow.  
Parted — silent, and sad-hearted :  
And we meet — in guilt and sorrow.

But we shall meet . . . meet, O God,  
To part never . . . the last time !  
Yes ! the Ordeal shall be trod.  
Burning ploughshares — love and  
crime.



O with him, with him to wander  
Through the wide world — only his!  
Heart and hope and heaven to squander  
On the wild wealth of his kiss!

Then? . . . like these poor flowers that  
wither  
In my bosom, to be thrown  
Lightly from him any whither  
When the sweetness all is flown?

O, I know it all, my fate!  
But the gulf is crost forever.  
And regret is born too late.  
The shut Past reopens never.

Fear? . . . I cannot fear! for fear  
Dies with hope in every breast.  
O, I see the frozen sneer,  
Careless smile, and callous jest!

But my shame shall yet be worn  
Like the purple of a Queen.  
I can answer scorn with scorn.  
Fool! I know not what I mean.

Yet beneath his smile (*his* smile!)  
Smiles less kind I shall not see.  
Let the whole wide world revile.  
He is all the world to me.

So to-night all hopes, all fears,  
All the bright and brief array  
Of my lost youth's happier years,  
With these gems I put away.

Gone! . . . so . . . one by one . . . all gone!  
Not one jewel I retain  
Of my life's wealth. All alone  
I tread boldly o'er my pain

On to him . . . Ah, me! my child —  
My own fair-haired, darling boy!  
In his sleep just now he smiled.  
All his dreams are dreams of joy.

How those soft long lashes shade  
That young cheek so husht and warm,  
Like a half-blown rosebud laid  
On the little dimpled arm!

He will wake without a mother.  
He will hate me when he hears  
From the cold lips of another  
All my faults in after years.

None will tell the deep devotion  
Wherewith I have brooded o'er

His young life, since its first motion  
Made me hope and pray once more.

On my breast he smiled and slept,  
Smiled between my wrongs and me,  
Till the weak warm tears I wept  
Set my dry, coiled nature free.

Nay, . . . my feverish kiss would wake  
him.  
How can I dare bless his sleep?  
They will change him soon, and make him  
Like themselves that never weep;

Fitted to the world's bad part:  
Yet, will all their wealth afford him  
Aught more rich than this lost heart  
Whose last anguish yearns toward him?

Ah, there's none will love him then  
As I love that leave him now!  
He will mix with selfish men.  
Yes, he has his father's brow!

Lie thou there, thou poor rose-blossom,  
In that little hand more light  
Than upon this restless bosom,  
Whose last gift is given to-night.

God forgive me! — My God, cherish  
His lone motherless infancy!  
Would to-night that I might perish!  
But heaven will not let me die.

O love! love! but this is bitter!  
O that we had never met!  
O but hate than love were fitter!  
And he too may hate me yet.

Yet to him have I not given  
All life's sweetness? . . . fame? and  
name?  
Hope? and happiness? and heaven?  
Can he hate me for my shame?

"Child," he said, "thy life was glad  
In the dawning of its years;  
And love's morn should be less sad,  
For his eve may close in tears.

"Sweet in novel lands," he said,  
"Day by day to share delight;  
On by soft surprises led,  
And together rest at night.

"We will see the shores of Greece,  
And the temples of the Nile:

Sail where summer suns increase  
Toward the south from isle to isle.

"Track the first star that swims on  
Glowing depths toward night and us,  
While the heats of sunset crimson  
All the purple Bosphorus.

"Leaning o'er some dark ship-side,  
Watch the wane of mighty moons;  
Or through starlit Venice glide,  
Singing down the blue lagoons.

"So from coast to coast we'll range,  
Growing nearer as we move  
On our charmed way; each soft change  
Only deepening changeless love."

'T was the dream which I, too, dreamed  
Once, long since, in days of yore.  
Life's long-faded fancies seemed  
At his words to bloom once more.

The old hope, the wreckt belief,  
The lost light of vanished years,  
Ere my heart was worn with grief,  
Or my eyes were dimmed with tears!

When, a careless girl, I clung  
With proud trust to my own powers;  
Ah, long since I, too, was young,  
I, too, dreamed of happier hours!

Whether this may yet be so  
(Truth or dream) I cannot tell.  
But where'er his footsteps go  
Turns my heart, I feel too well.

Ha! the long night wears away.  
Yon cold drowsy star grows dim.  
The long-feared, long-wisht-for day  
Comes, when I shall fly with him.

In the laurel wakes the thrush.  
Through these dreaming chambers wide  
Not a sound is stirring. Hush;  
— O, it was my child that cried!

## II.

## THE PORTRAIT.

YES, 'tis she! Those eyes! that hair  
With the self-same wondrous hue!  
And that smile — which was so fair,  
Is it strange I deemed it true?

Years, years, years I have not drawn  
Back this curtain! there she stands  
By the terrace on the lawn,  
With the white rose in her hands:

And about her the armorial  
Scutcheons of a haughty race,  
Graven each with its memorial  
Of the old Lords of the Place.

You, who do profess to see  
In the face the written mind,  
Look in that face, and tell me  
In what part of it you find

All the falsehood, and the wrong,  
And the sin, which must have been  
Hid in baleful beauty long,  
Like the worm that lurks unseen

In the shut heart of the flower.  
'T is the Sex, no doubt! And still  
Some may lack the means, the power,  
There's not one that lacks the will.

Their own way they seek the Devil,  
Ever prone to the deceiver!  
If too deep I feel this evil  
And this shame, may God forgive her!

For I loved her, — loved, ay, loved her  
As a man just once may love.  
I so trusted, so approved her,  
Set her, blindly, so above

This poor world which was about her!  
And (so loving her) because,  
With a faith too high to doubt her,  
I, forsooth, but seldom was

At her feet with clamorous praises  
And protested tenderness  
(These things some men can do), phrases  
On her face, perhaps her dress,

Or the flower she chose to braid  
In her hair, — because, you see,  
Thinking love's best proved unsaid,  
And by words the dignity

Of true feeling's often lost,  
I was vowed to life's broad duty;  
Man's great business uppermost  
In my mind, not woman's beauty;

Toiling still to win for her  
Honor, fortune, state in life.



("Too much with the Minister,  
And too little with the wife!")

Just for this, she flung aside  
All my toil, my heart, my name;  
Trampled on my ancient pride,  
Turned my honor into shame.

O, if this old coronet  
Weighed too hard on her young brow,  
Need she thus dishonor it,  
Fling it in the dust so low?

But 't is just these women's way,—  
All the same the wide world over!  
Fooled by what's most worthless, they  
Cheat in turn the honest lover.

And I was not, I thank heaven,  
Made, as some, to read them through;  
Were life three times longer even,  
There are better things to do.

No! to let a woman lie  
Like a canker, at the roots  
Of a man's life,—burn it dry,  
Nip the blossom, stunt the fruits,

This I count both shame and thrall!  
Who is free to let one creature  
Come between himself, and all  
The true process of his nature,

While across the world the nations  
Call to us that we should share  
In their griefs, their exultations?—  
All they will be, all they are!

And so much yet to be done,—  
Wrong to root out, good to strengthen!  
Such hard battles to be won!  
Such long glories yet to lengthen!

'Mid all these, how small one grief,—  
One wrecked heart, whose hopes are  
o'er!

For myself I scorn relief.  
For the people I claim more.

Strange! these crowds whose instincts  
guide them  
Fail to get the thing they would,  
Till we nobles stand beside them,  
Give our names, or shed our blood.

From of old this hath been so.  
For we too were with the first

In the fight fought long ago  
When the chain of Charles was burst.

Who but we set Freedom's border  
Wrenched at Runnymede from John?  
Who but we stand, towers of order,  
'Twixt the red cap and the Throne?

And they wrong us, England's Peers,  
Us, the vanguard of the land,  
Who should say the march of years  
Makes us shrink at Truth's right  
hand.

'Mid the armies of Reform,  
To the People's cause allied,  
We—the forces of the storm!  
We—the planets of the tide!

Do I seem too much to fret  
At my own peculiar woe?  
Would to heaven I could forget  
How I loved her long ago!

As a father loves a child,  
So I loved her:—rather thus  
Than as youth loves, when our wild  
New-found passions master us.

And—for I was proud of old  
(T is my nature)—doubtless she  
In the man so calm, so cold,  
All the heart's warmth could not  
see.

Nay, I blame myself—nor lightly,  
Whose chief duty was to guide  
Her young careless life more rightly  
Through the perils at her side.

Ah, but love is blind! and I  
Loved her blindly, blindly! . . . Well,  
Who that ere loved trustfully  
Such strange danger could foretell?

As some consecrated cup  
On its saintly shrine secure,  
All my life seemed lifted up  
On that heart I deemed so pure.

Well, for me there yet remains  
Labor—that's much: then, the state:  
And, what pays a thousand pains,  
Sense of right and scorn of fate.

And, O, more! . . . my own brave boy,  
With his frank and eager brow,

And his hearty innocent joy.  
For as yet he does not know

All the wrong his mother did.  
Would that this might pass unknown!  
For his young years God forbid  
I should darken by my own.

Yet this must come . . . But I mean  
He shall be, as time moves on,  
All his mother might have been,  
Comfort, counsel—both in one.

Doubtless, first, in that which moved me  
Man's strong natural wrath had part.  
Wronged by one I deemed had loved me,  
For I loved her from my heart!

But that's past! If I was sore  
To the heart, and blind with shame,  
I see calmly now. Nay, more,—  
For I pity where I blame.

For, if he betray or grieve her,  
What is hers to turn to still?  
And at last, when he shall leave her,  
As at last he surely will,

Where shall she find refuge? what  
That worst widowhood can soothe?  
For the Past consoles her not,  
Nor the memories of her youth,

Neither that which in the dust  
She hath flung,—the name she bore;  
But with her own shame she must  
Dwell forsaken evermore.

Nothing left but years of anguish,  
And remorse but not return:  
Of her own self-hate to languish:  
For her long-lost peace to yearn:

Or, yet worse beyond all measure,  
Starting from wild reveries,  
Drain the poison misnamed Pleasure,  
And laugh drunken on the lees.

O false heart! O woman, woman,  
Woman! would thy treachery  
Had been less! For surely no man  
Better loved than I loved thee.

We must never meet again.  
Even shouldst thou repent the past.  
Both must suffer: both feel pain:  
Ere God pardon both at last.

Farewell, thou false face! Life speeds  
me  
On its duties. I must fight:  
I must toil. The People needs me:  
And I speak for them to-night.

## III.

## THE LAST INTERVIEW.

THANKS, Dear! Put the lamp down . . .  
so,  
For my eyes are weak and dim.  
How the shadows come and go!  
Speak truth,—have they sent for him?

Yes, thank Heaven! And he will come,  
Come and watch my dying hour,—  
Though I left and shamed his home.  
—I am withered like this flower

Which he gave me long ago.  
'T was upon my bridal eve,  
When I swore to love him so  
As a wife should—smile or grieve

With him, for him,—and not shrink.  
And now? . . . O the long, long pain!  
See this sunken cheek! You think  
He would know my face again?

All its wretched beauty gone!  
Only the deep care survives.  
Ah, could years of grief atone  
For those fatal hours! . . . It drives

Past the pane, the bitter blast!  
In this garret one might freeze.  
Hark there! wheels below! At last  
He is come then? No . . . the trees

And the night-wind—nothing more!  
Set the chair for him to sit,  
When he comes. And close the door,  
For the gust blows cold through it.

When I think, I can remember  
I was born in castle halls,—  
How yon dull and dying ember  
Glared against the whitewash walls!

If he come not (but you said  
That the messenger was sent  
Long since?) Tell him when I'm dead  
How my life's last hours were spent



In repenting that life's sin,  
And . . . the room grows strangely  
dark!

See, the rain is oozing in.  
Set the lamp down nearer. Hark,

Footsteps, footsteps on the stairs!  
*His . . . no, no! 't was not the wind.*  
God, I know, has heard my prayers.  
We shall meet. I am resigned.

Prop me up upon the pillows.  
Will he come to my bedside?  
Once 't was his . . . Among the willows  
How the water seems to glide!

Past the woods, the farms, the towers,  
It seems gliding, gliding through.  
*"Dearest, see, these young June-flowers,  
I have pluckt them all for you,*

*"Here, where passed my boyhood musing  
On the bride which I might wed."*  
Ah, it goes now! I am losing  
All things. What was that he said?

Say, where am I? . . . this strange  
room?

THE EARL.

Gertrude!

GERTRUDE.

Ah, his voice! I knew it.  
But this place? . . . Is this the tomb,  
With the cold dews creeping through  
it?

THE EARL.

Gertrude! Gertrude!

GERTRUDE.

Will you stand  
Near me? Sit down. Do not stir.  
Tell me, may I take your hand?  
Tell me, will you look on her

Who so wronged you? I have wept  
O such tears for that sin's sake!  
And that thought has never slept, —  
But it lies here, like a snake,

In my bosom, — gnawing, gnawing  
All my life up! I had meant,

Could I live yet . . . Death is drawing  
Near me —

THE EARL.

God, thy punishment!

Dare I judge her? —

GERTRUDE.

O, believe me,  
'T was a dream, a hideous dream.  
And I wake now. Do not leave me.  
I am dying. All things seem

Failing from me — even my breath!  
But my sentence is from old.  
Sin came first upon me. Death  
Follows sin, soon, soon! Behold,

Dying thus! Ah, why didst leave  
Lonely Love's lost bridal bowers  
Where I found the snake, like Eve,  
Unsuspected 'mid the flowers?

Had I been some poor man's bride,  
I had shared with love his lot:  
Labored truly by his side,  
And made glad his lowly cot.

I had been content to mate  
Love with labor's sunburnt brows.  
But to be a thing of state, —  
Homeless in a husband's house!

In the gorgeous game — the strife  
For the dazzling prize — that moved  
you —  
Love seemed crowded out of life —

THE EARL.

Ah fool! and I loved you, loved you!

GERTRUDE.

Yes. I see it all at last —  
All in ruins. I can dare  
To gaze down o'er my lost past  
From these heights of my despair.

O, when all seemed grown most dear —  
I was weak — I cannot tell —  
But the serpent in my ear  
Whispered, whispered — and I fell.

Look around, now. Does it cheer you,  
This strange place? the wasted frame  
Of the dying woman near you,  
Weighed into her grave by shame?

Can you trace in this wan form  
Aught resembling that young girl's  
Whom you loved once? See, this arm —  
Shrunk, shrunk! And my curls,

They have cut them all away.  
And my brows are worn with woe.  
Would you, looking at me, say,  
She was lovely long ago?

Husband, answer! in all these  
Are you not avenged? If I  
Could rise now, upon my knees,  
At your feet, before I die,

I would fall down in my sorrow  
And my shame, and say "forgive,"  
That which will be dust to-morrow,  
This weak clay!

THE EARL.

Poor sufferer, live.

God forgives. Shall I not so?

GERTRUDE.

Nay, a better life, in truth,  
I do hope for. Not below.  
Partner of my perished youth,

Husband, wronged one! Let your bless-  
ing  
Be with me, before, to-night,  
From the life that's past redressing  
This strayed soul must take its flight!

Tears, warm tears! I feel them creep  
Down my cheek. Tears — not my  
own.  
It is long since I could weep.  
Past all tears my grief hath grown.

Over this dry withered cheek,  
Drop by drop, I feel them fall.  
But my voice is growing weak:  
And I have not spoken all.

I had much to say. My son,  
My lost child that never knew me!  
Is he like me? One by one,  
All his little ways come to me.

Is he grown? I fancy him!  
How that childish face comes back  
O'er my memory sweet and dim!  
And his long hair? Is it black?

Or as mine was once? His mother  
Did he ever ask to see?  
Has he grown to love another —  
Some strange woman not like me?

Would he shudder to behold  
This pale face and faded form  
If he knew, in days of old,  
How he slumbered on my arm?

How I nursed him? loved him? missed  
him  
All this long heartbroken time?  
It is years since last I kissed him.  
Does he hate me for my crime?

I had meant to send some token —  
If, indeed, I dared to send it.  
This old chain — the links are broken —  
Like my life — I could not mend it.

Husband, husband! I am dying,  
Dying! Let me feel your kiss  
On my brow where I am lying.  
You are great enough for this!

And you'll lay me, when I'm gone,  
— Not in those old sculptured walls!  
Let no name be carved — no stone —  
No ancestral funerals!

In some little grave of grass  
Anywhere, you'll let me lie:  
Where the night-winds only pass,  
Or the clouds go floating by;

Where my shame may be forgot;  
And the story of my life  
And my sin remembered not.  
So forget the faithless wife;

Or if, haply, when I'm dead,  
On some worthier happier breast  
Than mine was, you lean your head,  
Should one thought of me molest

Those calm hours, recall me only  
As you see me, — worn with tears:  
Dying desolate here; left lonely  
By the overthrow of years.

May I lay my arm, then, there?  
Does it not seem strange to you,  
This old hand among your hair?  
And these wasted fingers too?



How the lamp wanes! All grows dark—  
Dark and strange. Yet now there  
shined  
Something past me . . . Husband, hark!  
There are voices on the wind.

Are they come? and do they ask me  
For the songs we used to sing?  
Strange that memory thus should task  
me!

Listen—  
*Birds are on the wing:*

*And thy Birthday Morn is rising.  
May it ever rise as bright!  
Wake not yet! The day's devising  
Fair new things for thy delight.*

*Wake not yet! Last night this flower  
Near thy porch began to pout  
From its warm sheath: in an hour  
All the young leaves will be out.*

*Wake not yet! So dear thou art, love,  
That I grudge these buds the bliss  
Each will bring to thy young heart, love,  
I would claim all for my kiss.*

*Wake not yet!*  
— There now, it fails me!  
Is my lord there? I am ill.  
And I cannot tell what ails me.  
Husband! Is he near me still?

O, this anguish seems to crush  
All my life up, — body and mind!

THE EARL.  
Gertrude! Gertrude! Gertrude!

GERTRUDE.  
Hush!  
There are voices in the wind.

THE EARL.  
Still she wanders! Ah, the plucking  
At the sheet!

GERTRUDE.  
Hist! do not take it  
From my bosom. See, 'tis sucking!  
If it sleep we must not wake it.

Such a little rosy mouth!  
— Not to-night, O not to-night!  
Did he tell me in the South  
That those stars were twice as bright!

Off! away! unhand me—go!  
I forgive thee my lost heaven,  
And the wrong which thou didst do.  
Would my sin, too, were forgiven!

Gone at last! . . . Ah, fancy feigns  
These wild visions! I grow weak.  
Fast, fast dying! Life's warmth wanes  
From me. Is the fire out?

THE EARL.  
Speak,

Gertrude, speak! My wife, my wife!  
Nay she is not dead, — not dead!  
See, the lips move. There is life.  
She is choking. Lift her head.

GERTRUDE.  
\* \* \* \* \*  
Death! . . . My eyes grow dim, and  
dimmer.

I can scarcely see thy face.  
But the twilight seems to glimmer,  
Lighted from some distant place.

Husband!

THE EARL.  
Gertrude!

GERTRUDE.  
Art thou near me?  
On thy breast — once more — thy  
breast!  
I have sinned — and — nay, yet hear me,  
And repented — and —

THE EARL.  
The rest  
God hath heard, where now thou art,  
Thou poor soul, — in Heaven.  
The door —  
Close it softly, and depart.  
Leave us!  
She is mine once more.

## MINOR POEMS.

### THE PARTING OF LAUNCELOT AND GUENEVERE.

#### A FRAGMENT.

Now, as the time wore by to Our Lady's  
Day,  
Spring lingered in the chambers of the  
South.  
The nightingales were far in fairy lands  
Beyond the sunset: but the wet blue  
woods  
Were half aware of violets in the wake  
Of morning rains. The swallow still  
delayed  
To build and be about in noisy roofs,  
And March was moaning in the windy  
elm.

But Arthur's royal purpose held to keep  
A joust of arms to solemnize the time  
In stately Camelot. So the King sent  
forth  
His heralds, and let cry through all the  
land  
That he himself would take the lists,  
and tilt  
Against all comers.

Hither came the chiefs  
Of Christendom. The King of North-  
galies;  
Anguise, the King of Ireland; the Haut  
Prince,  
Sir Galahault; the King o' the Hundred  
Knights;  
The Kings of Scotland and of Brittany;  
And many more renowned knights  
whereof  
The names are glorious. Also all the  
earls,  
And all the dukes, and all the mighty  
men  
And famous heroes of the Table Round,  
From far Northumberland to where the  
wave  
Rides rough on Devon from the outer  
main.

So that there was not seen for seven  
years,  
Since when, at Whitsuntide, Sir Galahad  
Departed out of Carlyel from the court,  
So fair a fellowship of goodly knights.

Then would King Arthur that the Queen  
should ride  
With him from Carlyel to Camelot  
To see the jousts. But she, because that  
yet  
The sickness was upon her, answered  
nay.  
Then said King Arthur, "This repenteth  
me.

For never hath been seen for seven years,  
No, not since Galahad, at Whitsuntide,  
Departed from us out of Carlyel,  
So fair a fellowship of goodly knights."  
But the Queen would not, and the King  
in wrath  
Broke up the court, and rode to Astolat  
On this side Camelot.

Now men said the Queen  
Tarried behind because of Launcelot,  
For Launcelot stayed to heal him of his  
wound.  
And there had been estrangement 'twixt  
these two

I' the later time, because of bitter words.  
So when the King with all his fellowship  
Was ridden out of Carlyel, the Queen  
Arose, and called to her Sir Launcelot.

Then to Sir Launcelot spoke Queen  
Guenevere.

"Not for the memory of that love  
whereof  
No more than memory lives, but, Sir,  
for that  
Which even when love is ended yet en-  
dures  
Making immortal life with deathless  
deeds,  
Honor—true knighthood's golden spurs,  
the crown